

Standing United, Upholding Religious Freedom Key to National Security

U.S. Commanders Warn that Religious Intolerance Undermines our National Security.

- General David Petraeus, U.S. Commander in Afghanistan, said that incidents like the proposed Koran burning in 2010 could "endanger troops and it could endanger the overall effort here.... [I]n fact, images from such activity could very well be used by extremists here and around the world."¹

Speaking about Racial or Religious Communities as Threats to the United States Is Wrong and Feeds al Qaeda Propaganda.

- As John Brennan said, "Describing our enemy in religious terms would lend credence to the lie—propagated by al Qaeda and its affiliates to justify terrorism—that the United States is somehow at war against Islam. The reality, of course, is that we never have been and will never be at war with Islam. After all, Islam, like so many faiths, is part of America....Our enemy is al Qaeda and its terrorist affiliates. For it was al Qaeda who attacked us so viciously on 9/11 and whose desire to attack the United States, our allies, and our partners remains undiminished."²
- Brian Fishman, an associate at West Point's Combating Terrorism Center, warns that anti-Islamic rhetoric feeds into the message of al Qaeda propagandists like Anwar al-Awlaki, who try to recruit terrorists by advancing claims that American Muslims face a dark future of ever-worsening discrimination and vilification. Fishman said, "When the rhetoric is so inflammatory that it serves the interests of a jihadi recruiter like Awlaki, politicians need to be called on it."³

Americans From All Communities Have Played Key Roles In Stopping Terrorist Plots.

- Claims that Muslim Americans are not cooperating with law enforcement have no basis in fact. As Attorney General Eric Holder said, "[T]he cooperation of Muslim and Arab-American communities has been absolutely essential in identifying, and preventing, terrorist threats."⁴
- Muslims, like members of every other community in America, often work with law enforcement to help prevent crime. As Faisal Shahzad sought to detonate a bomb in Times Square last year, it was Aliou Niasse, a Muslim street vendor, who first alerted police to the threat.⁵

Targeting Muslims at Home Undercuts Efforts to Build Bridges with Muslims Abroad.

- Karen Hughes, former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, said, "I believe it is in America's strategic interest, and in the interest of defeating terrorism, that we make clear that we view most Muslims as our allies in a common struggle against extremists."⁶
- Major General Paul Eaton, US Army (Ret), explained how Anti-Muslim rhetoric is harmful to the military's objectives: "It is a slap in the face to a great many people we wish to have as allies. We are trying to make allies of our colleagues in Iraq and Afghanistan and this is not helpful." He also added, "This is unhelpful to the American fighting men and women and counter to the image we wish to portray in Afghanistan and Iraq."⁷

Talking Points

American Muslims Serve in our Armed Forces with Distinction.

- President George W. Bush said, "Muslim members of our Armed Forces and of my administration are serving their fellow Americans with distinction, upholding our nation's ideals of liberty and justice in a world at peace."⁸
- President Barak Obama said, "I've got Muslims who are fighting in Afghanistan in the uniform of the United States Armed Services. They're out there putting their lives on the line for us. And we've got to make sure that we are crystal clear, for our sakes and their sakes, they are Americans and we honor their service. And part of honoring their service is making sure that they understand that we don't differentiate between them and us. It's just us."⁹
- Colin Powell, on the sacrifice of a young American soldier: "Is there something wrong with being a Muslim in this country? The answer is no. That's not America....I feel particularly strong about this because of a picture I saw in a magazine. It was a photo essay about troops who were serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. And one picture at the tail end of this photo essay was of a mother at Arlington Cemetery and she had her head on the headstone of her son's grave. And as the picture focused in, you could see the writing on the headstone, and it gave his awards - Purple Heart, Bronze Star - showed that he died in Iraq, gave his date of birth, date of death, he was 20 years old. And then at the very top of the head stone, it didn't have a Christian cross. It didn't have a Star of David. It has a crescent and star of the Islamic faith. And his name was Kareem Rashad Sultan Khan. And he was an American. He was born in New Jersey. He was fourteen years old at the time of 9/11, and he waited until he could serve his country and he gave his life."¹⁰

⁴ <http://www.mainjustice.com/2010/12/11/holders-prepared-remarks-at-muslim-advocates-dinner-in-san-francisco/>

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http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article7114495.ece

⁶ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/20/AR2010082002124.html>

⁷ <http://mediamatters.org/blog/201008160044>

⁸ <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/12/20021205-5.html>

⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2IBOkKGBMw>

¹⁰ <http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/talk/blogs/eades/2008/10/colin-powell-salutes-muslim-am.php>



¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/WN/Afghanistan/burn-quran-day-sparks-protests-afghanistan-petraeus-endanger/story?id=11569820>

² <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-assistant-president-homeland-security-and-counterterrorism-john-brennan-csi>

³ http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/21/world/21muslim.html?_r=2