

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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FACT SHEET: The White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism

This week, the White House is convening a three-day summit on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) to bring together local, federal, and international leaders – including President Obama and foreign ministers – to discuss concrete steps the United States and its partners can take to develop community-oriented approaches to counter hateful extremist ideologies that radicalize, recruit or incite to violence. Violent extremist threats can come from a range of groups and individuals, including domestic terrorists and homegrown violent extremists in the United States, as well as terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIL.

Understanding “Countering Violent Extremism”

CVE encompasses the preventative aspects of counterterrorism as well as interventions to undermine the attraction of extremist movements and ideologies that seek to promote violence. CVE efforts address the root causes of extremism through community engagement, including the following programs:

- **Building awareness**—including briefings on the drivers and indicators of radicalization and recruitment to violence;
- **Countering extremist narratives**—directly addressing and countering violent extremist recruitment narratives, such as encouraging civil society-led counter narratives online; and
- **Emphasizing Community Led Intervention**—empowering community efforts to disrupt the radicalization process before an individual engages in criminal activity.

U.S. Government Policy to Counter Violent Extremism Here at Home

In August 2011, the White House released *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, the first national strategy to prevent violent extremism domestically. The underlying premise of the approach to countering violent extremism in the United States is that (1) communities provide the solution to violent extremism; and (2) CVE efforts are best pursued at the local level, tailored to local dynamics, where local officials continue to build relationships within their communities through established community policing and community outreach mechanisms. The Federal Government’s most effective role in strengthening community partnerships and preventing violent extremism is as a facilitator, convener, and source of research and findings.

Since the release of the Strategy, local governments and communities around the United States have developed prevention frameworks that address the unique issues facing their local communities. Three cities—**Greater Boston, Los Angeles, and the Twin Cities**—with the leadership of representatives from the Federal Government, have created pilot programs to foster partnerships between local government, law enforcement, mayor’s offices, the private sector, local service providers, academia, and many others who can help prevent violent extremism. Federal departments and agencies have begun expanding support to local stakeholders and practitioners who are on the ground serving their communities. Each city created an action plan tailored to addressing the root causes and community needs they identified. The pilot framework developed by these three cities emphasizes the strength of local communities with the premise that well-informed and well-equipped families, communities, and local institutions represent the best defense against violent extremist ideologies and offers three overarching components.

The Federal Government is supporting these efforts in a number of important ways. In conjunction with the Summit, we are announcing new steps to advance our whole-of-nation CVE efforts, including by:

- Appointing the first-ever senior level, full-time CVE Coordinator at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS);
- Establishing, in partnership with the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles-based Office for Strategic Engagement and committed on-the-ground dedicated staff to facilitate information sharing, engagement with local partners, strengthening of community and law enforcement partnerships, and the local establishment of prevention and

intervention frameworks. Due to the successes in Los Angeles, DHS on-the-ground engagement staff will be expanded in 2015 to Boston and other municipalities across the country;

- Seeking \$15 million in appropriated funding for the Department of Justice (DOJ) to support community-led efforts to build resilience and counter violent extremism in the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2016;
- Awarding nearly \$3.5 million in National Institute of Justice research and evaluation grants to address domestic radicalization to violent extremism for the third year;
- Leading a workshop with the creative arts community and community leaders in Los Angeles to develop innovative, scalable and implementable programs and tools to counter violent extremism. In 2015, these new programs and tools will include film training for disadvantaged youth and a "CVE Hub" that will be a non-governmental organization to connect, network, organize, and drive community groups, funders, academics, and the tech sector towards long-term, sustainable, creative, and nimble solutions for domestic CVE;
- Sponsoring a joint DHS and DOJ symposium for local partners to collaborate and share best practices on intervention and prevention framework development and implementation in 2015; and
- Joining Canada and the United Kingdom to bring together researchers from four robust and comprehensive research programs to deliver practical, timely and plainspoken results to practitioners. This international compilation will ensure the best results are validated and shared with those who need them most.

U.S. Government Policy to Counter Violent Extremism Globally

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA): At the United Nations in September 2014, President Obama called on member nations to do more to address violent extremism within their regions. He also asked that they return in 2015 with concrete steps taken to address "the underlying grievances and conflicts that feed extremism." The White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism is the first of many events leading up to UNGA in September 2015, through which the United States and its partners will develop actions to counter the most immediate threats, including ISIL, and stop the spread of violent extremism.

Ministers from nearly 70 countries, the UN Secretary-General, senior officials from other multilateral bodies, and representatives from civil society and the private sector will gather during the Ministerial segments of the Summit to develop a comprehensive action plan against violent extremism. They will also chart a path for progress that will include regional summits, aimed at taking concrete steps to prevent violent extremism in the lead up to UNGA 2015. This week's Summit offers an opportunity to approach CVE in a comprehensive way and build upon the framework of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which encourages the UN and other multilateral bodies to intensify efforts to identify and address the local drivers of violent extremism.

Focusing on Foreign Fighter Recruitment: CVE is also a key component of the U.S. Government's strategy to combat foreign terrorist fighters. Internationally, there is an unprecedented flow of foreign terrorist fighters to Syria and Iraq, with more than 20,000 foreign fighters from more than 90 nations traveling to Syria since the beginning of the conflict, including at least 3,400 from the West.

To complement the CVE discussions to prevent terrorist and other extremist recruitment and radicalization and implement other aspects of UN Security Council Resolution 2178, the Resolution that emerged from the Security Council session President Obama chaired last year, the Department of State is hosting an Information Sharing Ministerial on the margins of the Summit. The Ministerial is focusing on actionable steps to disrupt foreign terrorist fighters travel to and from conflict zones.

Additionally, the United States next week will host the Global Counterterrorism Forum's Foreign Terrorist Fighter Working Group workshop "Raising Community Awareness to Address the Foreign Terrorist Fighter Phenomenon" to focus on ways in which communities and governments can develop specific programs and efforts to address the issue of foreign terrorist fighters.

Widening the Global Base of CVE Stakeholders

Social Media Solutions: The U.S. Government, in partnership with foreign governments, civil society, and the private sector, is working to weaken the legitimacy and resonance of violent extremist messaging and narratives, including through social media. The Summit will identify concrete ways to build upon ongoing initiatives aimed at countering extremists' perverse message and new and innovative solutions to the challenges posed by violent extremists, especially online. For example:

- The United States is partnering with the United Arab Emirates to establish a digital communications hub that will counter ISIL's propaganda and recruitment efforts, both directly and through engagement with civil society, community, and religious leaders.
 - The State Department is launching a Peer-to-Peer Challenge to empower university students in the United States, Canada, North Africa, Middle East, Europe, Australia, and Asia to develop digital content that counters violent extremist messaging.
 - The United States and our partners in the private sector are organizing multiple "technology camps" in the coming months, in which social media companies will work with governments, civil society, and religious leaders to develop digital content that discredits violent extremist narratives and amplifies positive alternatives. The Summit will provide an opportunity to explore further collaboration with the information technology industry on empowering moderate voices and undermining violent extremists.
 - The United States has designated a Special Envoy for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications at the Department of State to drive U.S. Government efforts aimed at discrediting terrorists' propaganda and degrading their ability to disseminate messages and recruit fighters, with a particular focus on ISIL.
- Religious Leaders and Faith Community Engagement:** The United States works with religious leaders and faith communities around the world to address both religious and non-religious causes of violence and extremism, including by working with religious leaders on projects emphasizing peace, tolerance, and coexistence at the community level and training religious leaders on outreach to at-risk youth.

Civil Society: In September 2013, President Obama launched *Stand with Civil Society*, a global call to action to support, defend, and sustain civil society. Working in partnership with other governments, the philanthropic community, and multilateral initiatives, the United States is fostering supportive and permissive environments in support of a vibrant civil society and identifying innovative ways to inject technical, financial, and logistical support into this space. The Summit will explore opportunities for civil society to be a still more active partner in efforts to build local partnerships against violent extremism.

Youth Engagement: The United States is supporting young leaders in the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, including through projects that provide youth a sense of belonging, as well as technical skills and vocational training, scholarships, opportunities for civic engagement, and leadership training. As part of these efforts, the United States trains, mentors, and provides seed funding to young leaders, for example, who are working to counter extremists' narratives, reintegrate former violent extremists, and promote tolerance and non-violent dispute resolution.