Kelly Brownell :

Hello, my name is Kelly Brownell. I'm the Dean of the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. Our guest for this podcast is David Schanzer, associate professor of the practice at the Sanford School and director of the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security. Before David came to Duke University, he had a very rich background in all three branches of government. He clerked for a federal judge, implying and it truly so that his background is in the law, he spent 13 years in Washington working in the Justice Department, The Department of Defense, and both the House and the Senate. David, thanks very much for joining us.

David Schanzer:

Happy to be with you, Kelly.

Kelly Brownell :

You have a new report about to come out, entitled The Challenge and Promise of Using Community Policing Strategies to Prevent Violence Extremism. Tell us a little bit about the background of the report.

David Schanzer:

Sure. What we've seen in the United States since 9/11 is really no major large scale, highly sophisticated organized attacks. But even an attack as big as the Boston Marathon Bombing was really executed by two brothers, mostly flying under the radar screen, not leaving a lot of clues of what they were going to do in advance. So the question that faces the United States and our other countries in Western Europe is how do we try to prevent those things? How do we stop them from happening? And so there's a kind of collection of policies that's fallen under the rubric of countering violent extremism, which are what we call, if we're looking at a graph, try and say left of boom. What are the types of things we can do to prevent the bad thing from happening in the first place?

       And so I've been examining one of the areas that we call using the policing and community policing as a strategy to try to prevent these things in two ways, one way is having hopefully community members who may be learn about an individual that they think might be attempting to engage in illegal violent activity, to notify police and also to help communities themselves build resilience against these etiologies that that eventually do drive people to violence. So in both ways, we're trying to look at how the police can interact with communities.

Kelly Brownell :

So explain a little bit about the concept of community policing.

David Schanzer:

Well, this goes back, really have nothing to do with terrorism, but a new idea of how police should operate going back really for the 70s and 80s and saying, "let's not just put police in squad cars and wandering around patrols and responding to crimes after they occur, but how can we be more proactive? How can we solve problems and work with communities to make their community safer places in general?" So the idea is to get police out of their squad, have them walking around neighborhoods, having them interact with the people in the communities and helping them solve problems. So if there was an open air kind of area where drugs were exchanged and then the community would point that out and the police would make sure that they wandered by that corner. Or if it was dark and there wasn't a lamp fix, well then the police would help get that lamp fixed.

And they would look at these problems very holistically and say, get the community's ideas. "How can we try to prevent this lawlessness?" And it really worked, because one of the great social success stories of the last part of the 20th century, at least domestically is the dramatic drop in violent crime rates. In the 1980s and 90s, crime was a huge political debate, we had crime bills almost every other year by Congress because people were so concerned about it and the whole steam has been taken out of the crime issue. That doesn't mean there's not a lot of violence in America, there still is. But so community policing had a lot of real successes by working in this way. And then after 9/11, the question became, "can we use these same techniques to try to deal with the question of terrorism and violence extremism?"

Kelly Brownell :

One can certainly see how strong connections between the police and members of the community would help with surveillance and identifying people at risk, individuals of special concern in communities. But you also mentioned that this might be a way to help build resilience in the community for ways of thinking that might create extreme acts. Explain more if you would about how the resilience might come about.

David Schanzer:

Yeah. I think the resilience really it is dependent on the communities and the question is how the police can be helpful and encouraging. It's not the government's idea to tell people how to think, but communities certainly can shape the social environment in which especially young people exist. So if there are ideas floating around, especially in today's world with the internet and social media, and other kinds of internet communications technologies, if there are ideas floating around that parents don't know about and is affecting young kids, whether it be encouraging people to act in violence because they have extremist racial views or anti-immigrant views, or if they are attracted to this idea that Al-Qaeda and ISIS propagate that to be a good Muslim, you have to stand up and use violence against the so-called infidels or the United States or the Westerners, all of these ideas are floating around.

And while they're attractive to only small numbers of people, small numbers of people can do large amounts of violence. So communities need to be on the alert for this. And I think police with their expertise and the resources they have can help educate. Sometimes, I've interviewed for this report, we interviewed communities they said, "Well, we don't know what to look for. We've never seen an extremist." But the police can try to help educate people, what are some of the signs of an individual that might be headed down the wrong path. And they also might be able to reassure communities that if somebody has mental illness that they'll receive services if they come forward, but if their mental illness devolves into some sort of violence, then it's too late. So it's those kinds of interactions and talking through problems that I think can build resilience.

Kelly Brownell :

You mentioned the interviews that you did as part of this report. Explain more about who you interviewed and what you found through those interviews.

David Schanzer:

Yeah. Our methods were a twofold. We did a nationwide survey of chiefs of police. We covered every law enforcement agency with over 200 sworn officers and then a small sample of agencies with less than that. I know there are 16,000 law enforcement entities in the United States. Here in Duke University campus, we're probably covered by two or three of them alone. So there's a lot of law

enforcement agencies, but we got almost all of the big ones and we had a good return rate as well. So we did a survey, then we went out and based on the surveys we picked 20 police forces to do in-depth telephone interviews with, and we got sometimes the chief of police themselves, sometimes their deputies who were working on these issues on outreach and engagement. We tried to get a variety of places, some places that had more concerns about anti-government extremism, some places that had more concerns about extremism inspired by Al-Qaeda and ISIS' ideas, although this research took place a little bit before ISIS really was on the map.

And then we did some site visits and visit with the police officers. In the same communities we actually worked with community activists and developed focus groups of not a scientifically random sample, but what we tried to make a random sampling of Muslim Americans to try to capture the community's feelings about how they were being treated by law enforcement, what they thought of these ideas, that's a strategy to prevent extremism, what some of their other concerns were. So I'm excited about the report because I think it's one of the first things that tries to merge the views of law enforcement and the views of the community that they are interacting with.

Kelly Brownell :

So are there some particular observations that came from these interviews that you'd care to share?

David Schanzer:

Yeah, very much so. I think we call the report The Challenge and Promise of Using Community Policing. So there are a lot of challenges, but in the end we think that if these challenges can be overcome, that there's a lot of promise to this practice. And in some ways we've only been at it, most police departments for maybe four or five years with these kinds of intense efforts, so it's still at its nascent form. But some of the challenges really result from a lot of the impact of 9/11 on Muslim American community. I think it's worth thinking about. We'd like to say, "Hey, come forward point out illegal behavior." Of course, it's not that easy, any loyal citizen, Muslim American, or whatever American, if they know something is going to happen and cause a lot of hardship, they're going to come forward and say something.

What we're really looking for is to say to an individual, "Hey, this person hadn't done anything wrong, but we're really worried about them. And they might be heading the wrong direction. What can we do?" That's takes a lot of trust. And right now, because of the environment that we're living in and the experience that Muslims have had, there's really a trust deficit with respect to government authorities and society at large. And of course, the rhetoric we're hearing in the presidential campaign about a ban on Muslims, and that we have to look into mosques and things like that are really, really damaging to trying to build that trust. So we're starting from areas with the trust deficit, also, some of which comes from people feel that the FBI has mistreated them in some regards, there have been verified examples of informants being placed inside of mosques, there's what we know about the travel and TSA.

Most of Americans have had a lot of unpleasant experiences in the last decade. And they're somewhat suspicious of now the government coming and say, "Hey, let's be friends. Let's work on this together." And I'm not saying that's universal, but that's one of the challenges. How do you overcome those challenges? From the police perspective, we have challenges as well. People have crime, violence, gangs, drugs, domestic violence, all kinds of forms of problems. Believe it or not, despite the amount of attention terrorism gets for local police force, they don't see much terrorism, they don't see much threat of terrorism. And so this is not high on their priority list. So any effort that they spend to have a police officer doing community, is not arresting anybody, is not patrolling any area, that's resources that

are taken from somewhere else. I think the far sided police chief see this as a real benefit for many reasons, and they invest in it. But not every police chief is going to see it that way. So those are some of the challenges, but we do think that they can be overcome with some kind of creative police work.

Kelly Brownell :

Are there's some particular areas where this community policing has been done, especially well now?

David Schanzer:

Well, we have promised all the... To get people to talk to us, we did promise them confidentiality. So even though you're the Dean, I can't disclose that on this podcast. Many of them have been widely publicized. So there are some pockets of where some really good work is taking place, but even in those places, they still face challenges. I'm not disclosing anything by saying this, but for example, in Los Angeles, there's been some police officers who've been doing this for well before we start our research and have really developed some deep ties with parts of the community. But there's a split even within the Muslim community where some groups feel that this is the way to go, and they are deeply engaged and they're inviting police to all their events, and it's wonderful, but other parts of the most American community see this as a pseudo surveillance and are oppose to the whole concept of CVE. So, there's still a lot of work to go, even in the places that have been doing it for quite some time.

Kelly Brownell :

So CVE stands for?

David Schanzer:

Sorry. Countering Violent Extremism. And interestingly, I use that acronym because it is, at least in my area, pretty prevalent, but one of the things that we recommend is that police not call their programs, their community policing, CVE, or countering violent extremism. Because again, what the programs need to be about is saying to Muslims and other communities as well, whose members might be attracted to other kinds of extremism is to say to them, "Hey, we're the police and we're public servants. We're here to serve your needs, and to try to help you have safer, more vibrant communities, what can we do to help you?" And when policing is approached in that way, communities are going to say, "Yeah, well, here's a bunch of things that I would like to work on."

And then you work on those things and they see tangible improvements. And they say, "Okay, well, now let's work on some other things." And so, when we have that kind of approach to policing, then you can build the kind of trust that enables you to have some very delicate conversations about, "Hey, are you worried about... What can we do together to make sure that no kids in your community try to get aboard a plane and go to fight for ISIS in Syria." You know, that's happened to over 50 families in America in the last a year, and that's devastating. So you can have those conversations.

But if you go in and say, "Ah, I've got a program to prevent violent extremism, and here I am at the local mosque, let's, let's talk about how to prevent terrorism." You're not going to get any buy in from the community because in some way, you're saying, "well, you are the potential terrorists. And tell us who the bad guys are." No, that's not the way that can work. So we've actually... Every good program has to have a good acronym. So we're proposing a new one, which we call a complete, complete public safety. And the complete acronym stands for Community Partnerships with Law Enforcement to Enhance Public Safety. So who knows, maybe that'll catch on.

Kelly Brownell :

So if people would like to read more about this, where would you guide them?

David Schanzer:

Yes, we will hang our report on the website of the Triangle Center on Homeland Security, T-C-T-H-S.duke.edu. And I think at least for the month of late January and February, we'll be hanging at probably there'll be a little place on the Sanford school website, where they'll be able to be directed to it

Kelly Brownell :

Thank you very much, David. It was a pleasure to have you here.

David Schanzer:

Well, thank you so much, Kelly.

Kelly Brownell :

So we've just spoken with David Schanzer associate professor of the practice at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University and director of the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security. David does a weekly podcast called On Security, if you'd like to hear more. And you could find this by going to the sanford.duke.edu. Thank you. My name is Kelly Brownell. I'm the Dean of the Sanford School of Public Policy.