

May 22, 2018

**SENT VIA EMAIL**

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Dear Mr. Close:

Under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Va. Code § 2.2-3700 *et seq.*, Hassan Ahmad, Esq. and Muslim Advocates hereby request the opportunity to inspect or obtain copies of public records that are in the possession of Culpeper County Sheriff's Office ("CCSO"), a public body. As outlined below, the records we request concern John Guandolo, his "Understanding the Threat" ("UTT") consulting group, and Mr. Guandolo's status as a Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County, Virginia.

**I. Background**

Mr. Guandolo and his associates at UTT have a long, well-documented history of spreading anti-Muslim sentiment through public comments and private law enforcement trainings in the United States. For close to a decade, Mr. Guandolo has toured the country, claiming during public appearances, presentations, and internet posts that a vast conspiracy exists among Muslim groups to "overthrow America and establish Islamic law."<sup>1</sup> Through such inflammatory rhetoric, Mr. Guandolo has sought to inculcate anti-Muslim prejudice among local law enforcement authorities and communities at large, declaring, for example, that:

- All U.S.-based Muslim organizations "share the same ideology as ISIS;"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Mosely, *Islamic subversion alleged by speaker*, Shelbyville Times-Gazette (Feb. 17, 2009), <http://www.t-g.com/story/1502537.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Miranda Blue, *John Guandolo: Obama Committing 'Treason' By Working With US Muslim Groups With The 'Same Ideology As ISIS'*, Right Wing Watch (Dec. 11, 2015), <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/john-guandolo-obama-committing-treason-by-working-with-us-muslim-groups-with-the-same-ideology-as-isis/>.

- That “Islam is a barbaric and evil system,”<sup>3</sup> and that “the civilized world knows Islam is the problem;”<sup>4</sup>
- That there is no such thing as a peaceful “version” of Islam, and that those who believe Islam is a religion of peace are “psychotically disconnected from reality;”<sup>5</sup>
- That Muslim Student Associations at colleges and universities around the country are “points of recruitment in America for the Muslim Brotherhood and jihad;”<sup>6</sup>
- That Muslims “do not have a First Amendment right to do anything,”<sup>7</sup> and that mosques should “not [be] afforded the same legal rights” as churches;<sup>8</sup>
- That mosques in the U.S. are akin to foreign military bases on American soil,<sup>9</sup> and that the vast majority of mosques in the country should be shut down and their leaders arrested;<sup>10</sup>
- And in recent months, Mr. Guandolo has repeatedly claimed—despite the FBI’s conclusion to the contrary<sup>11</sup>—that the October 2017 Las Vegas massacre that killed nearly 60 people and injured hundreds more was “a jihadi operation.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>3</sup> John Guandolo (@JohnGuandolo), Twitter (Aug. 27, 2017, 4:04 PM), <https://twitter.com/JohnGuandolo/status/901943534890213376>.

<sup>4</sup> John Guandolo (@JohnGuandolo), Twitter (Aug. 31, 2017, 7:38 PM), <https://twitter.com/JohnGuandolo/status/903446902586400768>.

<sup>5</sup> John Guandolo, *Is Violence a Core Teaching in Islam?*, Understanding the Threat (Jan. 20, 2015), <https://www.understandingthethreat.com/is-violence-a-core-teaching-in-islam/>.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Holton, *HOLTON: The Muslim Brotherhood Is Flexing Its Muscles At LSU*, The Hayride (Sept. 11, 2013), <http://thehayride.com/2013/09/holton-the-muslim-brotherhood-is-flexing-its-muscles-at-lsu/>.

<sup>7</sup> Bob Smietana and Tony Gonzalez, *Sheriff hires mosque foe to lead terrorism training*, USA Today (Feb. 15, 2012), <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-02-15/terrorism-training-tennessee/53102430/1>.

<sup>8</sup> Miranda Blue, *John Guandolo Tells Members Of Congress U.S. Mosques Shouldn't Be 'Afforded The Same Legal Rights' As Churches*, Right Wing Watch (Nov. 15, 2017), <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/john-guandolo-tells-members-of-congress-u-s-mosques-shouldnt-be-afforded-the-same-legal-rights-as-churches/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Brian Tashman, *John Guandolo: Close The Majority Of Mosques In America*, Right Wing Watch (Apr. 4, 2016), <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/john-guandolo-close-the-majority-of-mosques-in-america/>.

<sup>11</sup> Associated Press, *FBI: Las Vegas shooter had no connection to ISIS*, N.Y. Post (Oct. 2, 2017), <https://nypost.com/2017/10/02/fbi-las-vegas-shooter-had-no-connection-to-terror-groups/>.

<sup>12</sup> *Anti-Muslim company's bombing tweet the latest in a series of erratic statements and behaviors*, Southern Poverty Law Center (Nov. 1, 2017), <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/11/01/anti-muslim-company%E2%80%99s-bombing-tweet-latest-series-erratic-statements-and-behaviors>.

While Mr. Guandolo presents himself as an authority on counter-terrorism, he has repeatedly made clear that his professional opinions are formed not by expert analysis but by an abiding commitment to anti-Muslim religious profiling. For example:

- In June 2017, while discussing an automobile attack on a London mosque that killed and injured several worshippers, Mr. Guandolo stated that his “first professional response to this event is not to believe at face value anything that the Muslims at the scene are reporting;”<sup>13</sup>
- On September 11, 2017, Mr. Guandolo stated on Twitter his belief that “it is UNPROFESSIONAL to learn Islam from muslims;”<sup>14</sup>
- On September 15, 2017, Mr. Guandolo photographed two bearded Transportation Security Administration officials and posted the images on Twitter, along with the captions, “Nothing like traveling thru LaGuardia Airport w/ sharia adherent muslims (aka Jihadis aka Terrorists) wearing TSA uniforms. @jeffsessions,”<sup>15</sup> and “Am I the only 1 who sees a problem w/ Terrorists (jihadis/sharia adherent muslims) ‘protecting’ us?;”<sup>16</sup>
- On November 3, 2017, Mr. Guandolo photographed a bearded Transportation Security Administration official and posted the image on Twitter, along with the caption, “See something, Say something. This JIHADI (sharia adherent muslim) is a TSA supervisor at DFW airport. @DHSgov @jeffsessions @potus;”<sup>17</sup>
- On February 14, 2018, the date of the tragic school shooting in Parkland, Florida, Mr. Guandolo stated on Twitter that the FBI’s announcement that the shooting had “nothing to do with terrorism” should be taken as a sign that “its [sic] likely a jihadi;”<sup>18</sup>
- On March 22, 2018, Mr. Guandolo photographed a bearded Southwest Airlines employee and posted the image on Twitter, along with the caption,

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<sup>13</sup> *The ‘Axis of Terror’: The apparent and the not so apparent*, Stand in the Gap (June 19, 2017), <https://subsplash.com/americanpastors/media/mi/+sbp8cwn>, at approx. 7:30.

<sup>14</sup> John Guandolo (@JohnGuandolo), Twitter (Sept. 11, 2017, 4:44 PM), <https://twitter.com/JohnGuandolo/status/907389437830746112>.

<sup>15</sup> John Guandolo (@JohnGuandolo), Twitter (Sept. 15, 2017, 3:49 PM), <https://twitter.com/JohnGuandolo/status/908825137381826566>.

<sup>16</sup> John Guandolo (@JohnGuandolo), Twitter (Sept. 15, 2017, 3:56 PM), <https://twitter.com/JohnGuandolo/status/908826884213002240>.

<sup>17</sup> John Guandolo (@JohnGuandolo), Twitter (Nov. 3, 2017, 8:16 AM), <https://twitter.com/JohnGuandolo/status/926468083077828611>.

<sup>18</sup> John Guandolo (@JohnGuandolo), Twitter (Feb. 14, 2018, 7:05 PM), <https://twitter.com/JohnGuandolo/status/963972602523017216>.

“I wish this were shocking... a sharia adherent muslim (aka jihadi) at my plane as I head to AZ to speak at the Western Conservative Conference.”<sup>19</sup>

Other law enforcement agencies and organizations have disavowed Mr. Guandolo after learning about his blatantly discriminatory views.<sup>20</sup> Most recently, the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (“TCOLE”) found that Mr. Guandolo’s training was “concerning in its overly broad characterization of an entire subset of the population” and “provided no training value for law enforcement attendees.”<sup>21</sup> As a result, TCOLE withdrew all accreditation for the training Mr. Guandolo had held for law enforcement officers in Texas.<sup>22</sup>

Yet despite Mr. Guandolo’s voluminous record of well-known anti-Muslim bias and blatant displays of anti-Muslim religious profiling, CCSO has twice invited him to Culpeper County to provide trainings focused on the threats posed by “jihadis” in the United States. Indeed, in February 2014, CCSO invited Mr. Guandolo to host a three-day training on “jihadi networks in America,”<sup>23</sup> and in September 2016, CCSO invited him to return for a one-day training that was billed as being “tailored for civilian audiences to detail . . . the jihadi threat to their particular area/state.”<sup>24</sup>

CCSO also appears to have granted Mr. Guandolo an official title within the Sheriff’s Office. According to a biographical document that at the time of this letter’s writing remains posted on UTT’s website, Mr. Guandolo “is currently a Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County, Virginia.”<sup>25</sup> (A copy of this biographical document is attached to this request as Exhibit A.) Mr. Guandolo also continues to be described as a Culpeper County Special

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<sup>19</sup> See Bree Burkitt, *Southwest Airlines condemns ‘cruel’ anti-Muslim tweet targeting employee*, AZ Central (Mar. 25, 2018), <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona/2018/03/25/southwest-airlines-condemns-anti-muslim-tweet-john-guandolo/456886002/>.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g. Tim Potter, *Sedgwick County Sheriff’s Office won’t partner on anti-terrorism training by controversial speaker*, The Wichita Eagle (May 23, 2014), <http://www.kansas.com/news/article1144011.html> and Ian Millhiser, *Virginia Police Academy Nixes ‘Advanced Counterterrorism Training’ Taught By Anti-Muslim Activist*, ThinkProgress (Feb. 25, 2014), <https://thinkprogress.org/virginia-police-academy-nixes-advanced-counterterrorism-training-taught-by-anti-muslim-activist-38e4e6d42c7a/>.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Kim Vickers, Exec. Director, TCOLE (May 16, 2018), <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4465256-Letter1.html>.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* See also Letter from Kim Vickers, Exec. Director, TCOLE to David Faison, Training Coordinator, Concho Valley Regional Law Enforcement Academy (May 16, 2018), <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4465257-Letter2.html> and Jolie McCullough, *In reversal, Texas agency says ex-FBI agent who called Islam ‘barbaric and evil’ can’t train law enforcement*, The Texas Tribune (May 16, 2018), <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/05/16/reversal-texas-state-agency-says-ex-fbi-agent-who-called-islam-barbari/>.

<sup>23</sup> *John Guandolo facilitates seminar for VA sheriff’s office*, Imagine 2050, <http://imagine2050.newcomm.org/timelines/john-guandolo-facilitates-seminar-for-culpepper-county-sheriffs-office/> (last visited May 18, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> *John Guandolo returns to VA at request of local sheriff*, Imagine 2050, <http://imagine2050.newcomm.org/timelines/john-guandolo-returns-culpeper-va-request-local-sheriff/> (last visited May 18, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Biography of John Guandolo, Understanding the Threat, [https://www.understandingthethreat.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/JG\\_Bio\\_UTT.pdf](https://www.understandingthethreat.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/JG_Bio_UTT.pdf) (last visited May 18, 2018).

Deputy Sheriff in promotional materials related to his ongoing speaking engagements around the country. In recent weeks, for example, Worldview Weekend included this title in a biographical statement that accompanied promotional materials for a multi-city speaking tour in which Mr. Guandolo was prominently featured.<sup>26</sup> The tour, which focused on “Understanding the Threat of Islam to America,” was ultimately canceled after its first event due to multiple venues’ unwillingness to host Mr. Guandolo and his associates.<sup>27</sup>

Given all of these factors, the public has a keen interest in knowing the full extent of the relationship between CCSO and Mr. Guandolo, as well as any interactions that have occurred between Culpeper County officials—particularly those involved in law enforcement—and Mr. Guandolo, including UTT and any individuals associated therewith.

## II. Request

I am seeking the following records<sup>28</sup> in the possession of the CCSO that concern John Guandolo and his UTT consulting group, including but not limited to Mr. Guandolo’s status as a Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County and the trainings conducted by UTT from February 25 to 27, 2014 and on September 17, 2016 in Culpeper, Virginia (the “Trainings”).

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<sup>26</sup> *Free Des Moines, Iowa: Understanding the Threat of Islam to America*, Worldview Weekend, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180428175830/http://www.worldviewweekend.com/events/free/free-des-moines-iowa-understanding-threat-islam-america#> (last visited May 18, 2018); *Free La Crosse, Wisconsin: Understanding the Threat of Islam to America*, Worldview Weekend, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180428181125/http://www.worldviewweekend.com/events/free/free-la-crosse-wisconsin-understanding-threat-islam-america#> (last visited May 18, 2018); *Free Green Bay, Wisconsin: Understanding the Threat of Islam to America*, Worldview Weekend, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180428181306/http://www.worldviewweekend.com/events/free/free-green-bay-wisconsin-understanding-threat-islam-america#> (last visited May 18, 2018); *Free St. Paul-Minneapolis: Understanding the Threat of Islam to America*, Worldview Weekend, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180428181415/http://www.worldviewweekend.com/events/free/free-st-paul-minneapolis-understanding-threat-islam-america> (last visited May 18, 2018); *Free Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Understanding the Threat of Islam to America*, Worldview, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180428181534/http://www.worldviewweekend.com/events/free/free-milwaukee-wisconsin-understanding-threat-islam-america> (last visited May 18, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> See *John Guandolo’s tour collapses and longtime partner Chris Gaubatz quits*, Southern Poverty Law Center (Apr. 12, 2018), <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/04/12/john-guandolo%E2%80%99s-tour-collapses-and-longtime-partner-chris-gaubatz-quits>; *Onalaska mayor weighs in on cancelled anti-Muslim presentation at OmniCenter*, WIZM (Apr. 6, 2018), <http://www.1410wizm.com/index.php/home-m/item/33175-anti-muslim-presentation-at-omni-center-tonight-faces-protests>.

<sup>28</sup> The term “records” is intended in the broadest possible sense and includes without limitation all records or communications preserved in electronic or written form, including but not limited to correspondence, regulations, directives, documents, data, videotapes, audiotapes, e-mails, faxes, files, guidance, guidelines, standards, evaluations, instructions, analyses, legal and policy memoranda, minutes or notes of meetings and phone calls, memoranda, agreements, notes, orders, policies, procedures, protocols, reports, rules, manuals, technical specifications, text communications between phones or other electronic devices (including, but not limited to, communications sent via SMS or other text, Blackberry Messenger, iMessage, WhatsApp, Signal, Gchat, or Twitter direct message), training materials or studies, including records kept in written form, or electronic format on computers and/or other electronic storage devices, electronic communications and/or videotapes, as well as any reproductions thereof that differ in any way from any other reproduction, such as copies containing marginal notations. No category of material should be omitted from search, collection, and production.

I, Hassan M. Ahmad, the requesting party, am a citizen of the Commonwealth of Virginia as required by statute. Va. Code § 2.2-3704 *et seq.*

Specifically, I request:

1. Any and all records related to Mr. Guandolo's consideration for and appointment to the position of Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County, Virginia.
2. Any and all records related to the duties and responsibilities assigned to Mr. Guandolo at any point in his capacity as a Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County, Virginia.
3. Any and all records created or contributed to by Mr. Guandolo in his capacity as a Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County, Virginia. This request includes but is not limited to all documents, reports, policies, protocols, meeting materials, briefing materials, conference materials, workshop materials, and training materials created or contributed to by Mr. Guandolo in his capacity as a Special Deputy Sheriff.
4. All communications sent and received by Mr. Guandolo in his capacity as a Special Deputy Sheriff. This request includes but is not limited to letters, emails, memos, typed or handwritten notes, text messages, and others forms of written or electronic correspondence.
5. All CCSO communications related to Mr. Guandolo's responsibilities and activities as a Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County, Virginia. These communications include but are not limited to letters, emails, memos, typed or handwritten notes, text messages, and others forms of written or electronic correspondence.
6. All inquiries and complaints received by CCSO relating to Mr. Guandolo's status or activities as a Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County, Virginia, including but not limited to complaints from any member of the public, organizations (such as faith or advocacy groups), or by internal CCSO staff or employees.
7. All billing, reimbursement, and payroll records related to Mr. Guandolo's activities as a Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County, Virginia. This request includes records concerning all public monies spent on any aspect of Mr. Guandolo's activities as a Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County, Virginia.
8. All billing records, communications, and documents relating to the Trainings. This request includes records concerning all public monies spent on any aspect of the Trainings, including but not limited to payments for travel, food, entertainment, phone, Trainings-related materials, trainer fees, and all other expenses or costs attributable to any aspect of the Trainings, its speakers, or attendees.
9. All training materials presented and used during the Trainings, including but not limited to documents, agendas, lesson plans, power points, hand-outs, books, articles, and recordings or transcripts of the Trainings itself.
10. All complaints CCSO received in response to the Trainings, including but not limited to complaints from any member of the public, organizations (such as faith or advocacy

groups), or by internal CCSO staff or employees, either before or after the date of the Training.

11. All records and communications between CCSO staff and persons responsible for presenting, inviting, or hosting the Trainings, including but not limited their communications with Mr. Guandolo or any UTT staff, employee, or agent.
12. All documents concerning the implementation of techniques presented at the Trainings, along with any internal assessments by the CCSO as to the adequacy of the Trainings.
13. All documents concerning the attendance of CCSO personnel at the Trainings or at any of Mr. Guandolo's previous trainings held on other dates or at other locations.
14. All records of communications between the CCSO and other government agencies or law enforcement personnel regarding Mr. Guandolo and his trainings, including discussions about any of Mr. Guandolo's previous trainings held on other dates or at other locations.

The public has an inherent right to be reasonably informed as to what public records contain and the manner in which public bodies conduct their affairs and operations. If an exemption is discretionary, I ask you not to withhold such records, even if they would qualify under the law. If you deny any or all of this request, please cite each specific exemption you believe justifies the refusal to release the information and notify me of the appeal procedures available to me under the law. Any records that fall under any exemption should be segregated or redacted in part so that the public can reasonably view the remainder of the requested record. Va. Code § 2.2-3704.01. I reserve the right to appeal any decision to withhold any information. Further, if your agency does not maintain these records, please provide me with the name and address of the custodian or agency that does.

I request a waiver of all fees as disclosure of the requested information is in the public interest and is not being sought for any commercial purpose. However, if there are any fees for searching or copying these records, please inform me of the costs before processing this request.

The Virginia Freedom of Information Act requires a response to this request be made within five business days. *Id.* § 2.2-3704(B). If access to the records I am requesting will take longer than this amount of time, please contact me with information about when I might expect copies or the ability to inspect the requested records. I will accept documents on a rolling basis.

Thank you for considering our request. Please contact me by phone at 703-964-0245 or by e-mail at [hma@hmalegal.com](mailto:hma@hmalegal.com) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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# EXHIBIT A



**John Guandolo** is the Founder of UnderstandingtheThreat.com, an organization dedicated to providing strategic and operational threat-focused consultation, education, and training for federal, state and local leadership and agencies, and designing strategies at all levels of the community in order to defeat the jihadi threat.

Mr. Guandolo is a 1989 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy who took a commission as an Officer in the United States Marine Corps. He served with 2d Battalion 2d Marines as an Infantry Platoon Commander in combat Operations Desert Shield/Storm. From 1991-1996, he served in 2d Force Reconnaissance Company as a Platoon Commander, Assistant Operations Officer, and the unit's Airborne and Diving Officer. During this time, he also deployed to the Adriatic/Bosnia. He served for one year as the Unit Leader for the CINC's In-Extremis Force, directly reporting to a Combatant Commander in a classified mission profile. Mr. Guandolo was a combat diver, military free-fall parachutist, and a graduate of the U.S. Army Ranger School.

In 1996, Mr. Guandolo resigned his commission in the Marine Corps and joined the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), serving at the Washington Field Office. From 1996-2000, he primarily conducted narcotics investigations domestically and overseas. In 2001, he served for one year as the FBI Liaison to the U.S. Capitol Police investigating threats on high-level government officials. Shortly after 9/11, Mr. Guandolo began an assignment to the Counterterrorism Division of the FBI's Washington Field Office developing an expertise in the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Doctrine, the global Islamic Movement, and terrorist organizations including Hamas, Al Qaeda, and others.

In 2006, *Mr. Guandolo was designated a "Subject Matter Expert" by FBI Headquarters and created and implemented the FBI's first Counterterrorism Training Program* focused on the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Doctrine, and the global Islamic Movement, and. This course was hailed as "groundbreaking" by the FBI's Executive Assistant Director in a brief to the Vice President's National Security Staff.

For his efforts, in 2007 Mr. Guandolo was presented the "Defender of the Homeland" Award by U.S. Senators Jon Kyl and Joseph Lieberman on behalf of the Center for Security Policy in Washington, D.C.

While in the FBI, *Mr. Guandolo also received two (2) United States Attorney's Awards for Investigative Excellence.*

Mr. Guandolo served on the Washington Field Office SWAT team for over nine years and as its Team Leader for three of those years. He was a certified Undercover Agent, a Nationally Registered Paramedic, a First Aid Instructor, and served as an FBI "Advanced Capability Medic." His career included significant overseas travel to include many areas of Africa, Southwest Asia, Europe and elsewhere.

After his FBI career, Mr. Guandolo conducted Strategic Analysis on the Global Islamic Movement for the Department of Defense.

Currently, Mr. Guandolo advises governments - U.S. and others - on matters related to National Security, specifically the threat from the Global Islamic Movement. He actively briefs and teaches members of Congress, senior military officials, law enforcement, the intelligence community, key community leaders, and others. Mr. Guandolo served as an adjunct instructor at the Joint Forces Staff College and instructed at the U.S. Army War College.

Mr. Guandolo is currently a Special Deputy Sheriff in Culpeper County, Virginia.

***In 2014, Mr. Guandolo was inducted into the International Who's Who for his work in the field of national security.***

Mr. Guandolo is the co-author of Shariah – The Threat to America, the first comprehensive book on the enemy threat doctrine, and the author of Raising a Jihadi Generation (September 2013) which details the Muslim Brotherhood's jihadi support network inside the United States.

Mr. Guandolo was Knighted into the Sovereign Order of the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem – Ecumenical Order (Knights of Malta), and is a Claremont Institute Lincoln Fellow.

He is a member of the Veterans of Foreign War, the American Legion, and the Force Reconnaissance Association.

Mr. Guandolo frequently appears on television and radio, and regularly publishes articles related to these matters in a number of media outlets.

His website is [www.UnderstandingtheThreat.com](http://www.UnderstandingtheThreat.com).