

Preventing Attacks or Targeting the Vulnerable?



Assessing Criticism of the FBI's Interactions with the Muslim Community



Partnerships



*The most effective weapon against crime is cooperation ...
The efforts of all law enforcement agencies with the support and understanding of the American people.*

Renewed Emphasis to Identify Threats, Partnerships Include:

- Other Government Agencies
- Private Sector
- Communities
- Academia

Muslim Community Partnerships

Hailed as a success by the FBI

- *It's at the heart of the FBI's effectiveness to have good relationships with these folks.*
-- Director Comey, 2016



Paul Abbate at a Falls Church, VA Mosque



Shauib Karim, Islamic Center of Northeast Florida

Yet ... Headlines

“How the FBI Invents Terror Plots to Catch Wannabe Jihadis”

“Racial Profiling by Law Enforcement is Poisoning Muslim Americans' Trust”

“The FBI is ‘Manufacturing Terrorism Cases’ on a Greater Scale than Ever Before”

Problem

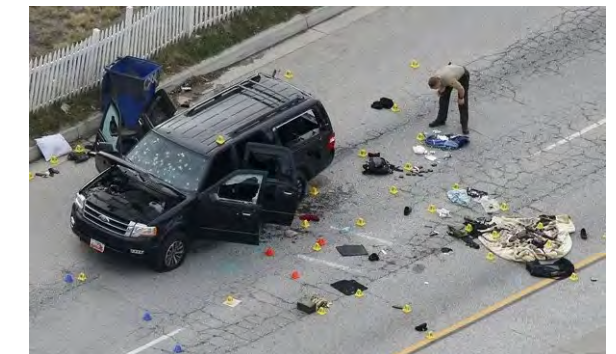
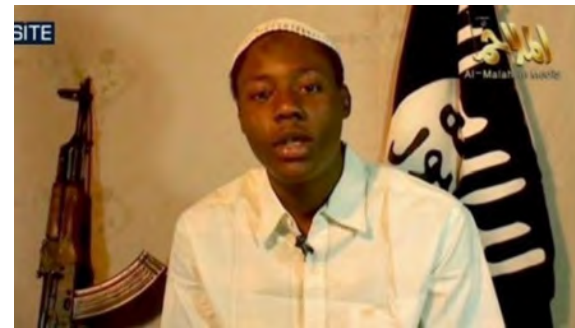
- Interactions, likely to continue, portrayed very differently.
- I want to determine:
 - 1) Criticism validity
 - 2) FBI Reactions
 - 3) Is there common ground or room for improvement?
- Ultimate Goal:
 - Can interactions can be improved without diminishing effectiveness?

Approach

- Attack Prevention – Why does the FBI Interact with Muslims?
- Four types of interactions: outreach, CVE, informants, stings
- Criticisms
- Assessing the Criticism
 - Review Most Intrusive Method: Stings
 - Public statements and Interviews of FBI Officials
 - Determine a way forward/recommendations

Attack Prevention

- "Get left of attack"
- Human Information critical to prevention
- Muslim community are targets and have knowledge

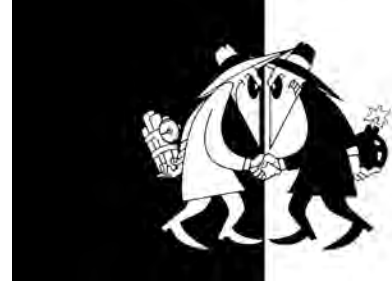


Types of Interactions: Intrusiveness Scale

Community Engagement



Informant Recruitment



Countering Violent Extremism
("CVE")



Sting Operations ("Agent Provocateur")



Less Intrusive Methods

More Intrusive Methods

Criticisms: More Intrusive

- Stings
 - Disproportionate Targeting Muslims Based on Identity
 - Stings affect the mentally ill
 - Entrapment Concerns
 - "Newburgh Four"
- Informant Recruitment
 - Aggressive focus, Sewing community mistrust, Encouraging Over-reporting
 - Recruitment in Mosques, Immigration as an incentive
- Resources Favor Efforts against Islamist Terrorism
 - Vs. Other international forms, domestic terrorism

Criticisms: Less Intrusive

- More interesting ...
- More intrusive methods cause problems for less intrusive methods
 - Conflict of Interest: Suspects vs. Partners
 - CVE as a ruse to recruit and surveil Muslims
 - Poor definitions of "extremism"
 - Criticism from many sectors
 - Poor implementation
 - Inconsistency across programs and field offices
 - Poor fits
- Focus on "Radicalization"
 - Unreliable predictor of violence; focus on "radical Islamic views" is problematic

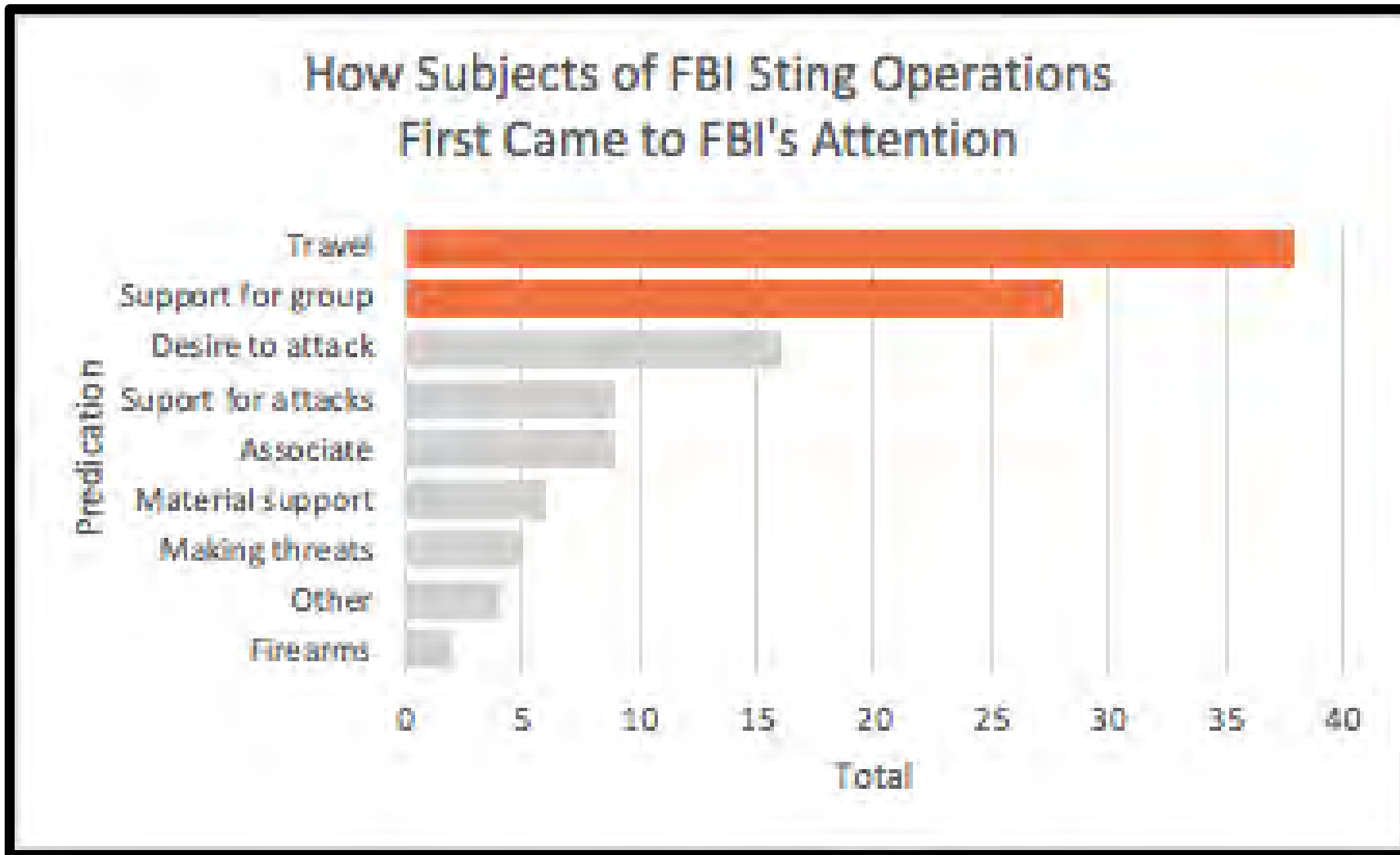
Assessing Criticism Validity

- Limitations: Lack of Access to Internal Data
- Serious charge: Targeting based on Muslim Identity
- Analysis of Sting Operations
 - Determine how eventual sting subjects came to FBI's attention
 - Determine whether patterns exist showing Muslim identity as a criteria
 - GWU Database of ISIS Cases: Criminal Complaints of 116 Sting Operations
 - Review text of criminal complaints to determine how FBI first learned of these individuals

Example

3. John T. Booker, Jr., a/k/a "Mohammed Abdullah Hassan," ("Booker") is a 20-year-old United States citizen who is currently living in Topeka, Kansas. In or around February 2014, Booker had been recruited by the United States Army in Kansas City, Missouri, and he was scheduled to report for Basic Training on April 7, 2014.
4. On March 15, 2014, Booker publicly posted on Facebook: "I will soon be leaving you forever so goodbye! I'm going to wage jihad and hopes that i die." On March 19, 2014, Booker publicly posted on Facebook: "Getting ready to be killed in jihad is a HUGE adrenaline rush!! I am so nervous. NOT because I'm scared to die but I am eager to meet my lord." That same day, the FBI became aware of Booker's postings based on a citizen's complaint. The FBI was able to identify Booker based on the publically available content on his Facebook account. On March 20, 2014, Booker was interviewed by FBI agents related to his Facebook postings. After being advised of and waiving his Miranda rights, Booker admitted that he enlisted in the United States Army with the intent to commit an insider attack against American soldiers like Major Nidal Hassan had done at Fort Hood, Texas. Booker

Results



83% = Support for
Terrorism or
Designated Terrorist
Groups

FBI Reaction: Public Statements and Interviews

- Strong Premise Rejection:
 - *The FBI follows the facts; We don't investigate first amendment activity.*
- Tensions and Perception Challenges Acknowledged:
 - *We have to overcome misperceptions, dispel myths.*
 - *Overcoming the tension is important to identify threats.*
 - Many successes noted as well; Outreach generated interest in civil rights cases
- Tension Cause: **Critics = FBI Tactics; FBI = Media Sensationalism**
- Common Ground: Implementation, getting the right people, consistency, focus on all forms of terrorism

Way Forward

- FBI and critics remain far apart; Stings focus on support for terrorism
 - Muslim identity not a criteria
 - FBI Bias: Violence in pursuit of political, religious, ideological, or social objectives
 - Debate: focus on ISIS/Islamic terrorism vs. Other terrorism forms
- Improving efforts
 - Understanding and directly addressing the criticism in outreach with **data**
 - Knowledge of high-profile, controversial cases
 - Implement common ground: right people, be consistent
 - Consider impacts of operations on outreach
- Framing Future Debates
 - Discuss radicalization focus vs. criminal activity