

Chapter 1 American Jihad, Muslim Americans, and the General Public

Abstract

A recent series of terrorist plots originating on American soil prompted the Obama Administration to include homegrown terrorism as a key component of its National Security Strategy in May 2010 (Benson 2010). Despite this, more deadly terrorist attacks carried out by homegrown terrorists, such as the San Bernardino massacre on December 2, 2015 and the Boston Marathon bombings on April 15, 2013 continue to shock Washington in spite of this shift in focus towards this new emerging threat. These incidents are directly associated with a growing number of American citizens and residents who are radicalized with jihadist ideology online while not necessarily being directly connected or affiliated with international terrorist organizations. These days, the growth of homegrown terrorism alarms not only politicians, but the general public as well; however, to date there is little scientific political research that offers a way of understanding where America's homegrown terrorists come from and how their threats should be most effectively countered. Chapter 1 aims to answer these imperative security questions and to draw possible policy suggestions on how to confront the growing threats of American jihad.