



National Security Program
Homeland Security Project

Threat Assessment

Recommendations

September 2013



In September 2013, the Bipartisan Policy Center's Homeland Security Project (HSP) released a report entitled *Jihadist Terrorism: A Threat Assessment*. The assessment provides a comprehensive view of the current capabilities of al-Qaeda and its affiliates as well as those of homegrown extremists who may target American interests. It also provides detailed recommendations for the legislative and executive branches on how best to counter these threats and protect the homeland.

Under the leadership and direction of former 9/11 Commission Co-chairs former Governor Tom Kean and former Representative Lee Hamilton, now co-chairs of BPC's Homeland Security Project, the report was authored by:

Peter Bergen, Director of the National Security Program at the New America Foundation and best-selling author of four books about al-Qaeda; Member of BPC's Homeland Security Project

Bruce Hoffman, Director of the Center for Security Studies at Georgetown University; Member of BPC's Homeland Security Project

Michael Hurley, former CIA Operative and current President of Team 3i LLC

Erroll Southers, Associate Director of Research Transition at the Department of Homeland Security's National Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE) at the University of Southern California and former FBI special agent; Member of BPC's Homeland Security Project



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Key Recommendations for the Legislative Branch

- Congress should overhaul its oversight committees on national security. The responsibilities of the different committees should be clearly defined and—to the extent possible—not overlap.
- Congress should hold a series of public hearings on where the United States stand in its counterterrorism strategy 12 years after the 9/11 attacks.
- Congress should use the withdrawal of combat troops from Afghanistan at the end of 2014 as an opportunity to review the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF).
- Congress should put the CIA drone program on a more sound legal footing.
- Congress should create an independent investigative body—similar to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)—to investigate terrorist attacks in the United States, explain how the attackers evaded law enforcement, and identify the lessons to be learned.

Key Recommendations for the Executive Branch

- The administration should repatriate some of the prisoners still being held at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility and should continue to use civilian courts to try terrorists.
- The administration should create an Assistant Secretary for Countering Violent Extremism at the Department of Homeland Security.
- The government should incorporate lessons learned from the Boston bombings into its current emergency-response plan to ensure a more measured reaction to tragic but small-scale terrorist attacks.
- The U.S. government should make a concerted effort to track the flow of arms into Syria and urge U.S. allies to keep these weapons out of the hands of jihadist fighters to the extent possible. The United States should also keep careful track of the foreign fighters who have joined jihadist groups fighting in Syria.
- The United States should maintain a military presence in Afghanistan after the NATO combat mission ends in December 2014.
- The government should release additional bin Laden documents captured at his Abbottabad compound.

The new assessment builds on three previous reports released by BPC's Homeland Security Project: a 2010 analysis that highlighted the increasingly homegrown nature of the terrorist threat, a 2011 report that offered practical recommendations for preventing violent radicalization in America and a 2012 report that offered recommendations to counter online radicalization. The 2013 Threat Assessment is the first in an annual series of reports.

The Bipartisan Policy Center's (BPC) Homeland Security Project (HSP) has as its core mission to be an active, bipartisan voice on homeland and national security issues. With terrorist threats and tactics still lethal and becoming more complex, the project works to foster public discourse, evaluate reform, provide expert analysis, and develop proactive policy solutions on how to best address emerging security challenges.

