

U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

Terrorist Threats in Perspective

The rise of ISIS has not only been a calamity for the people of Syria and Iraq, but a challenge to law enforcement and security agencies in this country and elsewhere. Adept at the use of social media to radicalize and inspire young people to violence, ISIS has encouraged its sympathizers throughout the world to commit acts of terrorism in its name. Recent attacks at a mosque in Kuwait, a beachside resort in Tunisia, and a protest event in Texas have brought home the fact that the threat from ISIS is real, and the diffuse nature of that threat makes it difficult to contain. The Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which includes much of July, is a month which the vast majority of Muslims regard as a time of fasting, peaceful reflection, restraint and charity. But in another measure of its moral perversion, an ISIS spokesman has urged its followers to commit acts of terror during Ramadan.

Preventing terrorist attacks is the U.S. Department of Justice's top priority, and a number of federal criminal cases have been filed nationally in recent months against ISIS adherents seeking to initiate violence in this country, or to travel to the Middle East to make common cause with ISIS fighters there. In this district as in others, we are working with the FBI and state and local law enforcement to detect and disrupt potential terrorist threats associated with Middle Eastern groups and their sympathizers.

While we properly focus resources on the terrorist threat emanating from ISIS, we must not overlook other terrorist threats that are more firmly rooted on our own soil. A number of recent studies have indicated that terrorist acts by anti-government extremists and white supremacists are responsible for more fatalities in the United States since 9/11 than attacks by Islamist terrorists. Law enforcement agencies across the country, which are often targeted by anti-government extremists, are particularly attuned to the threat of ideologically-motivated violence from domestic terrorists. And as we tragically witnessed in connection with the recent murders in a Charleston church by a white supremacist, the impact of a terror attack on innocent victims can be devastating, regardless of the motivation of the perpetrator.

Here in the Eastern District of California, combatting violence by domestic extremists has long been an important part of our mission, from the prosecution of the Williams brothers who burned three synagogues in Sacramento over decade ago, to the more recent prosecution of an extremist who targeted a Madera mosque and a Planned Parenthood. This month, an anti-government ideologue who engaged in a gun battle with a BLM Ranger and a CHP Officer is scheduled to be sentenced in District Court after his conviction at trial in February.

Terrorism comes in many forms. While the world's attention is understandably focused on the emergence of ISIS and the serious threat it poses, we must also remain vigilant to other threats of ideologically-based violence that can be equally lethal, many of which originate within our own borders.

If you would like to communicate with our office, contact the main number in Sacramento, or submit a suggestion by clicking on the button below. Thank you.

United States Attorney

Benjamin B. Wagner