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COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

(10:45 a.m.)

MR. WOLFF: If we can have a seat, please. I think we're all very excited about the next panel. My name is Evan Wolff. I'm a member of the Aspen Institute Homeland Security Group and former advisor at DHS for the first five years.

I'm delighted to introduce our next session, which is Countering Violent Extremism. What turns a young man or woman into a terrorist, what are the drivers, what are the triggers, what are the warning signs, and how can violent extremism be countered?

Moderating the conversation today is Noah Shachtman, which we are all very excited about. Noah is currently the executive editor of *The Daily Beast*. He previously served as the executive editor of *Foreign Policy*.

But at least to me, my son, and many of us around the room he's best known for the editor of *Wired Magazine's* national security site, *The Danger Room*, which covered many great issues and also won the national magazine award for reporting digital media and an online journalism award for the best reporting. He's held many other positions including being a nonresident Fellow at Brookings and with that I will let Noah take over, thank you very much.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Thanks

(Applause)

MR. SHACHTMAN: So it's almost become a cliché of this war on terror that it's a battle of narratives, right, that it's a fight for ideas for hearts and minds. But it seems like events in recent months have turned that cliché into something, I don't know, much more concrete. You know, we've seen in Paris, and Brussels, and Istanbul, and Orlando, and San Bernardino, and Nice and the list goes on and on and on, you know, in so many of these cases

we're getting young man or young men and women to be stirred to violence almost with no contact to any sort of traditional jihadist recruiter or leader and so -- and that's after hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent to, you know, fight this battle of ideas, to counter the narrative.

And it's also after an extremely aggressive law enforcement push here in the U.S. to catch these sort of would be jihadists before they get started. And so my question is: What the heck do we do now? What's to be done? And is this battle of narratives even winnable? Is it even one we should be fighting?

So to help sort through that with me I'll start all the way at the end. We've got Chairman Ed Royce, of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. We have Monika Bickert, the Head of Global Policy Management, of Facebook. George Selim runs the Office for Community Partnerships at DHS. And Jessica Stern, author of a great book on ISIS and also a Fellow at the Harvard School of Public Health.

Jessica, I'm going to start with you. Do we have any better sense these days of what's actually driving radicalization? I mean, for a while it was like oh, if these guys just get jobs they won't, you know, they won't be as radical, and that's sort of been cast to the wayside. There's a sense of oh, well if these -- if places go from authoritarian to democratic regimes there won't be, you know, there'll be less radicalism, and that's sort of proven to be untrue too. Do we have any sense these days of what's really driving radicalism?

MS. STERN: Well, I think we have to distinguish between those who are radicalized in the field, in the middle of a war zone or near a war zone, and those who are radicalized in the West. It's a very different picture. Young people are joining ISIS because it's the best job they can find or they go through their friends. Actually, that applies across the board. And in neighboring countries, it's not low GDP, it's not poverty. What we find is that education itself may be a risk factor in poor socioeconomic conditions. And the Combating Terrorism

Center has started to evaluate the intake forms for about 4,000 individuals who joined ISIS. And if you look, they're better educated than the average education in the country from which they came, but they are underemployed.

There's also a fascinating new book showing that engineers are over represented in countries where engineers are less likely to find rewarding work. But I think what we're all really interested in now is why are kids joining in the West? And there, I think, alienation, a search for identity, discomfiture. Alienation from the heritage community as well as the country they're living in, together that's a risk factor.

And also, we have found in a big study of Children's Hospital, focusing on Somali refugee youth, who, of course, are being targeted, that time on the internet is a risk factor. And what makes this so tragic is these are families that come from war zones. They're severely traumatized. The mother is likely to think, "My kid's inside on the internet. That means he's safe." That is the place where the kid is least safe.

MR. SHACHTMAN: That's fascinating and disturbing. Monika, I think that naturally leads to you. You know, after every one of these attacks, right, media outfits like mine go on and we immediately find that the attackers or their friends have been posting all kinds of really extremist stuff.

So in a sense it's not that hard to find after the fact. I guess the question is: What do you do beforehand? How do you cut off some of this messaging while, of course, respecting free speech rights? Because, you know, Facebook has been very strict about policing copyright infringement and policing nudity, and yet these extremist messages still seem to linger on.

MS. BICKERT: Well, I would go back to what you said when you first introduced the panel, which was that there's been a very extremely aggressive push by law enforcement to address this problem. There's been an extremely aggressive push by not only Facebook, but social media companies, to try to address this problem. We know

that these groups are going to try to use our platforms, our services, to try to radicalize and recruit new members.

You mentioned -- although I would say I would disagree with you exactly on what you would find on Facebook after attacks, but certainly after there are attacks we do see people praising attackers. We do see them praising the leader of ISIS or extremist ideologies, generally. And so the challenge really is finding that content and removing it.

And just to give everybody a sense of the scale of what we're talking about, Facebook alone has more than 1.6 billion people using the service. Which means we have billions of posts every day, billions of photos every day. These are in languages all over the world. Four out of five people using Facebook are not in the U.S. So when you think about trying to stop terrorist propaganda, even if you think about it just at Facebook -- we have on our staff Brian Fishman, counter terrorism expert. We talk to Jessica and other experts all the time to try and make sure that we're up-to-date on all the trends and doing everything we can to find this content.

But realistically speaking, the internet is a big place. Even if Facebook, and Google, and Twitter were perfect at removing this content and removing it immediately, you have literally thousands of websites, gaming platforms, messaging services where this sort of content and the recruitment is going to be something that the extremists will try to exploit.

So that is why in addition to trying to remove the content we're so focused on creating a place where those who, especially young people, who would stand up against extremism, really can find their voice and can reach their target audience.

MR. SHACHTMAN: And what does that mean?

MS. BICKERT: That means, for one thing, trying to reach young people, tell them that Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter are places that they can use to counter

extremism and then teaching them how to do it. That means everything from technical assistance, "This is how you use Facebook," to teaching them specifically what works to counter extremism.

For the past two years we've been researching that and I think you've seen, and I know some of you in the room have seen research that we've published on this, that we've done in collaboration with a group called Demos in the U.K. We've looked specifically at six different countries in our most recent wave of research: France, the U.K., Morocco, Tunisia, India and Indonesia. And we've analyzed speech against extremism, with a focus on, you know, speech against some of the extremist groups that we're seeing right now and identifying what are the common factors among the posts that tend to do well.

And that means, it's hard to say, what does it mean to do well? Because you don't know if you're actually changing somebody's mind when they see a post. But we look for things like what is the level of engagement that a specific post gets from the community? Who's interacting with it? Is this young people interacting with it or is this a broader demographic group?

And then, how well does that speech travel? Meaning maybe I'm very anti-ISIS and I have a page that's very anti-ISIS. George is a friend of mine. Jessica really doesn't know anything about this issue. If he's sharing my content and Jessica ends up seeing it and sharing it further then we're really -- the speech is really traveling and it's reaching people who otherwise wouldn't have been thinking about this. So this is taking the power, the amplification power of social media that we worry so much about and actually turning it into what it is for the vast majority of people on the internet, which is something very positive.

I'll just mention one program that we're doing, and that program is something that George Selim is also involved in, and this is the Peer-To-Peer Challenge, run by Adventure Partners, where we have integrated into university curricula around the world, universities around

the world, a counter-extremism course that is a semester long, during which students learn about how to counter extremism. For instance, they see our research, what is working. They get expertise in how to use social media. They get some ads credit so they can try to find the target audience. They get some Marketing training, and then they launch this campaign. And at the end of the semester they show us what they've done. And it's a competition. So we started off the program as a little bit small. I think we had 45 universities in the fall, 54 in the spring. In the fall, just for the portion that Facebook funds, which is the international portion, and George can talk about the domestic portion, we will have 120 universities in 50 countries, with regional play-offs in Oman and in Europe.

So, these students and the things that they produce are incredible. The team from Afghanistan, having watched the last panel, the team from Afghanistan won the global competition this spring, the Facebook global competition. They reached more than 5 million people just through their online campaign. And the online campaign really took -- its foundation was looking at Islam and looking at the texts that are very important to them as Muslims in Afghanistan, and using that as a way to say, "We stand against extremism and, in fact, to be a good Muslim, you are against extremism."

Their target audience was religious schools, religious teachers, religious students, and through the reach of their social media campaign they got enough credibility that they actually were able to insert into a textbook at these schools a chapter about how Islam stands against extremism. So these results are real and the program is growing.

MS. STERN: I just want to say that I was a judge, and it's true, it's fantastic. I wish you all could see what these kids are doing.

MR. SHACHTMAN: It sounds great, but George is there any evidence -- I mean, not to be that guy -- but is there any evidence that any of this actually works? Is there any data backing this up yet? I mean, you know, I

think one of the big critiques of CVE Programs has been there's been tons and tons of money poured into these things, every one of them sounds like light, and rainbows, and unicorns when you start out with, and then they don't really turn out to do very much.

MR. SELIM: Sure. So two responses for that question. The first is on the measurement side. What we're doing here in attempting to counter extremism, or to be much more specific, we're trying to prevent and intervene in the process of radicalization. And what we know through social science, research, and the whole body of knowledge, is it's not a linear process. Someone can be radicalized, but not necessarily commit an act of violence.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Sure.

MR. SELIM: Ideology can inspire in a different way. And so, this arguably is the most complex challenge. The federal government and industry faces this. How someone absorbs some piece of information or something that happens in the world and drives them to walk into a night club or into their place of work and open fire or attempt to travel to a foreign land to commit an act of terrorism or be trained, it's one of the hardest questions we face, I think, as a society today. Here's what the data has told us so far. There are a number of root causes and drivers, as Jessica has pointed out. And so the U.S. Government has approach domestically on these efforts has been kind of underpinned by three core approaches on this.

The first is to communities, at large, we need to raise awareness on the nature and scope of the threat. How does radicalization and recruitment happen? What are the case studies we've seen manifest domestically, not just in the post-ISIL, early 2014 through today period, but even prior to that with other sources and drivers of radicalization -- Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al Shabaab, and so on. And so raising awareness on the nature and scope of the threat, how has it manifested itself domestically? From the federal government perspective, domestically, at Homeland Security, providing tools and resources in the

sense of real life tabletop exercises, community awareness threat briefings. Homeland Security, just my office earlier this month, on July 6th, we released \$10 million in grants to support state and local efforts on this, both law enforcement and municipal officials, not-for-profit organizations, the universities, who are really doing pro-active work.

And then the last core component, after you raise awareness of the threat, you provide tools and resources, is really to the name of my office, the Office of Community Partnerships, you help develop those public-private partnerships that can be sustained over a period of time to help really address not just the root causes or drivers, but if someone in a community observes a sign, sees something that's on the radicalization spectrum, there's more than one resource of just pick up the phone and call the FBI or law enforcement.

It's really creating that wrap-around, comprehensive approach that's inclusive of not just law enforcement and community, but mental health, social service, education providers. This is the place where Homeland Security is moving to, is helping be the convener of this really multi-disciplinary set of issues.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Got it. But what I'm hearing in that, or what I didn't hear in that, is there's no hard data yet on really what works and what doesn't.

MR. SELIM: There's not an overarching measure that I can say, "In the U.S. here's what we've done" but what I can --

MS. STERN: But you are funding one.

MR. SELIM: We are funding a number of studies.

MS. STERN: Yes, yes.

MR. SELIM: Go ahead Jessica.

(Laughter)

MS. STERN: You have just put out an RFP for universities to try to evaluate the impact of CVE efforts. And I just want to say yes, with all due respect Noah, it sounds like a lot of money, but compared with the amount of money we spend on trying to take out the bad guys, kinetic operations, this is a drop in the bucket. It's nothing.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Mr. Chairman, is this even something, given the fact that we still don't have hard data, yes, and given the fact that a lot of money has been spent, like is this even something the federal government should be doing? Like is this something a bunch of bureaucrats in Washington should be, you know, trying to change minds? Isn't the real metric changing action? Like, who cares what's in these guy's heads? Like, isn't it really about stopping bad things from happening rather than people having bad thoughts?

MR. ROYCE: Well there's two points here. One is for this to be effective you have to have authenticity, and that means you have to be able to find the jaded jihadists that have a story to tell that resonates. And that's not best done in Washington. That's actually best done working in other countries. And I'll give you -- maybe later we can get into some examples of where that's been done successfully.

But the second point, I take the point about kinetic activity, but in a bi-partisan effort of the Foreign Office Committee, we tried to convince the Administration, when ISIS was coming out of Raqqa, that they should be hit from there air in those pickup trucks. And we watched a period of eight months when city by city, starting with Fallujah, and ending with Mosul, ISIS established its caliphate.

Our argument was, "Don't allow it to establish that caliphate." And our argument also, I think, is when you have an entity that has developed to the degree and sophistication to use platforms and social media like none other that has proceeded it, it is very much in your interest to counter the narrative that God is on their side and that they're unstoppable. In other words, they

should be stopped.

We now have a problem where ISIS is in North Africa, training 6500 jihadists, West Africa, East Africa, and Central Asia. In other words they are dispersing their operations. So this has become a lot more complicated, because we did not take decisive steps early. And I'll just sum up with this, we also have bipartisan legislation to reform the BBG, but also to reform our efforts in terms of our interaction to counter this violent extremism.

It's in legislation authored by myself and Eliot Engel, that's now in the Senate. Walter Isaacson's been supportive, as has the Aspen Institute, in developing this legislation and moving it, but our next step in this -- we've put it in the National Defense Authorization Act -- is to get that out on to the President's desk. We really need to look at what has worked in other countries. Maybe we can get into that, because I think we have a lot to learn about their effectiveness in this area and how we can emulate that.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Okay, I'd love to ask you about those examples, but I need to ask a follow-up question first.

MR. ROYCE: Sure.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Are you saying that basically there's no such thing as successful CVE while Raqqa is still the capital of the so-called Islamic State?

MR. ROYCE: A part of our difficulty is as long as they can point to an existing concept of a caliphate, for those who have been mesmerized around the planet in Deobandi schools, in these Madrasas that have been funded through the Gulf States since 1979, you've got a lot of young graduates of those schools that are coming out believing in jihad, capable of teaching jihad, becoming clerics, and those ideas are in the pipeline.

And they are being spread all over, from Indonesia to West Africa. So the question is, with that

out there, with those concepts out there, and the use of the internet by ISIS to build on the support base of those who believe in that fundamentalism or that radical jihadist ideology, how best to stop it? It's certainly not to allow the establishment of a caliphate, because that makes it very, very credible that this could be the future.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Right. But now there is a caliphate, right? And even if it's wiped out tomorrow, which it's not going to be, then people for decades hence can point back to it and say, "Ah look at this," you know, "We got over on them."

MR. ROYCE: Right. It's unfortunate, but at least we've started the debate now of what we can do in the Middle East, for example, using MBC, the main station broadcasting there. Now that's authenticity. Those are script writers, story tellers that tell their stories up until Ramadan.

They ran a 20-part series of a drama about what happens to a family or families where the boys go and join ISIS, the consequences on the family, the disillusionment when they come back and see what it's really like. I would recommend everyone here Edward Husain's book, *The Islamist*. There's a story by an Islamist, told to Islamists. That's who's reading that book. And it is the disillusionment, and then coming back to Britain and saying, "Why didn't they teach us British values when I was in school?" And beginning to understand the importance of political pluralism and tolerance, these are the voices that are going to have resonance. These are the voices we are going to have to basically give a microphone to --

MS. STERN: I think --

MR. ROYCE: -- without looking like we're giving the microphone.

MS. STERN: Yeah.

MR. ROYCE: We've got to do this through the

universities, through philanthropy, through -- you know, we can do seed funding. Hollywood's got to be involved in this, and certainly Silicon Valley can be more involved and already are getting involved.

MS. STERN: Yeah. I think --

MR. SELIM: Can I --

MS. STERN: Oh.

MR. SELIM: Go ahead, please.

MS. STERN: I just wanted to say I think, for this discussion, I think we really need to distinguish between what we do outside the United States and what we do inside the United States. You can't bomb the American kids who are finding a way to turn themselves into heroes by killing people in ISIS's name at home. That's not going to work.

MR. SELIM: Yeah. And just to follow up on two points the Chairman made. First of all, he's absolutely right, and as Secretary Johnson said the other night in his opening remarks, countering violent extremism domestically has widely been received in a bipartisan effort. We've received tremendous support from the Hellenists.

This is a universal set of issue that in terms of protecting the homeland is not going away anytime soon. And so the Congress has been very supportive of DHS's efforts in this regard. But to the last point, a need for technology, philanthropy, non-traditional sectors to get involved with the unique security mission, as Jessica points out, both at home and abroad, that's the future where these issues are going.

Four years ago, Homeland Security, and Facebook, and the State Department didn't have a partnership to promote campaigns and create content on university campuses across the globe. Today we do. Next year when we're here there may be other technology and philanthropy partners, God willing, who will be at the table with

government, thinking through these really hard problems, and helping develop technology and social media solutions.

MR. SHACHTMAN: To what extent is that all undone by a potential president of the United States demonizing large segments of the Muslim population?

MR. SELIM: Easy question.

(Laughter)

MR. SELIM: So Homeland Security, as I said earlier, and the protection of the homeland is without question a bi-partisan set of efforts. There's no question that countering ideology and preventing and intervening in the process of radicalization is not a democrat or republican issue. So to the extent that the domestic security agencies and agencies that operate internationally can continue to expand that effort, and as the Secretary said the other day, not do so in a way that demonizes or demagogues a particular religion both at home and abroad. Part of what the mission of Homeland Security is, is protecting our homeland with respect to civil rights and civil liberties. And the first 6 years of the past 10 that I've worked at the Department of Homeland Security as a career civil servant was in the Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Office. And so the approach that I bring to these issues on countering extremism and preventing radicalization is very mindful of civil rights, civil liberties, and privacy protections. They're not mutually exclusive. We can achieve a safer homeland while protecting civil liberties and not demagoging any segment of people, like my parents, who immigrated to this country.

MR. ROYCE: And I think, Noah, Lee Hamilton was the former Chairman of my committee when I first came on. I think it was Lee Hamilton and the 9/11 Commission that said, "You're not going to defeat the enemy," I mean that report said, "without identifying the problem." And I think the terms he used, it was close to this, radical Islamist ideology, which is the same terms that the continental Europeans use, the U.K. use, he same term, frankly, that is used in the Middle East. So I understand

the political question there, but the point is that that term is already out there and used relatively frequently in order to define the problem in the rest of the world.

MS. STERN: I think it's important in this context to understand that ISIS has said that one of its goals is to destroy the grey -- what they call the grey zone, which is where Muslims live at ease in the West. And they say that the reason they are recruiting Western Muslims to attack in the West is to turn Christians against Muslims, Muslims against Muslims.

In their latest issue of *Dabiq*, they have listed many Muslims living in the West, including Imams, 11 Imams, living in the West, that they will target. They're targeting Muslim police officers. They have a goal to increase prejudice against Muslims in the West. It's part of their management of savagery. It's their plan.

MR. ROYCE: Part of their plan is -- and I saw this in West Africa years ago, talking to the governor, the Muslim governor of the state that Boko Haram is now in. He said, "They're here and they're changing our culture." And I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I grew up in a Madrasa, being educated. Across the street there's a new one, 10 times the size with 100 times the budget, and they're teaching jihad. They are changing my culture. They're changing our culture, and someday you will see the consequences of that. They will come for us first, and then they will come for you." Same thing I heard in Central Asia, in Kyrgyzstan, in Uzbekistan.

So they are trying to change the culture. It is a war or a struggle within that culture. What we need to do is back those who are resisting this effort to change indigenous Islam in North Africa and West Africa. And this Islamist attempt, this radical attempt, is what puts those cultures at risk, and they understand that.

MR. SHACHTMAN: I want to open things up for a minute to the audience. If you've got questions, raise your hand. Please make it a question, and not a rant, rave, or a declaration of principles. Charlie Dunlap?

MR. DUNLAP: Hi. Charlie Dunlap from Duke Law School. Last year I asked Jim Comey how come the government hadn't considered --

MR. SHACHTMAN: Oh, I'm supposed to tell you to wait for a microphone.

(Laughter)

MR. DUNLAP: Hi. Charlie Dunlap from Duke Law School. Last year I asked Jim Comey how come they didn't use the materials to support statute and civil lawsuits to go after social media that was hosting the -- and it sounds like the problem is still as egregious as it was last year as we discussed in the program. Why shouldn't we be encouraging more civil lawsuits, at least from the private sector, because that's what changed big industries, big tobacco, the auto industry, the pharmaceutical industry. They have to have this motivation, this financial motivation, to do the things they need to do to take down the sites. At least sites reflective of organizations that are on the designated terrorist organizations, you know, listed by the State Department. Tell me why I'm wrong with that, or why I'm right.

MR. SHACHTMAN: I think that's a question for you Monika.

MS. BICKERT: I'll let George go first.

MR. SELIM: I'll start with one --

MR. SHACHTMAN: Why shouldn't people sue Facebook for jihadist conflict? That's basically the question, right?

MS. BICKERT: One thing I want to make really clear is that the business incentives of social media companies here are very much aligned with government incentives in removing this content. This is horrible for business. None of these companies want it. I run a working group for social media companies, international working group, that has been in place now for over a year,

that has about 20 members large and small. It's confidential. It's a place for social media companies to come and meet and talk about best practices in removing content. And I can tell you without exception, first of all, every social media company that we've invited to join has joined, and the conversations have revealed to me, without exception, that there is not a lack of will to remove this content.

Now there sometimes are challenges, especially when you're talking about small companies that don't have efficient reporting systems, or, you know, I talked about how Facebook is in so many countries. We have reviewers that speak more than 40 languages that are reviewing this content. Smaller companies are not going to have that. But what can we do as an industry? For one thing, we can collaborate and help one another identify this content as quickly as possible.

So ISIS put out a new video a few days ago. Immediately we're on the phone with other social media companies saying, "What links are you seeing? Where are they?" Twitter, who has had a bad rap for the past few years, one of the things that I do is talk to Twitter on the phone. And what I have seen time and time again is a tremendous willingness and eagerness on the part of social media to make sure that these communities are safe and that they are removing anything.

And one final thing I'll mention, because you asked about detailed list. I want to be very clear what our policies are on this. On Facebook and on Instagram, we don't allow anybody who's a member of a terror organization to have any presence on the site. And that means if the leader of Boko Haram wants to set up a page on Facebook and talk about how great Aspen is, that violates our policies, and we would remove it.

If somebody who is not a member of a terror organization says something that is positive about one of those groups, or praises a beheading, or even says, "Wow, cool," or something like that, that is removed as well. And where appropriate, we also provide information to law enforcement authorities to stop threats. This is

something the industry takes extremely seriously.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Okay. Charlie did not get his question answered, I don't think, but --

MR. DUNLAP: Well, just a quick -- a super quick follow-up.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Yeah.

MR. DUNLAP: Twitter's a good example. The lawsuit was filed in January in Florida against Twitter by the survivors of somebody who said that they were -- that the killers were radicalized by something they saw on Twitter. A month later Twitter takes down 125,000 accounts. Why didn't they do that before? I think that there's a motivation by the, you know, the civil litigation that will make Facebook have 2,000 people working to take down, you know, these jihadist sites, and so forth. Tell me where I'm wrong.

MS. BICKERT: Can I clarify something there? Twitter didn't take down 125,000 accounts in the span of the month. Twitter came out with a statement saying, "By the way, this is some of the stuff that we're doing and have done over the past year." So again, incentives are aligned. Social media companies have a tremendous challenge when -- if you want to provide a space for people to upload posts dynamically, you think of something, you don't want Facebook to read it, and scan it, and approve it, you know, an hour later, you want to be able to post. That's how we communicate with one another. And the overwhelming majority of people are using this to connect with family and friends in very positive ways. If you want to live in a world that has that sort of freedom and that sort of communication, that brings so many positive things to this world, then we have to acknowledge that there are going to be challenges in removing this content.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Okay, I want to --

MR. ROYCE: Charlie there may be a solution to this technically.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Yeah.

MR. ROYCE: We've had hearings on this. Programing is getting awfully close to being capable of identifying these types of posts and taking it down instantaneously, automatically. And if we can do this in conjunction with the Valley, we might be able to come to a solution here that offers better protection.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Okay, I think Dan -- Oh, sorry.

MR. ALMAN: My name is Eric Alman, with the D.C. Police Department. My question for you, Ms. Bickert, is that if Facebook can determine -- because I searched on Razor, that give me suggested things that I might be interested in buying that are related to razors, or razor chargers, or the kind of car I want to drive, why can't you, with the excellent algorithms you develop, identify kids that are a potential risk for radicalization and do something proactive? Not just take down posts, but, you know, build a risk index that is based on the algorithms and the searches that Facebook recognizes, and the posts that people make, so that these people are identified and proactive efforts can be made to de-radicalize them?

MR. SHACHTMAN: You know I think that's an excellent question. I'll just build on that. You know, Facebook's got the most sophisticated facial recognition system on the planet, it's widely regarded, and so why not if kid X posts a picture of Abu-Bakr Baghdadi, which is instantly recognized, why can't they be served up sort of counter-programing right away?

MS. BICKERT: Great questions, and also the point about automation is well taken. There are a lot of misconceptions out there about what we do with automation, and we, not just Facebook, but across industry, and what we can't yet do with automation. So first let me say that automation's incredibly helpful for us in many areas across policy enforcement, and for many different reasons. For instance, if we were to remove -- let's say that we do find that somebody is a member of a terror organization and we remove that account, or we find somebody who has

been sharing beheading videos, and that's what his page is about, and we remove that account, we don't stop there. We are fanning out and using those as signals to identify other bad content, other bad accounts that we can then remove and look at and, if appropriate, send on to authorities.

One of the challenges that was mentioned in the back of the room is what do we do pro-actively before somebody has really hit that point where they're doing something? And this is hard, because if you're going to craft your policies in an aggressive way and say, you know, you share three beheading videos, you're account's coming down. Well, the price for that is that you don't see the rest of that escalation, because you stopped that person here.

And in fact when I talk to people, the Peter Newmans of the world, and the Jessica Sterns of the world, and the Erin Zellen's of the world, who really research this stuff, one of the things they point out is when you do take down that content at the very initial stage, when somebody's interacting with it, then you do lose the ability to see the rest of the escalation. That person hasn't done anything other than, you know, share a beheading video and say, "Cool," which either might just be a teenager who has no particular interest, and that will go nowhere, but what do you do with that sort of information?

MR. SELIM: I'd like to say something on that point.

MS. BICKERT: Yeah.

MR. SELIM: Sorry. One quick point to get in on this. This is the point that I think I was making earlier. We can have a great panel on what the right message or narrative is to counter ISIL radicalization and recruitment, but that would be a one-dimensional panel. The way that radicalization and homegrown violent extremism has manifested itself is there's an online and there's an off-line component.

And so when I'm talking about creating prevention frameworks in cities and municipalities across the country, when we're talking about the inclusion of mental health and social service providers with state and local law enforcement, religious leaders, and community leaders, that comprehensive approach to couple the things that we're doing to promote content online and partner with industry, that's the comprehensive approach. It's not just an online piece. There's got to be an offline piece. And that's where the federal government can help drive policy and programs, but it's important that they're implemented at the local level. And that's the unique nature of this.

MR. SHACHTMAN: We've got time for only one or two more questions, and I have one of my own that I need to ask, which is, we've been talking a lot about, you know, jihadist narratives, right, and jihad extremism, but as everybody in this room knows we've seen a huge rise in far right extremism, both in America and in Europe. We've seen, you know, whether it's a Dylan Roof, or Planned Parenthood bomber, or attacker, don't we need a CVE for the White Nationalist Movement, for the all right (phonetic), doesn't that need to happen --

MR. SELIM: Good question.

MR. SHACHTMAN: -- here?

MR. SELIM: So very quickly. This question comes up often. As defined in policy, we define violent extremism as ideologically motivated violence to further a political goal, irrespective of what that ideology is. And so when we're raising awareness on the nature and scope of a threat in a particular community, when we're providing tools and resources, and building partnerships to prevent an ideologically motivated act of violence that's irrespective of ideology from the source, whether it's a designated foreign terrorist organization, or a person or group that's aligned with some type of act of violence in the United States. And so, we set up the Homeland Security apparatus, as we're working with state and law enforcement, to address this on the wide scope, and then you can tailor it by geographic area depending on

how the threat manifests itself.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Mr. Chairman, that has been -- this sort of talking about violent extremism, as opposed to honing just in on Islamic radicalism, that has, in the past, for your party, been a -- that's been seen as a mistake. Do you think that --

MR. ROYCE: Well let me understand this, because the FBI was established originally to do something about the Ku Klux Klan, right?

MR. SHACHTMAN: Right.

MR. ROYCE: And that was very much supported by my party.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Yes.

MR. ROYCE: I don't know how my party gets involved in this --

MR. SHACHTMAN: No, no, no. In other words they're talking about, that talk of CVE, without any mention of Islamic extremism that a -- well, anyway.

MR. ROYCE: Let me put it this way. We have a long history of using law enforcement, starting with the establishment -- the Klan was the big original concern here, and the damage it did in the United States. And there are still elements out there

MR. SHACHTMAN: Yeah.

MR. ROYCE: And to the extent that law enforcement can follow that, to the extent that we can knock that down, we need to.

MR. SHACHTMAN: I guess what I'm saying is do you believe that resources that are currently being put towards anti-Islamic radicalism, countering violent extremism, should also be put towards anti-White Nationalism?

MR. ROYCE: I just explained that. Obviously, you look at where the attacks are coming from, and because of the history of the Klan, because of the violence that they used as a methodology, our government over the years developed a very effective strategy for infiltrating that and for basically taking out their capability for the most part. They are still remnants of it. We are going to, because of the internet, and because of the evolution of the internet, especially with encryption, is going to allow people who want to use violence towards their ends to figure out new ways to communicate, to recruit. We're up against some major challenges here.

MR. SELIM: And just to --

MR. ROYCE: And that's why I appreciate this panel and the Aspen Security Forum here getting into the details.

MR. SELIM: Just to make one point very clear. The number one threat to the homeland is ISIL's ability to recruit and radicalize. And that's where Homeland Security's resources are going. To the extent that the tools and resources that we develop can be used to address a broad range of threats to not just law enforcement, but the American public at large, that's what we're in a position to do.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Got it. Dina in the back. You've been waiting.

MS. TEMPLE-RASTON: Dina Temple-Raston, with *National Public Radio*, I've got two questions. Monika, first for you, can you talk a little bit about the Demo report, and particularly what I found interesting in it, was that it wasn't arguing with people online that was effective, but, in fact, it was either changing the subject, or being more positive.

And for you George, since we were here last year and we were talking about these kinds of issues, what is really changed is there has been a new look at de-radicalization of people in this country, particularly in Minneapolis, and a new discussion about off-ramping.

Jessica can probably help with this too. Can you talk a little bit about that, because I think we tend to think that nothing has moved forward in the past year, and I think actually there has been some movement on this. Thanks.

MS. BICKERT: The report -- thanks for the question. The report is interesting in a couple of respects. One thing that we found from analyzing speech against extremism that does well, is, first of all, it is very localized. If you look at what works in Morocco, it is not necessarily the same sort of thing that works in France. There are different types of content that people want to interact with. We also did find, however, that there were some similarities. And one thing that we saw across all the countries was, as Dina said, that the tone mattered very much. People tend to interact with content that is positive, humorous, gets them to think about something in a new way, maybe ask a question.

They don't tend to interact with content that is negative. So if somebody sees a post that they think is Islamophobic, for instance, and they respond to it with some sort of nasty attack or "You're a this," or "You're a that," that sort of content isn't likely to change the first person's mind, it's not likely to be shared.

If, instead, we see people posting messages that change the narrative in a slight way, or are positive or humorous, we see that being successful. And one area where -- one country where I'll point to that is in Morocco. Morocco and Tunisia we saw that political events abroad really drove counter-speech creation and also drove interaction with it. But in doing so it was the post that received the most interactions were not those that were negative, they could be negative about events overseas, but those that actually took it in a different direction, made it positive. And that's something that I think the university students through Peer-To-Peer have shown --

MR. SELIM: Absolutely.

MS. BICKERT: -- a unique ability to understand and to do naturally.

MR. SELIM: I associate myself with those comments completely. Let me start, and Jessica feel free to jump in. Since last year -- thank you for your question on this -- I wear two hats at DHS. One hat is the Director of the Office of Community Partnerships, but since then we've also created a new Countering Violent Extremism Task Force that's comprised of over 10 departments and agencies, to include the FBI, the Justice Department, the National Counter-Terrorism Center, as well as non-security agencies as well, Department of Education, Health and Human Services, and others. And so one of the key units or lines of efforts that we're focused on is exactly the concept that you pointed out, is interventions. And we've heard from community-based, primarily Muslim community-based organizations, from Montgomery County, Maryland, to Los Angeles, who want to develop their own intervention models, community-lead intervention models, and to what extent can the Department of Homeland Security or the federal government support those community-lead initiatives. We've got a task force set up. We're putting out some grants to resource those community-lead efforts. And hopefully by next time this year we will have some real positive data to show.

MR. SHACHTMAN: Okay. We now have a sign being shown to us that says zero minutes really remaining, so I think we'd better get out of here. I want everybody to thank our panelists for what I thought was a really fascinating discussion.

(Applause)

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