



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 27, 2006

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The Wisconsin Attorney General Must Engage in the War Against Terrorism

By JB Van Hollen

I have received some heat from my political opponents for saying that there are terrorists in Wisconsin...training here and raising money here. They claim that saying such things is irresponsible.

My primary opponent has even said terrorism should not be a concern of the Wisconsin Attorney General. His exact quote: "This isn't a federal law enforcement agency. This isn't about terrorism."

While I've been critical of the current Attorney General, at least she understands that the state does have a role in the war on terrorism.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice's Division of Criminal Investigation-Special Assignments Bureau is responsible for issues involving domestic security and terrorism. This includes looking out for organized plots to disrupt security here by committing widespread violence, conducting bioterrorism and interrupting economic activity. The DOJ's Special Assignments Bureau is also the Wisconsin liaison for INTERPOL, the agency which promotes mutual assistance among law enforcement authorities in the prevention of international crimes.

I respectfully disagree with all three of my opponents' desire to put their heads in the sand and ignore the existence of the terrorist threats we face, and I strongly disagree with my primary opponent who believes the Attorney General shouldn't focus on those threats.

Take the DOJ's Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), which used a quarter of a million dollar Homeland Security grant to establish a statewide terrorist intelligence database that allows law enforcement to access real-time intelligence on domestic and foreign terrorist threats. (That grant is just part of the anti-terror expenditures here. The Department of Homeland Security spent more 37 million dollars in Wisconsin in 2005 alone.) But dollars aren't the only answer. For example, As Attorney General, I will make sure law enforcement has the skills and resources to track and capture would-be terrorists by intercepting email and cell phone communications.

Are there terrorists in Wisconsin to track? While my opponents scoff at the notion, and while federal law prohibits me from commenting on even the existence of any information I may have as the result of having served as a United States Attorney here in Wisconsin, you don't have to take my word for it. A cursory look at news accounts indicates that, of course there are terrorists in Wisconsin.

Terrorism is a psychological strategy for gaining political/social ends by deliberately creating a climate of fear among the civilian population. Terrorists come in all stripes and shapes, and are both domestic and foreign. And they do not only exist in the big cities on the East and West Coasts.

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Add one

- On November 22nd, 24th and again on December 24th of last year, someone placed pipe bombs in a parking ramp in Madison.
- In 2004, Rajib Mitra was sentenced to 8 years in prison after my office successfully prosecuted him for hacking into and disrupting the Madison police radio system. Mitra disrupted the police radio system up to 21 times between January and August 2003.
- On October 9, 2004, someone caused two power transmission towers in Oak Creek to fall by loosening and/or removing several bolts from the base of the towers. This knocked out power to 17,000 customers, including Mitchell International Airport.
- Between 1984 and 2000 the US Navy's Project ELF (Extremely Low Frequency) - was shut down five times by activists who damaged the 28-mile-long transmitter antennae by cutting down the poles that support it. *I should note here, that as District Attorney of Ashland County I handled prosecutions of demonstrators accused of trespassing or damage to Navy equipment at the Clam Lake ELF site.*

Remember that Zacarias Moussaoui, the French Moroccan member of Al Qaeda, was arrested while in flight training in neighboring Minnesota just weeks before the 9/11 attacks. And just a few months ago, a federal grand jury indicted three Toledo-area men for terrorist activities. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales said it was work by the FBI and the Toledo Joint Terrorism Task Force that led to the indictments.

Terrorism is a threat in Wisconsin. It would be naïve and irresponsible to assume otherwise. Between cutting edge labs at the state's universities, the lock and dams along the Mississippi, majestic courthouses and the Capitol building, to widely-attended sporting attractions, there are several potential high-value terrorism targets in Wisconsin. We should not be paranoid, but we must be prepared.

The Attorney General must, like all law enforcement, remain vigilant regarding all possible threats to public safety.

How can anyone believe that Wisconsin is protected by some invisible force field? That, somehow, terrorists can't cross, and their plans can't penetrate, the Wisconsin state line?

The Wisconsin Attorney General and my primary opponent are taking 20th Century approaches to 21st Century criminal justice issues. Considering the complex nature of many of our most serious threats, no one law enforcement unit—be it DOJ, Milwaukee Police, or the Vilas County Sheriff's Department can possibly meet those threats alone. DOJ and the state's leading law enforcement officer personally, should be the driving catalysis to put together regional partnerships and expertise. I will.

Building off my experience as a local and federal prosecutor, I will establish Multi-jurisdictional Action Teams to coordinate, train and assist local law enforcement to meet today's modern threats. These MATs would engage in a cooperative effort to not only fight crime but also to make internal procedural changes that reflect best practices and suggest needed changes in policy

Twenty eight county district attorneys, 20 county sheriffs and 37 prominent elected Republican legislators are backing my campaign because they know I have the experience and integrity to fight crime as Attorney General. This includes fighting cyber-crime, the scourge of methamphetamine, and yes, *the threat posed by potential terrorists here.*

We must be vigilant and prepared to fight all crime. To do otherwise would be irresponsible.

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