

ONE REASON WE'RE LOSING THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

Last Wednesday, Oregon District judge Garr King sentenced Mohamed Osman Mohamud to 30 years in prison for pressing a button FBI undercover officers had led him to believe would bomb Portland's Christmas tree-lighting ceremony. Mohamud's attorneys argued that in the almost-four years since his arrest Mohamud has shown a great deal of remorse. Prosecutors suggested that by contesting his conviction by claiming he was entrapped, Mohamud showed no remorse.

So 5 years after Mohamud's father called the FBI, asking them to help divert his son from his interest in Islamic extremism, the government put Mohamud away for the better part of the rest of his life. Even assuming Mohamud only serves two-thirds of his sentence and pretending inflation doesn't exist, taxpayers will pay \$678,600 to incarcerate Mohamud, on top of the money spent on his 4-year prosecution and the at-least 18 months of informants and undercover officers pursuing the then-teenager.

Meanwhile, as the prosecution of a young man whose father reached out for help and whom the FBI prevented from spending a summer working in Alaska draws to a close, the Administration has been rolling out – for at least the third time (2010, 2011, 2014) – an effort to “counter violent extremism.” While the government has always been squishy about what gets included in “violent extremism,” in practice it has always been an effort to work with Muslim and only Muslim communities to ... well, it's not clear what the point is, whether it's just a renewed effort to get communities to narc out their own, or whether it's an effort to provide alternatives to an ideology that has proven attractive to young men in such communities.

The roll-out isn't going very well.

At a hearing in OH, DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson got an earful from community leaders asking why they should trust the government.

But when Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson showed up recently at the Noor Islamic Cultural Center here to offer a sympathetic ear and federal assistance, he faced a litany of grievances from a group of mostly Muslim leaders and advocates.

They complained of humiliating border inspections by brusque federal agents, [F.B.I.](#) sting operations that wrongly targeted Muslim citizens as terrorists and a foreign policy that leaves President Bashar al-Assad of Syria in place as a magnet for extremists.

"Our relationship has to be built on trust, but the U.S. government hasn't given us very many reasons to build up that trust," said Omar Saqr, 25, the cultural center's youth coordinator.

And Linda Sarsour – whose organization serving Arab immigrations was targeted by NYPD's spying program – asks how they can trust a government that spies on them.

Muslim advocates say there is deep suspicion that, despite all the meetings and the talk of outreach, the government's main goal is to recruit informants to root out suspected terrorists.

"I don't know how we can have a partnership with the same government that spies on you," said Linda Sarsour, advocacy director for the National Network for Arab American Communities.

Perhaps most telling, however, in one of NYT's

several attempts describing what CVE is, it describes spying, not community.

Among its efforts, the Department of Homeland Security provides training to help state and local law enforcement officials in identifying and countering the threat, including indicators of violent extremism and “lone wolf” attacks.

The department awarded the International Association of Chiefs of Police a \$700,000 grant last year to develop training on how to prevent, respond to and recover from acts of terrorism.

DHS is going to give a police organization as much to train to spy as it'll take to incarcerate Mohamud.

Ultimately, no matter how efficient your spying-and-sting-industry, you're still spending around \$1 million to catch and warehouse men because you're losing an ideological battle. And the spying and stings, and the obvious bias of it, surely sets the US back in its ideological battle.

If the US can't imagine a better response when a father calls for help but to spend 18 months catching his son a sting, we can roll out CVE programs every other month and we're not going to earn trust among the communities we need to.