

Peace Islands Institute (PII) hosted Mr. Michael Ward, SAC, FBI Newark Division, at the latest luncheon. His speech was entitled “Hopes and Concerns in the Threshold of Second Decade of 9/11: A Law Enforcement Perspective”. The program started off with reception where guests had an opportunity to meet each other and enjoy the fellowship. Mr. Ward started his presentation showing a video on terrorism. He speech was followed by Q&A session. Below is a summary of Mr. Ward’s speech:

“First thing we need to understand is the definition of terrorism. It is the use of force, violence or threat to bring about social or political change or unrest. Terrorism is an ideology and there isn’t a specific definable group that we are battling against that we are at war with. It is a mindset and that mindset can infiltrate all people regardless of their background, religion, creed or culture. If you look back in your history lessons going back centuries, people have engaged in attacks and wrongdoing and every time somebody does something that they can justify their actions. We had people who rationalized and justified their actions based on an interpretation on religion going back for centuries and that applies to all religions.

One of the problems that we have today is that the perception that there is a linkage between counter terrorism and certain religions. And, that is wrong. Religion does not drive counter terrorism. It is individuals who decide to go out and do something for personal reasons, or small group of individuals or maybe they band together with some like-minded individuals. They do it for personal reasons and then they provide justification. It is important that this message goes out because there are people that sit there and say, for example, “Islam is a religion that promotes terrorism”. No it doesn’t. I can give you a half of dozen examples - I’m Christian - of attacks perpetrated by people of Christian faiths and backgrounds, but yet I don’t believe that my religion promotes terrorism. But you have those examples. One thing that you will not hear the FBI in NJ do is to link religion to counter terrorism, because it is not a driving force. If somebody goes out and robs a bank, I do not sit there and ask them what religion they are.



