



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on November 23, 2011

## Homeland Security-linked CELL Terrorizes Americans

A non-profit organization that receives taxpayer funding and works closely with the Department of Homeland Security is under fire for promoting unjustified terror and fear among the public about terrorism, claiming that Americans should be suspicious even of their best friends and neighbors.

Known as [The Counterterrorism Education Learning Lab](#) (The CELL), the organization produces propaganda designed to hype the threat of terrorism and persuade citizens that they can join the terror-war, too. It includes, among other ventures, a [full-scale museum exhibit](#) entitled "Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere: Understanding the Threat of Terrorism" that presents terror as one of the gravest dangers facing humanity today.



"If this sounds like an expensive, museum-size example of America's paranoia, that's because it is," [noted](#) a piece from *The Economist* by Alexander Ewing. "Indeed, the exhibition includes a Rand Corporation expert who notes that the probability of an American being killed in a terror attack is about one in a million, compared to one-in-7,000 or -8,000 chance of being killed in a car accident."

In recent years the group has been assailed by critics for controversial videos produced with taxpayer money. In late 2009, "The CELL" released a short DHS-funded film — "[Recognizing the Eight Signs of Terrorism](#)" (still shot pictured above) — that portrayed owning firearms, buying gold, paying in cash, and donating to obscure charities as suspicious behavior that should be reported.

"Anyone can become a victim of terrorism, anytime, anywhere," says the narrator, football star John Elway. "Suspicious surveillance activity may include ... drawing diagrams, making notes, using vision enhancing devices [binoculars]" and other seemingly innocuous activities.

Making large cash transactions, using an alias, keeping weapons in the garage, and making "suspicious" statements should all be considered potential indicators of terrorist intentions and promptly called in, the video explains. "The success of defending our community's safety depends upon our shared commitment," Elway says after repeatedly urging viewers to contact authorities.

"The Cell is dedicated to spreading disturbing state propaganda and fear," [noted](#) a blogger at DailyPaul.com, citing some of the more absurd points in the organization's terror video. "The film displays gold coins next to explosives, implying gold coins are used as tools of terrorism."

Now the Denver-based "CELL" has a new scheme to spread fear and "awareness" of terrorism — a traveling terror course for citizens and businesses with over two hours of information on terror and how to fight it. But critics are calling the group's newest plot, known as the Community Awareness Program (CAP), another Orwellian exercise in fear-mongering.

The class is [described on the group's website](#) as follows: "Developed by The Counterterrorism



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Education Learning Lab (The CELL) and the Colorado Information Analysis Center (CIAC), the CAP is an interactive curriculum, taught by Colorado public safety professionals, that provides citizens with the basic tools needed to recognize and help prevent terrorist and criminal activity in their hometowns."

But while the courses are supposedly designed to "empower" regular citizens to join in the terror war — mostly by spying on fellow Americans and reporting them to authorities — statements made by The CELL leaders are raising concerns. "It's not going to be the person that you think it's going to be," a bureaucrat dealing with transportation security named Diana Woodson, who also teaches the class, [told the \*Denver Post\*](#). "He's your best neighbor, your best pal. It doesn't always look like the bad guy; it can be someone unassuming."

The CELL boss Melanie Pearlman refuses to ride the subway and is reluctant to enter tall buildings, yet insists that she is not paranoid. And in an interview with the *Post* she explained why her organization and its various initiatives are needed: all of the countless government agencies promoting terror fears were failing to spread the hysteria in the same way.

"You had different groups — FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency], UASI [Urban Areas Security Initiative], the CERT — different state and city agencies going out and espousing the same message, but the message was nuanced and inconsistent," she [said](#). "So we brought all of those folks around the same table to make sure we met all their respective requirements in developing this program."

Critics were still unimpressed, however. And after the *Post* article promoting the CAP scheme was published, commentators unleashed a new wave of criticism and ridicule aimed at the ominously named CELL.

"The fact that American citizens are being taught by shadowy non-profit groups tied at the hip with Homeland Security that their best friend or closest neighbor could be a terrorist is another illustration of how the terrorists have won," [noted](#) analyst and author Paul Joseph Watson. "Thanks to the federal government, we live in a society driven by fear and paranoia, with huge amounts of money being wasted on programs like this."

As *The New American* and other publications have documented extensively, Homeland Security has become increasingly aggressive in its efforts to [paint ordinary Americans — particularly right-of-center citizens and veterans](#) — as a potential terror threat. But its reports and propaganda films, often using preposterous sources including known spoof websites, have generated a great deal of opposition and even [calls for Homeland Security boss Janet Napolitano's resignation](#).

Earlier this year DHS was embroiled in a [scandal over a propaganda video it made](#) portraying nearly every "terrorist" as a regular-looking light-skinned American. The film was part of its "See Something, Say Something" campaign encouraging citizens to spy on and report each other to authorities.

Instead of ending the terror-promoting propaganda, however, the Obama administration and Napolitano's bureaucracy have taken it to a whole new level in recent months. The "See Something, Say Something" snitch program, with films already playing at Wal-Marts nationwide, will now be [rolled out in hotels across America](#).

"Not using a credit card to settle a hotel bill is suspicious behavior," the propaganda film's narrator claims after an actor raises eyebrows for asking to pay his tab in cash. The rest of the video is similarly disturbing.



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Meanwhile, a [congressional report released this month said](#) DHS's Transportation Security Administration had consumed \$60 billion so far — and American air travel is not any safer than it was before September 11, 2001. At the same time, the Obama administration is embroiled in a [growing scandal](#) for illegally providing guns to Mexican drug cartels.

Analysts said that while the federal government's efforts to instill terror in Americans might appear comical or even ludicrous at first glance, the trend should be taken very seriously. Nearly all brutal dictatorships have waged similar campaigns to encourage irrational suspicion and wanton "snitching" prior to unleashing horrors upon the citizenry.

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