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AMERICAN CIVIL  
LIBERTIES UNION  
FOUNDATION  
OF ARIZONA

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Dear Mr. Montgomery:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Arizona and leaders of Arizona's Muslim community write to express our deep concern regarding the Maricopa County Attorney's Office decision to invite John Guandolo and his "Understanding the Threat" associates to speak to law enforcement personnel in Maricopa County. Mr. Guandolo has a well-publicized history of making inaccurate, biased, and inflammatory statements regarding Islam, promoting racial and religious stereotypes, and utilizing blatant anti-Muslim rhetoric. Mr. Guandolo's statements have been discredited and disavowed by law enforcement personnel and community leaders across the country due to their inaccuracy and ethnic and religious bias.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, defended at trial by MCAO attorneys amongst others, was recently proven to have engaged in the systematic improper use of race in the *Ortega-Melendres* lawsuit.<sup>1</sup> It is troubling that a person with Mr. Guandolo's history of racist statements has been invited to speak with law enforcement personnel by the attorneys who represented defendants in this lawsuit. Mr. Guandolo's message would undermine the Court-ordered training in *Ortega-Melendres* and conflict with the training curriculum developed to deter racial and ethnic profiling. The sponsorship by the County Attorney reflects a pattern by Maricopa County law enforcement of insensitivity toward Muslims and hostility to minority and immigrant communities.

The MCAO should rescind its ill-conceived invitation and cancel Mr. Guandolo's September 19, 2014 training session.

The presentations by Mr. Guandolo and his associates are noted for inaccurate and dangerous statements based on their animus and bigotry towards the Muslim community. Mr. Guandolo has claimed that "every major Muslim organization is controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood"<sup>2</sup> and that American Muslims "do not have a First Amendment right to do anything."<sup>3</sup> He told a talk-radio host that CIA director John Brennan secretly

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.acluaz.org/issues/press-releases/2013-05/3742>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.t-g.com/story/1502537.html>

<sup>3</sup> Amanda Peterson Beadle, Tennessee County Sheriff's Office Brings in Anti-Muslim Speaker to Train Officers About Muslim Culture, ThinkProgress, February 15, 2012, available at: <http://thinkprogress.org/security/2012/02/15/425947/tennessee-county-sheriffs-office-brings-in-anti-muslim-speaker-to-train-officers-about-muslim-culture/>

converted to Islam and is a tool of Saudi intelligence.<sup>4</sup> In his trainings, Mr. Guandolo falsely claims "it is a permanent command in Islam for Muslims to hate and despise Jews and Christians"<sup>5</sup> and that mosques are "front organizations for the Muslim Brotherhood with no right to exist."<sup>6</sup> In 2013, "Understanding the Threat" speaker Clare Lopez, also advertised by the MCAO to appear at the September 19 training, told an audience, "when people in other bona fide religions follow their doctrines they become better people — Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, Jews. When Muslims follow their doctrine, they become jihadists."<sup>7</sup>

Sheriff's offices and police departments in Kansas and Virginia have canceled or declined to sponsor training sessions with Mr. Guandolo upon learning of his views. After consulting with other law enforcement agencies, the Rappahannock Regional Criminal Justice Academy in Virginia pulled their sponsorship of Mr. Guandolo's event.<sup>8</sup> Predictably, Mr. Guandolo automatically characterizes his critics as supporters of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>9</sup> In one training session, Mr. Guandolo declared that an Ohio law enforcement officer must be sympathetic to terrorists based solely on that officer's religion and nationality.<sup>10</sup>

In response to a recent report by *The Intercept* about FBI and law enforcement trainings that described Mr. Guandolo's approach and record,<sup>11</sup> the White House ordered the Director of National Intelligence to undertake an assessment of Intelligence Community policies, training standards or directives. The stated goal was to promote diversity and tolerance — the opposite of Guandolo's message — and, as necessary, make any recommendations, changes, or additional reforms.<sup>12</sup>

The Southern Poverty Law Center documented that Mr. Guandolo is "a notorious Muslim-basher and conspiracy theorist who resigned from the FBI before he could be investigated for misconduct."<sup>13</sup> On August 14, 2014, a coalition of human rights and faith-based organizations wrote the Department of Homeland Security to complain about training materials that presented any and all members of the Muslim community as dangerous, citing Mr. Guandolo's work.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Guandolo trained agents that "mainstream" Muslims should be treated as supporters of terrorism. The authors note that "Guandolo's definition of

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<sup>4</sup> Josh Glasstetter, Virginia County Sheriff Hosting Anti-Muslim Training By Disgraced Conspiracy Theorist, Salon, February 17, 2014, available at:

[http://www.salon.com/2014/02/17/virginia\\_county\\_sheriff\\_hosting\\_anti\\_muslim\\_training\\_by\\_disgraced\\_conspiracy\\_theorist\\_partner/](http://www.salon.com/2014/02/17/virginia_county_sheriff_hosting_anti_muslim_training_by_disgraced_conspiracy_theorist_partner/)

<sup>5</sup> John Guandolo, "Understanding Shari'ah's Role in the War," *Wired* (blog), May 10, 2012,

[http://www.wired.com/images\\_blogs/dangerroom/2012/05/guandolo\\_jihad\\_islamic\\_law.pdf](http://www.wired.com/images_blogs/dangerroom/2012/05/guandolo_jihad_islamic_law.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Bob Smietana and Tony Gonzalez, "Sheriff hires mosque foe to lead terrorism training," *The Tennessean*, February 15, 2012,

<http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-02-15/terrorism-training-tennessee/53102430/1>

<sup>7</sup> Debra Rubin, "AJC guest sees little moderation in Islam," *New Jersey Jewish News*, May 7, 2013, <http://njewishnews.com/article/17339/ajc-guest-sees-little-moderation-in-islam#.U5nWUvldWAU>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cair.com/images/pdf/Guandolo-Training.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://blog.understandingthethreat.com/category/law-enforcement/>

<sup>10</sup> Dina Temple-Raston, Terrorism Training Casts Pall Over Muslim Employee, NPR, July 18, 2011, available at:

<http://www.npr.org/2011/07/18/137712352/terrorism-training-casts-pall-over-muslim-employee>

<sup>11</sup> Glenn Greenwald, Meet the Muslim American Leaders the FBI and NSA Have Been Spying on, *The Intercept*, July 8, 2014, available at:

<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2014/07/09/under-surveillance/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/09/white-house-nsa-racial-slurs-training-material>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2014/02/13/virginia-county-sheriff-hosting-anti-muslim-training-by-disgraced-conspiracy-theorist-john-guandolo/>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.muslimadvocates.org/files/FINALCoalitionLetterTrainings\\_8.14.14.pdf](http://www.muslimadvocates.org/files/FINALCoalitionLetterTrainings_8.14.14.pdf)

activities that merit surveillance encompasses so many basic practices of Islam that it would include virtually every Muslim in the United States and activities protected by the First Amendment.”<sup>15</sup>

The use of anti-Muslim trainers and materials is highly offensive, disparages the faith of millions of Americans, and inevitably leads to biased policing that targets individuals and communities based on religion and ethnicity, and not on criminal acts or evidence of wrongdoing. We are already aware of many examples of law enforcement agents in Maricopa County improperly and illegally monitoring, questioning and detaining law-abiding members of the Muslim community. We urge the Maricopa County Attorney’s Office to cancel all scheduled sessions of “Understanding the Threat.”

Sincerely,



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Mohamed El-Sharkawy, Chairman  
Arizona Muslim Police Advisory Board

Ahmad Al-Akoum, President  
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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.muslimadvocates.org/files/FINALCoalitionLetterTrainings\\_8.14.14.pdf](http://www.muslimadvocates.org/files/FINALCoalitionLetterTrainings_8.14.14.pdf)