Obama to host global terrorism summit

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12 January 2015

The Obama administration announced Sunday that it would convene a global summit on the struggle against "violent extremism around the world" on February 18 at the White House.

The announcement of the White House summit seemed to be an effort to reassert a leading role for US imperialism in the development of anti-democratic methods worldwide. The statement issued by White House spokesman Josh Earnest cited the events in Ottawa, Sydney and Paris as the motivation for the convening of the summit, although the attacks in Ottawa and Sydney were the actions of isolated individuals, each evidently mentally disturbed, who had no known connection to any jihadist groups.

The most ominous aspect of the prospective White House "Summit on Countering Violent Extremism," as it will be officially titled, is that it will feature representatives from Boston, Los Angeles and Minneapolis-St. Paul discussing their experiences in fighting Islamic fundamentalists.

In the case of Boston, this would mean discussion of the tactics used in the wake of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, when large portions of the metropolitan area were placed on lockdown and subjected to warrantless house-to-house searches by militarized police, a mobilization that affected more than one million people.

The authorities in the Twin Cities will presumably discuss their experiences in monitoring the Somali immigrant community, tracking the handful of youth who travelled to their home country to join the Islamist Shabab movement fighting the US-backed government there.

The official White House statement described the conference proceedings as follows: "Through presentations, panel discussions and small group interactions, participants will build on local, state and federal government; community; and international efforts to better understand, identify and prevent the cycle of radicalization to violence at home in the United States and abroad."

A major focus will be the need to monitor social media and recruit informants and spies within minority and Muslim communities. The White House statement said that the summit "will include representatives from a number of partner nations, focusing on the themes of community engagement, religious leader engagement, and the role of the private sector and tech community."

Attorney General Eric Holder discussed the announcement in appearances on several of the Sunday morning television interview programs, appearing on "Face the Nation" on CBS, "This Week" on ABC, "Meet the Press" on NBC, and "State of the Union" on CNN.

Holder spoke from Paris, where he was attending a meeting of security ministers from Europe and North America, convened by French President François Hollande in the wake of Thursday's massacre at the satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* and Friday's twin sieges of Islamic fundamentalist gunmen. The two-day death toll was 20, including the three gunmen.

Holder said the meeting would "bring together all of our allies to discuss ways in which we can counteract this violent extremism that exists around the world." This language suggests that unlike Sunday's march in Paris, representatives of Russia would be excluded.

On "This Week," Holder said that groups like Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula might not have directly organized the attack in Paris. "At this point, we don't have any credible information that would allow us to make a determination as to which organization was responsible," he said.

On "Face the Nation," he appeared to downplay the significance of the French events, saying that groups like ISIS and AQAP "have inspired people negatively

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around the world to engage in these really small attacks that involve only one or two people, small number of arms that can have devastating impact, as we have seen in France."

Holder matched his words with his actions, deciding not to join the demonstration in Paris at which dozens of heads of state marched arm in arm with Hollande, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, British Prime Minister David Cameron, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

The only American representative at the march was the US ambassador to France, Jane Hartley, one of the lowest-ranking officials to participate. Neither Obama nor Vice President Joe Biden made the trip to Paris, despite ample notice and no public schedules during the weekend. Secretary of State John Kerry was in south Asia, and went ahead with a scheduled visit to the remote Himalayan principality of Bhutan, on the border between India and China.

There was no public explanation as to why Holder, a senior Obama cabinet official, did not travel the few miles from the security conference to the Place de la République, even though several other participants in the security conference, like Canadian Public Safety Minister Stephen Blaney, did join the march. Nor was he asked that question on any of the Sunday interview programs on which he appeared.

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