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Planned Military Recruiting Center Attack: 40th Terror Plot Against the United States Foiled

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On June 22, the FBI arrested Abu Khalid Abdul-Latif and Walli Mujahidh in a Seattle warehouse, where the two suspects had arranged to purchase weapons from an anonymous informant in contact with the Seattle Police Department. They were looking to purchase automatic machine guns and grenades in preparation for an attack on a military recruiting station in Seattle. Since the arrests have been made, authorities have learned that Abdul-Latif, a Seattle native, had initially planned to attack the Joint Base Lewis-McChord with his friend, Los Angeles resident Mujahidh. The target was later changed to the Seattle Military Entrance Processing Station for undisclosed reasons.

This is the 40th terrorist plot that has been foiled in America since the 9/11 attacks nearly 10 years ago. It is also one of countless examples of the continued need for robust partnerships among federal, state, and local governments on counterterrorism matters. The Seattle Police Department and FBI worked well in coordinating their efforts, which is encouraging. However, the Obama Administration and Congress should still remain committed to real reforms that will break down walls in information sharing and give state and local law enforcement a real role in counterterrorism activities.

Continued Advancement Needed. In the decade since the events of 9/11, the country has thwarted 40 attempted attacks. While on one hand this shows that U.S. counterterrorism and intelligence officials have been successful in executing

their job, it also shows that the terrorists who aspire to attack this country are as determined as ever. In order to keep ahead of this continued threat, the U.S. should recognize:

- ***Need for a vigorous intelligence community.*** Keeping the PATRIOT Act current is vital to the cause of preventing terrorist threats. Allowing it to expire would be detrimental to the fight against terrorism abroad and within America's borders. The PATRIOT Act's provisions modernize intelligence and legal authorities, ensuring that terrorism investigators have the same tools as those available in criminal investigations and enabling them to better focus on protecting against and preventing attacks. With use of the PATRIOT Act's "roving" surveillance provision, the intelligence community was able to stop a plot to attack the New York subway system in 2009. While Congress recently approved a short-term (one-year) extension of the act, Congress should now look to making the act's sunset provisions permanent.
- ***Need for increased information sharing.*** It is imperative for different groups to share information and intelligence in counterterrorism efforts,

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whether it is with United States allies abroad or agencies within the government or between the different levels of government. The Joint Terrorism Task Force, for instance, has proven to be a critical tool in counterterrorism. Increased efforts at information sharing will amplify efficiency and timeliness in the counterterrorism field. The Administration needs to recognize the importance of these programs and work to expand them.

- **Need for state and local participation.** The country has recently seen an increase of threats from one or two people rather than a group. With this changing profile of terrorist threats, adaptive approaches to counterterrorism—including fostering a greater role for state and local governments—are essential. State and local law enforcement officials tend to be more accustomed to their communities and are, therefore, more aware of when something is unusual. For instance, local police were critical in the apprehension of Kevin James, the founder of the radical Islamist group Jam'iyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh, who plotted to attack military recruitment centers in Southern California.

Success Should Not Bring Complacency. The past 10 years have shown that the terrorist threat against the United States will not relent and will only continue to evolve over time. While the thwarting of 40 terrorist attacks since 9/11 shows that U.S. law enforcement and intelligence has been successful, it does not mean that the system is perfect—room for improvement remains. This ultimately means that the Administration should take action to remain one step ahead of those who wish to do harm to the American people.

The best way to maximize efficacy and efficiency is to equip law enforcement and intelligence officials with the tools they need, foster greater information sharing, and ensure the participation of all forms of government. With these improvements and continued vigilance, this nation will be better prepared to avert the next wave of terrorist threats.

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