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Right Turn

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Obama's feeble counterterrorism efforts lambasted

By [Jennifer Rubin](#)

The Obama administration has been roundly criticized for ignoring the ideology that animates Islamic terrorism. In fact, it has entirely excised “radical jihadism” or “Islamic fundamentalism.” Now a Muslim organization is taking the Obama team to task.

A [news release](#) yesterday described the problem:

The American Islamic Leadership Coalition (AIRC) issued a policy communiqué today noting both improvements and glaring omissions in the Obama administration's recently released National Strategy on Counterterrorism (NSCT) and recommending revisions to increase the effectiveness of the strategy. The AIRC is a group of more than 25 organizations and leaders representative of the overwhelming “silent majority” of Muslims in America — who span a wide gamut of religious beliefs and adhere to diverse social and cultural practices. As Muslims dedicated to helping the U.S. government to protect our nation, AIRC leaders are offering their vision of a genuine solutions-based approach against the threat of Islamist terror.

AIRC recommends:

- Clearly and publicly define the ideology of al-Qa'ida and the terror organizations that we seek to defeat;
- Distinguish between the religion of Islam and Islamist ideology (“a distorted interpretation of Islam”), whose adherents seek to conflate their own theocratic, statist agenda with Islam itself;
- Acknowledge the diversity of American Muslims, and recognize that genuinely pluralistic, tolerant and spiritual Muslim leaders possess the theological legitimacy, authority and credibility required to counter Islamist ideology and movements from within Islam, and should be encouraged and supported in their efforts to do so;
- Engage non-Islamist Muslim groups to help develop and implement effective counter-radicalization programs that affirm the principles of liberty and individual rights;
- Facilitate the production of compelling content (“narratives”) and their distribution, through proactive use of the internet, which is one of al-Qa'ida's primary means of ideological indoctrination and recruitment;
- Support the development of robust, on-the-ground efforts to expose the brutal reality of Islamist oppression, violence and terror, and contrast it with American values.

The [response](#) is worth reading in full. Two points are particularly noteworthy.

First, it harshly criticizes the administration (a fault equally applicable to the Bush administration) for conducting “outreach” to precisely the wrong groups. CAIR (the Council on American-Islamic Relations), for example, refuses to label Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist groups, and a number of its officials have been criminally indicted. Yet this group is given legitimacy and access to the administration. AILC writes:

In seeking to discredit al-Qa’ida’s ideology, it is counterproductive to engage and empower groups that share an ostensibly (or tactically) “non-violent” form of that same ideology, as partners in what should be a systematic, long-term effort to undermine and discredit their highly politicized and distorted understanding of Islam. Unfortunately, well-financed Muslim Brotherhood, Wahhabi and Jamaat-e-Islami legacy groups — inspired by an Islamist ideology that substantially parallels that of al-Qa’ida itself — have been organizing in North America for nearly fifty years. Their members have, in many cases, acquired significant influence in American society under the guise of promoting a “moderation” that exists in word only, while actually seeking to intimidate, marginalize and otherwise silence those who hold a truly pluralistic, tolerant and spiritual understanding of Islam. The AILC was founded, in large part, to dispel this illusion, and to help unite the vast, silent majority of Muslims in the U.S. and Canada, to reclaim our religion from those who merely claim to speak in our name.

And second, the administration has not taken seriously and adopted an effective strategy for combating efforts to radicalize American Muslims (no doubt because the very groups from which the administration seeks advice were among the most vocal critics of the House Homeland Security Committee’s hearings on this topic). AILC states:

Nearly every terrorist plot and act on U.S. soil in the past few years was perpetrated by American Muslims who were indoctrinated here, on our own soil. The Internet is one of the primary vehicles for the transmission of ideas that threaten our security, and should be a primary vehicle through which we respond to the propagation of extremist ideology. In 2008, many of us in the American Islamic Leadership Coalition commended the US Senate Homeland Security Committee on its comprehensive report on Violent Islamist Extremism, the Internet and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat. It is disconcerting that three years later, the White House’s newest NSCT appears to ignore most of those findings and recommendations.

AILC raises a host of troubling issues. Both the House and Senate should use the response as a guide to conducting oversight committees and to call the administration to account for its half-hearted effort to engage in the war against Islamic extremism.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/post/obamas-feeble-counterterrorism-efforts-lambasted/2011/03/29/gIQAmxJzPI_blog.html#pagebreak