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RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE, BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER , IN COLLABORATION WITH FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, HOLDING SUMMIT TO DISCUSS COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACHES TO PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

WASHINGTON – The Rutgers Institute for Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security (IEPHS), the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC), in collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), today convened a summit bringing together experts from across the United States and Europe to develop community-based strategies to prevent targeted violence and mass casualty attacks.

The two-day summit includes faith leaders, educators, mental health professionals, community advocates, as well as federal, state and local law enforcement officials from Europe and the United States and follows a year of research by the Rutgers Faith-Based Communities Security Program (FBCSP), examining mass casualty attacks in Europe and the U.S. for the purposes of identifying effective prevention strategies. The summit will
consider that research as part of a discussion on the development of concrete strategies to address violent extremism and protect communities.

“The threat to our nation by independent, violent extremists is the newest element to an always evolving and ever-changing threat environment,” said John Farmer, Rutgers’ Special Counsel to the President and faculty lead for FBCSP. “By bringing together this group of law enforcement officials, faith leaders, mental health professionals and academics, we are working to empower local communities and strengthen critical partnerships in order to prevent future violent attacks.”

For the past year, a number of both high and low profile attacks have occurred in local communities in Europe and in the United States, targeting people and facilities associated with law enforcement, the media, the military and communities of religious faith. At the same time, the terrorism-related threat in the West continues to shift as people become inspired by organizations like al-Qaeda or ISIS, but act independently of them. Such threats are by nature more difficult to detect or deter. As a result, law enforcement officials seek ways to expand collaboration with community members across a variety of disciplines to prevent violent acts by those inspired by extremist ideologies and/or others who seek redress to perceived grievances by conducting mass casualty attacks.

“In response to the rise in instances of mass violent acts across the nation, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is proud to partner with Rutgers University, the Bipartisan Policy Center and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to identify comprehensive community-based solutions to effectively counter violent narratives,” said Richard Beary, IACP President and Chief of the University of Central Florida Police Department.

“The lone wolf actor, or an individual who takes inspiration from a terrorist group but acts alone, is the most difficult type of threat to detect. That is why it is so important to raise awareness across our society to the danger of such attacks. Gathering representatives from various community groups to discuss these types of threats is not only important, but necessary to help identify signs that perhaps could uncover these individual threats ahead of time. The challenges are many, but raising awareness from meetings like this can only help,” said former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean and former U.S. Representative Lee Hamilton, co-chairs of the Bipartisan Policy Center’s National Security Program.

Utilizing the feedback gained during the summit, Rutgers and its partners plan to develop programmatic guidance and an educational curriculum to assist local authorities from a variety of disciplines in enhancing the capacity to identify and prevent these types of incidents.
“Over the past several weeks alone we have witnessed horrific attacks in Charleston, South Carolina and Chattanooga, Tennessee,” said Professor John Cohen of Rutgers’ School of Criminal Justice and faculty lead for FBCSP. “We must complement our robust counter-terrorism capabilities with community-based collaborative partnerships to detect, assess and intervene in situations where individuals may exhibit the behaviors and indicators of violent extremism to prevent such attacks.”

Rutgers’ IEPHS, a federally designated Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence, blends expertise and experience in the sciences and humanities from all campuses statewide to protect and enhance life, health, and wellness of individuals and populations—and to safeguard the physical, economic, and societal infrastructure—through national and international collaboration in research, education, community outreach, and practice. The FBCSP, founded in 2014, conducts research around the world to assess current security efforts; better understand best practices and operational gaps; foster closer collaboration between law enforcement authorities and faith-based communities; and help at-risk communities implement best practices. The program is supported by Paul S. Miller, a 1962 graduate of Rutgers School of Law–Newark, through the Miller Family International Initiative Fund.

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