



[Congressional Record: June 12, 2009 (House)]
[Page H6669-H6676]

COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS--CAIR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Wolf) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, as ranking member on the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriation Subcommittee, which last week considered the fiscal year 2010 appropriations bill, I have a keen interest in and oversight responsibility for a host of counterterrorism and related initiatives.

The bill which is expected to come before the full House next week includes \$7.7 billion to support the work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the FBI, whose top priorities include protecting and defending the United States against terrorism and foreign intelligence threats.

{time} 1315

The FBI was intimately involved in a 15-year investigation, which culminated last fall in the Holy Land Foundation and five of its former organizers being found guilty of illegally funneling more than \$12 million to the terrorist group Hamas.

A Department of Justice press release issued May 27, 2009, reported, ``U.S. District Judge Jorge A. Solis sentenced the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development and five of its leaders following their convictions by a Federal jury in November 2008 on charges of providing material support to Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization.'' The sentences range from 15 years to 65 years in prison.

According to the Department of Justice, ``From its inception, the Holy Land Foundation existed to support Hamas. The government's case included testimony that, in the early 1990s, Hamas' parent organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, planned to establish a network of organizations in the U.S. to spread a militant Islamist message and raise money for Hamas. The defendants sent Holy Land Foundation-raised funds to Hamas-controlled zakat committees and charitable societies West Bank and Gaza.''

Among the unindicted conspirators in the case is an organization which, over the last several years, has been granted access to the highest levels of the U.S. Government--an organization which is routinely elevated in the press as a voice of mainstream Muslim Americans. This organization is the Council on American-Islamic Relations, or CAIR.

Tawfik Hamid, according to his bio, is an ``Islamist thinker and reformer and onetime Islamist extremist from Egypt. He was a member of a terrorist Islamic organization, Jemaah Islamiyah, with Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, who became later the second in command of al Qaeda.

On May 25 of 2007, in a Wall Street Journal op-ed, Hamid wrote the following, ``In America, perhaps the most conspicuous organization to persistently accuse opponents of Islamophobia is the Council of [sic]

American Islamic Relations.' ' The observations of Mr. Tawfik, himself a Muslim, are particularly relevant in light of recent news reports.

On January 30, 2009, Fox News reported that the FBI was ``severing its once close ties with the Nation's largest Muslim advocacy group, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, amid mounting evidence that it has links to a support network for Hamas.' '

Given that Hamas is on the current list of U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations, this was obviously a serious claim and one which, if true, would rightly inform a shift in FBI policy. However, the Fox News piece left me with some unanswered questions, questions which, given the seriousness of the report, necessitated further inquiry. Such questions of the executive branch are a common congressional practice and, in fact, are the responsibility of the legislative branch of government and are the intended purpose of our system of checks and balances.

For 6 years, from 2001-2006, I served as chairman of the appropriations subcommittee which has oversight of the FBI. This year, I resumed a leadership role as the lead Republican on the subcommittee.

According to the Congressional Research Service, ``Congressional oversight refers to the review, monitoring and supervision of Federal agencies, programs, activities, and policy implementation. It is an integral part of the American system of checks and balances.' '

[[Page H6670]]

A young Woodrow Wilson, before becoming President, put it this way. He said, ``Quite as important as legislation is vigilant oversight of administration.' '

Needless to say, I take very seriously the responsibility of congressional oversight, especially in matters with potential national security implications. In this spirit of oversight, I wrote to the FBI on February 2, seeking additional information and clarification regarding the Bureau's decision about its relationship with CAIR.

For the Record, I submit a copy of the letter.

Congress of the United States,

House of Representatives,

Washington, DC, February 2, 2009.

Mr. Michael J. Heimbach,
Assistant Director, Counter Terrorism Division, Federal
Bureau of Investigation, Washington DC.

Dear Mr. Heimbach: I write regarding the bureau's position on meeting with the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR). Over the weekend I saw a FOX News report (enclosed) that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has cut off ties with CAIR ``amid mounting evidence that it has links to a support network for Hamas.' ' Given that Hamas is on the current list of U.S. designated foreign terrorist organizations, this is obviously a serious claim, one which would rightly inform a shift in FBI policy.

In response to this report, I request answers to the following questions:

Has the FBI severed ties with CAIR? If so, how is the FBI planning to formally notify Members of Congress and other government officials of this decision?

If FBI policy has changed with regard to CAIR, is there any indication that this decision is being revisited by the new administration? If so, what new evidence would justify a change in course?

Is CAIR's national office still in contact with the FBI?

The report quotes Assistant Director John Miller from the FBI Office of Public Affairs as saying: ``The FBI has had to limit its formal contact with CAIR field offices until certain issues are addressed by CAIR's national headquarters.'' What specifically are the ``certain issues'' which you have raised with CAIR? Is there still informal contact with any field offices? If so, what is the distinction between formal and informal and why is there a distinction between field offices?

To your knowledge, does CAIR receive financial contributions from foreign sources? If so, which ones and how much?

I look forward to your timely response, and to working with you in the days ahead in my new role as ranking member of the House Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations subcommittee.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf,
Member of Congress.

The Fox News piece, which prompted my initial interest, quoted the assistant director of the Office of Public Affairs at the Bureau as saying, ``The FBI has had to limit its formal contact with CAIR field offices until certain issues are addressed by CAIR's national headquarters.''

I found this statement to be vague. While perhaps sufficient from a public affairs vantage, I believed it to be an insufficient explanation for Members of Congress, none of whom, to my knowledge, had been informed of this policy shift, and it was just that--a policy shift.

The FOX piece noted later that the FBI has ``long been close to CAIR. The agency has previously invited CAIR to give training sessions for agents and used it as a liaison with the American Muslim community.''

I was one of several Members of Congress, both Democrat and Republican, who wrote the Bureau in the days following this report. Some, such as Republican Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona and Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, voiced their support for the Bureau's decision, which was a step further than my initial letter; but they, too, desired to ``understand the situation more fully'' as Senators Kyl and Schumer wrote.

When I received a response from the FBI on March 9, only 1 of the 10 questions I posed was answered, which prompted me to send a second letter restating the original questions and pressing the FBI for a timely and detailed response.

I submit a copy of that letter for the Record.

Congress of the United States,

House of Representatives,

Washington, DC, March 9, 2009.

Mr. Michael J. Heimbach,
Assistant Director, Counter Terrorism Division, Federal
Bureau of Investigation, Pennsylvania Ave., NW,
Washington DC.

Dear Mr. Heimbach: I was deeply disappointed with the FBI's response--hand-delivered to my office last Friday--to my letter of February 2 inquiring about the Bureau's position on meeting with the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR). It took the Bureau more than a month to respond, and the letter I received provides only a partial answer to one

of the 10 questions I posed.

In 1998 I authored the legislation that created the National Commission on Terrorism. Regrettably its recommendations were not implemented until after the attacks on 9/11. I take seriously the responsibility of congressional oversight, especially in matters with potential national security implications. For six years I served as chairman of the appropriations subcommittee with jurisdiction over the FBI and count myself among the Bureau's strongest supporters. Having resumed a leadership role this year as ranking member on the Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations subcommittee, it is important to me that the FBI provide timely and detailed responses. And so again, I request answers to the following straight-forward questions:

Has the FBI severed ties with CAIR? If so, how is the FBI planning to formally notify Members of Congress and other government officials of this decision?

If FBI policy has changed with regard to CAIR, is there any indication that this decision is being revisited by the new administration? If so, what new evidence would justify a change in course?

Is CAIR's national office still in contact with the FBI?

The FOX News report I referenced in my original letter quotes Assistant Director John Miller from the FBI Office of Public Affairs as saying: ``The FBI has had to limit its formal contact with CAIR field offices until certain issues are addressed by CAIR's national headquarters.'' What specifically are the ``certain issues'' which you have raised with CAIR? Is there still informal contact with any field offices? If so, what is the distinction between formal and informal and why is there a distinction between field offices?

To your knowledge, does CAIR receive financial contributions from foreign sources? If so, which ones and how much?

I would like these questions fully answered by this Friday, March 13, and by someone who works on counter-terrorism, rather than a public affairs officer. Other members of Congress, both House and Senate, have expressed interest in and additional information about the Bureau's position as it relates to CAIR. I would think the Bureau would be embarrassed to send the insufficient response I received.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf,
Member of Congress.

Days after my second letter, CAIR launched a public attack against me, claiming in a March 12 press release that I ``abused'' my ``office'' by ``seeking to pressure the FBI to produce negative information'' about the organization.

Those assertions are patently untrue and would not even warrant a response were they not symptomatic of what I believe to be a larger pattern of intimidation undertaken by CAIR--intimidation which is of great consequence given the national security matters at stake.

As my letters to the FBI indicate, I was seeking to better understand the Bureau's position and access information about what led to this decision. It is a conclusion which--and I agree with my Senate colleagues--is absolutely appropriate based on reports I have read for years but which, again, marks a change in course for the Bureau and, as such, deserved further explanation.

It is noteworthy that, on April 28, following my initial

unsatisfactory reply from the Bureau, Senator Kyl received a more substantive response from the FBI to his letter. In the letter to Senator Kyl, the Bureau was more detailed in explaining and in validating the original news report regarding its relationship with CAIR.

The letter reads, ``As you know, CAIR was named as an unindicted coconspirator of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development in the United States v. Holy Land Foundation, et al.

``During that trial, evidence was introduced that demonstrated a relationship among CAIR, individual CAIR founders, including its current president emeritus and its executive director, and the Palestinian committee. Evidence was also introduced that demonstrated a relationship between the Palestinian committee and Hamas, which was designated a terrorist organization in 1995. In light of that evidence, the FBI suspended all formal contacts between CAIR and the FBI.

``The FBI's decision to suspend formal contacts was not intended to reflect a wholesale judgment of the organization and its entire membership. Nevertheless, until we can resolve

[[Page H6671]]

whether there continues to be a connection between CAIR or its executives and Hamas, the FBI does not view CAIR as an appropriate liaison partner.'

I submit a copy of the Bureau's response to Senator Kyl for the Record.

U.S. Department of Justice,

Federal Bureau of Investigation,

Washington, DC, April 28, 2009.

Hon. Jon Kyl,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Dear Senator Kyl: This responds to your letter to Director Mueller dated February 24, 2009, regarding your interest in reports that the FBI has severed its liaison relationship with the Council on Islamic Relations (CAIR). I apologize for the delay in responding to your inquiry. For your information an identical letter has been sent to Senator Schumer and to Senator Coburn, M.D.

As you know, CAIR was named as an unindicted co-conspirator of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development in United States v. Holy Land Foundation et al. (Cr. No. 3:04-240-P (N.D.TX.)). During that trial, evidence was introduced that demonstrated a relationship among CAIR, individual CAIR founders (including its current President Emeritus and its Executive Director) and the Palestine Committee. Evidence was also introduced that demonstrated a relationship between the Palestine Committee and HAMAS, which was designated as a terrorist organization in 1995. In light of that evidence, the FBI suspended all formal contacts between CAIR and the FBI.

The FBI's decision to suspend formal contacts was not intended to reflect a wholesale judgment of the organization and its entire membership. Nevertheless, until we can resolve whether there continues to be a connection between CAIR or its executives and HAMAS, the FBI does not view CAIR as an appropriate liaison partner. It is important to note, however, that although the FBI has suspended all formal

outreach activities with CAIR at this time, CAIR, its officers, and members have been encouraged to report any hate crime, violation of federal civil rights or suspicious activity to the FBI.

The FBI made its own decision vis-a-vis outreach activities with this particular group. Any questions regarding broader executive branch outreach activities would be better answered by the Administration.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office if we may be of additional assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Richard C. Powers,

Assistant Director, Office of
Congressional Affairs.

R 221435Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5272
INFO AMCONSUL DUBAI

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 002127
SENSITIVE
FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PPD; INFO NEA/FO, R

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KISL, SOCI, PHUM, PGOV, KDEM, AE
SUBJECT: VISIT BY COUNCIL ON AMERICAN ISLAMIC RELATIONS
(CAIR) TO UAE

1.(U) On May 21, the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) paid a courtesy call on the Ambassador to discuss the organization's issues, outreach strategies, and its visit to the CAE. The UAE press has reported that Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al-Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai and UAE Minister of Finance and Industry, ``has endorsed a proposal to build a property in the U.S. to serve as an endowment for CAIR.'' DCM, PAO and MEPI Regional Director also participated in the meeting.

2.(U) The group expressed ideas about countering negative stereotypes about Muslims in the U.S. (``Islamophobia'') and addressing anti-Americanism in the Middle East. They mentioned previous meetings with State Department officials, U/S Karen Hughes and A/S David Welch, their attendance at the Secretary's Iftar, and spoke of a possible meeting with President Bush in the future.

3.(U) Mr. Don Myers, representing Washington, D.C. public relations firm Hill & Knowlton, provided a short demonstration of a PR campaign designed to support CAIR's overall organizational objectives defined as: 1) political empowerment of Muslims, 2) grassroots effort by CAIR to improve community relations with non-Muslims, 3) launching of an effective, long-term (5 year) advertising/outreach campaign to counter negative stereotypes about Muslims.

4.(U) Members of the CAIR delegation included: Hon. Larry Shaw, Senator (North Carolina General Assembly); Hon. Paul Findley, Former U.S. Representative; Don Myers, Washington, D.C. public relations firm Hill & Knowlton; Nihad Awad, CAIR Executive Director and Co-Founder; Cary (Ibrahim) Hooper, CAIR Communication Director and Co-Founder; Dr. Parvez Ahmed,

CAIR Board Chairman; and Dr. Nabil Sadoun, CAIR Board Member.

5.(U) CAIR delegation also paid a call earlier in the day on Sheikh Sultan bin Muhammad al-Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah, which was covered in the press.

6.(U) Sheikh Ali al-Hashemi, UAE Presidential Adviser on Islamic affairs, is hosting a reception at his house this evening, May 22, in honor of the CAIR group; Ambassador and PolOff to attend. Al-Hashemi also thanked the Ambassador for receiving the CAIR delegation.

7.(SBU) Comment: CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad told us that while they were pleased with the results of the meeting with Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid, they had no concrete information on the size of the endowment or when it might be forthcoming. Awad also mentioned that the Bin Hamoodah Group, a \$500 million/year trading company, founded by three Emirati brothers and representing Halliburton, IBM, FMC Corporation and General Motors, is CAIR's main benefactor in the UAE. One newly-rich stock trader, Talal Khoori (UAE national of Iranian origin), is believed to have donated one million dollars to CAIR.

Sison.

P 281502Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9065
INFO GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
AMCONSUL JEDDAH

UNCLAS RIYADH 005172
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: SCUL, KDEM, KISL, PGOV, PHUM, SOCI, SA
SUBJECT: VISIT BY COUNCIL ON AMERICAN ISLAMIC RELATIONS
(CAIR) TO SAUDI ARABIA
REF: ABU DHABI 2127

1.(U) Following up on a similar visit to the UAE in May (reftel), a delegation from the U.S.-based Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in June. On June 22 the group paid a courtesy call on the Embassy to discuss the organization's issues and outreach strategies. In the Ambassador's absence, DCM received the group, along with the PA Counselor and Poloff (notetaker).

2.(SBU) Prior to coming to Riyadh, the CAIR group visited Mecca and Jeddah. Although they apparently were not received at the highest levels of the SAG, the group assured the Embassy that ``King Abdullah knows CAIR very well'' and receives regular updates on the group's projects. After recalling the success of their visit to the UAE in May, the group predicted that they would be back in the region by fall to visit Kuwait and Qatar. The group also mentioned that they had been well-received in Washington by senior State Department officials, including Secretary Rice and Undersecretary Hughes.

3.(U) The core delegation consisted of CAIR Board Chairman Dr. Parvez Ahmed, Executive Director Nihad Awad, and Communications Director Cary (Ibrahim) Hooper. Accompanying them were former U.S. Representative Paul Findley and Don Myers, a former DoD official now with Hill and Knowlton public relations.

4.(U) During their hour-long meeting in the Embassy, the group presented various projects that CAIR is working on to counter negative stereotypes about Muslims in the U.S. ('`Islamophobia''), linking their work to concern over growing anti-Americanism in the Middle East. One of the current CAIR projects they discussed was the presentation of ``accurate books about Islam'' to schools and libraries in the U.S.

5.(SBU) Mr. Don Myers, representing Hill and Knowlton, gave a short demonstration of a CAIR-funded media campaign to support CAIR's overall information outreach effort. According to Myers, this private campaign will emphasize both grassroots outreach to improve American non-Muslim understanding of Muslims and the encouragement of political engagement by American Muslims. The multi-year broadcast and print campaign is to be entitled ``Let the Conversation Begin'' and is aimed at countering negative stereotypes about Muslims within the broad American public.

6.(SBU) One admitted reason for the group's current visit to the KSA was to solicit \$50 million in governmental and non-governmental contributions. PA Counselor noted that private outreach activities can provide valuable support to USG efforts to build mutual understanding overseas but cautioned that USG Public Diplomacy (PD) funds cannot be used or associated with efforts to target American audiences. The delegation was interested to hear of the Embassy's PD exchange and activities within the KSA and offered to help support them in any appropriate way. The group did not share, however, any details of their success or lack thereof in fundraising within the KSA.

Oberwetter.

American Muslims Commend FBI for Rejection of CAIR

Thirty years have passed since the Iranian revolution and 29 years since the first Islamist murder in the U.S.--that of `Ali Akbar Tabataba'i in a Washington, D.C., suburb. More than seven years ago, America received a wake-up call, on September 11, 2001, about radical Islam. However straightforwardly evil these events, they left U.S. authorities mostly baffled by extremism among American Muslims.

One disturbing example of this confusion has involved the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).

Almost from CAIR'S founding in 1994, the FBI has worked with the organization, which successfully presented itself as the ``Muslim NAACP,'' letting CAIR train bureau personnel and serve as a liaison to the American Muslim community. CAIR concentrated on terror-related law enforcement such as sensitivity in investigating extremist suspects and allegations of profiling.

[[Page H6672]]

Now, at last, the FBI-CAIR relationship has changed.

In a letter dated March 9, 2009, FBI Assistant Director John Miller wrote to U.S. Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va) confirming that the bureau has ``suspended any formal

engagement with Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) field offices around the country.' He explained that this adjustment ``comes in part as a result of evidence gathered through FBI investigation and presented in connection with the Holy Land Foundation trial. CAIR was listed as an unindicted co-conspirator in that case.'

Miller referred to the Holy Land Foundation, or HLF, having been convicted of terror financing in November 2008.

CAIR and its allies in the ``Wahhabi lobby'' reacted aggressively to the FBI's decision to distance itself from CAIR. Ten extremist Muslim groups announced on March 17, 2009, that they are ``considering suspending outreach relations with the FBI'' based on vague claims that ``American mosques and Muslim groups have been targeted.' CAIR's supporters included American Muslims for Palestine, the Islamic Circle of North America, and the Muslim Students Association, as well as the leading pro-Iranian Muslim element in America, the Islamic Educational Center of Orange County, Ca.

We, the undersigned American Muslims, have long known the true character of CAIR and its allies. Therefore:

We observe that they denounce ``terrorism'' in general terms but not the specific actions of Islamist groups like Hamas or Hezbollah. They denounce violence but not the ideologies behind it.

We observe their commitment to radical aims, their attempts to chill free speech by calling critics of radical Islam ``Islamophobes,''' and their false, ugly accusations against moderate American Muslims who disagree with their agenda.

We reject any claim that CAIR and its supporters are legitimate civil liberties advocates or appropriate partners between the U.S. government and American Muslims.

We congratulate the FBI for adopting a firmer attitude toward CAIR, as a defense of Americans of all faiths from the menace of radical Islam, including Muslims of all backgrounds--Sunni, Shia, Sufi, secular, etc.

We call on the U.S. Department of Justice to affirm and continue this decision.

We call on the entire United States government to follow suit in rejecting relations with the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Dr. Kemal Silay, President, Center for Islamic Pluralism, www.islamicpluralism.org;

Supna Zaidi, Assistant Director, Islamist Watch, www.islamist-watch.org;

M. Zuhdi Jasser, American Islamic Forum for Democracy, www.aifdemocracy.org;

Imaad Malik, Fellow, Center for Islamic Pluralism;

Dr. Ahmed Subhy Mansour, International Quranic Center, www.ahl-alquran.com;

Khalim Massoud, reformislam@gmail.com;

Nawab Agha Mousvi, American Muslim Congress and Center for Islamic Pluralism;

Kiran Sayyed, Council for Democracy and Tolerance, <http://cfdnt.com/>;

Stephen Suleyman Schwartz, Executive Director, Center for Islamic Pluralism;

Shia.Protest@yahoo.com;

Dr. Jalal Zuberi, Southern U.S. Director, Center for Islamic Pluralism.

I plan to take the remainder of my time to explore many of these same concerns and talk about why everything I've read, studied and observed has led me to believe that the Bureau's decision is not only defensible but advisable and that it ought to, in fact, inform the actions of other public officials, policymakers and the press, many of whom consistently--and I would argue mistakenly--look to CAIR to speak for mainstream Muslim Americans.

Zhudi Jasser, himself a Muslim and president of the Islamic Forum for Democracy, makes a critical distinction between ``Islam'' and ``Islamism.'' ``Islam'' is, of course, a faith which has an estimated worldwide following of over 1 billion people. ``Islamism,'' however, according to Mr. Jasser, is ``a coercive governmental and political construct that seeks to impose shar'ia--Islam jurisprudence--upon society.''

In 2007, in the publication Family Security Matters, Jasser wrote that CAIR uses ``the protection of religion when the facts are not on their side. They use the discourse of politics when they want to push forth their Islamist agenda with the presumption of speaking for all Muslims. They will delve into the political only on their own terms in both foreign and domestic policy, but when they are on the receiving end of political criticism, they run for cover under the guise of victimization.''

A dispassionate look at CAIR's public posture shows that Mr. Jasser's observations ring true.

In 1998, I authored the legislation that created the National Commission on Terrorism. That same year, in CAIR's own words from a press release, it ``asked Muslims to contact leaders of a House-Senate conference committee and urge them to amend or eliminate new legislation that would create a National Commission on Terrorism.''

This was a misguided lobbying effort at best. Fortunately, it was unsuccessful, and the bipartisan commission was authorized to conduct its work.

A Congressional Research Service report described the main finding of the commission this way: ``It calls on the U.S. Government to prepare more actively to prevent and deal with a future mass casualty, catastrophic terrorist attack.''

Regrettably, the commission's recommendations, sent to Congress in June 2000, were generally ignored until after the attacks of September 11, 2001, when 3,000 people were killed, including 30 from my congressional district.

Following the commission's public report, CAIR's executive director, Nihad Awad, said in a June 4 press release, ``The fight against terrorism is one that should be undertaken, but that struggle should not be based on stereotypes, false assumptions or the political agendas of foreign governments. If the past is any indication, all or most of these new provisions will be used to target Muslims in this country and worldwide. It is American Muslim groups whose fund-raising will be restricted. It is Muslim students who will be monitored.''

Indeed, the FBI has restricted the fund-raising of some Muslim groups, but only when those organizations have been found to be a cover for terrorist financing, as was true most notably with the Holy Land Foundation.

When the Holy Land Foundation was shuttered 3 months after 9/11, CAIR warned in a December 4, 2001, press release that this was an ``unjust and counterproductive move that can only damage America's credibility with Muslims in this country and around the world and could create the impression that there has been a shift from a war on terrorism to an attack on Islam.''

This purported ``attack on Islam'' proved to be baseless in the face of the Holy Land Foundation verdicts.

A November 25, 2008, Department of Justice press release following the initial verdicts in the foundation case quotes Patrick Rowan, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. He says, ``For many years, the Holy Land Foundation used the guise of charity to raise and

funnel millions of dollars to the infrastructure of the Hamas terrorist organization. This prosecution demonstrates our resolve to ensure that humanitarian relief efforts are not used as a mechanism to disguise and enable support for terrorist groups.'

As I noted earlier, CAIR was named as an unindicted coconspirator in the Holy Land Foundation case, which makes its cautionary word about the ``injustice'' of closing the ``charity'' suspect.

In a Federal court filing from December 2007, Federal prosecutors described CAIR as ``having conspired with other affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood to support terrorists.''' The government also stated ``proof that the conspirators used deception to conceal from the American public their connections to terrorists was introduced'' in the Holy Land Foundation trial.

{time} 1330

In a footnote, government prosecutors pointed out: ``From its founding by Muslim Brotherhood leaders, CAIR conspired with other affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood to support terrorists.'''

Further, according to Senate testimony, CAIR received a \$5,000 donation for the Holy Land Foundation. Initially, in written testimony submitted September 10, 2003, to the Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security, CAIR denied that this was the case. Specifically, Mr. Awad said claims to the contrary were ``an outright lie. Our organization did not receive any seed money from the'' Holy Land Foundation. But when confronted with the IRS form on which the Holy Land Foundation disclosed the contribution, Mr. Awad changed his position in supplemental testimony submitted to the subcommittee saying that the amount in question was a donation like any other.

CAIR ultimately filed an amicus brief seeking removal from the list of unindicted coconspirators in the Holy Land Foundation case. In September of 2007, prosecutors made several arguments in favor of maintaining CAIR

[[Page H6673]]

status, saying: ``CAIR has been identified by the government at trial as a participant in an ongoing and ultimately unlawful conspiracy to support a designated terrorist organization, a conspiracy from which CAIR never withdrew.'''

The Holy Land Foundation trial revealed more about CAIR than simply its ties to that particular entity. Rather, the trial brought to light, in the public square, the genesis of the organization. According to an October 14, 2008, Dallas Morning News story: ``Testimony has suggested that CAIR's founder Omar Ahmad and it's current executive director, Nihad Awad, participated in a 1993 meeting of purported Hamas sympathizers. Some Holy Land defendants attended the Philadelphia meeting, bugged by the FBI.''

A day later, the Dallas Morning News reported that FBI special agent Lara Burns testified during the Holy Land Foundation case that CAIR ``was formed in the aftermath of a 1993 meeting by Palestinian activists in America who brainstormed ways to spread pro-Hamas messages here without attracting too much attention.''

A Department of Justice press release issued on November 24, 2008, when the Holy Land Foundation verdicts came down: ``The government case included testimony that in the early 1990s, Hamas' parent organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, planned to establish a network of organizations in the U.S. to spread a militant Islamist message and to raise money for Hamas. . . . HLF became the chief fundraising arm for the Palestine Committee in the U.S. created by the Muslim Brotherhood to support Hamas. According to a wiretap of a 1993 Palestine Committee meeting in

Philadelphia, former Holy Land Foundation President and CEO Shukri Abu Baker spoke about playing down Hamas' ties in order to keep raising money in the U.S. Another wiretapped phone call included Abdulrahman Odeh, Holy Land Foundation's New Jersey representative, referring to a suicide bombing as 'a beautiful operation.'

According to a National Review article in the pre-CAIR days, both Nihad Awad and Omar Ahmad were top officers in the Islamic Association for Palestine. Former FBI counterterrorism chief Oliver 'Buck' Revell called Awad's former employer, the Islamic Association for Palestine, 'a front organization for Hamas that engages in propaganda for Islamic militants.'

A September 24, 2001, L.A. Times story described the connection between the Islamic Association of Palestine and the Holy Land Foundation this way: 'The IAP and the Holy Land were founded and funded by Mousa abu Marzook. . . . He's also the political leader of the terrorist group Hamas.'

Andrew McCarthy, a former Federal prosecutor who led the 1995 prosecution against Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the 'blind sheik' who was found guilty of planning the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, in a National Review article notes that there are 'several persons connected to CAIR who have been convicted of Federal felonies including terrorism.'

McCarthy includes in the group Ghassan Elashi, one of the founding members of CAIR's Dallas-area chapter, and also co-founder and former chairman of the Holy Land Foundation. According to July 9, 2007, Dallas Morning News report, Elashi was sentenced to 'nearly 7 years in prison for doing business with a terrorist and violating export laws.' In a 1994 forum discussion videotaped at Barry University, CAIR's Mr. Awad said, 'I'm in support of the Hamas movement.' CAIR has subsequently sought to discredit his video on his Web site by saying this quote was in response to a specific question and that Hamas was only designated a 'foreign terrorist organization,' in January 1995 and did not commit its first wave of suicide bombings until late 1994 after Mr. Awad made the comment. It is noteworthy that Hamas' 1988 covenant describes itself as 'one of the wings in the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine' and says that 'the day of judgment will not come about until Muslims fight Jews and kill them.'

CAIR's defense and Mr. Awad's quote based simply on chronology is wanting in light of Hamas' founding principles which clearly embrace violence. As the Washington Post's Richard Cohen wrote in April of 2009: 'Read the Hamas charter. It is not some uplifting cry of a downtrodden people seeking its freedom but a repellant anti-Semitic screed.'

CAIR's mission statement focuses on protecting the civil rights of Muslims in America and on improving Islam's image. But CAIR's action under the umbrella of civil rights raises troubling questions.

In November 2006, US Airways removed six imams from a flight following passenger reports of unusual behavior. An Investor's Business Daily piece described the imams' action this way: 'At the gate before boarding, they angrily cursed the U.S. Then they bowed to Mecca and prayed 'very loud' shouting 'Allah Allah, Allah' according to the gate agent and another witness. On the plane, they didn't take their assigned seats and instead fanned out to the front, the middle, and the rear of the plane. . . . Some ran back and forth speaking to each other in Arabic. Adding to suspicions, most of them asked for seatbelt extensions even though they didn't need them--or even use them.'

'Following the incident, the imams and CAIR filed a lawsuit against US Airways, the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Airports Commission and 'John Doe' passengers,' meaning the passengers on the plane.

Omar Mohammedi, the New York attorney who represented the imams, was a former president for the board of directors for CAIR, New York. The

suit charged that the John Doe passengers ``may have made false reports against plaintiffs solely with the intent to discriminate against them on the basis of their race, religion, ethnicity and national origin.''

CAIR subsequently called on the Department of Justice to investigate violations of civil liberties for the six religious leaders taken off the plane.

The then-president of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a Washington, DC public interest-based law firm protecting the free expression of all religious traditions, wrote the following letter to CAIR regarding suit against the John Doe passengers:

``This is a first for us. We have never opposed someone else's claim for religious discrimination but this tactic of threatening suit against ordinary citizens is so far beyond the traditions of civil rights litigation in the United States that we must oppose it to defend the good name of religious liberty itself.''

It is noteworthy that the Becket Fund has successfully argued cases for Muslims including securing a place for Muslim public school students in Texas to pray. In March of 2007, the Arizona Republic called the suit against ordinary citizens ``intimidation by lawsuit.''. On April 9, 2007, the San Francisco Chronicle reported that CAIR's Ibrahim Hooper had a notably different take: ``It is wrongheaded for observers to be suspicious of innocent behavior. Praying or asking for a seatbelt extension--simply because a Muslim `That Muslim is wearing a tie,' Hooper scoffed. `He can take it off and strangle someone.' ''

The U.S. Department of Transportation conducted an investigation following the passenger complaints and found that US Airways did not discriminate against the six imams when it removed them. In a letter to CAIR's acting legal director, the assistant general counsel for Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings wrote the following: ``We find the decision to remove the imams from the aircraft was based on information available to the captain at the time and was reasonable . . . it appears that the captain decided to remove the imams because of security concerns as a result of the sum of the imams' actual and perceived behavior, not their race or ethnicity. The fact that the captain's concerns were not borne out in hindsight does not make the action that he took discriminatory.''

CAIR's approach in this case was not simply an inconvenience. Rather, it had potential security implications as well. Airports nationwide implore travelers to report suspicious activities. Signs on major highways, bridges and tunnels throughout America do the same. New York Metropolitan Transit Authority introduced an ad campaign which has been adopted by municipalities around the country as part of their own anti-terrorism campaign. The ad features the following admonition: if you see something, say something.

[[Page H6674]]

But CAIR would have had Americans thinking, If you see something, think twice before you say something, lest you get mired in a lawsuit. USA Today editorialized in the days following the imams' suit and said: ``This legal tactic seems designed to intimidate passengers willing to do exactly what authorities have requested--say something about suspicious activity.''. The paper went on to report that ``the imams want to know the names of an elderly couple who turned around to watch and then made cell phone calls presumably to authorities.''

In a response to the incident at the Minneapolis Airport, Congressman Peter King, the ranking member on the House Homeland Security Committee, and Congressman Steve Pearce first moved to provide immunity to those on public transportation who report suspicious activity through a recommittal motion to the Rail and Public Transportation

Security Act of 2007, which the House overwhelmingly passed in March 2007 by a vote of 304-121.

Later in the 110th Congress, despite CAIR's public lobbying effort, Mr. King and Senator Joe Lieberman were successful in adding a section to the 9/11 Commission Implementation Act, Public Law 11053, which provides legal immunity to individuals who report terrorists or suspicious activity which they see on trains or planes to law enforcement.

In what has become a familiar refrain, Nihad Awad, on FOX News, March 31, 2007, said that Peter King's legislative efforts were encouraging Islamophobia. In fact, the bill language had the potential to encourage other John Does who encounter suspicious activity to report it to authorities.

CAIR's funding is also a source of interest. Apart from the financial link with Holy Land Foundation, there is much that is unclear as to whether and to what degree CAIR is receiving contributions from foreign governments. In a March 2007 interview with the Chicago Tribune, Ahmed Rehab, CAIR-Chicago's executive director, said, ``Neither CAIR chapters nor the national office solicits or accepts money from any foreign government.''

A January 2007 open letter on CAIR's Web site says they are ``proud to receive support of every individual, whether Muslim, Christian, Jewish, or of another faith background, who supports the mission of promoting justice and mutual understanding as long as they are not an official of any foreign government and there are no strings attached to the request.''

Yet in a sensitive, but unclassified, May 2006 State Department cable which was brought to my attention, U.S. embassy staff in Abu Dhabi cabled that the UAE press was reporting that ``Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al-Maktoum, deputy ruler of Dubai and UAE Minister of Finance and Industry has endorsed a proposal to build a property in the U.S. to serve as an endowment for CAIR.'''

{time} 1345

In another sensitive, but unclassified, June 2006 State Department cable, U.S. Embassy staff in Saudi Arabia reported the following after meeting with a CAIR delegation. The cable said, ``One admitted reason for the group's current visit to the KSA (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) was to solicit \$50 million in governmental and nongovernmental contributions.'' I submit both cables for the Record.

According to the June 2006 cable, ``The core delegation consisted of CAIR Board Chairman Dr. Parez Ahmed, Executive Director Nihad Awad, and Communications Director Cary (Ibrahim) Hooper.''

On an MSNBC talk show with Tucker Carlson in September 2006, just 3 months after the trip, Ibrahim Hooper claimed, ``To my knowledge, we don't take money from the Government of Saudi Arabia.''

I want to make it clear that it is important to understand that American Muslims, like all Americans, are entitled to organize, advocate, and engage in the political process; such are the makings of a vibrant democracy. They have taken advantage of the opportunity America provides for every background. They are teachers, doctors, policemen, they are mothers and fathers and neighbors.

I am reminded of a young Pakistani American who is Muslim that I had the privilege of meeting during one of my visits to Walter Reed Hospital. I met him when he was in the midst of his physical therapy, therapy that was necessary because he had lost both legs while in combat in Iraq. Despite his tremendous sacrifice, he was committed to the hard work of rehabilitation, in part because he hoped to go back to Iraq. He was a patriot of the sort that ought to give us pause and ought to make us proud.

I want to be absolutely clear that concerns I have with CAIR are specific to the organization and not to the Muslim faith. Even a passing glance at my record in Congress should put any thought to the contrary to rest.

In Sudan, Chechnya, China, Bosnia, and Kosovo, I have spoken out in defense of people of the Muslim faith. I have been to Sudan five times, including leading the first congressional delegation to Darfur, where nearly all the victims of the genocide are Muslim.

I was the only Member of Congress to visit Chechnya during the fighting in 1995. When I returned, I condemned the violence against the Chechen people, most of whom were Muslim, and called for a cease-fire.

I was one of the only Members to visit Muslim men in a Serb-run prisoner of war camp in Bosnia, where I saw evidence of a modern-day Holocaust taking place. And very early on, I began speaking out against the ethnic cleansing and the culture of genocide against the Bosnian people. I spoke out in favor of lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia so that the Muslim Bosnian Government could defend itself. I have visited Kosovo five times, and I voted and spoke out on the floor to approve the bombing campaign to stop the Serbian atrocities against Muslims in Kosovo.

I was one of the first Members to raise concerns about the persecution of Muslims in China, and continue to speak out when few others do.

Further, I was the author of the International Religious Freedom Act which created the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom as well as the International Religious Freedom Office at the State Department. Central to the act was the assertion that "freedom of religious beliefs and practices is a universal human right and fundamental freedom." The legislation, and ultimately the offices it created, strengthens the United States' advocacy on behalf of individuals persecuted in foreign countries on account of religion, which, of course, includes persecuted Muslims.

America is an imperfect Nation, but a great Nation, a "shining city on a hill" as described by our Founders, a beacon of hope for persecuted and oppressed people. For centuries, the "huddled masses" depicted in the iconic poem at the base of the Statue of Liberty have arrived on these shores seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

My grandparents immigrated to America from Germany. My father served in World War II. Part of the reason he did so was that he felt a need to show that his loyalty was to America. Even though my grandparents were both native German speakers, when World War I broke out, my grandmother decided from that day forward only English would be spoken in their home.

I share this bit of personal history to illustrate that I am sensitive to the challenges facing new immigrants, especially during times of war. There have been instances in our Nation's history, especially when our country has been under attack, where the civil liberties of certain groups of people have been violated because other people were afraid. This is inexcusable. But this is the exception, not the rule.

Our experiment in self-governance has been marked by an unwavering commitment to basic freedoms for all people, among them the right to worship according to the dictates of your conscience. Many American Muslims left countries where such freedom is unimaginable; however, in a pluralistic society like ours, these principles are paramount. To silence or otherwise repress people of faith is inimical to the American way. In a public discourse, to accuse someone of religious bigotry or intolerance is a sure way to stifle debate.

On October 4, 2008, the editorial page editor of The Columbus Dispatch spoke to CAIR's bent toward accusation as a means of muzzling

debate. They said, ``For many years, CAIR has waged a campaign to intimidate and silence

[[Page H6675]]

anyone who raises alarms about the dangers of Islamic extremism. CAIR's rationale is that discussions of Islamic extremism lead to animosity not just toward those who twist Islam into a justification for terrorism, but toward all who practice Islam.

``CAIR's concern is understandable, but its response is unreasonable.'' They went on to say, ``The group acts properly when it hammers home the point that only a small number of Muslims support religiously motivated violence, and that targeting law-abiding Muslims is wrong. Where CAIR errs is in labeling anyone who discusses Islamic terrorism a bigot and hatemonger, an Islamophobe, to use CAIR's favorite slur.'' Ironically, some of CAIR's most pointed attacks have in fact been aimed at other Muslims who dare to have differing views.

In a 2006 Philadelphia Inquirer piece, CAIR's Hooper is quoted as saying Zuhdi Jasser, President of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, who has been critical of CAIR, was ``providing others with an opportunity to advance an agenda that is hostile to the American Muslim community.''

Given CAIR's genesis, its associations with known terrorist entities and individuals, and its tactics--namely, attempting to discredit anyone who dares to speak out against its organization--their cries of victimization and accusations of religious bigotry appear disingenuous.

And given the dangerous world in which we live today, any attempt to literally silence honest discourse about the nature of the threats facing our country is intolerable and must be addressed.

I stand today with other elected officials who have raised questions about CAIR. Senator Schumer describes CAIR as an organization ``which we know has ties to terrorism.'' Democratic Senator Dick Durbin has said that CAIR is ``unusual in its extreme rhetoric and its association with groups that are suspect.''

Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer withdrew an award she gave to an official at a local CAIR chapter because she ``had concerns about statements by some CAIR officials and about claims of financial links to terrorism.'' And other Senators, including Republicans Jon Kyl and Tom Coburn, have voiced support for the FBI's actions in severing ties with CAIR.

I stand today with counterterrorism experts, including Steven Pomerantz, the FBI's former chief of counterterrorism, who has stated, ``CAIR, its leaders, and its activities effectively give aid to international terrorist groups.''

And perhaps most importantly, I stand with thousands of American Muslims for whom CAIR does not speak. In June, 2007, the Washington Times published a report which analyzed CAIR's tax documents and found that CAIR's membership has declined by 90 percent since 9/11. Zuhdi Jasser of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy was quoted in the article as saying, ``This is the untold story in the myth that CAIR represents the American Muslim population. They only represent their membership and donors.''

In 1999, the Islamic Supreme Council of America, ISCA, issued an open letter to all Muslims after Shaykh Kabbani, Chairman of the ISCA, spoke at a State Department open forum on Islamic extremism and subsequently came under public attack by several organizations, including CAIR. In the open letter, ISCA says the organizations attacking Kabbani, among them CAIR, ``have not quoted a single statement of Shaykh Kabbani in full or in context. Moreover, the statements were augmented with emotionally charged words like `promoted and generalized an allegation,' `outrageous statements,' and `Islamophobic,' thereby

thwarting his original intention and message.' The letter goes on to say, ``In their action alerts, CAIR has a chronic tendency to negatively juxtapose Islam and Americans.''

Consider, too, the words of Dr. Hedieh Mirahmadi, then general secretary of the Islamic Supreme Council of America, quoted in a 1999 ISCA press release following this same incident. She remarked, ``The carefully orchestrated and calculated plot to intimidate Shaykh Kabbani into retracting his statements only goes to prove the unwillingness to tolerate differences of opinion and belief, as well as the extent to which they would go to silence the voice of opposition.''

Or consider the testimony of Zeyno Baran, a prominent Turkish American scholar who is presently a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. In July of 2008, speaking before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, she stated that she believed CAIR ``was created by the Muslim Brotherhood to influence the U.S. Government, Congress, and NGOs, along with academic and media groups'' and lamented that, ``despite being founded by leading Islamists, CAIR has successfully portrayed itself as a mainstream Muslim organization over the past 15 years and has been treated as such by many U.S. Government officials.''

Or most recently, an April 2009 advertisement in Weekly Standard authored by ``American Muslims,'' applauded the FBI for rejecting CAIR. The signatories included representatives of six different organizations, and I submit a copy of the ad for the Record. The signatories wrote, ``We observe that they (CAIR) denounce `terrorism' in general terms, but not the specific actions of Islamic groups like Hamas or Hezbollah. They denounce violence, but not the ideologies behind it.' Further, the group acknowledged CAIR's ``attempts to chill free speech by calling critics of radical Islam `Islamophobes.' ''

Finally, I would like to close my speech by recognizing the men and women of the FBI and the hard work they do every day to keep this country safe, and to restate the FBI's own words, ``Until we can resolve whether there continues to be a connection between CAIR or its executives and Hamas, the FBI does not view CAIR as an appropriate liaison partner.''

I completely agree.

R 221435Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5272
INFO AMCONSUL DUBAI

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 002127
SENSITIVE
FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PPD; INFO NEA/FO, R

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KISL, SOCI, PHUM, PGOV, KDEM, AE
SUBJECT: VISIT BY COUNCIL ON AMERICAN ISLAMIC RELATIONS
(CAIR) TO UAE

1.(U) On May 21, the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) paid a courtesy call on the Ambassador to discuss the organization's issues, outreach strategies, and its visit to the UAE. The UAE press has reported that Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al-Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai and UAE Minister of Finance and Industry, ``has endorsed a proposal to build a property in the U.S. to serve as an endowment for CAIR.''
DCM, PAO and MEPI Regional Director also participated in the meeting.

2.(U) The group expressed ideas about countering negative stereotypes about Muslims in the U.S. (``Islamophobia'') and addressing anti-Americanism in the Middle East. They

mentioned previous meetings with State Department officials, U/S Karen Hughes and A/S David Welch, their attendance at the Secretary's Iftar, and spoke of a possible meeting with President Bush in the future.

3.(U) Mr. Don Myers, representing Washington, D.C. public relations firm Hill & Knowlton, provided a short demonstration of a PR campaign designed to support CAIR's overall organizational objectives defined as: 1) political empowerment of Muslims, 2) grassroots effort by CAIR to improve community relations with non-Muslims, 3) launching of an effective, long-term (5 year) advertising/outreach campaign to counter negative stereotypes about Muslims.

4.(U) Members of the CAIR delegation included: Hon. Larry Shaw, Senator (North Carolina General Assembly); Hon. Paul Findley, Former U.S. Representative; Don Myers, Washington, D.C. public relations firm Hill & Knowlton; Nihad Awad, CAIR Executive Director and Co-Founder; Cary (Ibrahim) Hooper, CAIR Communication Director and Co-Founder; Dr. Parvez Ahmed, CAIR Board Chairman; and Dr. Nabil Sadoun, CAIR Board Member.

5.(U) CAIR delegation also paid a call earlier in the day on Sheikh Sultan bin Muhammad al-Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah, which was covered in the press.

6.(U) Sheikh Ali al-Hashemi, UAE Presidential Adviser on Islamic affairs, is hosting a reception at his house this evening, May 22, in honor of the CAIR group; Ambassador and PolOff to attend. Al-Hashemi also thanked the Ambassador for receiving the CAIR delegation.

7.(SBU) Comment: CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad told us that while they were pleased with the results of the meeting with Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid, they had no concrete information on the size of the endowment or when it might be forthcoming. Awad also mentioned that the Bin Hamoodah Group, a \$500 million/year trading company, founded by three Emirati brothers and representing Haliburton, IBM, FMC Corporation

[[Page H6676]]

and General Motors, is CAIR's main benefactor in the UAE. One newly-rich stock trader, Talal Khoori (UAE national of Iranian origin), is believed to have donated one million dollars to CAIR.

Sison.

P 281502Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9065
INFO GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
AMCONSUL JEDDAH

UNCLAS RIYADH 005172
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: SCUL, KDEM, KISL, PGOV, PHUM, SOCI, SA
SUBJECT: VISIT BY COUNCIL ON AMERICAN ISLAMIC RELATIONS
(CAIR) TO SAUDI ARABIA

REF: ABU DHABI 2127

1.(U) Following up on a similar visit to the UAE in May (reftel), a delegation from the U.S.-based Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) visited the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia (KSA) in June. On June 22 the group paid a courtesy call on the Embassy to discuss the organization's issues and outreach strategies. In the Ambassador's absence, DCM received the group, along with the PA Counselor and Poloff (notetaker).

2.(SBU) Prior to coming to Riyadh, the CAIR group visited Mecca and Jeddah. Although they apparently were not received at the highest levels of the SAG, the group assured the Embassy that ``King Abdullah knows CAIR very well'' and receives regular updates on the group's projects. After recalling the success of their visit to the UAE in May, the group predicted that they would be back in the region by fall to visit Kuwait and Qatar. The group also mentioned that they had been well-received in Washington by senior State Department officials, including Secretary Rice and Undersecretary Hughes.

3.(U) The core delegation consisted of CAIR Board Chairman Dr. Parvez Ahmed, Executive Director Nihad Awad, and Communications Director Cary (Ibrahim) Hooper. Accompanying them were former U.S. Representative Paul Findley and Don Myers, a former DoD official now with Hill and Knowlton public relations.

4.(U) During their hour-long meeting in the Embassy, the group presented various projects that CAIR is working on to counter negative stereotypes about Muslims in the U.S. (``Islamophobia''), linking their work to concern over growing anti-Americanism in the Middle East. One of the current CAIR projects they discussed was the presentation of ``accurate books about Islam'' to schools and libraries in the U.S.

5.(SBU) Mr. Don Myers, representing Hill and Knowlton, gave a short demonstration of a CAIR-funded media campaign to support CAIR's overall information outreach effort. According to Myers, this private campaign will emphasize both grassroots outreach to improve American non-Muslim understanding of Muslims and the encouragement of political engagement by American Muslims. The multi-year broadcast and print campaign is to be entitled ``Let the Conversation Begin'' and is aimed at countering negative stereotypes about Muslims within the broad American public.

6.(SBU) One admitted reason for the group's current visit to the KSA was to solicit \$50 million in governmental and non-governmental contributions. PA Counselor noted that private outreach activities can provide valuable support to USG efforts to build mutual understanding overseas but cautioned that USG Public Diplomacy (PD) funds cannot be used or associated with efforts to target American audiences. The delegation was interested to hear of the Embassy's PD exchange and activities within the KSA and offered to help support them in any appropriate way. The group did not share, however, any details of their success or lack thereof in fundraising within the KSA.

Oberwetter.
