

THE SECRET SQUIRRELS PITCHING “COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM”

For the record, I believe our country needs some kind of program to divert wayward young men – of whatever race, religion, and ideology – rather than ensnaring them in stings that will result in a wasted life.

Mind you, the government is going about it with the Muslim community badly. In part, that’s because the US doesn’t have much positive ideology to offer anymore, especially to those who identify in whatever way with those we’ve spent millions villainizing. In part, that’s because we’d have to revamp FBI before we started this CVE stuff, starting with the emphasis on terrorist conviction numbers as the prime measure of success. You’ll never succeed with a program if people’s primary job measure is the opposite.

Finally, and most obviously, you have to start by building trust, which will necessarily require a transition time between when you primarily rely on dragnets and informants to that time when you can rely on community partners (it will also require an acceptance that you won’t stop all attacks, regardless of which method you use).

Which is why I find this story, in the Administration’s latest effort to roll out a CVE program, so telling.

Senior administration officials, speaking to reporters Monday, said that while the initiative would not end terrorist acts like those undertaken in Copenhagen and Libya in the past few days, they are part of the broader answer to such threats.

“I think we need to be realistic that this is a long-term investment,” said

one official, who asked for anonymity to discuss the event in advance. "And so, ultimately, we hope to get to a place where we just have much greater resilience and greater action across communities. But that is not something we're going to see tomorrow."

[snip]

One of the senior administration officials said Monday that "there's no profile that we can point to to say this person is from this community, is going to be radicalized to violence," adding, "I think that we make a mistake as a government if we focus on stereotypes."
[my emphasis]

The article quotes the US Attorney from Minnesota, which has had a fairly sustained effort of outreach to the Somali community, by name. And it quotes the Congressional testimony of others.

But otherwise, every single Administration official insisted on anonymity.

This is all about trust, and the Administration would not permit the top officials rolling out this program to speak under their own name.

The increasing paranoiac secrecy of the Executive, worse even under Obama than Bush, sows distrust among all parts of the community.

But all the more so at the community most often targeted by programs that rely on secrecy to avoid public criticism.

So maybe before the Administration invests any more dollars into trying to change young Muslim men, it should first deal with its own poisonous hyper-secrecy?