

Terrorism officials advise language shift

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Two documents circulated by U.S. counter-terrorism officials suggest avoided the terms "Muslim" or "Islamic" when referring to militant groups. The National Counterterrorism Center distributed two documents in April urging U.S. officials to use terms like extremists, totalitarian or cult when describing al-Qaida and other militant groups. The NCTC documents caution against using terms like "jihad" or "mujahedin" because their Arabic meaning -- "struggle" and "strugglers" -- "unintentionally legitimize" terrorism, United Press International reported Wednesday. There's a growing consensus (in the Bush administration) that we need to move away from that language," said one former Cabinet official. The documents advise officials to think of al-Qaida as "illegitimate political organization" to avoid supporting the group's ideology that uses religious doctrine to justify violent acts. It also recommends against using variations of "Islam" because lay audiences make no distinction between Islamism, the political doctrine based on the religious teachings of Islam, and the religion itself. The use of the technical variations may be correct, the documents say, but "it may not be strategic for (U.S. government) officials to use the term."

Copyright © 2008, by United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

Terrorism officials advise language shift by UPI