

Hamas operates ‘massive’ U.S. influence network, former FBI counterterror expert says

Muslim Brotherhood, Palestinian militants infiltrate and influence federal government



Pro-Palestinian Pasadena City College students walk out of class as they demonstrate against the Israel-Hamas war in Pasadena, Calif., on April 30, 2024. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly accused critics of Israel or his policies of antisemitism, including the U.S. college campus protests and the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. (Sarah Reingewirtz/The Orange County Register via AP).

By Bill Gertz - [The Washington Times](https://www.washingtontimes.com) - Tuesday, July 30, 2024

The Palestinian militant group Hamas operates an extensive network of supporters in the U.S. linked to the international Muslim Brotherhood jihadist group, according to a report by a former federal counterterrorism expert.

John D. Guandolo, a former FBI agent and former Pentagon counterterrorism strategist who has studied the global Islamist movement extensively, stated in a new report that both Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) are engaged in ideological attacks on the U.S. system and pose major internal security threats.

Hamas influence operations can be seen throughout the U.S. in the spate of anti-Israel protests following the group's Oct. 7 terrorist attack in Israel that killed some 1,200 people and ignited a war in the Gaza Strip.

One key feature of the Hamas-Muslim Brotherhood activities is a close alliance with Marxist and communist groups in the U.S., the report contends. It report said recent pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli demonstrations in cities and on college campuses across the country should serve as a warning.

"The recent protests across college campuses and U.S. cities by communists and jihadis highlight the need for communities to identify and root out these hostile elements," Mr. Guandolo said in an interview. "All of the jihadi attacks in the United States since and including Sept. 11, 2001, have been perpetrated with the direct help and involvement of organizations easily identifiable in this hostile U.S. Islamic movement."

The report author, a graduate of the Naval Academy, was a Marine Corps combat officer in the first Persian Gulf war. He was an FBI special agent from 1996 to 2008 and worked from 2001 as a counterterrorism specialist focused on the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic doctrine and the global Islamist movement. He was designated a subject matter expert by the FBI in 2006 and implemented a government-wide program of counterterrorism training.

SEE ALSO: Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh is killed in Iran by an alleged Israeli strike, threatening escalation

In 2008, he joined the Pentagon as a strategic analyst on the global Islamic movement. He left government in 2012 and created Understanding the Threat, a counterterrorism analysis firm.

Based on his research, Mr. Guandolo said Hamas and MB have been using both nonviolent and violent protests, along with intelligence-gathering and influence operations in effort spanning more than 60 years of covert operations, to shape government policy and public opinion in the U.S.

The Muslim Brotherhood is a shadowy international organization created in Egypt in 1928. It defines itself as a global revolutionary Islamic movement working to establish an Islamic state or caliphate under Islamic law.

Hamas, or the Islamic Resistance Movement, was created in 1987 by the Muslim Brotherhood as a political movement with an armed wing that opposes Israel and refuses to recognize the Jewish state's legitimacy.

Both groups to date have successfully deflected counterterrorism restrictions and law enforcement action by claiming to pursue nonviolent yet potentially illegal methods, the report states.

“Where ‘the rubber meets the road’ in towns all around America, communist and MB/Hamas organizations and leaders work to undermine liberty, erode effective security measures, and destroy the republican form of government demanded by the U.S. Constitution,” the report said.

Islamist radicals often have positioned themselves as exclusive advisers to federal and state agencies responsible for protecting Americans at home and abroad.

“This is extremely dangerous and problematic for U.S. national security since the vast majority of Muslims working inside the U.S. government and/or providing guidance and influence can easily be identified as leaders or members of Hamas/Muslim Brotherhood entities, or possessing an ideology consistent with them,” the report said.

Those sympathetic to Hamas within the government can exercise influence over U.S. foreign policies, domestic counterterrorism strategies, and military war-fighting training and strategies regarding Islamic adversaries, the report said. The influence networks can pressure government officials against speaking out regarding the Islamic political movement.

“This danger is further exacerbated by the fact military and civilian leaders in the United States have little understanding of this network, the doctrine driving it, and its modus operandi,” the report said.

Midwest roots

In the U.S., elements of the Muslim Brotherhood or its ideological sympathizers are based in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan, with Hamas having a headquarters in Chicago, the report said. The report identifies 29 Muslim Brotherhood groups that were created in the U.S. since the 1960s.

Details in the report on Hamas activities and supporters were derived from court case filings and prosecutions of terrorists and groups over the past two decades.

One key case was the 2008 prosecution of the Dallas-based Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development. Five former leaders of the Muslim charity were convicted in 2008 of funneling more than \$12 million to Hamas.

According to the report, the Muslim Brotherhood, while amorphous in structure, is leading the Islamic movement in the U.S. It has branches in some 70 countries, some of which have been officially designated as terrorist organizations by the U.S. government.

This movement “is well entrenched in American society, operating in the open, and waging total war along multiple lines of operation against the United States,” the report said.

“Without immediate and significant action taken at the state and local levels against the intensive, continuous, and withering attacks being waged by the jihadis, there is little chance for victory,” Mr. Guandolo said.

The 33-page report, “The Hamas-Muslim Brotherhood Network in the United States,” was published on July 4 and was produced in response to Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack. It is available at JohnGuandolo.com.

The report lists numerous cases of Hamas-linked influence agents including several in the U.S. government.

They include Maher Bitar, the current White House National Security Council intelligence director. Mr. Bitar is identified in the report as a Palestinian who at one time worked with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, known as UNRWA.

Mr. Bitar did not immediately respond to an email request for comment.

Israeli military leaders say their operations in Gaza since Oct. 7 have uncovered records showing that some UNRWA personnel actively collaborated with Hamas terrorists.

Mr. Guandolo’s report identified the Council on American Islamic Relations as a “leading Hamas organization” in the U.S. CAIR has worked with numerous leftist and communist groups “to advance their objectives and create instability inside U.S. communities and local and state governments,” the report said, including sponsoring anti-war rallies and pro-Hamas, anti-Israel protests.

CAIR also worked with the Marxist group ANSWER in the past. ANSWER, short for Act Now to Stop War and End Racism, sponsored the protests last week near Union Station that included burning a U.S. flag and raising a Palestinian flag in its place. Anti-Israel protesters supporting Palestinians defaced statues last week to protest Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to Congress.

ANSWER describes itself as an anti-imperialist organization made up of socialists, communists, civil rights advocates, and left-wing organizations from the Muslim, Arab, Palestinian, Filipino, Haitian, and Latin American communities.

CAIR on its website denies involvement with the Muslim Brotherhood or that it seeks to subvert the Constitution. The group dismissed its inclusion on a list of unindicted co-conspirators that funded Hamas in the 2008 Holy Land Foundation trial.

“The Muslim Brotherhood affects CAIR the way a dust storm on Mars impacts the weather in Washington, D.C.,” CAIR said on its website. “The two might exist in the same solar system, but neither has any impact on or relationship with the other.”

CAIR stated that labeling the group one of a large number of unindicted co-conspirators in the 2008 case was an attempt by “Islamophobic groups” and “anti-Muslim extremists” to smear its reputation.

CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad in November expressed support for the Hamas Oct. 7 attacks against Israel, according to the Middle East translation group MEMRI.

“The people of Gaza only decided to break the siege, the walls of the concentration camp, on Oct. 7,” Mr. Awad said in a speech. “And yes, I was happy to see people breaking the siege and throwing down the shackles of their own land, and walk free into their land, which they were not allowed to walk in.”

Information warfare

Mr. Guandolo’s critique said another failure of the U.S. government is the fact that the government is focused mainly on violent extremism when dealing with the challenge posed by radical Islamist groups.

Most Muslim Brotherhood activities are nonviolent and focused on the information sector, the report said. That includes propaganda, espionage, counterintelligence, psychological operations, economic warfare and the subversion of key institutions, including religious, media, education, political and other organizations.

Without clearly understanding the U.S. Islamic movement “America will lose this war because leaders have failed to do their most basic job when it comes to security matters — identifying the enemy and why the enemy is fighting,” the report said.

In the 1990s, the Muslim Brotherhood directed all its units to create a Palestine Committee to recruit members, raise funds and promote propaganda for Hamas.

The U.S. Palestine Committee was created in 1988 according to one internal MB document quoted in the report. Its leader was Mousa Abu Marzook, who is currently a senior Hamas leader based in Qatar.

The U.S. committee set up three groups to promote its mission, including the Islamic Association for Palestine, the United Association for Studies and Research, and the Occupied Land Fund which evolved into the now-disbanded Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development.

A fourth front group — CAIR — was created in 1994.

Mr. Guandolo argues that the most important feature of the Muslim Brotherhood-Hamas movement is deception.

“Deception is used to gather intelligence and misinform key U.S. leaders and components of government about Islam to confuse and disorient them — and the American people — to render them unable to identify them as an enemy until it is too late,” the report said.

The plan calls for convincing U.S. leaders to support Muslim Brotherhood policies and goals that will require deceiving them, building relationships and then seek policy, laws and executive decisions that support their goals, the report said.

Within the U.S. military, those who have sought to sound the alarm on jihadist subversion have been forced out of the services as extremists. The report attributed the expulsions to misinformation provided by Islamic advisers.

“These efforts by the U.S. Hamas/Muslim Brotherhood operatives are much more espionage- and counterintelligence-oriented than violently oriented, which is why solutions to these threats focused solely from a military, law enforcement, and/or prosecutorial perspective may give the impression of short-term victories, but will always lead to defeat in the long-term,” the report said.

The report provides details on what it says are more than a dozen instances of Muslim Brotherhood or Hamas infiltration and influence within government. Among them is the case of Abdurahman Alamoudi — a senior U.S. Muslim Brotherhood leader and a key financier of al Qaeda in the U.S.

Alamoudi created or led about two dozen Islamic organizations in North America, including the Muslim chaplain program at the Pentagon. He was an adviser to President Bill Clinton and also worked in the George W. Bush presidential campaign. He pleaded guilty to financial and conspiracy charges in 2004 and was sentenced to 23 years in prison.

The report stated that the Department of Homeland Security's Countering Violent Extremism Working Group includes four Hamas-Muslim Brotherhood members, who are identified as subject matter experts, the report said.

The report concludes with a "campaign plan for victory" that urges defeating the Islamic ideological subversion threat at the federal, local and county level, and warns that senior U.S. government officials in security agencies and in Congress have little or no appreciation of the power and influence of jihadist networks in the U.S.

The campaign to counter the threat should include a national effort to identify elements of the Hamas-Muslim Brotherhood network and greater education of the Islamist networks at the secondary school and university level.

"It is important for citizens to understand the breadth of the jihadi and communist movements in America, and how significantly these elements have penetrated the key institutions of the U.S. federal government," the report said.

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