

# Open Letter to Jane Harman, Re: Terrorism and the Internet

November 16, 2007

U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
176 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Att: Jane Harman, Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment.

Dear Jane Harman,

As Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment (Committee on Homeland Security) I want to bring to your attention what appears to me a troubling tendency by two of the witnesses that testified at the November 6, 2007 Hearing, "Using the Web as a Weapon: the Internet as a Tool for Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism". I hereby submit this open letter to you, cc'ed to the Subcommittee.

The tone of the Hearing established by the opening remarks from you, Mr. Thompson, and Mr. Reichert, was fair enough, with a well-meaning focus on extremist radicalization. Terrorism is a horrible tactic, no matter who is employing the slaughter of innocent people to enable a radical agenda.

However, in the statement by Mr. Bruce Hoffman, things quickly go off-track.

You are a long-time associate of Mr. Hoffman, (as you note in your introduction of Hoffman at the hearing), dating back to his employment with the RAND Corporation. It's kind of interesting how that works. RAND specializes in studies of issues of interest to the U.S. Government, including a bunch of studies on terrorism. Now, as an objective analyst of terrorism-related issues, Mr. Hoffman testifies to the House on the need for more study of terrorism-related issues.

I hope that you take the following statement from Mr. Hoffman to heart;

*Defeating al Qaeda suggests first and foremost that our assessments and analyses must be anchored firmly to sound empirical judgment and not blinded by conjecture, mirror-imaging, politically partisan prisms and wishful thinking.*

However, this statement by Mr. Hoffman does not appear to reflect his own advice;

*The Internet, once seen as an engine of education and enlightenment, has instead become an immensely useful vehicle for terrorists with which to peddle their baseless propaganda and manifold conspiracy theories and summon their followers to violence.*

Hoffman begins like the Hearing did, clearly focused on how violent radicals use communication portals like the internet to spread their message... but then he drifts off into conjecture about "manifold conspiracy theories".

I want to suggest that there is no empirical evidence which proves that "manifold conspiracy theories" trigger violent radicalization, that tying conspiracy theories to a serious study of the roots of terrorism during House testimony is conjecture, and doubly, wishful thinking.

His blanket statement about the internet is too broad and not generally true. The internet is still "an engine of education and enlightenment", despite its abuse by those who call for violence.

I hope that you can remain objective when evaluating Mr. Hoffman's testimony, despite your prior associations with him.

Even more egregious, however, is the testimony of Mr. Mark Weitzman of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Weitzman's testimony also begins on-track, focused on violent radicalization and its perpetuation via the internet.

Unfortunately, Weitzman riots in tact and in fact when he also decides to stroll down "conspiracy theory" lane. During Weitzman's PowerPoint presentation to the Hearing, he presents a series of websites that purport to have content that instructs visitors how to conduct acts of terror, and talks of individuals affected by these sites.

I urge your staff to closely examine the sites that were presented by Mr. Weitzman, to see if his claims are true and accurate. I do this because once Mr. Weitzman goes off the beaten path, he is quickly out of his depths, and presents websites that bear no relation to his claims.

Weitzman says;

*To illustrate the trends described above, we have put together a short PowerPoint demonstration. Without going into deep detail in these written remarks, I would like to offer some brief descriptions of the material that will be shown. The presentation begins with a look at how 9/11 is viewed in some eyes online, including those who applauded it as well as some conspiracies sites. The presence of the conspiracy site is significant, since so much of what passes as fact online is actually based on some form of conspiracy. These are often built around the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which allege Jewish control of the world, or around presenting the United States government as being engaged in various conspiracies or cover-ups, or ultimately having the entire Western world engaged in a vast, multi-layered conspiracy against the Islamic world.*

Among the websites shown by Weitzman to "illustrate the trends described above", (presumably he means: racism - domestic extremism - radical Islam), he throws in the website Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth.

I visited the website in question to attempt to verify Weitzman's claims. ae911truth.org is not "built around the Protocols of the Elders of Zion", does not "allege Jewish control of the world", and does not accuse "the United States government as being engaged in various conspiracies or cover-ups, or ultimately having the entire Western world engaged in a vast, multi-layered conspiracy against the Islamic world."

Here is what the site is about, clearly placed in the "About Us" section of the website;

<http://www.ae911truth.org/aboutus.php>

*We are a non-partisan association of Architects, Engineers, and affiliates, who are dedicated to exposing the falsehoods and to revealing truths about the "collapses" of the WTC high-rises on 9/11/01.*

*We call upon Congress for a truly independent investigation with subpoena power. We believe that there may be sufficient evidence to conclude that the World Trade Center buildings #1 (North Tower), #2 (South Tower), and #7 (the 47 story high-rise across Vessey St.) were destroyed not by jet impact and fires but by controlled demolition with explosives.*

*We believe that this website, as well as the other referenced sites, contains the information necessary to demonstrate to all with an open mind that this is the case, and that such an investigation is warranted and overdue. We believe that the available relevant evidence casts grave doubt on the government's official story of these "collapses".*

*Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth are encouraged to take an active role by reporting the results of their research on 9/11 by means of lectures, articles, and methods of disseminating the truth about the 9/11 WTC building "collapses".*

It appears to me that this group, whose core members are mostly architectural professionals are not terrorists, racists, or "conspiracy theorists". They present evidence that when looked at in an empirical manner, "not blinded by conjecture, mirror-imaging, politically partisan prisms and wishful thinking", an objective observer will conclude that they should join them in a call for a new investigation into the collapses of the World Trade Center.

I hope that there is some objectivity at play in these Hearings, and that testimony is carefully evaluated, and sorted.

Thank you,

(by Reprehensor; signed copy to Commission)

cc. Norman D. Dicks, James R. Langevin, Christopher P. Carney, Ed Perlmutter, Bennie G. Thompson, David G. Reichert, Christopher Shays, Charles W. Dent, Peter T. King

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Testimony and prepared statements for the hearing;  
<http://homeland.house.gov/hearings/index.asp?ID=102>

Video stream at C-SPAN;  
[http://www.c-spanarchives.org/library/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_video ...](http://www.c-spanarchives.org/library/index.php?main_page=product_video...)