

Erdogan's Foot Soldiers in America

by [Karys Rhea](#) and [Benjamin Baird](#) (May 2020)



May 16, 2018: Erdogan's Security attacking peaceful Protesters, ©Voice of America

American protestors violently beaten by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's security detail in May 2017 are finally experiencing justice after a federal court [rejected Turkey's](#) request to dismiss a civil lawsuit targeting the perpetrators.

[Video evidence](#) showed Turkish security officials attacking demonstrators, including women and elderly, outside the Turkish ambassador's residence in Washington D.C. This was the latest altercation involving the presidential security team, which has skirmished with American journalists, law enforcement, and demonstrators during recurring state visits.

During a more recent state visit, it seems that Erdogan has supplemented his misfit bodyguard detail with an Islamist neighborhood watch group that is mired in controversy. On September 22, the Brooklyn-based Muslim Community Patrol and Services (MCPS) provided protective services for the Turkish dictator while he [addressed](#) members of the Turkish American National Steering Committee (TASC) at the Hilton Midtown Hotel ballroom. An MCPS official was also [present](#) at the attack on demonstrators in 2017, although it is unknown whether MCPS was involved in the violence.

At the TASC event in 2019, “MCPS was there to provide support, security and crowd management” for the Turkish president, claimed the group’s [Facebook page](#).

[Fliers](#) promoting the September event titled it “Uniting the Ummah”—a reference to the global Muslim community. Erdogan was in town to forge ties with American Islamists who increasingly [view](#) the Turkish despot as their “new Caliph,” or the rightful leader of the “Islamic world.” The hosting body TASC is the unofficial proxy of Turkey’s conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP), and its members make no attempt to hide their singular loyalty to Erdogan, calling him “our president.”

MCPS, which bills itself as a civilian patrol organization acting as a liaison between New York police and the local Muslim community, typically patrols Brooklyn’s Bay Ridge and Sunset Park neighborhoods. One MCPS leader [called the group](#) a “neighborhood community patrol on steroids,” and residents have [complained](#) about its overzealous nature. Besides driving

around in patrol vehicles that look remarkably similar to New York Police Department cruisers, MCPS recruits have been accused of [harassing residents](#) for minor offenses, and they are allegedly involved in a [feud](#) with the local Gates Avenue Bloods, a violent street gang. (MCPS head of security Ali Karim [denied](#) this altercation, referring to the sources of the allegation as “human devils.”)

Staffed by amateur volunteers, MCPS may not seem like Erdogan’s best option for supplemental security. However, by employing MCPS, the Turkish regime is expanding its base of overseas Islamist loyalists, who can subsequently be called upon to support his political objectives.

While cementing his authoritarian reign at home, Erdogan has long been leveraging his international ties to Islamists. He [openly backs](#) the Muslim Brotherhood. His regime has [provided](#) financial support for Hamas, a designated terrorist group, and is accused of supporting affiliates of terrorist groups such as [ISIS](#) and [Al Qaeda](#).

On the American front, Erdogan and his advisors [regularly attend](#) conventions organized by Islamist groups with extremist ties, such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations and the Islamic Society of North America. Recently, Turkey [invested](#) \$110 million in building a 20,000 square foot [mosque](#) in Maryland. In response, Islamists openly pledge their [support](#) to the Turkish president, treating him “like a Sultan” in exchange for increased financial and political support.

With documented ties to terrorism and extremism of their own,

MCPS leaders apparently harbored no reservations about lending their support to a foreign Islamist leader. In fact, MCPS [security chief](#) Ali Karim [claimed](#) that he “witnessed” the 2017 Sheridan Circle assault “first hand,” but still felt at ease working in September with the Turkish president’s violent security detail.

Karim is the spokesman and head of security for extremist preacher and senior MCPS leader Siraj Wahhaj’s At-Taqla mosque, where Karim hosts self-defense [workshops](#) offering paramilitary-style training and [instructions](#) on how to disarm law enforcement officers. Several workshop participants have [referred](#) to themselves as “jihad warriors,” and one trainee pleaded guilty in 2011 to plotting an attack on the Washington D.C. Metro System. In a 2013 social media post, Karim [wrote](#), “Allah made it obligatory for the Muslims to fight in Jihad against the evil of the enemy who transgress against Islam . . . Jihad is required from every person.”

According to official NYPD [documents](#), local law enforcement maintained a special interest in Karim and Wahhaj, secretly monitoring them for years.

Wahhaj’s [speech](#) at the September TASC event praised the Turkish president. “We need a centralized leadership. I have a feeling that the leadership is coming from Turkey,” Wahhaj said, adding, “We love you here in New York.”

Wahhaj, the MCPS [deputy director of operations](#), was listed as a potential co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. During the late 1980s, Wahhaj began recruiting

Muslims from prisons and homeless shelters to eradicate [crack dealers](#) from Brooklyn. “We are willing to fight, willing to die and willing to kill,” Wahhaj told the *New York Times*.

Wahhaj’s men were eventually absorbed into SSI Patrol Services, an armed private security firm frequently in trouble with the law. At least three SSI guards were charged with serious criminal offenses, including second-degree murder. The [defendant](#) in that case, Ali Mustapha, was acquitted after one key witness was murdered and another refused to testify. Mustapha [currently serves](#) as MCPS’s recruitment officer and supervisor.

Impetuous and extreme, MCPS members make for poor public safety officers. Perhaps for these reasons it was selected to reinforce a Turkish presidential security detachment with its own history of brutality and contempt for U.S. laws.

The presence of uniformed Muslim American guards deployed in service to a foreign leader sends a clear message to the world: a growing number of American Islamists are fiercely devoted to Erdogan as the Caliph of an Islamic state that has transcended national borders.

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