NYPD'S SEARCH FOR CAFES IN WHICH TERRORISTS WOULD BE COMFORTABLE

It's bad enough that the NYPD continues its Muslim spying program in spite of their Intelligence Division Chief's admission that they have not derived a single lead from it. But look more closely at the astoundingly stupid rationalizations that Thomas Galati gave in his deposition for the program.

Galati imagines that if NYPD were ever faced with an imminent terrorist threat, the demographic mapping they had already done would allow them to figure out right away where the terrorist might go.

> When we are faced with a threat or we have information about a threat that is present and we need to go out and we need to try and mitigate that threat, we have to be able to, at our fingertips, find what is the most likely location that that terrorist is going to go to and hide out amongst other people from the same country.

Let's consider how this worked in practice the single time it might have applied.

When the FBI alerted the NYPD that Najibullah Zazi was heading back to NYC with the intent to blow up some subways, the NYPD knew exactly who to go to. They called Zazi's Imam, Ahmad Wais Afzali, who not only knew him but had taught him and some of his accomplices. So that part worked.

What didn't work is that Afzali promptly tipped off Zazi and his father, making it more difficult to develop a case against Zazi's accomplices.

> Media reports quoting anonymous FBI officials have suggested the NYPD botched the case when it showed a picture of Najibullah Zazi, the Denver shuttle-bus driver at the heart of the investigation, to Ahmed Afzali, a Queens Imam and sometime police informant. Afzali, the reports say, first called Zazi's father Mohammed, then Najibullah himself, alerting them to the probe. The FBI, which had been monitoring the calls, was then forced to move immediately to arrest the Zazis — much sooner than it had planned.
>
> [snip]
>
> When Zazi traveled to New York ahead of the anniversary of 9/11, the FBI as a precaution alerted the NYPD. That's when officers from the NYPD's intelligence unit consulted Afzali. "It looks like they did this on their own initiative — they really trusted this Imam," says the law-enforcement official. "But if they'd consulted with the bureau first, they'd have been told not to talk to anybody."

So far Galati's logic works if you want to make sure terrorists are tipped off by their close associates.

But it gets worse.

Central to the Galati's explanation for the NYPD's retention of the content of conversations about events—such as a Quran-burning, in the passage below (or, presumably, opposition to a drone strike)—is that it provides insight into whether a terrorist would be "comfortable in" a particularly environment.

> Q I think you've told me that the fact that at this particular location where there are Pakistanis speaking Urdu, the Zone Assessment Unit heard two men complaining about the [redacted-Quran burning] That fact alone, their

> complaint expressed to each other
> doesn't make it more likely that this is
> a place where a terrorist would go?
>
> A It doesn't make it more likely or less
> likely. It's a tool for us to look for
> that person that we're looking for that
> has that same characteristic that's
> going to hide or recruit within **a place
> that he or she is comfortable in**.
>
> For a terrorist person that we're trying
> to secrete themselves in this particular
> community, I can't tell you it's more
> likely or less likely. It's a tool for
> us to look in the right place.
>
> [snip]
>
> A I'm taking the conversation as a
> whole. I'm looking in that conversation.
> I'm seeing Urdu. I'm seeing them
> identify the individuals involved in
> that are Pakistani. I'm using that
> information for me to determine that
> this would be **a kind of place that a
> terrorist would be comfortable in** and
> I'm retaining that for the fact that I
> can retain it, if it's going to help me
> detect or prevent a potential unlawful
> or terrorist attack.
>
> [snip]
>
> I think what's important for us is, if
> the conversations indicate support for
> let's say Osama Bin Laden or Iran or
> depends on a particular conversation,
> it's important for us to know because
> that might be a place that a terrorist
> could recruit from. So, the content of
> the conversations may give us **an idea of
> the place that a terrorist would be
> comfortable being in**, so he could
> recruit from a location like that. [my
> emphasis]

It's one thing to suggest that a terrorist might

find recruits in cafes where people earlier
expressed support for Osama bin Laden. It's an
entirely different thing to say that any Muslim
who expresses concern about Quran-burning or
drone killings would be a good mark for
recruitment.

Even assuming Galati uses this fluffy language
about comfortable terrorists to avoid talking
about political speech, which is forbidden, why
would you assume a terrorist is going to hide
out where he's most comfortable?

Particularly when you consider some of the
NYPD's assumptions. Even within heavily Muslim
communities the NYPD has not profiled chains,
with the exception of (all Bangladeshi-owned, I
think) Dunkin Donuts. As I've shown, they looked
at the Muslim owned local businesses in the
immediate neighborhood of Faisal Shahzad's
hawala, but not the 7/11 that employed many of
the Pakistanis who knew Shahzad's hawala
operator. And all that's before you consider the
very generic chains the 9/11 terrorists used.
That is, the NYPD is looking where smart
terrorists are least likely to hide out, both
because they're not looking at non-Muslim or
corporate owned businesses and they're assuming
terrorists would look for comfort, not
anonymity.

Then there's an even funnier assumption. NYC
experienced its first al Qaeda related threat in
1993, when the Egyptian Blind Sheikh and Khalid
Sheikh Mohammed's Pakistani nephew teamed up to
bomb the World Trade Center. 9/11 was
masterminded by KSM, but carried out mostly by
Saudis.

And yet here is what the head of the NYPD's
Intelligence Division
had to say about looking for Pakistani
terrorists like KSM and Ramzi Youssef.

> But, this is the person that is going to
> commit a terrorist attack. To value
> what's in here, that I know if I'm
> looking for a terrorist who is

> Pakistani, from a region in Pakistan who speaks Urdu, I'm not going to waist [sic] my time in a restaurant where they speak Arabic.

This is sort of like when the NYPD returned to one establishment of a particular ethnicity (it appears to be Pakistani) three times in quick succession in January 2010, apparently in response to some big event. Three very obvious events would be the drone strike in al-Majala on December 17, 2009, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's attack on a Northwest flight on December 25, 2009, and Humam al-Balawi's attack on CIA's base in Khost on December 30, 2009. So an American attack purportedly aimed at Saudis and Yemenis, an attack by a Jordanian, supported by Pakistanis, in Afghanistan, and an attack by a Nigerian, supported by Yemenis and Saudis. How would any of those events be tied to one ethnicity?

So not only is this program ineffective, but its entire premise—or at least the one Galati has adopted to try to avoid Handschu violations—defies all the recent history of real terrorism in NYC and globally. As Galati would tell it, the NYPD has spent 9 years hunting for the kind of monolingual terrorists who won't step out of their comfort zone when they, of all entities, should know those aren't the kind of terrorists that might threaten NY.