

The Tragedy in Toulouse: When Kinetic Counterterrorism Tactics Aren't Enough

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Mar 30, 2012

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“In light of recent events, is France sufficiently prepared to deal with the challenge of homegrown violent Islamist extremism? The question could have been posed to French officials in the days since Mohammed Merah murdered seven people in Toulouse, including French soldiers of Muslim descent, a Rabbi, and several Jewish children. In fact, my colleagues and I posed the question to a group of French intelligence and security officials four years ago. The reactions of French officials to the Toulouse murders today echo the comments we heard four years ago, suggesting little has changed in the French approach to radicalization over the past four years. To prevent the next jihadist-inspired shooting spree, authorities -- whether in France, the United States, or elsewhere -- must make a conscious decision to expand their focus from only the expressly violent to even non-violent extremism. Contesting the ideologies that drive extremism is a critical, but still overlooked, element in the overall effort to prevent and defeat the violence that emerges from it...”

Matthew Levitt is director of the [Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/about/research-programs/stein-program-on-counterterrorism-and-intelligence/)

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