(U//FOUO) Empowering Somali Key for Countering Youth Radicalization and Their Travel Abroad for Terrorism

16 June 2015

(b)(3) per 50 U.S.C. § 3024(i) and 6 U.S.C. § 121(d)(11)
Empowering Somali-Americans Key for Countering Youth Radicalization and Their Travel Abroad for Terrorism

Prepared by the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (OIA).

This Assessment intends to help federal, state, local, and private partners prioritize efforts countering violent extremism (CVE) and invest in the most promising CVE strategies. Although there are dozens of CVE programs around the world, including ones that actively involve Somali-Americans of violent extremists, this study, we highlight how Somali-American community figures can be key CVE advocates in their communities, based on their experiences and the analysis is intended for partners whose positions afford them interaction with Somali-Americans. This Assessment takes a broad look at ethnic Somali American groups in the United States and elsewhere in the West, Europe is home to a significant number of ethnic Somali youth who traveled—or attempted travel—to join violent extremists in Syria, and aspects of radicalization involving ethnic Somalis to violence appears to be fairly similar on both continents. This Assessment identifies possible pitfalls, opportunities, and best practices already present throughout the West that could minimize challenges and maximize opportunities to support Somali-American community figures as primary advocates of efforts to prevent radicalization to violence and travel to join terrorist organizations (FTOs). The information cut-off date for this Assessment is 19 May 2015.

Key Judgments

The significant number of Somali-Americans joining terrorist groups in Syria demonstrates that these individuals remain vulnerable to entreaties from violent extremists and underscores the importance in CVE efforts. These challenges can make it difficult for Somali-American to cooperate with and fully understand Western security agencies and legal systems. These also might not be fully aware of negative influences facing. These challenges can make it difficult for well-meaning to recognize radicalizing and mobilizing to violence and to handle such activities appropriately.

In the face of these challenges, Somali-American have demonstrated the capability and willingness to help become more resistant to the appeal of violent extremists in foreign conflict zones, and

suggestions that the United States should take a closer look at CVE programs in Europe, where there is a longer history of battling violent extremism. This Assessment identifies possible pitfalls, opportunities, and best practices already present throughout the West that could minimize challenges and maximize opportunities to support Somali-American community figures as primary advocates of efforts to prevent radicalization to violence and travel to join foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs). The information cut-off date for this Assessment is 19 May 2015.

For this study, we define “western Somali” as someone with citizenship or long-term residence in Western Europe or North America who has ethnic background in Somalia.
that discourage foreign fighter travel. For example, bars and barriers can make it difficult for Somali-Americans to cooperate with and fully understand Western security agencies and legal systems. A Somali-American asserted that more than 20 Somali-Americans from Minnesota had joined the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) during the last two years.25

> (U) Somali-American who reported their Syria-based missing as missing were quoted in a as feeling “betrayed by the FBI’s action,” and probably because of not fully understanding the US legal system, were reportedly reluctant to testify at a grand jury hearing because others who did not report missing were not required to appear.33

> (U) Some Minneapolis and St. Paul-based Somali-American sought more trust and stronger relationships with police officers who better understood their culture, language, and social structures.34

> (U) Members of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Somali community expressed significant anger, and distrust
Abuses by Authorities in East Africa Undermine Trust of Some in Western Officials

Some immigrant Somali figures were abused by authorities in East Africa and remain wary of security services after arriving in the West, including the United States, which might deter these individuals from seeking help from government officials. A number of Somali-Americans suffered from dangerous and corrupt government authorities in East Africa, and consequently are fearful of Western security officials.

Possibly lacking a complete understanding of Western systems of justice, some ethnic Somali have publicly expressed frustration that authorities, including those in the United States, could not do more to protect from terrorist activities.

A US official in February 2015 identified as reasons why the would not report their suspicions to authorities, even in cases where might had been concerned about behavior for months. Many Somali immigrants fear that responding to any government initiative could put their legal status and personal wellbeing in jeopardy, which is a consequence of misunderstanding of how the US government system works and the civil rights and liberties guaranteed to every citizen and resident of the United States.

Immigration Stresses Can Undercut Control

I&A assesses that some Somali in the West, including the United States.
(U) Of the six young Somali-American males arrested in April 2015 for their alleged attempts to join violent extremists in Syria, two were brothers and another in the group had a brother who is...
assessed to have previously joined al-Shabaab in Somalia.67 Separately, a Columbus-based Somali male arrested on terrorism-related charges in February 2015 is the half-brother of an US person who allegedly joined al-Nusrah in Syria during August 2013.68

(U) Two British-Somali sisters from Manchester traveled to Syria in June 2014 where their brother reportedly joined foreign-based violent extremists over a year before their trip.69

(U) A Finnish-Somali fighter who appeared in an August ISIL-produced video possibly was encouraged to join ISIL by his cousin—another Somali from Finland—who died in June 2014 fighting in Syria.67

(U) Empowering Cooperation

(U) A range of opportunities exists for government and private entities to inform Somali about the potential violent extremist influences and to make public and private programs more approachable to Somali.67

(U/FOUO) Socio-Economic Factors Put Somalis at Risk

(U) need to be proactive in explaining typical assistance, investigative, and legal actions taken in such situations.67

(U/FOUO) Integrating Somali-Americans into Law Enforcement Can be a Challenge

(U) To help address perceived profiling at airports, US Customs and Border Protection agreed as of mid-February to hold a series of job fairs that encourage Somali-Americans to apply for approximately 2,000 open jobs across the agency.78
Commission in Minnesota said that he “expects to contribute an East African perspective to the commission.”

The Portland Police Bureau in late May 2015 swore in its first Somali-American officer. The agency put forth significant effort to build relationships with local Somalis. Likewise, one goal of local Somalis after a Somali was arrested for planned to educate individuals vulnerable to being drawn to overseas conflicts on the role of law enforcement in detecting and discouraging foreign fighter travel.

Minnesota Leading the Way in Sensitizing Somalis to the US Criminal Justice System

To increase trust and collaboration with the largest US-based Somali community, officials in the Twin Cities have implemented some outreach efforts that we consider to be some of the best practices to build stronger partnerships with local Somalis. These engagement efforts are improving perceptions of law enforcement in Minnesota.

The Somali-American Police Association (SAPA) — national organization with origins in Minnesota where there are approximately two dozen police officers of Somali descent — has been considered a model resource for police departments seeking to forge deeper ties with local Somalis since its founding in 2012. SAPA has been credited with diverting a number of Somali-American teens from potentially radicalizing activities.

The Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office — unlike many of its counterparts with jurisdiction in Somali communities throughout the United States — has partnered with a community advisory board to field calls from individuals without immediately involving law enforcement. The Sheriff’s Office also released a Somali language video in mid-February 2015 aimed at strengthening its relationship with the community by describing its public safety responsibilities, law enforcement roles, security issues affecting local Somalis, and ways residents can partner with its Community Engagement Team to reduce crime.

In comparison to efforts in Belgium, cities like Minneapolis and St. Paul employ more sophisticated CVE policies, which include recruiting Somalis for law enforcement roles and teaching the police about Somali culture and language. After visiting Minnesota, the head of crime prevention at the Helsinki Police Department (HPD) concluded that HPD needed to adopt best practices from the MPD by recruiting Somali officers establishing associations for Somali youth, and organizing meetings with the community.
(U//FOUO) Fear for officials as of March 2015 sought to engage who may be targeted by violent extremists in the “pre-criminal space” to help these youths before they cross the line into significant terrorism-related activities.99

(U) Independent, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can provide non-punitive support to Somali immigrant parents to help pivot away from foreign conflict zones. NGOs in Europe—including in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, and Sweden—have established successful support groups for drawn to violent extremist activities abroad, according to b, d, y, 99

(U//FOUO) The inspired by a call-center, funded a support hotline in April 2014, which includes Somali language counseling services, to provide an alternative to informing the , which most are reluctant to do. b, d, y, 101

(U//FOUO) A -based private support network offers counseling services, educational materials, and intervention assistance to interested in dissuading young adults from joining FTOs, b, d, y. 104 The organization works with law enforcement counterparts to avoid potentially provocative actions, such as raids and arrests, unless they become absolutely necessary. 105

(U//FOUO) -based private support groups to help members increase their awareness of how violent extremist recruiters target adolescents and organized private support groups to help members increase their awareness of how violent extremist recruiters target adolescents and

(U) A -based group of that met weekly to discuss worrisome changes by their helped inspire programs in the United States that help Somali-American families deal with
(U/FOUO) Community Resiliency Programs a Proactive, but Contentious, Development for 2015

(U) A delegation from Minnesota, including the US Attorney representing that district, attended a late-February 2015 counterterrorism summit at the White House to advocate pilot programs in Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis intended to stem the causes of radicalization, including within Somali communities. These pilots—administered by local US Attorneys in coordination with the Department of Justice, NCTC, and DHS—plan to infuse communities with resources to increase their resilience to violent extremism as well as establish outlets for sensitive communications on potentially concerning activities. A significant number of Somali-Americans, however, are skeptical of these programs.

(U) These pilots envisage the creation of community-led “intervention teams” in which [REDACTED] would have the confidence, privacy, and means to enlist help from mental health counselors, religious leaders, teachers, and other community advocates if they suspect [REDACTED] are being recruited by violent extremists. Based on conversations with friends and relatives of youth who entered foreign conflicts, the delegation wanted to employ resources, such as the intervention teams, to emphasize the early detection of youth at risk for radicalization before their activities become criminal in nature. The community intervention team will only contact police if it cannot dissuade a person from joining a terrorist group, but the goal is to handle these cases outside law enforcement channels.

(U) Elements of the pilot program are intended to counteract the very sophisticated and persuasive violent extremist messaging directed at youth, including young Somali-Americans, by encouraging after-school programs, job training, law enforcement occupations, and elimination of perceived profiling at airports.

(U/FOUO) The pilots have drawn concerns and skepticism from many participants, including Somali-Americans, that these efforts will blur the lines between law enforcement, community outreach, and intelligence gathering. Much of this unease comes from reports that past unrelated community outreach programs created by the FBI and St. Paul police were designed, in part, to gather intelligence, although both agencies publicly maintain they never used outreach efforts to spy on community members with whom they engaged.

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(U) Support Is Available to Assist Somali

(U/FOUO) Despite the challenges, [REDACTED] have access to broad support networks in the West beyond their immediate families. Efforts to discourage radicalization and mobilization to violence are particularly successful when they take advantage of the typically positive relationships between Somali-American leaders and relatives of youth who wanted to employ the interventions.

(U) When facing negative circumstances, individuals in the Somali diaspora commonly rely on extended family members for support. There have been cases of Somali-Americans enlisting pseudofamily members to contact police and help detect violent and anti-social behavior.

(U) The communal aspect of Somali culture often results in the responsibility of monitoring young children being entrusted to the whole community, with any adult having the right to speak to a child about his or her behavior. Adults in Somali culture commonly act as a [REDACTED] if they see something potentially wrong involving unsupervised youth.

(U/FOUO) Many Somali immigrants [REDACTED] have welcomed education about risks and face, including radicalization to violent extremism and recruitment to overseas conflicts. Such guidance has proven effective in integrating advocacy into broader efforts. As of February 2015, stakeholders for radicalization concerns in Europe were developing training modules to enable practitioners to help potential foreign fighters detect early warning signs of radicalization.
Somali-American in Minnesota told that they appreciated education from government officials about violent extremist recruitment in their neighborhoods because that information equipped them for productive talks. Publicity on the recruitment of Somali youth in Minnesota to become foreign fighters in Somalia, for example, prompted a Somali-American to report an alleged attempt to join Yemen-based violent extremists in 2009.

Counseling program created in 2011 deploys counselors to work with members of individuals at risk of radicalization to violence to help steer them away from violent activities. This program capitalizes on strong bonds to keep communication lines open with troubled youth, coaches members on gathering insight into the motives of relatives who may be radicalized to violence, and employs strategies that undermine violent extremist narratives. Counselors affiliated with the program also analyze statements by who may be in the process of being radicalized to violence to help craft responses intended to sustain and intensify contact over time, improving the chances that their appeals to abandon violent extremism will succeed.

I&A assesses that

A crime prevention program deploys school, social welfare, and police officials to educate regarding the Internet's effect on young people, so that they can detect and appropriately address online radicalization with.

Outlook: CVE programs deployed for the benefit of Somali-American communities must be implemented carefully to empower advocacy organizations embraced by community members, promote comprehensive CVE services, and minimize the perception of undue government influence.

Many Somali-Americans, particularly those in Minneapolis-St. Paul, believe that promises of outside support are hollow and self-serving based on years of researchers, journalists, government offices, and other organizations studying radicalization and recruitment in their communities only to abandon the community when the research funding is exhausted, according .

found that Somalis in Minneapolis-St. Paul were more willing to discuss the primary research interest—terrorist recruitment and methods for countering it—when they demonstrated genuine interest in the community's challenges and accomplishments.
Mosques, community leaders, and organizations performing CVE-related work have discovered that government sponsorship can undermine the legitimacy of a program intended to counter violent extremist messaging. Some local CVE programs are pawns of federal counterterrorism efforts, because some do not know where to go when they have concerns. This found that some organizations unaffiliated with government-driven initiatives can more effectively message Minneapolis-St. Paul Somali youth because they do not raise as much community suspicion regarding motives.

Some have discovered that government sponsorship can undermine the legitimacy of a program intended to counter violent extremist messaging. The Somali community in Minneapolis widely believe some local CVE programs are pawns of federal counterterrorism efforts.

(U) Source Summary Statement

(U//FOUO) The large and varied body of reporting provides us confidence in our judgment that... We have confidence in our ability to account for most major government and private programs in the West—and areas where these efforts are lacking... Limited substantive information—where noted—prevented us from making definitive judgments on certain trends, although we have confidence in the anecdotal information cited.

(U) Report Suspicious Activity

(U) To report suspicious activity, law enforcement, Fire-EMS, private security personnel, and emergency managers should follow established protocols; all other personnel should call 911 or contact local law enforcement. Suspicious activity reports (SARs) will be forwarded to the appropriate fusion center and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force for further action. For more information on the Nationwide SAR Initiative, visit http://nsi.ncirc.gov/resources.aspx.

Homeland Security
Office of Intelligence and Analysis
Customer Feedback Form

Product Title: (U//FOUO) Empowering Somali Key for Countering Youth Radicalization and Their Travel Abroad

1. Please select partner type: Select One and function: Select One

2. What is the highest level of intelligence information that you receive? Select One

3. Please complete the following sentence: “I focus most of my time on:” Select One

4. Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following:

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<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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<td>Product’s overall usefulness</td>
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5. How do you plan to use this product in support of your mission? (Check all that apply.)
- Drive planning and preparedness efforts, training, and/or emergency response operations
- Observe, identify, and/or disrupt threats
- Share with partners
- Allocate resources (e.g., equipment and personnel)
- Reorient organizational focus
- Author or adjust policies and guidelines
- Initiate a law enforcement investigation
- Initiate your own regional-specific analysis
- Initiate your own topic-specific analysis
- Develop long-term homeland security strategies
- Do not plan to use
- Other:

6. To further understand your response to question #5, please provide specific details about situations in which you might use this product.

7. What did this product not address that you anticipated it would?

8. To what extent do you agree with the following two statements?

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>This product will enable me to make better decisions regarding this topic</td>
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<td>This product provided me with intelligence information I did not find elsewhere</td>
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9. How did you obtain this product? Select One

10. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up conversation about your feedback? Yes

To help us understand more about your organization so we can better tailor future products, please provide:

Name: 
Organization: 
Contact Number: 
Position: 
State: 
Email:

Privacy Act Statement

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Product Serial Number: IA-0214-15

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