

THE GLOBAL WAR ON WAYWARD KNUCKLEHEADS

103 minutes into today's Global Threat Hearing in the Senate Intelligence Committee, National Counterterrorism Center Director Matt Olsen got asked his first question, about what his agency is seeing as rising threats. As part of the discussion that ensued, he noted that homegrown Islamic terrorists continued to be a threat though, he admitted, such attacks would be "unsophisticated."

He then admitted that those who get inspired by Al Qaeda propaganda are "wayward knuckleheads."

The comment sure seems to confirm a key premise of Trevor Aaronson's book, *The Terror Factory*. Our domestic war on terror – complete with FBI-concocted plots – really consists of getting wayward knuckleheads to respond to FBI incitement. "FBI's trawling in Muslim communities has resulted largely in sting operations that target easily susceptible men on the margins of society."

Meanwhile, Robert Mueller had a curious comment in his discussion about the ongoing al Qaeda threat. He said that airplane plots remain a threat. The individuals responsible for previous airline attempts still out there, he said.

Um, I thought we had killed at least one individual responsible for previous airline attempts in September 2011. You mean Anwar al-Awlaki wasn't the mastermind of the UndieBomb threat?

Of course not: Ibrahim al-Asiri was the operational mastermind of it (or maybe Abu Tarak!). Which is why we had another purported attempt last year, more than six months after Awlaki died.

In any case, Mueller's comment seems to be an at

least implicit admission that the Administration oversold Awlaki's single centrality to the first UndieBomb plot.