

Testimony of

The Honorable Jon Kyl

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OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JON KYL
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SECURITY

"TERRORISM: TWO YEARS AFTER 9/11, CONNECTING THE DOTS"

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Tomorrow marks the second anniversary of the worst, most cold-blooded attacks on the United States since its founding. In his address to the nation this past Sunday, President Bush said that "We have learned that terrorist attacks are not caused by the use of strength; they are invited by the perception of weakness. And the surest way to avoid attacks on our own people is to engage the enemy where he lives and plans. We are fighting the enemy (abroad) so that we do not meet him again on our own streets, in our own cities."

The Terrorism subcommittee is gathered here today to do its part to ensure that Americans are not attacked again. Defense of our people and our way of life at home requires that law enforcement agencies, members of Congress and government at large take an offensive approach to trace the roots of terror and terrorist financiers overseas and here in the U.S. homeland. As this subcommittee heard in June from one expert witness, "Al Qaeda, murderous as it is, is but a symptom . . . of an underlying malignancy which is Islamic extremism."

To defeat this threat, we must improve our ability to "connect the dots" between terrorists and their supporters and sympathizers. We must understand their goals, their resources and their methods, just as well as they understand our system of freedoms and how to exploit them for their terrible purposes.

Despite the commendable accomplishments of our law enforcement community, our intelligence services, and the men and women in our military, notably the capture or termination of two-thirds of al-Qaeda's leaders, freezing \$133 million in terrorist assets around the world, disrupting numerous terrorist cells and deadly attacks here in the United States -- and ending two terrorist-sponsoring regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, our government still has a great deal of work to do to secure our country from real and pressing terrorist threats.

In earlier testimony, and again this weekend from the New York FBI Director, we have been told of the presence of active al-Qaeda cells in 40 states -- from cities like our Capital, to the plains of the heartland. Increasingly we are told how worried our officials are about what they continue to learn and what they have not yet uncovered.

Today's hearing is the second in a series of hearings to investigate the roots of terrorist ideology, terrorist support networks, and state sponsorship -- especially the continued financial support from Saudi Arabia -- estimated at billions of dollars per year for nearly 40 years -- and what the U.S. government can do to counter these terrorists and their supporters. Members of this Subcommittee heard testimony earlier this summer by David Aufhauser, General Counsel to the Treasury Department, who called the Saudi regime the "epicenter" of terrorist financing. Special Agent John Pistole, Acting Assistant Director for Counterterrorism for the FBI, who testified before Congress in late July, declared that the "jury (was) still out" on Saudi Arabia's promises to combat terrorist financing.

Saudi Arabia has a deep historical and symbiotic relationship with the radical Islamic ideology of Wahhabism. The Saudis continue aggressively to export this intolerant and violent form of Islam to Muslims across the globe, and to inculcate it in the major institutions of Islam worldwide. The New York Times, The Washington Post and others have recently reported on Wahhabi influence around the world - including in Iraq where terrorists are carrying out ruthless attacks against U.S. forces attempting to rebuild that country and killing countless other innocent men and women.

Equally disturbing is the presence of radical Islamist groups and cells here in the United States that often have the support financially, ideologically, and even diplomatically, of the Saudi regime. Contrary to popular opinion, the voice of moderate Muslims is not often heard here in Washington and across America. Instead, a small group of organizations based in the U.S. with Saudi backing and support, is well advanced in its four-decade effort to control Islam in America - from mosques, universities and community centers to our prisons and even within our military. Moderate Muslims who love America and want to be part of our great country are being forced out of those institutions.

The Wahhabi-backed extremists then denounce critics of Wahhabism and other forms of Islamist extremism as being racists and bigots.

This will not stand. Let us be very clear. We are not suggesting that Islam as a religion or its faithful believers are enemies of the United States, the West or modernity. However, a growing body of accepted evidence and expert research demonstrates that the Wahhabi ideology, that dominates, finances and animates many groups here in the United States, indeed is antithetical to the values of tolerance, individualism, and freedom as we conceive these things. That ideology presents a clear and present danger to our Constitution and the principles of freedom enshrined by our Founding Fathers. Hence it is a threat to the security of secular liberal democracies such as the United States and indeed is engaged, on many levels, in a violent struggle against them, from Manila to Morocco, from India to Iraq, and from Jerusalem to Jakarta.

It threatens the progress and security of many countries with substantial Muslim populations, and in this sense too, our fight against this scourge is the fight of moderate Muslims for the preservation of their religion. And just as the US has fought to protect the Muslim peoples of the Balkans, Somalia, Kuwait and Afghanistan, so we will continue to help them defend their right to freedom.

Today's hearing will bring these and other important issues facing the U.S. in the war on terror to light.

Our first witness today is Simon Henderson, a veteran journalist and respected expert on the Saudi Arabian royal family and related Middle East issues; he is currently with Saudi Strategies in London. Mr. Henderson will expose a history of activity in the Kingdom that has culminated in its current role in financing terror. He will outline a number of Saudi entities, some run by the government, that are involved in financing terror around the world.

Next, we will hear from Matthew Epstein, a terrorism expert and lawyer specializing in terror finance and Assistant Director with the Investigative Project here in Washington. Mr. Epstein will provide testimony on the network of American Muslim organizations -- the majority of which are recipients of the very Saudi largesse Mr. Henderson will outline. Mr. Epstein will highlight their long history of sympathy, coordination and support for terrorist groups. As an example he will focus on a group that we, here on the Hill, are very familiar with, namely the Council on American-Islamic Relations or CAIR. Members of the Council on American-Islamic Relations were invited to testify today on this important anniversary, an opportunity that this Subcommittee offered so that the organization could have its say about the serious allegations concerning its funding, ideology, leadership, and foreign and domestic networks. CAIR declined the Subcommittee's invitation. CAIR has submitted a statement for the record.

Matthew Levitt, a Senior Fellow in Terrorism Studies at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and a former FBI terror analyst, has submitted a written testimony as he is out of the country at a vital

counterterrorism conference and unable to appear in person. The title of his statement is: "Subversion from Within, Saudi Funding of Islamic Extremist Groups: Undermining U.S. Interests and the War on Terror from Within the United States." Of special interest to me in his statement, Mr. Levitt gives examples of how Wahhabist organizations in the U.S. aim to disrupt anti-terrorism legislation.

While these groups often pay lip service to condemning terrorism in the abstract, they assiduously oppose virtually every effort broadly supported by the American people and this Congress to provide our law enforcement and intelligence communities the resources and tools needed to effectively understand, interdict, prosecute and thus prevent further terror acts.

Mr. Levitt notes that "the foreign funding of subversive domestic organizations (in the United States) linked to designated terrorist groups poses immediate dangers to the national security of the United States." Finally, Mr. Levitt touches on the subject for a future hearing: the constraints faced by US law enforcement and intelligence in terms of tools and powers, and a risk-averse culture -- including a disinterest or incapacity in strategic analysis of the terrorist opponent. This, when combined with the lack of foreign cooperation from putative allies, both in the Gulf and in Europe, "are a continuum of a larger issue," he says. "Namely, two years after the horrible events of September 11, 2001, our rhetoric still does not match our actions."

As Senator Schumer said at the subcommittee's last hearing on this subject, "Mr. Chairman, by holding these hearings . . . you are doing what is necessary to ensure that we do not look back after the next terrorist attack and say, 'Why did we not stop it when we had the chance?' My worry is that the Saudis, and many in this administration, are not heeding these warning signs. My worry is, by not heeding these signs; we are once again letting those who hate freedom recruit disciples in our country that might potentially do us harm. My fear, Mr. Chairman, in conclusion is that if we do not wake up and take action now, those influenced by Wahhabism's extremist ideology will harm us in, as of yet, unimaginable ways."

Finally, I would like to thank Senator Feinstein for her hard work on this hearing.