

Panel: Somali extremists pose U.S. threat

by UPI

WASHINGTON - Somali-Americans recruited by radical Islamic groups to fight in Africa also pose a threat to the United States, a U.S. Senate panel said Wednesday.

Concerns about "radicalized" Somali-Americans were sparked by the discovery that a 27-year-old Somali-American college student from Minneapolis, Shirwa Ahmed, was a suicide bomber in an Oct. 29 wave of attacks in Somalia attributed to Islamic militant group al-Shabaab, which reportedly has close links to al-Qaida, The Washington Post reported.

Since then, the FBI says it has moved quickly to probe the disappearances of U.S. Somali teens and young men, who, some family members say, have likely gone to Somalia to take part in an Islamic war against the West.

U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said during a Wednesday hearing of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, "The dangers brought to light by these revelations is clear: radicalized individuals trained in terrorist tactics and in possession of American passports can clearly pose a threat to the security of our country," CNN reported.

Testifying at the hearing was Philip Mudd, a director of the FBI's national security branch, who told the panel that while the estimated 70,000 to 200,000 Somali U.S. immigrants and their families aren't "radicalized" as a community, small numbers of them are recruiting potential terrorists.

"We don't have radicalized communities. We have radicalized clusters of (young) people," Mudd said, adding, "Local criminal familial and clan dynamics make some members of this community more susceptible to (this) sort of extremist influence."

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