

The Partnering for Prevention & Community Safety Initiative

Developing Partnerships Between Law Enforcement and
American Muslim, Arab, and Sikh Communities:

A Promising Practices Guide Executive Summary



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May 2004

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Cover design and layout by:

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This publication received significant support from the
Soros Justice Senior Fellowship Program of the Open Society Institute
and Northeastern University

This publication was also supported in part by a grant from the
Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bringing this project from a back porch discussion to a reality would not have been possible without incredible support from an amazing team of people.

We are eternally grateful to the Open Society Institute/Soros Foundation as well as the Whiting Foundation of Boston for supporting this project when it was still an idea on a piece of paper. We would specifically like to thank Kate Black, Antonio Maciel and Joe Onek for their commitment and passion for this project. Further, we would like to thank the folks at Northeastern University who have found the resources we need to keep this project on track, time and time again.

In order to launch this work we relied on the wise counsel of a number of key individuals who were critical in pointing us in the right direction. In particular, without early and ongoing encouragement and guidance from Dr. Ziad Asali and SAC Michael Rolince, this project would never have come to fruition.

Researching this project has brought us in contact with incredible individuals from the community and law enforcement who are too numerous to mention. Without their willingness to share their perspectives, and in some cases personal histories, this project would have no substance. During each of our site visits and trips to Washington DC, we imposed on a host of organizations and agencies who warmly took us in, assisted us with logistics, and in many cases pointed us towards additional knowledgeable people and organizations. For making this possible we would particularly like to thank Joseph Zogby, Jean AbiNader, Nawar Shora, Preetmohan Singh, Sue Plochinski, Pam Thompson, Imad Hamad, Sireen Sawaf, Sadaf Kazmi, Ralph Boyd, Michael Ricciuti, Steve Weglian, and Barry Kowalski.

For their unending behind-the-scenes support we are truly indebted to a large team of people at Northeastern University that includes Ahmed Abdelal, Chris Hopey, Bob Gittens, Ron Hedlund, Emily Spieler, Kevin Currie, Patricia Denn, Linda Powell, and Jim Rowan. Our team of Northeastern University law students were also an invaluable asset to this project and we want to thank them all for all of their work. In particular we want to express our gratitude to the team from the spring 2004 quarter -- Stephanie Woldenberg, Linden Bierman-Lyle, Taryn Eckstein, Sukti Dhital, and David Fink -- who brought us down the final stretch with humor and enthusiasm and produced a fantastic appendix on the Patriot Act. Additionally, Teresa Wallace, Alan Alvarez, Awais Sufi, Julie Lazarus, Jim Jordan, Tara Quinlan, Heather Notter, Alicia Mutrie, Mary Ramsey, Susan Thorn, and Johanna Gefell have all contributed critical insights and assistance to this project.

Last but not least we want to thank our families. In particular, all of our gratitude goes to Ralph, Rachel, Michael, TB, and Mohammed for their love and for supporting our dreams.

We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this work. The findings and views expressed here are those of the PfP research team and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of PfP partners, project participants, or funding entities. We accept sole responsibility for any errors.

DAR, SOC, RZ

INTRODUCTION

The Partnering for Prevention and Community Safety Initiative (PfP) grew out of a series of conversations among American Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities, and among federal, state, and local law enforcement leaders, that began in the fall of 2001. After the attacks of September 11th, leaders in the Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities realized a critical need to define themselves as distinctly American communities who, like all Americans, had every desire to help prevent another terrorist attack. It was, as many have noted, their time in history. However, these communities also had the added burden of both guarding their civil liberties from heightened security measures and protecting their children, their homes, and their places of worship from hate crimes and hate incidents. To achieve these goals these communities began to prioritize law enforcement outreach efforts.

At the same time law enforcement recognized that the tools used prior to September 11th were inadequate to the new post-September 11th task. Although traditional investigative tools had been useful in achieving a quick and thorough response to September 11th, law enforcement needed enhanced tools to effectively prevent future acts of terror. Specifically, September 11th reinforced the idea that for law enforcement agencies to effectively prevent future acts of terrorism, it would require the cooperation and assistance of the American Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities. Embedded within these communities are the linguistic skills, information, and cultural insights necessary to assist law enforcement in its efforts to identify suspicious behavior. In order to have access to these critical tools and information, law enforcement recognized the need to build the bridges required for effective communication with these groups.

In the fall of 2002, members of the future PfP research team came together at Northeastern University to pursue mechanisms for moving this discussion about institutionalizing partnerships forward into action. In order to assist with the development of partnerships, the team decided to research 1) the benefits of these proposed partnerships; 2) the challenges posed by this partnership model; 3) case studies of these partnerships in action; and, ultimately, 4) the “promising practices” that can be utilized by sites interested in pursuing this model.

The PfP research was conducted from May 2003 to May 2004 and was based on three sites: Southeastern Michigan, Southern California, and Greater Boston. Guidance and input from national partners in Washington, DC was another critical piece of the research plan. These research sites were chosen because of their experience in developing preliminary partnerships between communities and local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, the presence of major terrorism or hate crime investigations, and/or because significant numbers of Arab, Muslim and Sikh community members indicated an interest in participating in the study.

These communities were chosen because both law enforcement and the perpetrators of hate crimes were (and in some cases still are) focused on individuals who share or are perceived to share¹ characteristics with the September 11th hijackers.

Specific research participants were initially identified through national organizations. Local chapters of these organizations then directed the team toward other interested community members, who were also asked to participate. On the law enforcement side, key federal, state, and local agencies were contacted in each of the three sites. Over the course of the year, PfP visited the three sites and conducted numerous focus groups, personal interviews, and discussions with community and law enforcement members. After these visits, the team continued to communicate with project participants through e-mails, letters, faxes, and phone calls. All project participants were given the opportunity to review a draft version of the relevant section of the report to help ensure its accuracy.

As a culmination of this research, the Promising Practices Guide aims to demonstrate the research findings which are that: 1) The goals of the American Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities and law enforcement are not in conflict and can in fact be achieved simultaneously; 2) The most effective model for simultaneously addressing community and law enforcement concerns is through institutionalized partnerships; and 3) While there are significant challenges to achieving these partnerships, they are not only possible but also necessary for both community safety and terrorism prevention.

While this work is by no means comprehensive, it does reflect the experience of a wide range of community and law enforcement representatives. Both in terms of studying additional sites and contacting more community organizations and law enforcement entities, there is still much work to be done in this arena. The hope is that this guide will serve as the beginning of an ongoing dialogue and the catalyst for new programming and training focused on the initiation, development, and strengthening of partnerships. This research will continue and can be followed by accessing PfP's website at www.ace.neu.edu/pfp.

¹ While Sikhs are not Muslim and predominately originate from India (a non-Arab country), they are sometimes confused with Muslims and Arabs because many Sikhs cover their hair with turbans.

SUMMARY

Why Partner?

When federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies develop partnerships with members of the American Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities, they obtain cultural and linguistic insights, information, cooperation, and informed observations that can become part of a productive strategy for crime prevention as well as a catalyst for respectful policing. In the post-September 11th environment, the information gleaned from these community partnerships has become invaluable to counterterrorism efforts to gather domestic intelligence and to develop effective hate crime prevention protocols. Further, these partnerships have allayed community fears, helped to ensure effective hate crimes investigations and prosecutions, and fostered open communications.

Further, the war on terrorism cannot be won with military might alone. The most dangerous threats in this war are rooted in the successful propagation of anger and fear directed at unfamiliar cultures and people. One way to counter this type of threat is to address the anger and fear by presenting and demonstrating alternative paradigms such as a counterterrorism and hate crime prevention model that includes a strong, collaborative community component.

It is the premise of the Partnering for Prevention and Community Safety Initiative that we will only truly be safe from terrorist attacks when law enforcement adopts a strategy focused on building trust and strengthening relationships with the American Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities. This paradigm is not only more consistent with our constitutional ideals, it also increases operational effectiveness.

Challenges

It is important to identify and recognize the many challenges to partnership efforts before beginning to describe examples of the collaborative process. These challenges, although significant, are not insurmountable and have been overcome in a number of jurisdictions.

These challenges include: the use of immigration enforcement as a tool for terrorism prevention and investigation; the ambiguity of prosecutorial practices related to terrorism and hate crimes; and the general lack of familiarity between the American Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities and members of federal, state, and local law enforcement. Further, differing perspectives on issues related to community-law enforcement interaction; difficulties in measuring success as it relates to both terrorism prevention and partnership growth; resource limitations; recruitment issues; and finding appropriate community and law enforcement representation also present challenges to partnerships.

Case Studies

Communities and law enforcement in PfP research sites (Southeastern Michigan, Southern California, and Greater Boston) have had a wide range of experiences related to their efforts to build bridges and partnerships in a post-September 11th environment. Southeastern Michigan has historically had politically and socially active Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities. This region also has strong community leadership and well-established pre-September 11th channels of community-law enforcement communication. Because of these factors, post-September 11th hate crimes and terrorism prevention initiatives have been highly collaborative and illustrative of the benefits of partnerships.

In Southern California, while there are very large Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities, they are geographically dispersed and organizationally insular. Additionally, prior to September 11th formal mechanisms for communication did not exist between law enforcement and these communities. Post-September 11th, the community and law enforcement have increased their focus on establishing and maintaining partnerships which are currently in their nascent phase. To date, efforts at collaboration are predominantly personality/individual organization-driven therefore the region is just beginning to experience the breadth of benefits that come from institutionalized, systemic partnerships.

The experience of law enforcement and the Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities in Greater Boston is significantly different from their experience in either Southeastern Michigan or Southern California. While there are Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities in Greater Boston, they are relatively small and they lack the kind of significant organizational resources that exist in California and Michigan. Additionally, pre-September 11th, there were no formal mechanisms for communication between these groups because, while Boston is known for the “Boston Model” of community policing, this traditional model predominantly focused on state and local law enforcement and the African-American, Asian, and Latino communities. Today Greater Boston has begun to prioritize the initiation of partnerships, but many challenges remain.

FINDINGS

Working towards institutionalizing partnerships between law enforcement and American, Muslim, Arab and Sikh communities is one of the keys to preventing future acts of terrorism and hate crimes in this country. Therefore creating partnerships should be a priority for both law enforcement and the community. In this spirit, the PfP research team offers the following recommendations that focus on practical strategies for implementing these partnerships. These recommendations are based on promising practices found in the Southeastern Michigan, Southern California, and the Greater Boston case studies as well as in discussions with national community and law enforcement leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMERICAN MUSLIM, ARAB, AND SIKH COMMUNITIES / ORGANIZATIONS

- In order to develop and maintain partnerships with law enforcement, local community groups must first prioritize this work and devote the necessary resources to sustaining these efforts. While, at times, this may be challenging due to competing priorities and limited resources, prioritizing partnerships is necessary because consistency and commitment are critical to relationship-building.
- Local community organizing is a critical component of establishing and maintaining grassroots support for partnerships with law enforcement however community resources are often extremely limited. In order to address resource needs, local communities should look towards national community organizations that ought to make every effort to support their local chapters in their efforts to establish partnerships. In addition to resources, national organizations can help local chapters by providing clear guidance about law enforcement outreach policies and procedures. Particularly in areas where community numbers are small, local organizations can also leverage limited resources by partnering with other civil rights organizations, inter-faith organizations, local academic institutions, and political groups. Community groups should also actively seek funding from local philanthropies to help support partnership efforts.
- In addition to local community organizational strength, it is critical for community organizations to maintain a strong national presence through an effective Washington, DC office. Without national strength, local community groups have trouble: establishing legitimacy with federal law enforcement which tends to take its cues from Washington; obtaining substantial resources; and remaining involved in policy dialogue and national media coverage.
- Community groups should develop strategic action plans for hate crimes response and proactive interaction with law enforcement on counterterrorism issues. These plans should include strategies for: 1) educating law enforcement and the media about accurate community history and cultural norms; 2) educating the public at large about community history and cultural norms; 3) identifying appropriate community members who have the operational skills needed to take the lead on particular areas of focus; and 4) creating a mutually agreed-upon list of priorities to be raised with law enforcement partners.
- Local communities should identify representatives who will be endowed with the authority and support necessary to effectively work with law enforcement. These representatives will need to work collaboratively with law enforcement and the communities they represent to design a mechanism for ongoing communication and problem-solving.

One model that has proven to be useful for communication is the establishment of a working group which includes representation from the district's Anti-Terrorism Task Force (ATTF) or equivalent organization and the local Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities.

- The community must take some of the responsibility for publicly recognizing achievements of newly established partnerships. In order to accomplish this goal, the community should be willing to: publicly acknowledge those law enforcement officials who have worked successfully with them; participate in joint press conferences on issues of concern to both law enforcement and the community; and, in order to ensure mutual accountability, the community must work closely with law enforcement to develop target goals for partnerships and help measure progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Law enforcement should abandon the “expertise model” of policing and embrace a counterterrorism and hate crime strategy that is inclusive of community voices. This requires law enforcement to embrace the idea that the most effective way to reach operational goals is to focus on strategic targeting of suspicious behavior as opposed to “casting the net wide” around “suspicious people”. Specifically, law enforcement should abandon any initiatives which are targeting people based on their religion or national origin.
- Executives at the highest levels of federal, state, and local law enforcement must make community outreach and coordination a priority for their organizations and agencies. Commitment at the highest level is required because, as previously noted, consistency and commitment are critical to relationship building. This commitment should be reflected in rewards and promotions for law enforcement officials doing community work (this requires the development of community policing evaluation mechanisms) and every effort should be made to recruit the best and brightest to work on community outreach initiatives.
- Within law enforcement agencies, work with the community must be integrated into casework and viewed as an integral operational strategy. If work towards community partnerships is marginalized and separated from other operational activities, partnership efforts will be unable to fully reach their potential.
- Law enforcement must be willing to redefine and expand traditional roles and jurisdictions. First, because immigration enforcement is such a key issue for members of the Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities, all agents and officers must have a working knowledge of their agency or department's immigration policies and they must have clear and accurate instruction about their discretion in this regard.

Additionally, agents and officers should have the basic information required to help community members with referrals to other government agencies with whom the community might have issues or concerns such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and local city or state officials.

- While there are many competing objectives for law enforcement involved in counterterrorism and hate crime investigations, maintaining a dedication to partnership efforts is critical. One way for law enforcement to minimize the resources required to initiate these efforts is to look to their counterparts in other regions for assistance with such things as: program materials, educational resources, existing models for community outreach, and general guidance. Law enforcement should also actively seek assistance from academic partners or other intermediaries.
- The Executive Office of US Attorneys should require all ATTFs or equivalent entities to develop and implement action plans for working with the Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities on counterterrorism and hate crimes prevention. These action plans should include strategies for: 1) educating the region's law enforcement on issues related to Muslim, Arab, and Sikh cultures and histories; 2) educating the community on law enforcement's basic operating procedures and jurisdictions, specifically including training about the role immigration enforcement can and will play in the investigations of terrorism and hate crime; 3) identifying partners from these communities; 4) rapidly responding to reports of hate crimes and hate incidents; 5) sharing accurate information about partnerships with the media; 6) and developing systems for briefing law enforcement personnel on current national and international issues which may be of concern to or have impact on these communities. These plans should be evaluated regularly by the GAO or an equivalent federal agency.
- Given their relatively large access to resources, it is incumbent upon law enforcement to help support the creation of working groups or other institutionalized mechanisms for ongoing communication that includes representation from the District ATTF or equivalent organization and the local Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities. Further, law enforcement should utilize its extensive recruitment resources to assist in efforts to increase representation of Muslim, Arab, and Sikh community members in the ranks of law enforcement.
- Finally, law enforcement should take some of the responsibility for publicly recognizing achievements of newly established partnerships. In order to accomplish this goal, law enforcement should be willing to: publicly acknowledge those local community members and organizations who have worked successfully with them; actively pursue the inclusion of community members and organizations in press conferences and public meetings on issues of mutual concern; and ensure mutual accountability by working closely with the community to develop target goals for partnerships and help measure the progress towards these goals.

OPTIONS FOR SUPPORT AND FACILITATION

As community and law enforcement groups begin to work together, there is a need for third-party entities that are capable of facilitating education, communication, and planning programs. These supporting players could include: academic institutions; umbrella community groups; community-focused government departments; and/or faith-based organizations. It is incumbent on federal agencies and national philanthropic organizations to continue to support the work of these third parties through policy and the commitment of resources because these independent entities are critical to the partnership process.

Detailed below is Northeastern University's plan for helping to support these partnerships.

Web-Based Resource Center

In the summer of 2004, Northeastern University will launch a web-based Resource Center for Homeland Security and Human Rights designed to provide information and tools for building partnerships between law enforcement and the Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities. Specifically the Resource Center will include ongoing research findings; referrals; and an opportunity for interactive web-based dialogue on partnerships.

Partnership Pilot Programs

In 2004 - 2005, Northeastern University and PfP partner organizations will be conducting two to three pilot programs designed to assist law enforcement and the community with launching partnership initiatives. Specifically, these pilot programs will include: 1) facilitated pre-briefs of law enforcement and the community separately, to provide tools for outreach initiatives; 2) assistance with the development of community and law enforcement action plans; and 3) a series of facilitated joint law enforcement-community meetings to share action plans and develop collaborative strategies for reaching mutually beneficial goals and objectives.

The goals of these pilot programs are to: 1) introduce local representatives of law enforcement and the community to each other; 2) provide both the community and law enforcement with the tools they need to successfully enter partnerships; and 3) launch institutionalized mechanisms for ongoing communication and collaborative problem solving.

The findings from these pilot programs will be shared through the web-based resource center and will help tailor recommendations and training programs for communities and law enforcement nationwide.

Center for Homeland Security and Human Rights

In order to support the above list of recommendations for communities and law enforcement, Northeastern University is currently seeking additional funding for further development of the Center for Homeland Security and Human Rights. This expanded Center will serve as an independent space where community members and law enforcement representatives could work in partnership to develop and implement new collaborative counterterrorism and hate-crimes prevention strategies that are synergistic with law enforcement's operational needs and with civil/human rights. The components of the Center will be:

Training

The cornerstone of the Center's programming will be research-based, joint law enforcement-community training curricula, tools, and templates. This program will focus on a wide range of subject areas driven by the needs of the community and law enforcement. Additionally, the Center will provide resources to support the development of law enforcement and community action plans for partnerships. The Center will implement a variety of training delivery methods including 'train the trainer' sessions, distance-learning modules, and an interactive web-based resource center.

Policy Development & Action

The Center will offer the opportunity for government officials to speak with members of the Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities about hate crime prevention and counterterrorism programs/initiatives prior to their implementation. This will afford the government the opportunity to address community concerns and perceptions on the front-end of program application. It will also afford the community the opportunity to help craft the very policies and procedures that disproportionately affect them.

The Center will host conferences as needed for national and local leaders from the Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities as well as representatives from USDOJ, FBI, BCIS, Homeland Security, TSA, and other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. These conferences will help to maintain a focus on current needs and objectives and will generate new ideas through continuing dialogue.

The Center will also host executive sessions designed to facilitate dialogue on the extent to which current counterterrorism policies and other federal initiatives facilitate or impede the kinds of community and law enforcement partnerships that should be at the center of our counterterrorism strategy. To the extent that these discussions reveal the need for new pilot projects, research, or the need to provide feedback to policy makers, the Center would facilitate those outcomes.

Continuing Research

The world we live in is constantly changing. Therefore, there is a critical need for ongoing research. This will involve the continuation of site visits to describe and identify promising practices in developing relationships between the Muslim, Arab, Sikh communities and law enforcement. This work will have both a domestic and international aspect. In the United States, the research will continue to utilize a selected site approach. Internationally, the research will branch out to explore the possibilities of examining existing practices in Australia, Canada, and Great Britain to determine if there are opportunities for shared learning.

Ongoing research will enable the Center to continue to measure, document, and discuss the effectiveness of various partnership strategies. It will also allow the Center to broaden and expand its work based on new or transitional issues related to counterterrorism and hate crimes investigations and enforcement.

CONCLUSION

The PfP research team recognizes that the above recommendations for law enforcement and communities will in some cases require a significant change of course. This shift is necessary, however, because homeland security and the protection of civil liberties require partnerships which are ultimately based on trust. To achieve this trust, both law enforcement and communities must simultaneously be clear of their own goals and be open to the perspectives and operational realities of partner organizations.

This process requires a willingness to think beyond long-held institutional and personal beliefs, stereotypes and generalizations, as well as the ability to challenge and change one's own preconceptions. Unless both groups are willing to acknowledge alternative viewpoints, whether they agree or not with the veracity of those opinions, a real working relationship cannot be built. Being true to one's own agenda while working collaboratively on issues of mutual concern is not only the greatest challenge, but also the key to establishing productive partnerships.

In addition to the hard work required from law enforcement and communities to achieve partnerships, government, academic, and other intermediary organizations must step forward to help facilitate these partnerships. The challenge of finding resources to support law enforcement, community organizations, and their partners in these efforts must be addressed. For the sake of the long-term security of the United States of America and all who live here, law enforcement and the Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities must establish basic trust, and as a country we must find the resources to support these efforts.

OUTLINE OF FULL REPORT

- I. RELEVANT ABBREVIATIONS**
- II. INTRODUCTION**
- III. ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS**
- IV. POST-SEPTEMBER 11TH CHALLENGES TO PARTNERING**
- V. THE SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN EXPERIENCE**
- VI. THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EXPERIENCE**
- VII. THE GREATER BOSTON EXPERIENCE**
- VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

APPENDIX A: Patriot Act Reference Guide

APPENDIX B: USDOJ Interview Project Data (GAO)

APPENDIX C: Reference Guide to National Programs

APPENDIX D: Immigration Initiatives Timeline (MPI)

APPENDIX E: Additional Resources