



# **Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat**

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## PREFACE

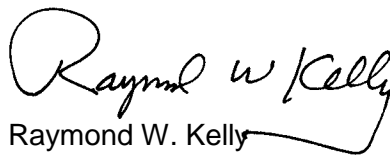
While terrorism has been with us for centuries, the destructive power and global reach of modern terrorism is unprecedented. The entire world witnessed the attacks of September 11, 2001, but most of the attacks and attempted attacks since then have shown 9/11 to be an anomaly rather than the standard pattern for terrorism in the homeland.

If the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world has taught us anything, it is that the tools for conducting serious terrorist attacks are becoming easier to acquire. Therefore intention becomes an increasingly important factor in the formation of terrorist cells. This study is an attempt to look at how that intention forms, hardens and leads to an attack or attempted attack using real world case studies.

While the threat from overseas remains, many of the terrorist attacks or thwarted plots against cities in Europe, Canada, Australia and the United States have been conceptualized and planned by local residents/citizens who sought to attack their country of residence. The majority of these individuals began as “unremarkable” - they had “unremarkable” jobs, had lived “unremarkable” lives and had little, if any criminal history. The recently thwarted plot by homegrown jihadists, in May 2007, against Fort Dix in New Jersey, only underscores the seriousness of this emerging threat.

Understanding this trend and the radicalization process in the West that drives “unremarkable” people to become terrorists is vital for developing effective counter-strategies. This realization has special importance for the NYPD and the City of New York. As one of the country’s iconic symbols and the target of numerous terrorist plots since the 1990’s, New York City continues to be the one of the top targets of terrorists worldwide. Consequently, the NYPD places a priority on understanding what drives and defines the radicalization process.

The aim of this report is to assist policymakers and law enforcement officials, both in Washington and throughout the country, by providing a thorough understanding of the kind of threat we face domestically. It also seeks to contribute to the debate among intelligence and law enforcement agencies on how best to counter this emerging threat by better understanding what constitutes the radicalization process.



Raymond W. Kelly  
Police Commissioner of the City of New York



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The NYPD's understanding of the threat from Islamic-based terrorism to New York City has evolved since September 11, 2001. While the threat from overseas remains, terrorist attacks or thwarted plots against cities in Europe, Australia and Canada since 2001 fit a different paradigm. Rather than being directed from al-Qaeda abroad, these plots have been conceptualized and planned by "unremarkable" local residents/citizens who sought to attack their country of residence, utilizing al-Qaeda as their inspiration and ideological reference point.

Some of these cases include:

- Madrid's March 2004 attack
- Amsterdam's Hofstad Group
- London's July 2005 attack
- Australia's Operation Pendennis (which thwarted an attack(s) in November 2005)
- The Toronto 18 Case (which thwarted an attack in June 2006)

Where once we would have defined the initial indicator of the threat at the point where a terrorist or group of terrorists would actually plan an attack, we have now shifted our focus to a much earlier point—a point where we believe the potential terrorist or group of terrorists begin and progress through a process of radicalization. The culmination of this process is a terrorist attack.

Understanding this trend and the radicalization process in the West that drives "unremarkable" people to become terrorists is vital for developing effective counter-strategies and has special importance for the NYPD and the City of New York. As one of the country's iconic symbols and the target of numerous terrorist plots since the 1990's, New York City continues to be among the top targets of terrorists worldwide.

In order to test whether the same framework for understanding radicalization abroad applied within the United States, we analyzed three U.S. homegrown terrorism cases and two New York City based cases:

- Lackawana, New York
- Portland, Oregon
- Northern Virginia
- New York City - Herald Square Subway
- New York City – The Al Muhajiroun Two

The same radicalization framework was applied to a study of the origins of the Hamburg cluster of individuals, who led the September 11 hijackers. This assessment, almost six years after 2001, provides some new insights, previously not fully-grasped by the law enforcement and intelligence community, into the origins of this devastating attack.

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## **RADICALIZATION**

### ***Ideology***

Jihadist or jihadi-Salafi ideology is the driver that motivates young men and women, born or living in the West, to carry out “autonomous jihad” via acts of terrorism against their host countries. It guides movements, identifies the issues, drives recruitment and is the basis for action.

- This ideology has served as the inspiration for numerous homegrown groups including the Madrid March 2004 bombers, Amsterdam’s Hofstad Group, London’s July 2005 bombers, the Australians arrested as part of Operation Pendennis in late 2005 and the Toronto 18 arrested in June 2006.

### ***Process***

An assessment of the various reported models of radicalization leads to the conclusion that the radicalization process is composed of four distinct phases:

- Stage 1: Pre-Radicalization
- Stage 2: Self-Identification
- Stage 3: Indoctrination
- Stage 4: Jihadization
  - Each of these phases is unique and has specific signatures
  - All individuals who begin this process do not necessarily pass through all the stages
  - Many stop or abandon this process at different points
  - Although this model is sequential, individuals do not always follow a perfectly linear progression
  - Individuals who do pass through this entire process are quite likely to be involved in the planning or implementation of a terrorist act

## **PHASES OF RADICALIZATION**

**PRE-RADICALIZATION.** Pre-Radicalization is the point of origin for individuals before they begin this progression. It is their life situation before they were exposed to and adopted jihadi-Salafi Islam as their own ideology.

- The majority of the individuals involved in these plots began as “unremarkable” - they had “ordinary” jobs, had lived “ordinary” lives and had little, if any criminal history.

**SELF-IDENTIFICATION.** Self-Identification is the phase where individuals, influenced by both internal and external factors, begin to explore Salafi Islam, gradually gravitate away from their old identity and begin to associate themselves with like-minded individuals and adopt this ideology as their own. The catalyst for this “religious seeking” is a cognitive opening, or crisis, which shakes one’s certitude in previously held beliefs and opens an individual to be receptive to new worldviews.

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There can be many types of triggers that can serve as the catalyst including:

- Economic (losing a job, blocked mobility)
- Social (alienation, discrimination, racism – real or perceived)
- Political (international conflicts involving Muslims)
- Personal (death in the close family)

**INDOCTRINATION.** Indoctrination is the phase in which an individual progressively intensifies his beliefs, wholly adopts jihadi-Salafi ideology and concludes, without question, that the conditions and circumstances exist where action is required to support and further the cause. That action is militant jihad. This phase is typically facilitated and driven by a “spiritual sanctioner”.

- While the initial self-identification process may be an individual act, as noted above, association with like-minded people is an important factor as the process deepens. By the indoctrination phase this self-selecting group becomes increasingly important as radical views are encouraged and reinforced.

**JIHADIZATION.** Jihadization is the phase in which members of the cluster accept their individual duty to participate in jihad and self-designate themselves as holy warriors or mujahedeen. Ultimately, the group will begin operational planning for the jihad or a terrorist attack. These “acts in furtherance” will include planning, preparation and execution.

- While the other phases of radicalization may take place gradually, over two to three years, this jihadization component can be a very rapid process, taking only a few months, or even weeks to run its course.

## **FINDINGS**

- Al-Qaeda has provided the inspiration for homegrown radicalization and terrorism; direct command and control by al-Qaeda has been the exception, rather than the rule among the case studies reviewed in this study.
  - The four stages of the radicalization process, each with its distinct set of indicators and signatures, are clearly evident in each of the nearly one dozen terrorist-related case studies reviewed in this report.
    - In spite of the differences in both circumstances and environment in each of the cases, there is a remarkable consistency in the behaviors and trajectory of each of the plots across all the stages.
    - This consistency provides a tool for predictability.
  - The transnational phenomenon of radicalization in the West is largely a function of the people and the environment in which they live. Much different from the Israeli-Palestinian equation, the transformation of a Western-based individual to a terrorist is not triggered by oppression, suffering, revenge, or desperation.
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- Rather, it is a phenomenon that occurs because the individual is looking for an identity and a cause and unfortunately, often finds them in the extremist Islam.
  - There is no useful profile to assist law enforcement or intelligence to predict who will follow this trajectory of radicalization. Rather, the individuals who take this course begin as “unremarkable” from various walks of life.
  - Europe’s failure to integrate the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of its immigrants into society, both economically and socially, has left many young Muslims torn between the secular West and their religious heritage. This inner conflict makes them especially vulnerable to extremism—the radical views, philosophy, and rhetoric that is highly advertised and becoming more and more fashionable among young Muslims in the West.
  - Muslims in the U.S. are more resistant, but not immune to the radical message.
    - Despite the economic opportunities in the United States, the powerful gravitational pull of individuals’ religious roots and identity sometimes supersedes the assimilating nature of American society which includes pursuit of a professional career, financial stability and material comforts.
  - The jihadist ideology combines the extreme and minority interpretation [jihadi-Salafi] of Islam with an activist-like commitment or responsibility to solve global political grievances through violence. Ultimately, the jihadist envisions a world in which jihadi-Salafi Islam is dominant and is the basis of government.
    - This ideology is proliferating in Western democracies at a logarithmic rate. The Internet, certain Salafi-based NGO’s (non-governmental organizations), extremist sermons /study groups, Salafi literature, jihadi videotapes, extremist - sponsored trips to radical madrassas and militant training camps abroad have served as “extremist incubators” for young, susceptible Muslims -- especially ones living in diaspora communities in the West.
  - The Internet is a driver and enabler for the process of radicalization
    - In the Self-Identification phase, the Internet provides the wandering mind of the conflicted young Muslim or potential convert with direct access to unfiltered radical and extremist ideology.
    - It also serves as an anonymous virtual meeting place—a place where virtual groups of like-minded and conflicted individuals can meet, form virtual relationships and discuss and share the jihadi-Salafi message they have encountered.
    - During the Indoctrination phase, when individuals adopt this virulent ideology, they begin interpreting the world from this newly-formed context. Cloaked with a veil of objectivity, the Internet allows the aspiring jihadist to view the world and global conflicts through this extremist lens, further
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reinforcing the objectives and political arguments of the jihadi-Salafi agenda.

- In the Jihadization phase, when an individual commits to jihad, the Internet serves as an enabler—providing broad access to an array of information on targets, their vulnerabilities and the design of weapons.
  - Individuals generally appear to begin the radicalization process on their own. Invariably, as they progress through the stages of radicalization they seek like-minded individuals. This leads to the creation of groups or clusters. These clusters appear almost essential to progressing to the Jihadization stage—the critical stage that leads to a terrorist act.
    - “Group think” is one of the most powerful catalysts for leading a group to actually committing a terrorist act. It acts as a force-multiplier for radical thought while creating a competitive environment amongst the group members for being the most radical.
  - Although there are many groups or clusters of individuals that are on the path of radicalization, each group needs certain archetypes to evolve from just being a “bunch of guys” to an operational terrorist cell. All eleven case studies had:
    - A “spiritual sanctioner” who provides the justification for jihad—a justification that is especially essential for the suicide terrorist. In some cases the sanctioner was the nucleus around which the cluster formed.
    - An “operational leader” who is essential as the group decides to conduct a terrorist act--organizing, controlling and keeping the group focused and its motivation high.
  - The full radicalization of a Western individual, or groups of individuals, does not always result in the committing of a terrorist act in the West. Many fully-radicalized individuals have first looked to conduct jihad by becoming mujahedeen and fighting in conflicts overseas.
    - The image of the heroic, holy warrior or “mujahedeen” has been widely marketed on the Internet as well as in jihadi tapes and videos. This image continues to resonate among young, especially Muslim, men 15-35 years-old—men who are most vulnerable to visions of honor, bravery and sacrifice for what is perceived as a noble cause.
    - Among those individuals who travel abroad in search of jihad, some end up as mujahedeen and fight in foreign lands; some are re-directed to commit acts in the West, often in their country of origin, while others give up and return home because they can’t endure the training or have a change of heart.
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- For those groups of homegrown radicalized individuals who do not seek jihad abroad, the dedication and commitment of their leader to jihad is often the main factor in determining whether the group will commit a terrorist act or not.
  - Although the 9/11 attack, with its overseas origins, is more of an exception in terms of how terrorist plots have been launched since the destruction of the Twin Towers, it has probably been the most important factor in proliferating the process of radicalization, especially in the West. More importantly, 9/11 established the current trend of committing an act in the name of global jihad as a natural culmination of full radicalization and the ultimate responsibility for the fully radicalized jihadist.
    - Prior to 9/11, the entire radicalization process moved at a much slower rate. There was no direct link to jihad, other than to become a mujahedeen. Aspiring jihadists would travel to Afghanistan without any idea that they could become actual terrorists. Now, there is no longer any illusion as to what the adoption of jihadi-Salafi ideology means.
    - The radicalization process is accelerating in terms of how long it takes and the individuals are continuing to get younger. Moreover, with the higher risks associated with heading down this pathway, individuals will seek to conceal their actions earlier, making intelligence and law enforcement's job even more difficult.
  - It is useful to think of the radicalization process in terms of a funnel. Entering the process does not mean one will progress through all four stages and become a terrorist. However, it also does not mean that if one doesn't become a terrorist, he or she is no longer a threat. Individuals who have been radicalized but are not jihadists may serve as mentors and agents of influence to those who might become the terrorists of tomorrow.
  - The subtle and non-criminal nature of the behaviors involved in the process of radicalization makes it difficult to identify or even monitor from a law enforcement standpoint. Taken in isolation, individual behaviors can be seen as innocuous; however, when seen as part of the continuum of the radicalization process, their significance becomes more important. Considering the sequencing of these behaviors and the need to identify those entering this process at the earliest possible stage makes intelligence the critical tool in helping to thwart an attack or even prevent the planning of future plots.
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## STATEMENT OF CLARIFICATION

This statement should serve as a means of clarification for some issues that have arisen in the wake of this report's publication.

- 1) New York City Muslim Community as NYPD Ally: The NYPD Report, "Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat" is exclusively focused on al Qaeda inspired and linked terrorism in the West. The twisted ideology that underpins this specific type of terrorism claims its legitimacy from an extremist misinterpretation of Islam. As a consequence, this particular type of terrorist ideology has historically found most of its supporters to be Muslim.

Nevertheless, NYPD understands that it is a tiny minority of Muslims who subscribe to al Qaeda's ideology of war and terror and that the NYPD's focus on al Qaeda inspired terrorism should not be mistaken for any implicit or explicit justification for racial, religious or ethnic profiling. Rather, the Muslim community in New York City is our ally and has as much to lose, if not more, than other New Yorkers if individuals commit acts of violence (falsely) in the name of their religion. As such, the NYPD report should not be read to characterize Muslims as intrinsically dangerous or intrinsically linked to terrorism, and that it cannot be a license for racial, religious, or ethnic profiling.

- 2) Permeating the community: On Page 69 of the report, it says, "Unfortunately, the City's Muslim communities have been permeated by extremists who have and continue to sow the seeds of radicalization." There has been some confusion about the precise intended meaning of this statement.

NYPD sought to use the word as Webster's defines it – "to diffuse through or penetrate something" to explain that extremists have, as a foreign element, penetrated the community and attempted to proliferate their ideology and thus "sow the seeds of radicalization". The intention was never to suggest that the NYC Muslim community has been saturated by extremism.

The Internet serves as an excellent example of how extremists permeate the community online, as it provides a venue for more than 500 extremist websites -- anyone in the community can access it.

- 3) Coupling Religion and Terror: Al Qaeda inspired terrorism is not the only type of terrorism that New York City has faced. In fact, before 9/11, other religious and ethnic groups were responsible for more terrorist related deaths of New Yorkers than any Islamic group. These included the Italian anarchists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Puerto Rican FALN in the 1980's, among others. However, given the almost 3,000 deaths in New York City as a result of al Qaeda terrorism, al Qaeda was chosen as the topic of this study.

- 4) False positives and behaviors: Because of the NYPD's focus on al Qaeda inspired and linked terrorism in this report, it inevitably would focus on those who are most attracted to the ideology and those who have made up the majority of recruits to this specific movement.

This study analyzes the pathway by which these individuals got radicalized. In all of the case studies, early steps in this process happened in parallel with individuals' greater devotion to their religion and greater observance of rituals. However, during the early stages of radicalization, the behaviors associated with a greater degree of religiosity, in and of themselves, cannot be used as a signature of someone potentially becoming a terrorist.

The individuals, at this point, do not know what trajectory they themselves will follow, so law enforcement would be doing itself a disservice and wasting significant resources on tracking individuals who simply exhibit behaviors that at this stage are perfectly benign and in the vast majority of cases not associated with terrorism.

- 5) Not policy prescriptive: The NYPD reiterates that this report was not intended to be policy prescriptive for law enforcement. In all of its dealings with Federal, State and Local authorities, the NYPD continues to underscore this important point.
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**OUTSIDE EXPERT'S VIEW: Brian Michael Jenkins,**

*Senior Advisor to the President of the Rand Corporation*

The United States and its allies have achieved undeniable success in degrading the operational capabilities of the jihadist terrorist enterprise responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks, and numerous subsequent terrorist operations since then. However, we have not dented their determination, prevented their communications, or blunted their message. We have not diminished their capacity to incite, halted the process of radicalization, or impeded the recruitment that supports the jihadist enterprise. Indeed, recent intelligence estimates concede that “activists identifying themselves as jihadists are increasing in both number and geographic dispersion.” As a consequence, “the operational threat from self-radicalized cells will grow in importance to U.S. counterterrorism efforts, particularly abroad, but also in the Homeland. As the Department of Homeland Security’s Chief Intelligence Officer testified in March 2007, “radicalization will continue to expand within the United States over the long term.”

This study examines the trajectories of radicalization that produced operational terrorist cells in Madrid, Amsterdam, London, Sydney and Toronto to construct an analytical framework that tracks jihadist recruits from pre-radicalization to self-identification to indoctrination to jihadization--a cycle that ends with capture or death. It then compares this model with the trajectories of radicalization observed in conspiracies within the United States including the jihadist clusters in Lackawanna, Northern Virginia, Portland, Oregon, New York City, and lastly with the Hamburg cell responsible for the attack on 9/11.

Although there have been informative analyses of the paths to violent jihad in individual countries, this is the most comprehensive review across national boundaries, including the terrorist conspiracies uncovered in the United States. The resulting model will undoubtedly become the basis for comparison with additional cases as they are revealed in future attacks or arrests.

The utility of the NYPD model, however, goes beyond analysis. It will inform the training of intelligence analysts and law enforcement personnel engaged in counterterrorist missions. It will allow us to identify similarities and differences, and changes in patterns over time. It will assist prosecutors and courts in the very difficult task of deciding when the boundary between a bunch of guys sharing violent fantasies and a terrorist cell determined to go operational has been crossed. Above all, by identifying key junctions in the journey to terrorist jihad, it should help in the formulation of effective and appropriate strategies aimed at peeling potential recruits away from a dangerous and destructive course.

As the NYPD point outs, becoming a jihadist is a gradual, multi-step process that can take months, even years, although since 9/11 the pace has accelerated. The journey may begin in a mosque where a radical Imam preaches, in informal congregations and prayer groups—some of which are clandestine—in schools, in prisons, on the Internet.

Self-radicalization may begin the day that an individual seeks out jihadist websites. In the physical world when would-be jihadists seek support among local jihadist mentors and like-minded fanatics. This is the group that currently poses the biggest danger to the West. It is the focus of the present monograph.

As the NYPD shows, self-radicalization was often the norm, even before the worldwide crackdown on al Qaeda and its jihadist allies forced them to decentralize and disperse. Those who arrived at jihadist training camps, like members of the Hamburg cell, were already radicalized. At the camps, they bonded through shared beliefs and hardships, underwent advanced training, and gained combat experience; some were selected by al Qaeda’s planners for specific terrorist operations.

Short of preparing for a specific attack, it is hard to define the exact point at which one becomes a jihadist: Internalization of jihadist ideology? Bonding with brothers at a jihadist retreat? Downloading jihadist literature or bomb-making instructions from the Internet? Fantasizing about terrorist operations? Reconnoitering potential targets? Going to Pakistan? Signing a contract to pray for the jihadists, collect money on their behalf, or support terrorist operations? Taking an oath of loyalty to Osama bin Laden? The legal definition is broad.

Neither imported nor homegrown terrorism is new in the United States. A homegrown conspiracy (albeit with foreign assistance) was responsible for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. Another homegrown conspiracy carried out the devastating 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City. The United States, over the years, has successfully suppressed these groups through domestic intelligence collection and law enforcement.

Since 9/11, U.S. authorities have uncovered a number of alleged individual terrorists and terrorist rings, including clusters in Lackawanna, Northern Virginia, New Jersey, Portland, New York City, and Lodi and Torrance, California. These arrests, along with intelligence operations, indicate that radicalization and recruiting are taking place in the United States, but there is no evidence of a significant cohort of terrorist operatives. We therefore worry most about terrorist attacks by very small conspiracies or individuals, which nonetheless could be equivalent to the London subway bombings or a jihadist version of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

This suggests that efforts should be made to enhance the intelligence capabilities of local police, who through community policing, routine criminal investigations, or dedicated intelligence operations may be best positioned to uncover future terrorist plots. Of these, continued intelligence operations are the most important. Radicalization makes little noise. It borders on areas protected by the First and Fourth Amendments. It takes place over a long period of time. It therefore does not lend itself to a traditional criminal investigations approach.

The absence of significant terrorist attacks or even advanced terrorist plots in the United States since 9/11 is good news that cannot entirely be explained by increased intelligence and heightened security. It suggests America's Muslim population may be less susceptible than Europe's Muslim population, if not entirely immune to jihadist ideology; indeed, countervailing voices may exist within the American Muslim community. A recent survey of Muslim Americans by the Pew Research Center supports this thesis. The vast majority of American Muslims reject al Qaeda's violent extremism, although younger Muslims are more accepting of violence in the defense of Islam. Conversely, it may merely indicate that the American Muslim population has not yet been exposed to the degree or variety of radicalization that its European counterparts have been exposed to, and it requires not majorities, but only handfuls to carry out terrorist attacks.

There is understandable pressure on law enforcement to intervene before terrorist attacks occur. Protecting society against destruction, and if possible, diverting vulnerable young men from destructive and self-destructive paths are vital and legitimate tasks. Doing so, without trampling our freedoms, requires greater understanding of the process that leads to terrorism. NYPD has drawn the map.

**OUTSIDE EXPERT'S VIEW: Alain Bauer,**

*Criminologist at the Sorbonne University*

Criminologists do not arrest nor do they judge criminals. They try to understand how they work, how their goals are evolving, how their modus operandi changes. It is rare to see a police force able to adapt to the threat, to move from defense to pre-emption, to try to avoid the attack rather than just arresting the perpetrators afterwards. This is what the NYPD has done, after healing from the 9/11 shock.

The NYPD is not only fighting crime and terrorism. It examines clues and evidence worldwide to understand what is going on and to detect, as early as possible, what is going to be a threat for New York City, the citizens of the United States of America and democracies all over the world.

The NYPD has learned how to detect imported terrorists, new converts and homegrown operators. Based on NYPD knowledge and my own findings, we may highlight some discoveries:

- Since September 11th, 2001, jihadists comprising around 70 nationalities have been captured in some one hundred countries around the world and jihadi money has been frozen in 130 countries worldwide. As a result of this global war, the "battlefield" has stretched across more than two-dozen countries, including Afghanistan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, the UK, the United States and Yemen;
- Terrorism is now the central security concern for our governments. It may even be said that terrorism has become war. However, this all-pervasive terrorism has itself undergone a significant mutation. The state terrorism of the Cold War, whether political or ideological, has almost disappeared;
- Civilians, cities, corporations and the population at large– will be increasingly affected, as they were by the attacks of 9/11 and by the anthrax scares that same year;

New terrorists have emerged. Today, the real menace is hybrid groups that are opportunistic and capable of rapid transformation – and are not really organizations at all, as the West generally uses the term. They do not have solid, rigid structures. On the contrary, they are fluid, liquid, or even volatile. Al-Qaeda is not an organization like the IRA or the Basque ETA. We must look at and think about the terrorism as a continuum. There is a real phenomenon of communicating vessels between the different players.

When it comes to threats, can the "information society" produce serious diagnoses, or is it condemned to bluster? This is a crucial question.

Experts in the threats and dangers of today's world, on either side of the Atlantic, are not working in a vacuum. We live in a society whose major characteristics are not particularly conducive to the tasks of defense and security. Driving while looking in the rear-view mirror only, preparing war while only checking the last one with no idea on what's going on, is a sure way for disaster. We call it the "Maginot Line Syndrome". The concrete one failed during the last World War when Adolph Hitler's army simply went around it. The Electronic one collapsed on September 11th.

We need to be able to move out of the culture of reaction, retrospect, and compilation. Only in this way can we arrive at the stage of forward thinking and enable early detection of the threats and dangers of the modern world, our modern world.

This study is the NYPD's contribution to this essential process.

## **THE THREAT**

The NYPD's understanding of the threat from Islamic-based terrorism to New York City has evolved since September 11, 2001. Where once we would have defined the initial indicator of the threat at the point where a terrorist or group of terrorists would actually plan an attack, we have now shifted our focus to a much earlier point—a point where we believe the potential terrorist or group of terrorists begin and progress through a process of radicalization. The culmination of this process is a terrorist attack.

The September 11 plot was conceptualized, manned, and funded by al-Qaeda's leadership in Afghanistan. Because the attack originated abroad, it fit and furthered the pre-existing understanding of Islamist terrorism as being a threat from outside our borders.

In the immediate aftermath of September 11, the United States military and law enforcement captured, killed, or scattered much of al-Qaeda's core leadership—eliminating its sanctuary and training camps in Afghanistan. As a result, the threat from the central core of al-Qaeda was significantly diminished.

However, as al-Qaeda's central core of leaders, operatives, and foot soldiers shrunk, its philosophy of global jihad spread worldwide at an exponential rate via radical Internet websites and chat rooms, extremist videotapes and literature, radical speeches by extremist imams—often creating a radical subculture within the more vulnerable Muslim diaspora communities. This post-September 11 wave of militant ideological influences underpins radicalization in the West and is what we define as the homegrown threat.

Moreover, in the years since 2001, the attacks of September 11 stand out as both the hallmark al-Qaeda attack as well as the singular exception. Bali [2002], Casablanca [2003], Madrid [2004], and London [2005] all fit a different paradigm. The individuals who conducted the attacks were for the most part all citizens or residents of the states in which the attacks occurred. Although a few may have received training in al-Qaeda camps, the great majority did not. While al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for each attack after the fact, these attacks were not under the command and control of al-Qaeda central, nor were they specifically funded by al-Qaeda central. Rather, they were conducted by local al-Qaeda inspired affiliate organizations or by local residents/citizens, who utilized al-Qaeda as their ideological inspiration.

We now believe that it is critical to identify the al-Qaeda inspired threat at the point where radicalization begins. This radicalization may or may not take place in the same town, city, or country as their terrorist target. For example, the pilots who led the September 11 hijackers were radicalized in Germany, but attacked targets in the United States. Conversely, London's July 7 bombers were radicalized in the U.K. and attacked targets in the U.K. Consequently, the point of origin of the development of a terrorist is really the location where the radicalization takes place.

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## **METHODOLOGY**

This study provides a conceptual framework for understanding the process of radicalization in the West. This framework is derived from a comparative case study of five prominent homegrown groups/plots around the world which resulted in either terrorist attacks or thwarted plots. The cases include Madrid's 3/11/04 attack, Amsterdam's Hofstad Group, the London-Leeds 7/7/05 attack, Australia's Operation Pendennis which thwarted an attack(s) in November 2005 and Canada's Toronto 18 Case, which thwarted an attack in June 2006.

In researching these case studies, the NYPD dispatched detectives and analysts to meet with law enforcement, intelligence officials and academics at each of these locations to enhance our understanding the specifics of these events as well as the phenomenon of homegrown radicalization.

Based on this effort, we have been able to identify common pathways and characteristics among these otherwise different groups and plots.

To test whether the framework that we derived from this effort applied within the United States, we analyzed three post-September 11 U.S. homegrown terrorism cases (Lackawana, New York, Portland, Oregon and Northern Virginia) as well as two New York City cases (34<sup>th</sup> Street/Herald Square and the radicalization of two al-Muhajiroun members).

Lastly, we applied the framework to the Hamburg cluster of individuals who led the September 11 hijackers. This assessment, almost six years after the attacks, provides some new insights into the origins of this devastating attack that were not previously fully-grasped by the law enforcement and intelligence community.

## RADICALIZATION: WESTERN STYLE

Terrorism is the ultimate consequence of the radicalization process. In the example of the homegrown threat, local residents or citizens gradually adopt an extremist religious/political ideology hostile to the West, which legitimizes terrorism as a tool to affect societal change. This ideology is fed and nurtured with a variety of extremist influences. Internalizing this extreme belief system as one's own is radicalization.

The progression of searching, finding, adopting, nurturing, and developing this extreme belief system to the point where it acts as a catalyst for a terrorist act defines the process of radicalization. Only through an in-depth understanding and appreciation of the societal and behavioral indicators that define the various stages of this process can intelligence and law enforcement agencies array themselves properly against this threat.

Although the process of radicalization is not unique to the West, the scope of this study will be limited to the Western paradigm—focused on highlighting the indicators and signatures that define how populations, many who are more vulnerable to the militant Islamic message become radicalized while living under the influence of Western culture and values.

Radicalization in the West often starts with individuals who are frustrated with their lives or with the politics of their home governments. These individuals ultimately seek other like-minded individuals and form a loose-knit group or social network. Together, they progress through a series of events, realizations, and experiences that often culminate in the decision to commit a terrorist act. That said, not all individuals or groups who begin this progression end up as terrorists. Different pathways, catalysts and exposure to extremist nodes affect their progress. Individuals may drop out or stop moving along this pathway for a variety of reasons.

Some key factors in determining how this process advances are determined by social and behavioral dynamics of small groups as well as the amount of time that the group or group member is exposed to the various nodes or incubators of extremism. These incubators are often embedded in legitimate institutions, businesses, clubs, and of course, in the virtual world of the Internet (see Text Box p.22).

Radicalization in the West is, first and foremost, driven by:

- **Jihadi-Salafi Ideology.** What motivates young men and women, born or living in the West, to carry out “autonomous jihad” via acts of terrorism against their host countries? The answer is ideology. Ideology is the bedrock and catalyst for radicalization. It defines the conflict, guides movements, identifies the issues, drives recruitment, and is the basis for action. In many cases, ideology also determines target selection and informs what will be done and how it will be carried out.

The religious/political ideology responsible for driving this radicalization process is called jihadist or jihadi-Salafi ideology and it has served as the inspiration for all or nearly all of the homegrown groups including the Madrid 2004 bombers, the Hofstad Group, London's 7/7 bombers, the Australians arrested as part of Operation Pendennis in 2005 and the Toronto 18, arrested in June 2006.

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- *The Religious Dimension.* Jihadi-Salafi ideology is but one stream of the broader Salafi movement. The general goal of this Sunni revivalist interpretation of Islam, is to create a “pure” society that applies a literal reading of the Quran and adheres to the social practices that prevailed at the time of 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia.

Implementation of sharia law and replacement of the system of nation states with a worldwide Caliphate are the ultimate political aims. While other Salafi currents encourage non-violent missionary or political activities to achieve these religious/political goals, jihadi-Salafis utilize endorsements of respected scholars of Islam to show that their aims and violent means are religiously justified.

- Contemporary Saudi (Wahhabi) scholars have provided the religious legitimacy for many of the arguments promoted by the jihadists.<sup>1</sup>
  - Extreme intolerance and hostility towards unbelievers, including Jews, Christians, Hindus and Shiites, is a core doctrine provided by Wahhabi religious thought. It provides the primary theological foundation for jihadi-Salafi causes and reduces the barriers to violence.
- *The Political Dimension.* The political aspect of jihadi-Salafi ideology is heavily underpinned by the work of Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian author, Islamist, and the leading intellectual of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950’s and 1960’s. He believed that Islam was under attack from the West and divided the world into the Muslim and the non-Muslim. To Qutb, democracy challenged the sovereignty of God’s divine law and should be resisted. Moreover, he also contended that militant jihad had to be used to attack institutions and societies in order to overthrow non-Islamic governments and to bring about a “pure” Islamic society.
  - *The Appeal.* For many Muslims in the West, especially those of the second and third generation who are seeking to learn about their Muslim heritage, the Salafi interpretation is the version of Islam they are most widely exposed to. It has become more mainstream and is proliferated within diaspora communities. This interpretation of Islam is not the cultural Islam of their parents or their home countries.

The personal search for one’s own Muslim identity often dovetails with the desire to find an appropriate Islamic response to the political crises involving Muslims worldwide. Complex disputes like the Arab-Israeli conflict and Kashmir are diluted into one large conflict between “believers” and “non-believers”. This powerful and simple “one-size fits all” philosophy resonates with the younger diaspora Muslim populations in the West who are often politically naïve. This powerful narrative provides evidence of an across-the-board plan to undermine and humiliate Islam worldwide.

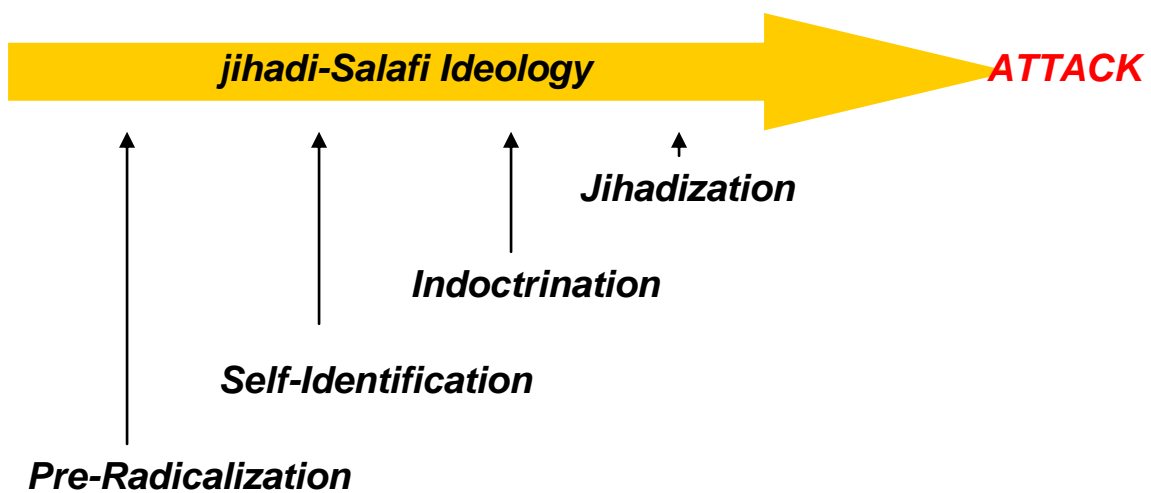
As Muslims in the West seek to determine their appropriate response to this perceived “war on Islam” many look for guidance for action from their religion. The jihadi-Salafi interpretation paves a path to terrorism by its doctrines, which suggest that violence is a viable and legitimate means to defend Islam from perceived enemies, even if means attacking one’s own government and/or sacrificing your own life.

## THE RADICALIZATION PROCESS

The radicalization process is composed of four distinct phases:

- Stage 1: Pre-Radicalization
- Stage 2: Self-Identification
- Stage 3: Indoctrination
- Stage 4: Jihadization

Each of these phases is unique and has specific signatures associated with it. All individuals who begin this process do not necessarily pass through all the stages and many, in fact, stop or abandon this process at different points. Moreover, although this model is sequential, individuals do not always follow a perfectly linear progression. However, individuals who do pass through this entire process are quite likely to be involved in a terrorist act.



### **Radicalization Incubators**

Critically important to the process of radicalization are the different venues that provide the extremist fodder or fuel for radicalizing—venues, to which we refer to as “radicalization incubators.”

These incubators serve as radicalizing agents for those who have chosen to pursue radicalization. They become their pit stops, “hangouts,” and meeting places. Generally these locations, which together comprise the radical subculture of a community, are rife with extremist rhetoric. Though the locations can be mosques, more likely incubators include cafes, cab driver hangouts, flophouses, prisons, student associations, non-governmental organizations, hookah (water pipe) bars, butcher shops and book stores. While it is difficult to predict who will radicalize, these nodes are likely places where like-minded individuals will congregate as they move through the radicalization process.

The Internet, with its thousands of extremist websites and chat-rooms, is a virtual incubator of its own. In fact, many of the extremists began their radical conversion while researching or just surfing in the cyber world. (For further discussion of the role of the Internet --See Text Box on p. 39.)

## RADICALIZATION IN THE WEST: FIVE FOREIGN CASES



MADRID: MARCH 2004



AMSTERDAM: NOVEMBER 2004



LONDON: JULY 2005



SYDNEY/MELBOURNE: NOVEMBER 2005



TORONTO: JUNE 2006

**STAGE 1: PRE-RADICALIZATION.** Pre-Radicalization describes an individual's world—his or her pedigree, lifestyle, religion, social status, neighborhood, and education—just prior to the start of their journey down the path of radicalization.

Despite the absence of a psychological profile of a likely candidate for radicalization, there is commonality among a variety of demographic, social, and psychological factors that make individuals more vulnerable to the radical message. For example:

- **The Environment.** The demographic make-up of a country, state, city, or town plays a significant role in providing the fertile ground for the introduction and growth of the radicalization process. Enclaves of ethnic populations that are largely Muslim often serve as “ideological sanctuaries” for the seeds of radical thought. Moreover, the greater the purity and isolation of these ethnic communities, the more vulnerable they are to be penetrated by extremism--under the guise that it represents a purer, more devout form of Islam.
  - Living within and as part of a diaspora provides an increased sense of isolation and a desire to bond with others of the same culture and religion. Within diaspora Muslim communities in the West, there is a certain tolerance for the existence of the extremist subculture that enables radicalization. For the individual, radicalization generally takes place in an atmosphere where others are being radicalized as well.
- **The Candidates.** Individuals, who are attracted to radical thought, usually live, work, play, and pray within these enclaves of ethnic, Muslim communities—communities that are dominated by Middle Eastern, North African, and South Asian cultures. Their gender, age, family's social status, stage in life as well as psychological factors all affect vulnerability for radicalization.
  - Fifteen to thirty-five year-old male Muslims who live in male-dominated societies are particularly vulnerable. These individuals are at an age where they often are seeking to identify who they really are while trying to find the “meaning of life”. This age group is usually very action-oriented.
  - Middle class families and students appear to provide the most fertile ground for the seeds of radicalization. A range of socioeconomic and psychological factors have been associated with those who have chosen to radicalize to include the bored and/or frustrated, successful college students, the unemployed, the second and third generation, new immigrants, petty criminals, and prison parolees.

Invariably, these individuals seek other like-minded individuals and often form a loose-knit group, cluster, or network. Commonalities among these individuals' age, residence, school, interests, personality, and ethnicity are critical in determining who becomes a member of a particular group or cluster. As Dr. Marc Sageman, a former CIA case officer and author of *Understanding Terrorist Networks*, noted,

"There's really no profile, just similar trajectories to joining the jihad and that most of these men were upwardly and geographically mobile. They came



from moderately religious, caring, middle-class families. They're skilled in computer technology. They spoke three, four, five, six languages including three predominant Western languages: German, French and English." (Al Qaeda Today: The New Face of Global Jihad, PBS.org)

The various local residents and citizens of each of the five Western-based plots, which we have used as case studies, shared many of the commonalities which define the pre-radicalization stage such as:

- Male Muslims
  - While women are increasingly becoming involved with jihadi groups; to date, Western-based radicalized women have primarily acted in a support role
- Under the age of 35
- Local residents and citizens of Western liberal democracies
- Varied ethnic backgrounds but often are second or third generation of their home country.
- Middle class backgrounds; not economically destitute
- Educated; at least high school graduates, if not university students
- Recent converts to Islam are particularly vulnerable
- Do not begin as radical or even devout Muslims
- “Unremarkable” – having “ordinary” lives and jobs
- Little, if any, criminal history

In particular, a review of the each of these five cases we examined reveals common details and instances of these pre-radicalization signatures—signatures depicted in either the people involved in the actual plots or in their surrounding environment. For example,

**MADRID (2004 Attack)** On March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004, a group of young Islamic extremists conducted a series of coordinated bombings against the Cercanias (commuter train) system of Madrid, Spain, killing 191 people and wounding 2,050. Although more than 100 people have been investigated in connection to the bombings, 29 have been charged with participating in the terrorist attack and of the 29, six have been charged with 191 counts of murder and 1,755 counts of attempted murder.

- **The Environment.** Close to 600,000 Muslims live in Spain, with the majority originating from northern Africa's Maghreb countries, mostly Morocco, located just 15 kilometers across the Strait of Gibraltar. Most of those living there
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today came during the 1980s. Their numbers grew in the 1990s as they took jobs in Spain's growing agricultural, construction, hospitality and service industry. Currently, there is a growing second generation of teenagers of North African origins who are now 16-17 years old.

The majority of the Madrid terrorists lived in the same or in adjacent neighborhoods within the city limits of Madrid. The areas in which Madrid's Muslims live are quite diverse, with Castilians and other nationalities, such as the Dominicans, co-habiting within a Moroccan diaspora population. This multi-ethnic environment, in general, has facilitated the assimilation of these nationalities into Spanish culture. Yet, it was from this milieu that the Madrid bombers emerged.

- **The Candidates.** The Madrid terrorists were primarily composed of 1<sup>st</sup> generation North African Muslim men, approximately 30 years old and younger, who fell on both ends of the spectrum of life-success. Some were drug dealers, part-time workers and drifting students. Many of them had criminal records in Spain for drug trafficking and other petty crimes. Others were students, who were doing well in school and appeared to have promising futures. The Spanish authorities never imagined that a group of petty drug traffickers and university students were capable of planning such a massive attack.
  - Jamal Ahmidan, a Moroccan considered the operational planner, was said to have been happily integrated in Spanish society. His Spanish friends included women who sported crop tops, tattoos and piercings.<sup>2</sup> Ahmidan had immigrated to Spain in the 1990's and became the head of an ecstasy and hashish network that was run by close family members based in both Morocco and Spain.
  - Mohamed and Rachid Ouland Akcha, were also part of this drug network.
  - Jamal Zougam was born in Tangier, Morocco and had lived in Spain since 1983. He and his half-brother Mohammed Chaoui had opened up their own mobile phone shop. Jamal Zougam was described as handsome, likable and one of the more popular youths among the Moroccan community living in Madrid. He enjoyed alcohol, women, and discos and seemed to be perfectly integrated into Spanish society.<sup>3</sup>
  - Sarhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhret was a promising Tunisian scholarship recipient, who had come to Spain to study economics at Autonomous University of Madrid and who ultimately was considered an ideological leader of the cell.<sup>4</sup>
  - Roommates Basel Ghayoun (Syria) and Anghar Fouad el Morabit (Algeria), were also foreign university students living in Spain.<sup>5</sup>

**AMSTERDAM (Hofstad Group)** The Hofstad Group was a group of young men who were intent on conducting an attack in the Netherlands and considered a variety of targets and plots including terrorist attacks on the Dutch Parliament and against several

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strategic targets such as the national airport and a nuclear reactor. The group also had the intention to assassinate several members of government and parliament. In November 2004, Mohammad Bouyeri, a member of the Hofstad Group, murdered Theo Van Gogh, nearly decapitating him, execution style. This triggered a series of arrests of most members of the group.

- **The Environment.** The Dutch Muslim community is primarily comprised of two major nationalities – approximately 350,000 individuals of Turkish origin and 300,000 individuals of Moroccan descent. The Moroccan community resides primarily in Dutch cities and has had more difficulty integrating into Dutch society and culture.
  - This community traces its roots in the Netherlands back to the 1960's when many immigrated for economic reasons, arriving as temporary guest workers.
  - More than 90% of the Moroccan population came from Berber heritage and were not well educated. According to the Dutch, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Moroccans are five to six times more likely to be involved in crime than other Dutch citizens.
- **The Candidates.** The Hofstad Group was a cluster of mostly young Dutch Muslims from North African ancestry. The group was made up of young Muslim males, between the ages of 18 and 28; typically but not necessarily of the second generation as well as a small group of converts.
  - Mohammed Bouyeri was born in West Amsterdam, the son of Moroccan immigrants. He was described as a cooperative and promising second generation immigrant in Holland by some people knew him in at this stage.<sup>6</sup>
    - He attended a local polytechnic to study accounting and information technology, but reportedly spent a lot of his time “on the streets”. He had a reputation for a quick temper and he was arrested for assaulting a police officer with a knife.<sup>7</sup>
  - Jason Walters, born in 1985, was the son of an American soldier based in the Netherlands and a Dutch woman. He converted to Islam as a teenager.
  - Ismail Akhnikh, 21, born in Amsterdam to a Moroccan family, who was unruly as a teenage student, was sent to Syria by his family for religious education before he found employment in the Netherlands in the hi-tech industry.<sup>8</sup>
  - Nouredine El Fatmi, of Berber descent, was born in a poor Moroccan village and immigrated to Spain at age 15 before coming to the Netherlands.

**LONDON (July 2005 Attack)** The July 7, 2005 London transit bombings were a series of coordinated bomb blasts that hit London's public transport system during the morning rush hour. At 8:50 AM, three bombs exploded within fifty seconds of each other on three London Underground trains. A fourth bomb exploded on a bus nearly an hour later in Tavistock Square. The bombings killed 52 commuters and the four suicide bombers,

injured 700 and caused a severe day-long disruption of the city's transport infrastructure countrywide.

- **The Environment.** The United Kingdom has a Muslim population of close to two million, of which half live in London. Approximately 66% of this population is South Asian (Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh). More specifically, in the Bradford/Leeds area, more than 10% of this population is of Kashmiri descent. Much of the population in northern England immigrated to the U.K. in the 1960's and 1970's to work in the textile industry, which has now fallen on hard times.
- **The Candidates.** Three of the four bombers--Mohammed Siddique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, and Hasib Hussain--were second generation British citizens of Pakistani descent from the towns of Beeston and Dewsbury, in northern England. All three grew up near Leeds, about 180 miles north of London. Germaine Lindsey, a fourth bomber, was 1<sup>st</sup> generation Jamaican from Buckinghamshire, UK—a county adjacent to the city of Leeds.

To many who knew them, all four were described as being well integrated into British society. All four had a Westernized, and unremarkable backgrounds with secular upbringings. None were educated in Islamic-based schools like madrasas; rather, they attended state schools and pursued modern studies. Three of the bombers came from well-to-do families.

- Mohammad Siddique Khan was a family man. He was married, a father, and worked as a teaching assistant with young children—a job he held since 2002. He studied business at Leeds Metropolitan University, from 1998-2001. Following graduation, he worked for the Benefits Agency and the Department of Trade and Industry.
  - As a teenager, Mohammad Siddique Khan shook off his Pakistani-Muslim identity and presented himself as a Westernized young man going by the nickname "Sid".<sup>9</sup>
- Shehzad Tanweer graduated from Leeds Metropolitan University, majored in sports science, specializing in cricket and ju-jitsu. Having come from a hard working and prosperous family, Tanweer had an estate worth \$200,000 and drove a Mercedes.
- Hasib Hussain, an introvert, was the youngest of four children. Despite a good attendance record, he dropped out of secondary school in 2003. Hussain was involved with sports, playing both soccer and cricket for local teams.
- One bomber was a convert to Islam. Germaine Lindsay, 19, was a Jamaican-born British resident who converted to Islam in 2000, and married a white convert. He was described as a bright child, successful academically at school, artistic, musically inclined, and good at sports. Lindsay spent his teenage years close to Leeds, in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire.<sup>10</sup>

**MELBOURNE/SYDNEY (Operation Pendennis)** On November 9, 2005 Australian police raided properties in Melbourne and Sydney, arresting 17 men and seizing bomb-making materials as well as maps of Casselden Place, the Melbourne headquarters of the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Immigration.

Although the target set for this group was never definitively determined, the Melbourne suspects had filmed the Australian Stock Exchange and Flinders Street Station, Melbourne's landmark central train exchange. In addition, members of the Sydney cluster were arrested in 2004 surveilling the Lucas Heights nuclear power plant and were reported to have targeted the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbor Bridge.<sup>11</sup>

- **The Environment.** Australia has approximately 340,000 Muslims and they comprise 1.6 percent of its population of 21 million. This Muslim community is relatively new in Australia as Australia's policy of absorbing significant numbers of refugees from war torn regions of the world played a role in the establishment of this community. Significant numbers of Lebanese refugees, escaping the civil war that ravaged Lebanon during the 1970's and 1980's, settled in Australia. Many second generation Australian citizens from this Lebanese diaspora population work as tradesman and live in the larger cities of Sydney and Melbourne.
- **The Candidates.** There were two clusters of men, one in Melbourne and one in Sydney. Virtually all were male Muslims between the ages of 18 and 28, who were either citizens or long time residents of Australia. At least seven of the Melbourne suspects were second generation Australians, the children of Lebanese immigrants who had grown up somewhat secular and had only began practicing Islam 18 months before their arrest.<sup>12</sup>

Though a few were students, most were tradesmen and laborers, including plumbers and painters. Several had minor criminal records.

- Aiman Joud, was born in Australia to Lebanese parents. One of eight children, he lived with his parents and worked as a site project manager for the family business, Joud Investments. Previously, he had been convicted of firearms and theft charges.
  - Abdulla Merhi, 20, a Lebanese from Melbourne, worked as an apprentice electrician.
  - Hany Taha, 31, and Izzydeen Atik, 25 had previous police records for minor crimes.
  - Fadal Sayadi, 25, a Lebanese from Melbourne, was newly married and reportedly worked as a plumber or concrete worker. He had recently been convicted on minor charges relating to an attempted theft.
  - Omar Baladjam, 28, was a former child actor from a popular television show who had starred in Australia Broadcasting Company's *Wildside* and *Home and Away* on TV and ran a painting business.
  - Shane Kent, 28 was a convert to Islam.
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- Amer Haddara, 26, another of the Lebanese from Melbourne, had earned a computer science degree at university and was working in a personnel recruitment firm.<sup>13</sup>

**TORONTO (Toronto 18 Plot)** On June 2-3, 2006, police and security agencies in Ontario, Canada carried out a series of counter-terrorism raids in the Greater Toronto Area that resulted in the arrest of 17 individuals. Canadian authorities believe that the men had been planning large-scale terrorist attacks, which included detonating truck bombs in at least two locations in Toronto, opening gunfire in a crowded public area, and beheading Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. It is alleged that the group also had plans to storm/attack various buildings such as the Canadian Broadcasting Center, the Canadian Parliament, the Canadian Secret Intelligence Headquarters, and the CN Tower.

- **The Environment.** The Muslim community of 250,000 in Toronto represents approximately 5% of the overall population. It has a significant proportion of doctors, accountants, businessmen and other professionals among this population. 37% percent of this community has South Asian (e.g. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) origins and twenty-four percent are Middle Eastern.<sup>14</sup>
- **The Candidates.** The Toronto plotters consisted of 18 people, almost all of them in their teens or early 20s. The group originated from two separate clusters—Mississauga, a suburb of Toronto and Scarborough, a neighborhood in Toronto. Accounts from family and friends of the plotters suggest that most, if not all, were “well-integrated” into Canadian society.
  - Fahim Ahmad, Zakaira Amara and Saad Khalid, core members of the group, were friends in Meadowvale Secondary School in Mississauga. They were known to have become more strident in their faith as they grew older.<sup>15</sup>
  - Steven Vikash Chand was a Canadian Army Reservist. Prior to converting to Islam from Hinduism, in approximately 2002, he was known to have enjoyed music, dancing and basketball.<sup>16</sup>
  - Most of the other plotters were not known to be particularly pious. Two of the plotters, Jahmaal James and Amin Mohammad Durrani, had not practiced Islam until they started the radicalization process.<sup>17</sup>

**ARCHETYPES: “The Convert”**

Steven Vikash Chand AKA Abdul Shakur

*Converts have played a prominent role in the majority of terrorist case studies and tend to be the most zealous members of groups. Their need to prove their religious convictions to their companions often makes them the most aggressive. Conversion also tends to drive a wedge between the convert and his family, making the radicalizing group his “surrogate family.”*



Steven Chand, age 25, was born in Canada to Hindu parents from Fiji. In some ways, Chand was considered relatively well-integrated, serving in the Canadian military from June 2000 and until April 2004. It was at some point during this period that he converted to Islam.

Chand was described as mild-mannered and easily influenced. Some speculate that his alienation from mainstream Canadian society and conversion to Islam was related to his parents' divorce—an event that further distanced him from his family.

Chand began attending the Salaheddin Islamic Center, a known radical mosque led by fundamentalist imam Aly Hindy. He soon went from seeking answers to providing them. Chand began spending two or three days a week outside public schools handing out extremist literature and seeking converts among school-age children.

As the plot progressed it was Chand who suggested the most unlikely of the group's plans – beheading the Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Other prominent converts among the case studies in this report include: the Walters brothers (Netherlands), Shane Kent (Australia), Germaine Lindsey (UK) and Randall Todd Royer, Yong Ki Kwon, Seifullah Chapman, Hammad Abdur-Raheem and Donald Surratt (Northern Virginia).

**STAGE 2: SELF-IDENTIFICATION.** This stage, which is largely influenced by both internal and external factors, marks the point where the individual begins to explore Salafi Islam, while slowly migrating away from their former identity—an identity that now is re-defined by Salafi philosophy, ideology, and values. The catalyst for this “religious seeking” is often a cognitive event, or crisis, which challenges one’s certitude in previously held beliefs, opening the individual’s mind to a new perception or view of the world.<sup>18</sup>

Individuals most vulnerable to experiencing this phase are often those who are at a crossroad in life—those who are trying to establish an identity, or a direction, while seeking approval and validation for the path taken. Some of the crises that can jump-start this phase include:

- Economic (losing a job, blocked mobility)
- Social (alienation, discrimination, racism – real or perceived)
- Political (international conflicts involving Muslims)
- Personal (death in the close family)

Political and personal conflicts are often the cause of this identity crisis. A political crisis is sometimes brought about by some of the “moral shock” tactics used by extremists in spewing out political messages, arguments, and associated atrocities that highlight some particular political grievance that Islam has with the West, or with one’s own government. These messages are usually proliferated via literature, speeches, TV, websites, chatrooms, videotapes, or other media.

Chronic exposure to these extremist political campaigns (e.g. conflicts of Muslims in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, Israel/Palestinians and Iraq) may initiate feelings of moral outrage. This outrage, which usually resonates louder with Muslims who are already experiencing an identity crisis, leads them in a sense to become “born-again” —a “religious” renewal that all too often is shaped by a radical interpretation of what it means to be a Muslim in a non-Muslim society.<sup>19</sup>

A personal crisis such as the death of a family member, a parolee’s search for a new direction in life, a turn to religion as a means to dealing with life crises and disappointment or for atoning for past transgressions, and loneliness are all examples of personal conflicts with which many of these Western-based terrorists struggled.<sup>20</sup>

The key influences during this phase of conflict and “religious seeking” includes trusted social networks made up of friends and family, religious leaders, literature and the Internet.

Given the high volume, popularity, and almost “faddish” nature of the extremist agenda, an individual who goes searching for answers will invariably be exposed to a plethora of Salafi/Wahhabi interpretations of Islam. Most often the vehicles for these exposures include family ties or old friendships, social networks, religious movements like the Tablighi Jamaat, political movements like the Muslim Brotherhood, or extremist-like discussions in halal butcher shops, cafes, gyms, student associations, study groups, non-governmental organizations and, most importantly, the Internet.



Ultimately the individual is alienated from his former life and affiliates with like-minded individuals, who, via small group dynamics, strengthen his dedication to Salafi Islam. Importantly, this phase is characterized by a self-selection process by which individuals first join a group that then becomes radicalized.

These crises often compel these individuals to seek out other like-minded individuals, who may be experiencing the same inner conflict. Subsequently, clusters of like-minded individuals begin to form, usually around social circles that germinate within the extremist incubators. Sometimes these clusters develop into actual jihadist cell—a cell that has committed to conducting a terrorist act.

Two key indicators within this self-identification stage that suggests progression along the radicalization continuum are:

- ***Progression or Gravitation Towards Salafi Islam***
- ***Regular Attendance at a Salafi mosque***

As these individuals adopt Salafism, typical signatures include:

- Becoming alienated from one's former life; affiliating with like-minded individuals
- Joining or forming a group of like-minded individuals in a quest to strengthen one's dedication to Salafi Islam
- Giving up cigarettes, drinking, gambling and urban hip-hop gangster clothes.
- Wearing traditional Islamic clothing, growing a beard
- Becoming involved in social activism and community issues

### **MADRID (2004 Attack)**

- ***Gravitating Towards Salafi Islam.*** A variety of political and personal crises contributed to Madrid bombers' attraction to the Salafi/Wahhabi interpretation of Islam during their inner battle in defining who they were. For example:
  - For Tunisian scholarship recipient, Sarhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhel, it was a personal crisis. After growing up in a middle-class family in Tunis, Fakhel moved to Madrid in 1994, armed with €29,500 in Spanish-government scholarships to study economics.

*"At first he was gracious and engaging," says Miguel Pérez Martín, a professor at the Autonomous University of Madrid, where he met Fakhel as a fellow student in 1996."*

However, over the next few years Fakhel withdrew from school and the world in general. He was described as having become "incommunicative."

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(The exact nature of this personal crisis has not been disclosed.) As a consequence, Fakhret spent more and more time in the Salafi mosques and was only interested in talking about Islam and the misery of the world.<sup>21</sup>

As these individuals adopted Salafi ideology, they sought out like-minded individuals by joining groups that provided them a validation of their new found beliefs. Members of these groups had ties to other militant groups; some even had specialized skills that could be used for terrorist purposes.

- Basel Ghayon, a Syrian, and Moroccan Anghar Foud el Morabit joined a Salafi/Wahhabi circle led by Rabei Osman el Sayed Ahmed, a 32-year-old Egyptian known as "Mohamed the Egyptian."
- Sayed Ahmed, who claimed to be a veteran jihadi who had fought in both Bosnia and Afghanistan, was a member of Egyptian Islamic Jihad. A former member of the Egyptian army, Sayed Ahmed was an explosives expert. He began attending Friday prayers at the M-30 mosque in 2001, where he came in contact with many of the Madrid bombers.<sup>22</sup>
- **The Salafi Mosque.** As these individuals continued moving towards Salafism, they began attending Centro Cultural Islámico (Islamic Cultural Center), popularly known as the "M-30 mosque." ("M-30" was a name that was coined for this mosque's due to its proximity to Madrid's M-30 motorway). M-30 had a history of being the mosque of choice for radical-thinking Muslims and as an extremist incubator, became a hub for the formation of the Madrid bomber cell.
  - Some of the Madrid bombers met with remnants of an extremist group which had formed around Imam Eddin Barakat Yarkas in the 1990's. These extremists played a critical role in the further radicalization of the Madrid bombers.
    - Yarkas had organized a militant Salafi support network for jihadi fighters in Bosnia in Spain in the 1990's and prayed at the M-30 mosque in Madrid.
    - Before Yarkas was arrested after 9/11, his group proselytized their views and eventually challenged the imam of the mosque for its leadership.<sup>23</sup>

#### **AMSTERDAM (Hofstad Group)**

- **Gravitating Towards Salafi Islam.** Mohammed Bouyeri's journey to radicalism appears to have begun during his seven month stay in prison—a sentence based on an assault charge. He became more religious and extreme in his views.<sup>24</sup>
  - After being released from prison, Bouyeri switched his academic pursuits from accounting to social work and began volunteering at his local community center. His friends say he began to wear "traditional" clothing and grew a beard. He was also more sensitive to political issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Bouyeri's transformation continued with a deepening of his religious convictions while his views on social issues became more conservative.

- As Bouyeri became more of an activist he began organizing Salafi-related events at the community center. He discouraged women from attending and sought to ban alcohol. Eventually, Bouyeri was asked to leave.<sup>25</sup>
- **The Salafi Mosque.** Bouyeri began frequenting the Al-Tawheed mosque—a mosque that was well known to Dutch authorities as being Salafi and very extreme. The imam at the mosque praised suicide bombers and sold literature that advocated the killing of homosexuals.<sup>26</sup>

### LONDON (July 2005 Attack)

- **Gravitating Towards Salafi Islam.** Beeston's extremist mosque and surrounding community, including youth clubs, gyms, and Islamic bookshop served as the "extremist incubators" for Mohammed Siddique Khan, Shezhad Tanweer and Hasib Husain's adoption of Salafi Islam.
  - In 2001, members of the 7/7 London group began to spend time at a youth club in Beeston, playing pool, boxing, and "hanging out." Extremists often used the club as a venue to proliferate their radical messages to the more susceptible youth. Jihad was a frequent topic of discussion at the club.
  - One of the gyms was known as "the al-Qaeda gym" due to its significant extremist membership.<sup>27</sup>

All three of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani London bombers appeared to experience this Salafi-based religious transformation; while Germaine Lindsay converted.

- Mohammed Siddique Khan's transformation began when he first entered Leeds Metropolitan University between 1998 and 2000.<sup>28</sup>
  - Khan, somewhat new to Salafi Islam himself, began to pray regularly at school, attend mosque on Fridays. He gave up fighting, bouts of drinking and using drugs. He began volunteering as a teaching assistant at an elementary school.<sup>29</sup>
- Shezhad Tanweer changed as well, giving casinos a rest and growing a beard.<sup>30</sup>
- Hasib Husain appeared to become more religious – wearing traditional clothing and a prayer cap after a trip on hajj to Saudi Arabia in 2002.<sup>31</sup>
- Germaine Lindsay's mother had converted to Islam in 2000 and, shortly after, he converted—taking the name "Jamal". Lindsay's behavior became somewhat erratic and he began associating with troublemakers.
  - At his local mosque and within his Islamic circles in Huddersfield and Dewsbury, Lindsay was admired for the speed with which he achieved fluency in Arabic. According to those who knew him, he

memorized long passages of the Quran, showing unusual maturity and seriousness. He also began wearing the traditional white thobe.<sup>32</sup>

- In 2002, Germaine Lindsay's mother moved to the US to live with another man, leaving Lindsay alone at the family home in Huddersfield. This has been described as a traumatic experience for Lindsay, for which he was ill equipped and may have pushed him towards seeking solace and support in the Salafist mosque.<sup>33</sup>
- **The Salafi Mosque.** Mohammed Siddique Khan attended all three mosques in Beeston, at least two of which had a strong extremist influence.
  - The Hardy Street mosque was run by Kashmiri Muslims; The Stratford Street by Pakistani Tablighi Jamaat; and the Bengali mosque on Tunstall Road by Bangladeshis, primarily. Finally, Khan chose to belong to the Stratford Street mosque—a mosque which followed the more rigid, orthodox, Deobandi school of Islam, with a heavy Tablighi Jamaat presence.<sup>34</sup>

### MELBOURNE/SYDNEY (Operation Pendennis)

Though the details of what characterized this self-identification process among the members of the Sydney and Melbourne clusters are not yet available, it appears these plotters also experienced that same pattern of struggling for identity, dissatisfaction with mainstream Islam, and looking to Salafism as an answer.

- **Gravitating Towards Salafi Islam.** Forty-five year-old cleric Abdul Nacer Benbrika, a native Algerian and leader of both the Sydney and Melbourne clusters, appears to have begun his radicalization journey once he arrived in Australia in 1989. For Benbrika, Sheikh Mohamed Omran, was the extremist incubator, who paved the way for his radicalization. Omran was a follower of the infamous jihadi-Salafi cleric, Abu Qatada, whom Omran brought to Australia on a speaking tour in 1994.<sup>35</sup>
- **The Salafi Mosque.** Benbrika began preaching at Omran's Brunswick mosque, attracting a small following. He called Osama bin Laden a "great man" and endorsed the goals and actions of Algeria's Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC). Later, Abdul Nacer Benbrika was able to extend his influence into New South Wales, creating a second cell in the Sydney area.
  - A number of those arrested in Melbourne as part of Operation Pendennis frequented the Brunswick mosque. This location served as a hub where many of the Melbourne suspects began to self-identify with the jihadi-Salafi ideology propagated by Benbrika.<sup>36</sup>

**TORONTO (Toronto 18 Plot)**

- **Gravitating Towards Salafi Islam.** Similar to the many of those involved in the other plots and attacks, the Toronto plotters also struggled with their identity as evidenced by this excerpt from a poem that was posted on the Internet by Zakaria Amara in 2001.

*“Please someone find me  
I want to find the light  
but no one is there to guide me  
Open the door someone give me it's key”*

Saad Khalid, a high school student at Meadowvale Secondary School, formed the “Religious Awareness Club”. During lunch time, he would preach Islam to other students and spent a good part of his time with Fahad Ahmad and Zakaria Amara. The trio even created a chat group called the “Meadowvale Brothers”. Schoolmates stated that the three began to dress more traditionally and became more withdrawn.

- **The Salafi Mosque.** The trio from Meadowvale began attending the Al Rahman mosque in Mississauga, where they met Qayyum Abdul Jamaal, the “spiritual sanctioner” who would help them progress to the next stage of radicalization.<sup>37</sup> While some of the other plotters attended different mosques, all were progressively being radicalized.
  - Steven Vikash Chand attended the Salaheddin Islamic Center, a known radical mosque. Imam Aly Hindy, an Islamic fundamentalist, was his mentor.
  - In April 2004, Chand, who had been enrolled in the reservist corps since June 2000, renounced his Hindu faith, declared himself Muslim, and left the reserves.
    - As recounted by those in his unit, before Chand left the reserves, he had reported for duty with the beginnings of a beard, telling his sergeant that it was required by his religion.<sup>38</sup>

**STAGE 3: INDOCTRINATION.** Indoctrination is the stage in which an individual progressively intensifies his beliefs, wholly adopts jihadi-Salafi ideology and concludes, without question, that the conditions and circumstances exist where action is required to support and further the Salafist cause. That action is militant jihad. A “spiritual sanctioner” plays a leading role in this phase of radicalization (see Text Box p. 40).

The key aspect of this stage is the acceptance of a religious-political worldview that justifies, legitimizes, encourages, or supports violence against anything *kufr*, or un-Islamic, including the West, its citizens, its allies, or other Muslims whose opinions are contrary to the extremist agenda. In effect, as the individuals become indoctrinated, they re-define their direction in life. That is, rather than seeking and striving for the more mainstream goals of getting a good job, earning money, and raising a family, the indoctrinated radical’s goals are non-personal and focused on achieving “the greater good.” The individual’s sole objective centers around the Salafi aim of creating a pure fundamentalist Muslim community worldwide.

Two key indicators that an individual is progressing to or is experiencing this stage of radicalization are:

- ***Withdrawal from the Mosque.*** As individuals begin to conceive militant jihad as an objective, they retreat from the mosque—the mosque that not only served as an extremist incubator for their formative years in becoming radicalized but also and often as the place where these individuals met their like-minded cohorts.
  - This withdrawal is sometimes provoked by the fact that the mosque no longer serves the individual’s radicalization needs. In other words, the individual’s level of extremism surpasses that of the mosque. Many of these withdrawals are preceded by some type of quarrel between the individual and mosque officials and/or other worshippers. Other times, the mosque is perceived as a potential liability.
  - An individual who begins to contemplate action now perceives the mosque as a threat to exposing his or her intentions. Given the series of terrorist-related arrests over the past few years, mosques are now perceived as being monitored by law enforcement and intelligence.
- ***Politicization of New Beliefs.*** As these individuals mold new identities based on Salafi ideology, they now begin to transfer this radical vision and mindset to the real world. Global events are now perceived through this newly found extremist ideological lens. From the conflict in Kashmir to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, all are blamed on a conspiratorial attack by unbelievers on Islam and the Muslim world.

What was merely an ideology transforms into a personal cause. The world for these individuals becomes divided into two sides: the enlightened believers (themselves) and the unbelievers (everybody else). The unbelievers become their arch enemy. Signatures associated with this phase include:

- Joining a group of like-minded extremists that help facilitate the individual’s continued departure from the secular world and all the things it represents. The group becomes the individual’s new world. The group members

become their new family—substituting the need for any interaction with the outside world.

- Holding meetings and discussions with an increasing radical agenda in more private settings—such as in the private residences of the group members, back rooms of book stores, or in isolated corners of prayer rooms.

Consequently, as individuals progress through the indoctrination phase, they most likely have already sought, found and bonded with other like-minded individuals. This loosely-knit but cohesive group of people forms a cluster—an alliance based on social, psychological, ideological, and ethnic commonalities.

### **The Internet—An Evolving Resource**

The Internet plays an important role during the radicalization process. As individuals progress through the various stages, their use of the internet evolves as well. In the Self-Identification phase, the internet serves chiefly as the person's source of information about Islam and a venue to meet other seekers online. With the aggressive proliferation of the jihadi-Salafi ideology online, it is nearly impossible for someone to avoid this extreme interpretation of Islam.

During the Indoctrination phase those undergoing this self-imposed brainwashing devote their time in the cyber world to the extremist sites and chat rooms—tapping into virtual networks of like-minded individuals around the world who reinforce the individual's beliefs and commitment and further legitimize them. At this stage, individuals or the groups they are in are likely to begin proliferating jihadi-Salafist ideology online along with consuming it. The Internet becomes a virtual "echo chamber" —acting as a radicalization accelerant while creating the path for the ultimate stage of Jihadization.

In the Jihadization phase, people challenge and encourage each others move to action. The internet is now a tactical resource for obtaining instructions on constructing weapons, gathering information on potential targets, and providing spiritual justification for an attack.

**ARCHETYPES: “The Spiritual Sanctioner”**

Ridwan Al-Issar

*A dramatic change in lifestyle and ensuing isolation creates a vacuum requiring even more guidance on how to build a new life that supports his newfound ideology. Individuals seen as being able to provide crucial guidance on how to live every detail of the religion have a critical role during this phase.*

*Consequently, a critical element in pushing a group further along the radicalization path is the “spiritual sanctioner”. This person generally appears during the Self-Identification phase and is the major influence during the Indoctrination phase.*

*The sanctioner is responsible for developing the “Us-versus-Them/War on Islam” worldview among the group that provides the moral justification for jihad. The sanctioner is often a “self-taught” Islamic scholar and will spend countless hours providing a “cut-and-paste” version of Islam which radicalizes his followers. In many cases, the sanctioner is not involved in any operational planning but is vital in creating the jihadi mindset.*

*The role of this “spiritual sanctioner” cannot be underestimated because “if an individual respects an Islamic scholar and that scholar tells him that fighting in the jihad is a religious duty and the only way to please God, the advice can have an enormous effect on choices.”<sup>39</sup>*

According to press reports, Al-Issar first applied for asylum in Germany in 1995 and was not religious. He used multiple alias and asylum applications to keep him in Germany and the Netherlands. When his asylum application was rejected in Germany, he tried again in the Netherlands in 1998. During his stay in Dutch asylum hostels, it appears he underwent a spiritual awakening.

Al-Issar began studying jihadist literature and learning about Islam on the Internet. There is no evidence that he ever formally studied Islam and the evidence suggests he went from non-religious to Islamic “expert” within about two years.

Armed with his Internet derived “scholarship”, Al-Issar soon began giving lectures and gravitated towards the radical Al-Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam. At Al-Tawheed, Al-Issar came in contact with the young men who formed the Hofstad Group and began serving as their spiritual guide.

Al-Issar eventually withdrew from the mosque and he began preaching in private apartments to his followers. It is unclear exactly how much Al-Issar was involved in the operational planning of the group. He vanished on the day Theo van Gogh was murdered and Dutch authorities believe he may be in Syria.

Other spiritual sanctioners among the case studies of this report include: Rabei Osman el Sayed Ahmed (Madrid), Abdul Nacer Benbrika (Sydney/Melbourne), Qayyum Abdul Jamal (Toronto) and Ali al Timimi (Virginia).





**MADRID (2004 Attack)**

- **Withdrawal from the Mosque.** During the indoctrination phase, members of the Madrid group began to separate themselves from secular society. They left the M-30 mosque because it was not sufficiently extreme and was potentially too conspicuous (monitored by the authorities). In mid-2002, some of the main co-ordinators of the attacks began holding their radical discussions in the living room of Faisal Allouch's nearby private house, where they discussed jihad.<sup>40</sup>
- **Politicization of New Beliefs.** According to Spanish court documents, Tunisian student Sarhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhel's activities became more radical following Spain's participation in the 2003 Iraq War Coalition.
  - During 2003, Fakhel spent considerable time cruising jihadi websites for ideas on terrorist attacks. Based on analysis of his computer's hard drive, Fakhel was specifically interested in the explosives used in both the Bali and Casablanca.<sup>41</sup>

**Prison—A Radicalizing Cauldron**

Prisons can play a critical role in both triggering and reinforcing the radicalization process. The prison's isolated environment, ability to create a "captive audience" atmosphere, its absence of day-to-day distractions, and its large population of disaffected young men, makes it an excellent breeding ground for radicalization.

Two of the Madrid bombers--Moroccan Jamal Ahmidan and Algerian Alleka Lamari--were either radicalized or more deeply indoctrinated in prison.

- Ahmidan, a non-observant Muslim incarcerated for petty crimes, was indoctrinated into radical Islam while in a Moroccan jail over the course of about 2 ½ years. Ahmidan was fascinated by some of the inmates who were veterans of the Afghan jihad. As these jihadists used the prisons--a haven of disaffected men who are ripe for radicalization-- for attracting future recruits, Ahmidan also became fascinated with their radical views.
- Ahmidan was released in 2003—a man now wholly transformed into a Salafi, ideologically and politically. Upon his return to Spain, Ahmidan not only prayed the required five times a day, but spoke incessantly about jihad and his desire to fight the Americans in Iraq. Although Ahmidan stopped drinking and using drugs following his transformation, he continued to sell drugs to non Muslims.<sup>42</sup>
- Allekema Lamari, who had been arrested in 1997 for belonging to an Algerian extremist group, had already been radicalized. However, according to open source, his five year stint in prison nurtured his extremist views and actually intensified his radical mindset. During his incarceration, Lamari joined an Algerian Islamist prison group.<sup>43</sup>

**AMSTERDAM (Hofstad Group)**

- ***Withdrawal from the Mosque.*** Mohammed Bouyeri's withdrawal from the Al-Tawheed mosque was influenced by the decision of the entire radical group, to which he belonged—to leave. The group, which included several members of the Hofstad Group, was mentored by Redouan Al Issar, a Syrian who belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. Al Issar was the group's "spiritual sanctioner". The group began holding both prayer and political discussion sessions in Bouyeri's apartment. During these private sessions, the group also watched jihadi videos and was active online promoting and debating jihad.
- ***Politicization of New Beliefs.*** Mohammed Bouyeri's progression from the self-identification stage to indoctrination was swift. The articles that Bouyeri would write for the community center, where he volunteered, became increasingly more radical—as Bouyeri's religious and political views became intertwined.
  - While in early 2002, Bouyeri was writing about tolerance and mutual respect, by April 2003, he was comparing the Dutch police to Nazis and calling for American soldiers in Iraq to be beheaded.<sup>44</sup> By mid 2003, his writings became even more strident:

“...the Netherlands is now our enemy, because they participate in the occupation of Iraq. We shall not attack our neighbors but we will those who are apostates and those who are behaving like our enemy.”<sup>45</sup>
  - As the group's "communication coordinator", Bouyeri further nurtured his political agenda by hosting a chat room for like-minded individuals, and translating/posting essays by prominent jihadist thinkers, including Abu Ala Maududi and Sayid Qutb, on websites.<sup>46</sup>

**LONDON (July 2005 Attack)**

- ***Withdrawal from the Mosque.*** By 2001, the two leading members of the 7/7 group, Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shezhad Tanweer left the local Deobandi mosque in Beeston, saying its approach to outreach was too narrow, its focus too apolitical. The young zealots felt contempt for the mosques' imams, who were from the subcontinent, spoke minimal English and knew little of the challenges British Muslims faced. Moreover, the Deobandi mosques did not address the issues of concern to the members of the 7/7 group and instead abided by an injunction by mosque elders that politics or current events involving Muslims should stay outside the mosque.<sup>47</sup>
- ***Politicization of New Beliefs.*** After they left the mosques, they gravitated to the Iqra Learning Center in Beeston, just blocks away from the youth center. This was part of the process of gradually separating themselves from secular society and self-radicalizing. They were soon joined by Hasib Husain. Here they were free from their parents' Islam as well as from scrutiny. They had political discussions about Iraq, Kashmir, Chechnya and organized study groups and produced jihad videos depicting crimes by the West on the Muslim world and

accessed the internet. This local bookshop was a central node in the community for radical Islam - not only did it sell Islamic books, tapes and DVD's, but it also hosted lectures and discussion groups on Islam.<sup>48</sup>

- By 2002, Khan was leading and participating in paintball outings with youth groups from the Leeds area. These events served as bonding and vetting opportunities and were often preceded by Islamist themed lectures. It is believed that through one of these outings, Khan met Germaine Lindsay.<sup>49</sup>
- Lindsay had been strongly influenced by the extremist preacher Abdallah al Faisal (also of Jamaican origin) who served a prison sentence in the U.K. for soliciting murder, incitement to murder, incitement to racial hatred and distributing material of a racial hatred nature. Lindsay is believed to have attended at least one lecture and to have listened to tapes of other lectures by him.<sup>50</sup>

### MELBOURNE/SYDNEY (Operation Pendennis)

- **Withdrawal from the Mosque.** Ultimately, Imam Abdul Nacer Benbrika broke away from Omran's Brunswick mosque, taking the most violent, radical elements of the congregation with him. In addition, rather than studying jurisprudence at a recognized Islamic university, Benbrika taught himself Islam, largely cut off from the wider community.<sup>51</sup> This absence of a classical background contributed to Benbrika's adoption of the jihadi-Salafi interpretation of Islam and only enabled him to teach the younger group members a "cut and paste" version Islam.
- **Politicization of New Beliefs.** Based on information that came to light at the trial for the Melbourne cell in the summer of 2006, Benbrika's indoctrination of the group was based on his belief that the Islamic community was under attack from the non-Islamic community of infidels. He said that Muslims were committed to engage in violent jihad, to persuade the government to withdraw Australian troops from Afghanistan and Iraq and frequently discussed the Islamic duty to fight the kufr (unbelievers or infidels). Benbrika preached that there was no difference between the government and the people who elected the government officials.<sup>52</sup>

Benbrika served as "spiritual sanctioner" for both Australian clusters.

### TORONTO (Toronto 18 Plot)

- **Withdrawal from the Mosque.** By 2005, some of the group members from Meadowvale Secondary School began to skip classes to visit Musalla-e-Namira, a private, informal prayer room on top floor of two-story building near a high school in Scarborough.
- **Politicization of New Beliefs.** By this stage, the young men of Toronto were ready to hear a more strident Islamic message. In Mississauga, the 43 year-old Qayyum Abdul Jamaal was delivering that message. Abdul Jamaal was known

by the other congregants to have an “us-versus-them” view of the world in which Muslims were being oppressed by the West. He had no formal religious role in the mosque but his radical views were tolerated by the leadership because he cleaned the mosque for free.<sup>53</sup> Abdul Jamaal also had a reputation for reaching out to young people, taking them camping, playing basketball, etc. The suspects soon began to be influenced by his views and adopted them as their own.

- Online, the suspects began discussing political issues and the permissibility of jihad. They watched jihadi videos online and communicated with like-minded individuals from around the world ranging from the U.K. to Bosnia. Communication in chat rooms with like-minded individuals around the world served as an “echo chamber” for their jihadists views, serving to only reinforce them. The Mississauga group went as far as wearing combat fatigues to the mosque - a fact that was noted as unusual by the other congregants, but not reported to authorities.
- As they got deeper into this insular world, their ideas began to harden. An extract from one of Zakaria Amara’s online poems written in 2003 stands in stark contrast from a “searching” poem he wrote just two years prior. See the comparison of the two below:

2001

*“Please someone find me  
I want to find the light  
but no one is there to guide me  
Open the door someone give me it's key”<sup>54</sup>*

2003

*“I am filled with peace when at the masjid I hear the Iqama  
But when I show more interest they call me Osama  
Just trying to practice my deen so they call me extreme  
They tell me I am too young, I am only sixteen”<sup>55</sup>*

In Scarborough, convert Steven Vikash Chand and another suspect, Mohamed Durrani took their new found fervor to recruit more young people. Both spent time at the campus of a local high school where they were able to convince the youngest members of the group to join.

**STAGE 4: JIHADIZATION.** This is the phase in which members of the cluster accept their individual duty to participate in jihad and self-designate themselves as holy warriors or mujahedeen. Ultimately, the group will begin operational planning for jihad or a terrorist attack. These “acts in furtherance” will include planning, preparation and execution.

By the jihadization phase, small group dynamics play a much more prominent role. While during the earlier stages, the group members may have been only acquaintances, meeting each other in Salafi chat rooms, at university or simply by being friends, by the jihadization phase the group has solidified and hardened. Individuals see themselves as part a movement and group loyalty becomes paramount above all other relationships.

“Group-think” now becomes a force multiplier for radicalization and invariably paves the way for action. As action becomes a group objective, each member of the cluster is challenged to accept jihad as an individual obligation—anointing themselves as holy warriors or mujahedeen. This act of accepting a personal duty to participate in jihad is by its very nature an internal decision and one with very subtle, if not invisible, signatures. In fact, the only way to know if someone has passed this marker is by observing their subsequent actions or by gaining a window into their personal feelings.

While some individuals independently seek opportunities to fulfill this jihadi obligation; others achieve it by being part of a group that decides, collectively, to conduct a terrorist act.

If an attack is a group objective, the next step will include target selection and operational planning. Although the commitment to accept jihad is an individual choice, the decision to attack is made as a group and the actual attack is conducted by the group. The type of targets a group or cluster chooses and the modus operandi it employs might vary considerably between individual clusters. However, the ultimate objective for any attack is always the same--to punish the West, overthrow the democratic order, re-establish the Caliphate, and institute sharia.

It is critical to note that while the other stages of radicalization may take place, gradually, over two to three years, the jihadization stage—the stage which defines the actual attack--can occur quickly, and with very little warning. In some cases, this stage runs its course in as little as a couple of weeks. The jihadization stage contains many sub-stages, all of which usually occur, but not necessarily sequentially. Each of these sub-stages is characterized by a unique set of indicator(s).

- **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** As each group member accepts jihad, they often look abroad--seeking that one trigger that will lead to their final acceptance of jihad or for others an opportunity to actually conduct jihad.
  - **Traveling Abroad.** Frequently, but not always, one or more members of a particular Western-based cluster travels abroad. This travel often follows or contributes to a member’s decision to commit jihad. The travel is more often than not to a militant training camp—a camp usually in a country or region that is regarded as a field of jihad. Pakistan, in particular, as well as Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Somalia are popular destinations. The “leaders” of these clusters are usually the ones who pursue this travel—an experience that appears to be the final catalyst for group action.

Many of those who embark on such trips either are seeking further religious justification for their newly adopted jihadi mindset or have already committed to jihad and now are looking for opportunities to put thought into action.

- For those seeking religious justification, attending a religious retreat steeped with extremist thought and apart from the distractions inherent in a Western civilization often acts as a “suicidal trigger” in providing the attendee the justification and conviction for suicidal jihad.
- For those seeking action, their initial intention is most often to become a mujahedeen and fight for a particular cause. However, many are regarded as battlefield liabilities and rejected. Some are re-directed to return home and to fulfill their jihadist objectives by conducting a terrorist act in their Western homeland.
  - Individuals reared in a Western urban setting and culture usually lack the physical and mental fortitude and endurance to survive, much less, fight in underdeveloped and severe environments such as Afghanistan, Kashmir, Iraq and Somalia. Moreover, the lack of native language capability also can limit their value and acceptance as fighters.
- **Training/Preparation.** As members of a cluster decide to conduct jihad, they become more and more isolated from their “secular” or “outside the group” life. They reach a point where the only people they truly trust are members of their group. They become very attached to each other and often seek opportunities to bond, train, and do things together.

These activities help define the roles and capabilities of each individual while solidifying the group’s cohesiveness, and esprit-de-corps that is vital for a successful coordinated attack. Prior to launching the attack, many of these clusters have participated in some form of group training and preparation to include:

- **“Outward Bound”-like Activities.** Activities such as camping, white-water rafting, paintball games, target shooting, and even outdoor simulations of military-like maneuvers have been popular among these groups once they reach this stage of radicalization.

Once would-be terrorists commit to jihad, some require continual reinforcement for committing the act—an act that will require people to die. For plots involving suicide, one of the most critical requirements for success is the un-wavering conviction of each individual member of the group to die by taking his/her own life. This conviction is especially difficult to maintain in a Western environment—a predominantly secular environment that values life, does not condone suicide, and markets wealth, comfort, and prosperity as ultimate life goals. As members of a cluster progress through the jihadization phase of the process, they have committed to jihad but continue to reinforce their commitment via “group think.” However, each member often

requires additional individual reinforcement. For example,

- **Mental Reinforcement Activities.** Members of a cluster that have committed to murder and, in some cases, suicide often turn to the Internet or other extremist media to fortify their resolve to die.
  - Extremist websites, chatrooms, and blogs provide forums for rallying support, alleviating fears, and obtaining religious sanctions.
  - Jihadist videos and tapes help “psych” the terrorist by glorifying death by jihad as a true hero’s inevitable fate.
  - Other means for reinforcement that potential suicide bombers have used include drafting a last will and testament or making a pre-suicide video. Both these mechanisms allow the suicide terrorist to renew his or her extremist vows while ensuring that their death has meaning. It also permits them to bid final farewell to family--hoping to retain their honor and admiration.
- **Attack Planning.** Once a cluster or group decides to conduct an attack, they begin conducting research while holding secretive tactical group discussions on targets, the mode of attack, the operational scenario (date, time, and hour), and the role of each group member. This sub-stage includes several indicators such as:
  - **Researching on the Internet.** The Internet has been used extensively by the plotters of terrorist attacks in choosing targets, formulating the mode of attack, and acquiring the technical capability. The Internet’s broad and unrestricted access to information has provided attack planners with a variety of options and advice for launching an attack.
  - **Reconnaissance/Surveillance.** Drawing maps, videotaping targets, and staking out target areas will invariably be conducted in the run-up to any attack.
  - **Acquiring Materiel/Developing the Device.** The majority of the devices used or that were being planned to be used in the homegrown plots were either commercially available or reasonably obtainable. Fertilizer-based devices, commercial explosives, cell phones and explosive ignition devices have all been acquired with relative ease.

That said, the acquisition of the materiel and the development of the weapon has on occasion been associated with low-end criminal activity and almost always suspicious activity such as: cooking chemicals to form explosives in bathtubs, purchasing large amounts of any one chemical or material, outfitting/modifying backpacks, buying TNT and wiring watches as detonators.

The ultimate stage of jihadization is, of course, the actual attack. By this time, all the potential preemptive indicators have expired. The terrorists have attained both intention

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and capability and the chances for law enforcement and intelligence thwarting or preventing an attack is extremely low.

### **MADRID (2004 Attack)**

- **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** The catalyst for pushing the Madrid group into the jihadization phase was the anonymous posting on December 10, 2003, of a document called *Jihadi Iraq: Hopes and Dangers: Practical Steps for the Blessed Jihad*, on the Global Islamic Media, one of the more popular jihadi websites.

The 42 page document discussed ways to defeat the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Its strategy was to leave the U.S. with the complete financial burden for the occupation, which eventually would result in its withdrawal. The way to accomplish this goal was to politically force U.S. allies to withdraw from Iraq.<sup>56</sup>

“Therefore we say that in order to force the Spanish government to withdraw from Iraq, the resistance should deal painful blows to its forces. This should be accompanied by an information campaign clarifying the truth of the matter inside Iraq. It is necessary to make utmost use of the upcoming general election in Spain in March next year. We think that the Spanish government could not tolerate more than two, maximum three blows, after which it will have to withdraw as a result of popular pressure.”

This document was also found in Sarhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhret's computer and is believed to have influenced the timing of the attack. The document called for a campaign of bombings, shortly before the March 14, 2004 general elections, resulting in a change of government, which would then order the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq.<sup>57</sup>

- **Attack Planning.** Once the Madrid group committed to jihad in December 2003, they scrambled to acquire the capability to launch the attack.
  - Fakhret downloaded tactical information on how to make bombs and how to use cell phones as detonators.
  - Jamal Ahmidan used his ties to a Moroccan hashish gang to barter drugs for dynamite.
  - The group rented a house in Chinchon for storing the hashish, dynamite and ultimately building the bombs.<sup>58</sup>
  - On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Jamal Zougam, purchased and supplied 20 stolen Mitsubishi Tritium T110 mobile phones cell phones to serve as detonators.<sup>59</sup>
- **The Result.** On the morning of March 11, 2004, the group bombed the Spanish rail system.



**AMSTERDAM (Hofstad Group)**

- **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** By 2003, various members of the Hofstad cluster had exhibited actions that demonstrated that they had committed to jihad. Jason Walters, the 19-year old Dutch-American convert, was one of the first to commit to jihad. He had already made a hit list including a number of prominent Dutch political figures including Ayaan Hirsi Ali among others.
  - Some time before September 2003, it is believed that Jason Walters had attended a training camp in Pakistan and/or Afghanistan.
  - Samir Azzouz had become well known to Dutch authorities for attempting to join Islamic fighters in Chechnya.
- **Attack Planning.** By October 2003, Samir Azzouz had obtained bomb making equipment and developed a list of targets including the Dutch Parliament, Amsterdam's international airport and a nuclear power plant.

On October 14, 2003, group members, Samir Azzouz, Ismail Akhnikh, Jason Walters and Redouan al-Issar were arrested for planning an attack in the Netherlands. While the others were released for lack of evidence, Azzouz was tried but acquitted because he had assembled the wrong mix of fertilizer for explosives.<sup>60</sup>

- **Training/Preparation.** Although Jason Walters was also subsequently released, the authorities had confiscated his computer and found chat logs where he had specifically sought out religious sanction for attacks, clearly demonstrating his intentions.<sup>61</sup>

During a chat on September 19, 2003, Walters sought sanction (via a friend: Galas03) from Imam Abdul-Jabbar van de Ven for jihad. Abdul-Jabbar was a Dutch convert who was a traveling imam. Walters' screen-name was "Mujaheed":

**Mujaheed:** *"you have to go to jabbar"*

**Galas03:** *"I will see him today InshaAllah at the lesson"*

**Mujaheed:** *"Go and ask him if it is here allowed to slaughter the unbelievers and/or to steal their possessions"*

**Galas03:** *"He has said about it, see it this way: the government, ministries, police etc., their blood and possessions is halal [we can take], because they openly declared war to the islam, but before you do something you have to think twice about what will happen with the islamic community."*

**Mujaheed:** *"OK djazaak Allah. This is the fatwa needed. Now I can slaughter every police, minister, soldier, officer etc. And robe [sic] them"<sup>62</sup>*

- **The Result.** By October 2004, Mohammed Bouyeri had become convinced of his personal obligation to do jihad himself, acquired his own gun and he began to practice shooting. As the group began to make plans for carrying out some of their grander operations, without warning, on the morning of November 2, 2004, before these plans could be realized, Bouyeri brutally shot and killed Theo Van Gogh in the streets of Amsterdam. This led to the arrests of the other members of the group within days and effectively rolled up the leaders of the Hofstad Group.

### LONDON (July 2005 Attack)

- **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** For some of the 7/7 bombers, the acceptance of their obligation for jihad began in July 2003. Travel abroad played prominently in directing them to conduct an attack in the U.K., solidifying the group's commitment to jihad, and providing them the advice and experience for acquiring the capability.
  - In July 2003, Mohammed Siddique Khan traveled to Pakistan and received military and explosives training at a camp in Malakand, in the North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan. The original purpose of the trip was for Khan to deliver funds raised in the U.K. for jihadi groups, such as Kashmiri fighters or the Taliban. However, following his arrival at the Islamabad airport, Khan decided to stay and attend a jihadi training camp.<sup>63</sup>
    - During his training, Khan met Mohammed Junaid Babar, a New Yorker of Pakistani origin who later confessed after being arrested to being a key al-Qaeda operative who was involved in an attempt to assassinate Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in 2003.
    - He also met Momin Khawaja, an Ottawa-based software technician who later designed and built electronic detonators to be used to trigger a huge fertilizer-and-fuel bomb along with four British conspirators (Operation Crevice).<sup>64</sup>
  - In late November 2004, Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shezhad Tanweer traveled to Karachi, Pakistan and met Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, a former major in Saddam Hussein's army, who was regarded as one of al-Qaeda's most experienced, intelligent and ruthless commanders.
    - Recognizing the potential for re-directing already radicalized British Muslims, who traveled to the region with the desire to become mujahedeen in Afghanistan or Iraq, Abd al-Hadi was responsible for re-tasking both Khan and Tanweer to attack the U.K..<sup>65</sup>
    - Pakistani records show the pair departed Pakistan on the same flight in early February 2005. Upon their return to the U.K. in February 2005, Khan and Tanweer immediately began planning an attack to punish Britain.

- **Training/Preparation.** As Mohammad Siddique Khan and Shezhad Tanweer moved closer to the launch date, they continued looking for opportunities to bond with other like-minded individuals.
    - Khan and Tanweer rode the whitewater rapids at Canolfan Tryweryn, the National Whitewater Centre, on June 4, 2005—approximately a month before the attack. There is reporting that two members of the unsuccessful July 21, 2005 London bomb plot in London, may have attended this very same whitewater rafting trip.<sup>66</sup>
    - It is important to note that at some point during their travels to Pakistan, both Mohammad Siddique Khan and Shezhad Tanweer filmed the video tape justifying their actions for the 7/7 bombings.
  - **Attack Planning.** The bombs used in the 7/7 attacks were homemade using relatively inexpensive, commercially available ingredients. Although these explosive devices could be manufactured using information solely available in the open sources, it is likely that the group obtained specific instruction, tips, or advice from bomb experts during their travel to Pakistan.
    - The first purchase of material to build 2-5 kg of homemade peroxide-based explosive was on March 31, 2005. Materials consistent with these processes were discovered at the apartment in Leeds, which was believed to be the “bomb factory.”<sup>67</sup>
    - In retrospect, wilted plants, along with constantly open windows shielded by window treatments, were indicators that noxious explosives were being prepared at the apartment.
- There appears to have been at least one reconnaissance/dry run visit to London on June 28, 2005 by Khan, Tanweer and Lindsay.
- The three journeyed from Beeston to Luton and then to King’s Cross station before traveling on the underground. They were picked up on CCTV near Baker Street tube station later in the morning and returned to Luton at lunch time.
  - Train tickets found at the Leeds bomb factory after the attack suggest there had been additional visits to London in mid-March.<sup>68</sup>
- **The Result.** In the early hours of July 7, 2005, Mohammed Siddique Khan, Shezhad Tanweer, Hasib Hussain and Germaine Lindsay left their homes to complete the final piece of the jihadization phase – the attack.
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**ARCHETYPES: “The Operational Leader”**

Mohammed Siddique Khan

*In order for a group of people with a grievance to turn into a terrorist cell, they need an effective leader. This leadership comes in two forms: Operational and Charismatic. These two qualities are sometimes found in separate people in a group and sometimes in one person. Operational and charismatic leadership are vital in providing training, motivation, discipline and group cohesiveness. Leadership within the group is the key determinant in terrorist “success”.*



Mohammed Siddique Khan was born in 1974 in Leeds, U.K. to Pakistani parents. At the 30, he was the oldest of the four men involved in the July 7<sup>th</sup> attacks in London was designated by authorities as the leader. Khan’s early life was unremarkable. Khan was not particularly observant as a youth but came to the religion as a young man.

He worked administrative jobs in the public sector before attending Leeds Metropolitan University. During this time he got a part-time job helping at-risk youth and discovered he had a knack for dealing with young people.

Khan’s skill with young people led to a job at a local school working with special needs children and youngsters with behavioral problems. He was praised for his dedication, ability to gain the trust of young people and was seen as a role model by many. Khan began mentoring youths through the local mosques, community centers and gyms. As his religious views became more extreme, his charisma and his volunteer work brought the other members of the cell into his orbit.

After Khan’s return from Pakistan in February 2005, planning for the 7/7 attacks accelerated. From March until the attacks, the group displayed great discipline, detailed planning and operational security – all indicative of Khan’s leadership ability.

Other operational leaders among the case studies in this report include: Fahim Ahmed (Canada), Jamal Ahmidan (Spain) and Mohammed Atta (Hamburg) and Randall Todd Royer (Northern Virginia).

**MELBOURNE/SYDNEY (Operation Pendennis)**

- **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** By the time of the arrests in November 2005, the two Australian groups had moved quite deep into the jihadization phase, having already accepted their duty to jihad and having begun planning violent acts to coerce the Australian government into withdrawing troops from Afghanistan.

They had held training camps in remote areas and were speaking in codes. They also had amassed extremist Islamic material, conducted surveillance on potential targets and were in the process of creating weapons with readily available materials.

- Previous travel abroad appears to have contributed to the group's entry into the jihadization phase.
  - Among the Melbourne cluster, only convert Shane Kent is thought to have trained abroad. In mid-2001, allegedly he had trained at a Jaish-e-Mohamed camp in Pakistan before proceeding to al-Qaeda's al-Farouq camp.
  - Among the Sydney cluster, at least three of the individuals had already been in Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) training camps in Pakistan including Khaled Chaiko, Mustafa Chaiko, and Mohamed Ali Elomar.<sup>69</sup>
- **Training/Preparation.** Members of both the Sydney and Melbourne clusters traveled to the Australian outback for an outdoor group venture and also began preparing themselves mentally for conducting an attack.
  - The Melbourne suspects participated in outdoor bonding activities, including paramilitary-like training at a rural Kinglake property and at various commercial hunting properties.
  - Similarly, two western New South Wales properties were used as jihad training camps by the Sydney cluster, whose members posed as recreational hunters.<sup>70</sup>
  - Six of the eight Sydney men attended "training camps" held in March and April of 2005, leaving behind ammunition shell casings, and unidentifiable burned and melted material.<sup>71</sup>
  - Members of this group watched graphic video footage of executions and decapitations in Chechnya as part of their mental preparation for jihad.<sup>72</sup>
  - Abdulla Merhi asked Benbrika for sanction to become a suicide bomber.
  - Reportedly, Mazen Touma told his mother that "jihad was an obligation for every Muslim" and that if his mother didn't agree, "he did not need her permission."<sup>73</sup>

- **Attack Planning.** Both the Sydney and Melbourne clusters conducted reconnaissance and target preparation.
  - The Melbourne suspects filmed the Australian Stock Exchange and Flinders Street Station, Melbourne's landmark central train station.
  - During the November raids by Australian authorities, officers reportedly found maps of Casselden Place, the Melbourne headquarters of both the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Immigration.
  - Members of the Sydney cluster were arrested in 2004 reconnoitering the Lucas Heights nuclear power plant. They were reported to have targeted the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge.<sup>74</sup>

Some of the Australian plotters used car theft and credit card scams to finance the purchase of the materiel for conducting the attacks.

- Following arrests made as part of Operation Pendennis, the Sydney cluster was found to have been in possession of hundreds of quarts of chemicals as well as laboratory equipment, 165 detonators, 132 digital timers, batteries, firearms and ammunition. The suspects' homes also contained bomb-making manuals.
  - Reportedly, Australian chemical suppliers claimed they had tipped off the authorities about several attempts by this cluster to purchase large quantities of hydrogen peroxide, acetone, hydrochloric and/or sulphuric acid and hexamine—all chemicals which can be used in explosives<sup>75</sup>
- **The Result.** Following a "walk-in" tip, two government paid confidential informants were able to penetrate the group and enabled the intelligence and law enforcement agencies to identify and prevent the group from carrying out its attacks in November 2005.

## TORONTO (Toronto 18)

- **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** With the influence of radical preachers, the Internet and their own echo chamber of self-radicalization, the Toronto group finally accepted their obligation to jihad and began the jihadization stage in late 2005. Rapidly, they shifted from talking and debating towards action.
  - In late December 2005, Jahmaal James traveled to Balikot, Pakistan for one month, ostensibly to find a bride, but where authorities believe he received paramilitary training.
- **Training/Preparation.** Members from both Toronto clusters used outdoor activities as venues for both training and bonding.

- Cluster members traveled to an isolated rural property in a remote part of Ontario to practice shooting and do military exercises in the snow during the Christmas week of 2005. During this outing, they also made a video imitating military warfare and discussed potential targets with two young Muslim men from the U.S. state of Georgia.<sup>76</sup>
    - Neighbors saw them "dressed in camouflage" and heard "automatic gunfire"<sup>77</sup>
  - **Attack Planning.** Targets which they had already identified included the Canadian Security Intelligence Services office, the Toronto Stock Exchange, the CN Tower (all in Toronto) and the Canadian Parliament Building in Ottawa. The group had already begun to acquire the tools they would need to commit their attacks, including guns, detonators and explosives.
    - When Canadian authorities arrested the group in June 2006, they already had detonators and a handgun and were in the process of seeking to purchase three tons of ammonium nitrate for \$4000.
  - **The Result.** As in Australia, two government-paid confidential informants, who were accepted into the group, enabled the Canadian intelligence and law enforcement agencies to identify and prevent the group from carrying out its attacks. Arrests commenced on June 2, 2006.
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# Trajectories of Radicalization Outside the United States

## Pre-Radicalization

## Self-Identification

## Indoctrination

## Jihadization



### HAMBURG

Mohammed Atta  
Ramzi bin al-Shibh  
Marwan al-Shehi  
Ziad Jarrah

Returns from haj more devout 1995  
Runs student study groups with Atta  
Father dies; joins Hamburg group 1998  
Returns from Lebanon; devout 1996

Radicalizes at bookstore/private flat  
Weekly meetings; discuss jihad 1998-9  
Moves in with Atta and al-Shibh 1998-9  
Moves to Hamburg; girlfriend problems

Individuals depart for  
Afghanistan for  
training; attend AQ  
camps 1999-2000

### MADRID

Jamal Ahmidan  
Sathane Fakhel  
Jamal Zougam  
Rabel Ahmed

Incarcerated in Morocco 2001-3  
Personal crisis; Dahdah group 1996  
Ran mobile phone shop  
Begins to attend M-30 mosque 2001

Emerges from prison as hardcore Salafi  
Leaves M-30 mosque; private meetings  
Attends private meetings 2002  
Radicalizes two foreign students 2002-3

Jihadi Iraq  
document posted;  
attack planning  
begins 12/03

### AMSTERDAM

Mohammed Bouyeri  
Redouan Al Issar  
Jason Walters  
Nourudine El Fatmi  
Samir Azzouz

7 months in prison; mother dies 2003  
Forms cluster via El-Tawheed mosque  
Travels to Pakistan/Afghanistan 2002  
Attends El-Tahweed mosque 2001  
Arrested going to Chechnya 2003

Rents flat for private meetings 2003  
Lectures on jihad at meetings  
Arrested; plans political assassinations  
Reconnaissance trip to Portugal 2004  
Arrested; plans against airport 2003

Al Issar disappears;  
Bouyeri kills Theo  
van Gogh; Hofstad  
cluster arrested  
November 2004

### LEEDS-LONDON

Mohammed Khan  
Shehzad Tanweer  
Hasib Hussain  
Germaine Lindsay

Becomes devout; volunteer work 2001  
Speaks at youth centers w/Khan 2001  
Friends with Khan and Tanweer 2003  
Mother leaves UK for US 2001

Leave mosques; meetings at bookstore  
Discussions on jihad, Iraq, Palestine With  
Khan/Tanweer at Al-Iqra bookstore  
Meets Khan and joins cluster 2004

Khan/Tanweer travel  
to Pakistan 12/04;  
return/begin attack  
planning

### SYDNEY/

Abdul Berbrika  
Shane Kent  
Abdullah Merhi  
Khaled Chaiko  
Hany Taha

Starts his own breakaway group 1994  
Attends AQ training camp in 2001  
Attends radical sermons at mosque  
Attends LeT training camp 2001  
Employed as spray painter

Preaches Iraq/Afghanistan War vs Islam  
Paramilitary training outside Melbourne  
Seeks permission to be suicide martyr  
Camping/ training trips outside Sydney  
Car theft committed to fund activities

Recon conducted;  
weapons, maps and  
explosives obtained;  
cluster arrested 11/05

### TORONTO

Zakaria Amara  
Gayyum Jamaal  
Steven Chand  
Fahim Ahmad  
Saad Khalid

Poem-Meadowvale Brothers blog 2001  
Beriends youth at mosque  
Converts to Islam in 2002  
Meadowvale blog; changes clothing  
Forms Religious Club 2003

New blog poem - changed attitude 2003  
Promotes anti-Canada view 2003-5  
Travels to Scarborough; recruit students  
Discusses permissibility of jihad on web  
Goes on military training exercise 12/05

Plan formulated; recon  
conducted; ammonium  
nitrate ordered; cluster  
arrested June 2006

<p>Arrives as student-Hamburg 1992 Moves to Hamburg 1995; met Atta Arrives as student-Germany 1998 Arrives as student-Germany 1996</p>	<p>Runs ecstasy drug network 1998-00 Arrives as student-Madrid 1994 Ran mobile phone shop Arrives in Frankfurt-1999 from Egypt</p>	<p>Studies accounting/IT at polytechnic Seeks asylum in Germany 1995 Converts to Islam as teen 2002 Immigrated to Spain (Morocco) 1997 Successful high school student 2004</p>	<p>Student at Leeds University 1998-01 Student at Leeds University 2001-4 Shy high school student 1998-2003 Converts to Islam in 2000</p>
<p>Arrives Australia from Algeria 1989 Converts to Islam in mid 1990's Worked as an apprentice electrician Shaunah Salafi 2<sup>nd</sup> generation –Lebanese descent</p>	<p>Meadowvale High School 2001-4 Pakistani native; cleans mosque Serves in Canadian Army Meadowvale High School 2000-3 Bright student high school 2002-5</p>	<p>Starts his own breakaway group 1994 Attends AQ training camp in 2001 Attends radical sermons at mosque Attends LeT training camp 2001 Employed as spray painter</p>	<p>Preaches Iraq/Afghanistan War vs Islam Paramilitary training outside Melbourne Seeks permission to be suicide martyr Camping/ training trips outside Sydney Car theft committed to fund activities</p>



## RADICALIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES



PORTLAND, OREGON



LACKAWANA, NEW YORK



NORTHERN VIRGINIA

## **RADICALIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES**

The five foreign case studies discussed are examples of how Europeans, Australians, and Canadian citizens were radicalized. History, geography, politics, demography, and culture are all factors which affect the ease, speed, and degree of how radicalization occurs.

For example, Europe traditionally has served as an asylum for diaspora communities that have sought political, social, and economic refuge from their oppressed lives in their native lands. Generous welfare systems coupled with immigration laws that do not encourage the assimilation of these largely Muslim communities into European culture and society have exacerbated the speed in which radicalization has spread within the European continent. This non-assimilation has allowed the migrant diaspora communities to become isolated--an isolation that has allowed them to avoid traditional European culture, society, and national spirit. For many of this diaspora, Europe is merely a place of residence and not one of belonging.

The United States has appeared to be somewhat immune from this process. It has not experienced an Islamic-based “homegrown” attack and the magnitude of the plots that have been thwarted has not risen to the level of those in Europe. In fact, in most U.S. cases, the would-be terrorists were still at a stage where they were traveling abroad for the purposes of training or becoming mujahedeen to fight abroad—not because they had decided to attack targets in the homeland. Nevertheless, New York City’s 2004 Herald Square and the recent Fort Dix plots—plots that involved the targeting of U.S. citizens in the homeland-- are examples that even the U.S. is at risk for a “homegrown” terrorist attack.

We have examined three U.S.-based “homegrown” cases: The Lackawana Six, The Portland Seven and Northern Virginia Paintball. All three cases had progressed to a level of threat where arrests were made and the perpetrators indicted, although none posed direct threats to U.S. lives or infrastructure. However, all three cases involved people who became radicalized to the point of intending to commit jihad—be it as a terrorist or as fighters killing infidels in the mountains of Afghanistan.

The three U.S.-based cases provided fewer examples of signature activities during the stages and sub-stages of the radicalization process than the five foreign examples. The lack of rich details on these U.S. cases, coupled with the fact that they were disrupted at a relatively early stage, obscured the fact that radicalization had occurred. Nevertheless, the three U.S. cases still provided sufficient evidence to corroborate parts of each of the four stages—from pre-radicalization to jihadization—demonstrating that these plots were also underpinned by the same radicalization process that the members of the five foreign plots underwent.

### **The Plots:**

- The Lackawana Six.
  - The Portland Seven
  - The Northern Virginia Paintball
-

## STAGE 1: PRE-RADICALIZATION

Most of the same indicators and signatures that were common among the five foreign plots were also common to the three U.S. plots.

Generally, the plot members were:

- Male Muslims, under the age of 35, who were local residents and citizens and came from varied ethnic backgrounds. In fact, all were between the ages of 18 and 37 with the average ages at the time of their training activity being about 27.
- Many, but not all, were the children of immigrants from the Middle East or South Asia; the second generation in the U.S.
- Significant proportions came from middle class backgrounds; none were economically destitute.
- Most had some form of higher education, at least high school graduates, if not university students.

### LACKAWANA, NEW YORK (The Lackawana Six)

- **The Candidates.** In Lackawana, the cluster was made up of eight Yemeni-Americans—both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. All were U.S. citizens and the first known to train at an al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan, prior to 9/11.
  - A number of them were second-generation children of immigrants who had come to work at the Bethlehem Steel plant in the 1970's. None were particularly religious.
  - Six were graduates of Lackawana High School. They were known by their peers and family as being more interested in playing soccer and hockey and partying than conducting jihad.<sup>78</sup>
  - One Lackawana-born Yemeni had been raised in Saudi Arabia, had received advanced weapons training in Afghanistan and fought as a mujahedeen in Bosnia in the 1990's – Kamal Derwish.<sup>79</sup>

### PORTLAND, OREGON (The Portland Seven)

- **The Candidates.** This cluster consisted of eight people, six of whom were born in the United States. Five were arrested following an attempt to join al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan immediately following 9/11. The group's membership was quite diverse and included:
    - A 38 year-old middle-class father and husband who was a former engineer for the world's largest semiconductor maker - Intel.
-

- An African-American convert, who had majored in Chinese and International Studies at Portland State. Between the years of 1998 and 1999, he was widely described as a model intern while working at Portland's City Hall.
- A one-time Mary Kay cosmetics representative who was trying to get out of his commitment to the U.S. Army reserves after washing out in boot camp.
- The ex-wife of the cosmetic representative, who transferred money abroad to her ex-husband.
- Two brothers of Arab descent who had sought to start a landscaping business.
- A Jordanian national who was a resident of Portland and claims to have been a mujahedeen and fought in the Soviet war in Afghanistan.
- An extremist Lebanese imam who preached in the community.<sup>80</sup>

#### **NORTHERN VIRGINIA (Virginia Paintball)**

- **The Candidates.** The diverse cluster included:
  - Four U.S.-born converts: two former U.S. Marines and two former U.S. Army soldiers, all who had converted to Islam (one was a decorated Gulf War veteran).
  - A South Korean-born convert who graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in engineering.
  - A Yemeni national who was the son of a diplomat.
  - A computer technology whiz from Pakistan.
  - A Pakistani-American kitchen designer.
  - A 40 year-old doctoral student in computational biology from George Mason University who served as the spiritual leader of the cluster.<sup>81</sup>

#### **STAGE 2: SELF- IDENTIFICATION**

Similar to the foreign cases, certain members of the U.S. groups, influenced by both internal and external factors, began to explore Salafi Islam. In some cases, a crisis - personal or external - precipitated this process. While a variety of triggers may have served as the catalyst, ultimately the individual was alienated from his former life and affiliated with like-minded individuals, who via small group dynamics strengthened his dedication to Salafi Islam.

### LACKAWANA, NEW YORK (The Lackawana Six)

- **Gravitating Towards Salafi Islam.** Kamal Derwish served as both a catalyst and a spiritual sanctioner for the Lackawana cluster's progression into this stage. Upon his return to Lackawana from Yemen in 1998, Derwish, described as "a card carrying member of al-Qaeda," held private meetings at his apartment for small groups of young men following evening prayers. These meetings, with extremist agendas, became popular—drawing as many as 20 regular attendees of males in their late teens and early 20's.
  - Derwish was a skilled mentor, often mixing religion with leisure. Young men were captivated by Derwish's passionate rhetoric. Since few Yemenis in the Lackawana community practiced Salafi Islam, they were awestruck by Derwish, who one follower called a "music man of religion."
    - According to one member of the cluster, "I really was, you know, starting to learn my religion and I didn't see, I never really saw the mujahedeen part of it." <sup>82</sup>

### PORTLAND, OREGON (The Portland Seven)

- **Gravitating Towards Salafi Islam.** Palestinian born Mike Hawash was known by friends as an American-trained computer whiz kid, not a disassociated Muslim. By the time Hawash was 30, he was considered a prodigy at Intel, a "go-to" guy in the competitive programming and hardware industry. Hawash was not a practicing Muslim. However, he was drawn back to Islam following the death of his father, who lost a long struggle with diabetes in 2000. <sup>83</sup>
  - According to his friends, it was a difficult year for Hawash and he returned to Islam as a way to cope. In early 2001, Hawash made a pilgrimage to Mecca. Signs of Hawash's spiritual renewal included:
    - Growing a beard and covering his head with a prayer cap
    - Shedding his secular identity for an Islamic one.
      - Hawash asked those who had known him for years as "Mike" to call him "Maher."
      - Hawash paid off the mortgage on his house because Islam forbids paying interest on loans.
- **The Salafi Mosque.** Hawash stopped worshipping at the Bilal Mosque and started attending the Masjid as-Saber, the Islamic Center of Portland—a mosque recognized as espousing a Salafi message. He began associating with more fundamentalist Muslims, making contact with the men who introduced and orchestrated the travel to Afghanistan for jihad. <sup>84</sup>

## NORTHERN VIRGINIA (Virginia Paintball)

- **The Salafi Mosque.** The Dar Al-Arqam, in Falls Church, Virginia served as a Salafi ideological incubator for the Virginia cluster. It was used as a meeting place for extremists and where members of the Virginia cluster were exposed to radical rhetoric and people
  - Ali Al-Timimi, a Salafi and doctoral student in computational biology, frequently gave lectures at the mosque and became the cluster's spiritual and intellectual leader and mentor to many in the group.
  - Prosecutors alleged that al-Timimi enjoyed "rock star" status. He had enormous charisma, wielding significant influence over this group of young Muslim men in northern Virginia.<sup>85</sup>
  - Randall Todd Royer, a convert, former U.S. army member and veteran of the jihad in Bosnia in 1994, lectured at the mosque and spent time with members of the cluster.
  - Lectures at the mosque discussed the righteousness of violent jihad in Kashmir, Chechnya, and other places around the world.<sup>86</sup>
- **Gravitating Towards Salafi Islam.** After meeting Ali Al-Timimi and Randall Todd Royer, some congregants of the group began to interact with them and discuss religious matters outside the mosque.

## STAGE 3: INDOCTRINATION

Both the Portland and Virginia clusters, like the European, Canadian and Australian groups, withdrew from the mosque as part of their self-imposed isolation. However, the Salafi mosque never played a significant role in the radicalization of the Lackawana cluster since group had not coalesced in a mosque, but rather at Derwish's apartment. In addition, they made the decision to travel to Afghanistan relatively early in their radicalization process.

## LACKAWANA, NEW YORK (The Lackawana Six)

Unlike some of the other radicalizing groups of young men, the Lackawana cluster may have traveled to Afghanistan before they had fully accepted jihadi-Salafi ideology. Consequently, the Lackawana cluster received their indoctrination into jihadi ideology while in al-Qaeda's al-Farouq training camp in Afghanistan. Although, their intention to travel to Afghanistan had been to further their pursuit of Salafism, they ended up in a militant training camp—a place that served both as an ideological and jihadi incubator.

- According to one of the six, in the spring of 2000, Derwish - the cluster's spiritual and operational leader, encouraged several members of the community to travel abroad, as part of a pilgrimage to salvage and rectify their insufficiently devout Islamic lifestyle.

- As one of the members of the cluster recounted, "I was hungry for knowledge of the religion itself," said Sahim Alwan, one of the college educated members of the group, "It was a religious quest, and yes, we didn't know about the camp part."<sup>87</sup>
- **Withdrawal from the Mosque.** The Lackawana cluster had not coalesced in a mosque and never spent much time in the town's one Yemeni mosque. In fact, their travel was a part of their "withdrawal" from Lackawana's mosque environment and its secular community. Derwish's private residence had been the group's meeting place for radical discussion and further indoctrination.
- **Politicization of New Beliefs.** Part of their indoctrination while attending the training camp in Afghanistan included watching jihadi videos—videos that glorified the bombing of the USS Cole and highlighted atrocities committed against Muslims in Lebanon, Indonesia and Israel.<sup>88</sup>

#### PORTLAND, OREGON (The Portland Seven)

- **Politicization of New Beliefs.** Al Saoub, a former mujahedeen during the Soviet-Afghanistan conflict, introduced the cluster to a "political agenda"—an agenda that would now allow the cluster to view world events through their newly-acquired extremist lens.
  - According to officials, al Saoub became the de facto leader of the group of six men who would ultimately travel from Portland to China in the weeks following the September 11 attacks. They were planning on traveling to Afghanistan via China.
  - Al Saoub provided the members of this cluster the "political justification" for the group's ultimate objective, which was to travel to Afghanistan and fight U.S. forces as jihadists.<sup>89</sup>

#### NORTHERN VIRGINIA (Virginia Paintball)

- **Withdrawal from the Mosque.** Beginning in 2000, having progressed to preparing for jihad, the Virginia cluster met frequently in private locations, furthering their radicalization with discussions.
- **Politicization of New Beliefs.** In approximately June 2000, Randall Royer, the convert and former U.S. army member who had fought in Bosnia as a jihadi, held private discussions with members of the cluster on his experiences serving with Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) in Pakistan earlier that year. Members of the cluster were told not to discuss further any of what they heard.<sup>90</sup>

#### STAGE 4: JIHADIZATION

For the Virginia and Portland groups, the attacks of September 11 served as the trigger for their decision to commit to jihad. Many of these plotters had previously traveled abroad and attended training camps where they had completed their indoctrination.

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Although travel to Afghanistan--early in their radicalization--helped speed up their indoctrination for the Lackawana cluster, it may have actually acted as an impediment to their final acceptance of jihad.

### LACKAWANA, NEW YORK (The Lackawana Six)

- **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** Members of the Lackawana cluster attended an al-Qaeda training camp in the spring of 2001, and reportedly met with Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. However, this exposure to militant jihad at a stage in their radicalization before they had yet to fully be indoctrinated in a holy warrior or mujahedeen mindset may have impeded their progression to the jihadization stage.
  - Four out of the Lackawana cluster members had left Afghanistan before completing the six-week al-Qaeda training course.
    - According to one individual who had left the camp early, when the six re-united in Lackawana later that summer, they discussed the importance of keeping their experience quiet, as though it almost never happened.
    - After September 11, the members of the cluster lowered their profile in the community and began a process of separating themselves from the entire Afghanistan experience. They even broke contact with Derwish, their leader.<sup>91</sup>
  - Only one of the seven Lackawana Yemenis made the individual commitment to suicidal jihad. As one of them noted,

“He [Jaber Elbaneh] was planning on going to the fighting against the Northern Alliance, and stuff like that. Basically his mindset was "I want to be a martyr. I want to die.”

    - Following his time at the camp, Elbaneh never returned to the United States, traveling instead to his native Yemen to live with his wife and children.
    - In 2006, Elbaneh was among the 23 men who tunneled out of a Yemeni prison after being arrested in 2003.
- **Training/Preparation.** Although all six underwent militant training, including firing assault rifles, launching rocket-propelled grenades, and assembling plastic explosives, Molotov cocktails and land mines, these experiences were never transferred into an operation. Since this cluster never progressed any deeper into the jihadization stage, there was never any evidence of any operational targeting or planning in the U.S.
- **The Result.** The cluster was ultimately dismantled and arrested following the travel of one member to Bahrain in September 2002 to get married. He had sent



suspicious e-mails back to the U.S. discussing what was construed to be coded language for a terrorist act--an "upcoming wedding" and "big meal." <sup>92</sup>

### PORTLAND, OREGON (The Portland Seven).

- **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** While some members of the Portland cluster progressed to the jihadization phase by the summer of 2001, it wasn't until 9/11 that the group as a whole began seeking out opportunities to conduct jihad. Ultimately they determined that jihad could be realized as mujahedeen in Afghanistan battling the American invaders.
- **Training/Preparation.** The group engaged in martial arts training and firearms practice, as part of a training regime, specifically to prepare them for their future lives as mujahedeen. In fact some of the members of this cluster conducted practice firing about two weeks after 9/11.
  - By mid-October 2001 and on the urging of al Saoub, the cluster traveled to Beijing, in an attempt to enter Pakistan with the ultimate aim of joining the Taliban.
- **The Result.** The group made its way to Beijing and eventually to Kashgar, in western China. However, they were eventually turned back by Chinese troops at the Pakistani border. On their return to the U.S. in 2002, six out of the seven were arrested. Al Saoub was killed by Pakistani forces in 2003.

### NORTHERN VIRGINIA (Virginia Paintball)

- **Training/Preparation.** During the summer of 2000, the members of the Virginia cluster accelerated their purchase and usage of semi-automatic weapons, ammunition and regularly participated in shooting practice in Pennsylvania and Virginia. The individuals in the cluster clearly saw themselves as soldiers and this was part of their training.
  - In March 2001, in rural Virginia, the cluster used paintball weapons and equipment to practice small-unit military tactics, with the intention of simulating the actual combat environment that they would face.
  - By July, another member of the cluster traveled to Pakistan to train in a LeT camp. All in all, three members of the group engaged in military training in Pakistan before September 11, 2001. <sup>93</sup>
- The group also prepared themselves mentally by watching jihadi tapes, prior to launching on their journey to become mujahedeen.
  - The cluster's favorite video, "Russian Hell," a jihad video that featured bloody clips of a Chechen Muslim rebel leader executing a Russian prisoner of war, served as a key inspirational force in maintaining the group's zeal and

courage to continue on their path to become jihadists.

- According to one member of the cluster, "They (the videos) motivated us. It was like they gave us inspiration."<sup>94</sup>
  - **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** Although some of the individual group members had committed to jihad, the decision to accept jihad as a group occurred five days after the 9/11 attacks at one of the members' house, in Fairfax, Virginia. The spiritual sanctioner, Ali al-Timimi, told his followers that the time had come for them to go abroad to join the mujahedeen engaged in violent jihad in Kashmir, Chechnya, Afghanistan, or Indonesia and that U.S. troops were legitimate targets. He also told the conspirators that they could fulfill their duty to engage in jihad by joining the LeT in Pakistan, because the LeT was on the correct path.
    - By September 20, 2001 four members of the cluster had departed the U.S. for Pakistan and by October, all four had participated in training at a LeT camp.
  - **The Result.** On June 27, 2003, eight of the eleven men were arrested on charges they formed a "Virginia jihad network" with ties to the Kashmiri separatist group LeT.<sup>95</sup>
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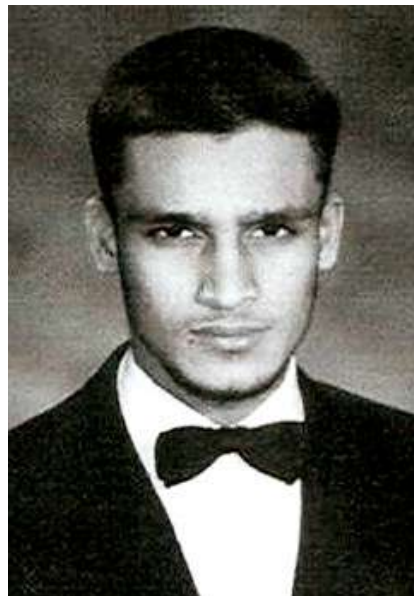
## THE NEW YORK CITY EXPERIENCE



THE HERALD SQUARE SUBWAY CASE



MOHAMMED JUNAID BABAR



SYED HASHMI

## THE NEW YORK CITY EXPERIENCE

Since September 11, New York City has been targeted numerous times by Islamic terrorists. To date, the 2004 Herald Square plot is the only known homegrown plot in New York City that reached the jihadization stage. However, radicalization continues permeating New York City, especially its Muslim communities. Two particular examples of how radicalization has transformed residents of this City into terrorists include the 2004 Herald Square Plot and, what we refer to as the “Al-Muhajiroun Two.”

**2004 Herald Square Plot.** On August 27, 2004, shortly before the Republican National Convention (RNC), Shahawar Siraj and James Elshafay were arrested and charged with conspiring to attack one of New York City’s busiest subway stations at Herald Square with bomb-filled backpacks. The RNC was to be held in Madison Square Garden, a block away from the Herald Square subway stop, starting August 30<sup>th</sup>. The attackers hoped to collapse the Manhattan Mall, which is immediately above that stop.

- As documented in court records, the plotters had created maps of where they would put explosives and completed a dry run with backpacks to test the police response on August 21, 2004. <sup>96</sup>
- A New York federal court found Siraj guilty of plotting to commit a terrorist act in *United States v. Shahawar Matin Siraj* in 2006. Siraj was sentenced to 30 years. James Elshafay, who pleaded guilty, was sentenced to five years.

**The Al-Muhajiroun Two.** Although this case did not involve any direct threat to New York City or to the U.S. homeland, it clearly involved the radicalization aspect of the homegrown phenomena. Both terrorists were homegrown in New York City. That is, both became radicalized in New York City to the point of being prepared to commit jihad.

New York City residents, Syed Hashmi and Mohammed Junaid Babar, both members of the New York City chapter of the extremist group al-Muhajiroun, traveled to the UK and joined-up with elements of al-Qaeda. Both became involved in terrorist activities overseas.

- Babar was arrested in April 2004 in New York after his return from Pakistan. He pleaded guilty to five counts of providing and conspiring to provide money and supplies to al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.
  - Two years later, in June 2006, British authorities arrested the other New Yorker, Syed Hashmi, in London’s Heathrow Airport. He was charged with aiding the al-Qaeda plot to attack targets in London and for delivering military equipment and funds to radical Islamists in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
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## STAGE 1: PRE-RADICALIZATION

### The Herald Square Plot and The Al-Muhajiroun Two

- **The Environment.** New York City has a diverse Muslim population of between 600,000 and 750,000 within a population of about 8 ½ million--about 40% of whom are foreign-born. Unfortunately, the City's Muslim communities have been permeated by extremists who have and continue to sow the seeds of radicalization. Muslim communities are often more vulnerable to the radicals' agenda—an agenda that uses Islam as the center stage for spreading and justifying extremist views. Radicalization is indiscriminate and those attracted to it include New York City citizens from all walks of life, ranging from university students, engineers, business owners, teachers, lawyers, cab drivers to construction workers.
- **The Candidates.** Similar to the members of both the overseas and domestic case studies, the New York City extremists were male Muslims approximately between 20-30 years old.
  - Shahawar Matin Siraj was a 23 year-old Pakistani illegal immigrant at the time of his arrest. He was member of the Ismaili sect of Islam, a persecuted minority in Pakistan, prior to coming to the United States a teenager with his family in 1999.
    - Siraj described himself as having attended Christian schools in Pakistan and having little interest in religion. <sup>97</sup>
  - James Elshafay was a troubled young man who was looking for direction in life. He was the 19 year-old son of an Egyptian father and Irish Catholic mother. He converted to Islam at around age 12, at his Egyptian father's insistence and dropped out of school after failing three times to complete the ninth grade. Elshafay spent his teen years drinking and taking drugs.
  - Twenty-six year-old Pakistani-born Syed Hashmi attended Robert Wagner High School in Long Island City and graduated from Brooklyn College in 2003 with a degree in political science. He had been described by those who knew him as a quiet, bright, and caring young man whose devotion to Islam was passionate but not overzealous.
  - Muhammad Junaid Babar was a 29 year-old, Pakistani-born man, whose family moved to the United States when he was two years-old. Babar spent most of his formative years in Queens.
    - Babar attended La Salle Military Academy, an all-boy military boarding school in Oakdale, Long Island and graduated with the rank of Second Lieutenant in 1994.
    - He studied pharmacy at St. John's University in New York but dropped out prior to completing the curriculum.

## STAGE 2: SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Far from being only a European phenomenon, many young Muslims in New York City are also struggling with their identity and often fall prey to the extremist ideology. Dissatisfied with the direction and values that traditional family and religious leaders can offer, they are drawn to alternative leadership and social groups to fill those needs.

### Salafi Influences and Incubators

This Salafi ideological influence has engaged the city's Muslim community through a variety of conduits. An individual's first exposure to these more extremist interpretations of Islam is often facilitated by informal groups or clusters of young men. These informal social networks themselves are usually associated with a particular venue – community center, non-governmental organization, university group, housing project, café or even a particular mosque and provide an environment conducive to radicalization.

**Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's).** Increasingly, Salafi NGO's are proliferating this militant ideology by distributing literature from Salafi ideologues such as Sayyid Qutb, Sayyid Mawdudi, and Hassan al-Banna. Moreover, these entities are seeking to widen their appeal among students by sponsoring joint Salafi-based events with local MSA's, subsidizing Salafi oriented adult learning classes and by providing forums for young, dynamic imams who espouse a more politicized form of Islam.

**Bookstores, Cafes, Hookah Bars, and Internet Cafes.** Other seemingly benign venues among diaspora communities can often serve as locations for indoctrination and comprise a radical subculture within the city. The presence of radical literature, extremist tapes and access to jihadi-Salafi websites make these locations incubators that can nurture extremist thoughts and rhetoric and can further the radicalization process (as evidenced by court records of the Herald Square case).

**Muslim Student Associations.** Among the social networks of the local university population, there appears to be a growing trend of Salafi-based radicalization that has permeated some Muslim student associations (MSA's). Extremists have used these university-based organizations as forums for the development and recruitment of like-minded individuals – providing a receptive platform for younger, American-born imams, to present a radical message in a way that resonates with the students. For example, one book increasingly being cited for discussion by many of these associations is Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab's *Kitab At-Tawheed*, the foundational book for Wahhabi Islam.

**Extremist Literature from Saudi Arabia.** The "Noble Quran," published by the Saudi-based al Haramain Foundation, is a Wahhabi/Salafi version of the Quran, which found its way into the New York State Correctional system. Although the Quran is in Arabic, it is supplemented by footnotes and appendices that are written in English. These, written by Saudi religious authorities, are non-traditional, militant interpretations of the Quran.

A recent review in *The Middle East Quarterly* characterized this version as reading more "...like a supremacist Muslim, anti-Semite, anti-Christian polemic than a rendition of the Islamic scripture."<sup>98</sup>

As these young Muslims explore their Islamic identity, their activist spirit causes them to gravitate to the more militant message of jihadi-Salafi Islam—a message that calls for aggressive action rather than steadfastness and patience. As Shamsi Ali, Deputy Imam of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York and director of the Jamaica Muslim Center in Queens notes,

“There are local preachers who distort our faith to foment hatred of America. There are people who, rather than encouraging young people to build better lives for themselves, irresponsibly egg them on toward an angry and narrow view of the future. I see this danger every day. As a scholar of the Koran and community leader in New York, I work closely with hundreds of Muslim teenagers. To a person, they have typical American dreams of becoming doctors, business people, baseball players, you name it. But I know Muslim young people well enough to understand that some who are susceptible to dangerous ideologies could turn in the wrong direction.”<sup>99</sup>

- ***Gravitating Towards Salafi Islam.*** Imam Ali’s comments accurately reflect what appears to be a growing jihadi-Salafi subculture within the City. In New York City, Salafism comes in many forms to include sermons given by visiting radical imams, the sale of jihadi tapes, extremist websites, lectures and other activities sponsored by extremist student associations, as well as traveling jamaatis or pilgrimages to and from extremist madrassas and mosques, and radical literature from Saudi Arabia.

As the members of both the Herald Square Plot and The al-Muhajiroun Two searched for their identity they encountered a variety of extremist incubators, which resulted in their introduction to Salafi and ultimately jihadi ideology. (See Text Box: p. 70)

- In the late 1990’s Syed Hashmi joined the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), a Jamaica, Queens-based Muslim NGO sponsored youth group as a means to explore Islam. Subsequently, ICNA’s message was too passive for Hashmi and he moved from ICNA to attend meetings of al-Muhajiroun - where his extremist transformation took root.
  - Although ICNA does not espouse a blatantly radical message, its curriculum is filled with Salafi doctrine and its recommended literature includes the writing and beliefs of such Salafi ideologues as Sayyid Qutb, Sayyid Mawdudi, and Hassan al-Banna.<sup>100</sup>
  - At Brooklyn College, in 2002, Hashmi was introduced to the views of al-Muhajiroun, an extremist organization.<sup>101</sup> There he became a different person and by the time he graduated in 2003 with a degree in political science, Hashmi had become something of a magnet and powerhouse recruiter for al-Muhajiroun.<sup>102</sup>
- The Internet appears to have had the most significant effect on Mohammed Junaid Babar. Once he began his journey exploring Salafi ideology, Babar dropped out of St. John’s University pharmacology program and took on odd jobs, such as valet parking, with no specific career goals. The Internet

introduced him to al-Muhajiroun, which, just like Hashmi, became his ideological incubator.

- According to Babar, during the 1990's "they (al-Muhajiroun) had representatives in New York. I was able to meet them on the internet. We spoke numerous times over the phone and there was also a lot of literature available on the internet I was able to see." As a result of this interaction, he became increasingly politicized and began seeking unity for the Muslim world.<sup>103</sup>

Shahawar Matin Siraj and James Elshafay's paths to radicalization traversed a bookstore—an Islamic bookstore which became an extremist incubator for both as they progressed through the stages of radicalization.

- Soon after September 11, Siraj began working in his uncle's Islamic bookstore, which was located next to a Sunni mosque. He started to read the books in the store and attend prayers at the mosque and took an interest in learning more about Islam.<sup>104</sup>
- In August 2002, at age 17, Elshafay traveled to Egypt to visit relatives—a visit that is believed to have led to his newly-found interest in Islam.<sup>105</sup>
  - When he returned to New York City, he sought out more information about Islam, which led him to the Islamic bookstore where Siraj worked.<sup>106</sup>

### STAGE 3: INDOCTRINATION

The Islamic bookstore and al-Muhajiroun continued serving as the extremist incubators for both the Herald Square plotters and the al-Muhajiroun Two, respectively. Because each of these extremists established early roots in these incubators, the mosque never played a major role in their radicalization journey. In retrospect, both the bookstore and al-Muhajiroun served as sanctuaries from their withdrawal from mainstream society.

- **Politicization of New Beliefs.** As Shahawar Siraj's commitment to fundamentalist Islam deepened, the Islamic bookstore in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn became his venue for transferring his Salafi-like mindset to his perception of global issues.
  - Political discussions coupled with the constant exposure to extremist literature sold in the bookstore hardened the Herald Square plotters' political views and they began forming their political agenda.
    - As early as November 2002, Siraj said that suicide bombings in Israel were not suicide, but revenge in response to Israeli atrocities and that he would do the same thing. He also stated that the mission of 9/11 was not complete, calling for more attacks on the United States.<sup>107</sup>



- Elshafay regularly visited Siraj at the bookstore, looking to him for religious guidance. They would watch jihadi videos. Also, Siraj would give Elshafay books that claimed Jews were conspiring to take over the world economically.<sup>108</sup>

Details of Babar and Hashmi's experiences as part of al-Muhajiroun during the indoctrination phase in New York City are scant. Moreover, al-Muhajiroun has since disbanded in New York City. However, a splinter organization from al-Muhajiroun -- the Islamic Thinker's Society still exists and is worth analyzing as a "stand in" for al-Muhajiroun, as it provides a similar ideological stepping stone to hardened and politicized Islamic extremist ideology. (See Text Box Below)

### **Al-Muhajiroun and Islamic Thinkers Society**

Al-Muhajiroun was founded by Syrian militant Omar Bakri as an affiliate of the local branch of the transnational Hizb-ut-Tahrir movement. Although al-Muhajiroun has since disbanded in the U.K., a number of offshoot organizations have emerged.

- The Islamic Thinkers Society (ITS) is an organization primarily composed of 2nd and 3rd generation college-age Americans of South Asian and Middle Eastern descent and espouses the same extremist worldview as al-Muhajiroun. Their ideology is underpinned by a politicized Salafi outlook that describes the United States as a nation of *kuffars*, or unbelievers. They do not respect U.S. "man-made laws" but rather seek to implement sharia and restore the Caliphate. <sup>109</sup>
- Islamic Thinkers Society claims that the worldwide Muslim community is under attack by a hostile West. It alleges that the West's strategy to undermine Islam combines social, cultural, political, economic, and military aspects. In an effort to support its arguments, ITS posts regular statements on its website about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Kashmir, and other global issues typically important to Muslims worldwide. In this regard, the group's call to jihad represents a justified resistance in defense of the worldwide Muslim community. However, ITS is careful not to explicitly call for violence. <sup>110</sup>
- The group has a Wahhabi orientation and is quick to impart "takfir" upon other Muslims who they consider apostates. ITS looks to the writings of influential Muslim ideologue Sheikh Ibn Taymiyyah, who inspired leading Islamist thinkers such as Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab and Sayyid Qutb, among others. <sup>111</sup>

Imam Shamsi Ali, Deputy Imam of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York and director of the Jamaica Muslim Center in Queens, cited the Islamic Thinkers Society as a "small organization based in Queens which routinely chooses anger over constructive action." In March 2006 their intolerance was on full display as they disrupted an annual religious Shi'a Ashura procession on Park Avenue in Manhattan. "The mischief mongers manhandled a religious scholar, calling him an infidel, and spread materials mocking Islamic jurists they consider too moderate." <sup>112</sup> Moreover, the small knot of angry young men waved placards which read. "Shia are NOT Muslims!" and "Shia is made of superstitious elements of Judaism." <sup>113</sup>

ITS and other similar organizations serve as indoctrination accelerants due to their ability to act as both incubators and proliferators of radicalization. Their use of the English language as well as the internet amplifies their message and specifically resonates with 2nd and 3rd generation Muslims in the West, many of whom speak or read little, if any Arabic. Thus, even in the virtual world, this organization successfully recruits, indoctrinates, and trains aspiring extremists.

## STAGE 4: JIHADIZATION

- **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** By the spring of 2004, less than two years from the time that both began to become radicalized, Siraj and Elshafay progressed to the jihadization phase—having now decided to put thought to action.
  - As a group, the Herald Square plotters agreed to conduct an actual attack against the people of New York City. They discussed various targets including bridges and police stations.<sup>114</sup>

For Babar of the al-Muhajiroun Two, the attacks of September 11 were the final straw that solidified his commitment to jihad. Hashmi soon followed suit.

- According to Babar, although his mother had worked in the World Trade Center, the attack had made him more committed toward the cause of jihad. He had wanted to fight a jihad in Chechnya and the Palestinian territory but had not been able to make the right contacts. After September 11, he knew that Afghanistan would be his only opportunity to participate in jihad. He left New York the next week.<sup>115</sup>
  - Babar initially traveled to the U.K. and to Pakistan, with the intention of going to Afghanistan.<sup>116</sup>
  - Hashmi moved to Britain from Queens in 2003, and allegedly allowed his London flat to be used to store supplies and money that Babar was shipping out to Abdul al-Hadi al-Iraqi, then head of al-Qaeda's operations in Afghanistan.<sup>117</sup>
- **Attack Planning.** Siraj and Elshafay discussed a variety of targets including NYPD precincts on Staten Island and the Verazzano Bridge before settling on the subway station at Herald Square.<sup>118</sup>
  - The plotters conducted reconnaissance on the subway station and even tested law enforcement response to their attack plans by placing knapsacks filled with clothes on the platform and timing how long it would take the authorities to respond.
- **Training/Preparation.** Babar spent considerable time in Pakistan, initially residing in al-Muhajiroun's office in Lahore before buying an apartment there in 2002.
  - Over the next two years, the flat became a temporary home to a conveyor belt of radicalized British Muslims, many of whom, like Babar, had been born in Pakistan and wanted to fight.<sup>119</sup>
  - Babar continued his jihadist support activities by seeking ways to smuggle money and military supplies to a senior member of al-Qaeda in Pakistan, and assisting in two separate attempts to assassinate General Pervez Musharraf in 2002.<sup>120</sup>

- In January and February 2004, Babar personally delivered night-vision goggles, sleeping bags, waterproof socks, waterproof ponchos and money to a high-ranking al-Qaeda official in South Waziristan. <sup>121</sup>

**The Result.** The radicalization of both the Herald Square plotters and the al-Muhajiroun Two did not result in an actual attack and direct loss of life; however, these radicalized New Yorkers indirectly supported at least one attack (London: July 7, 2005), and continued facilitating the radicalization trend among young Western Muslims.

- **Herald Square Plot.** On August 27, 2004, Siraj and Elshafay were arrested and charged with conspiring to detonate a bomb in the Herald Square Subway station.
  - Although the defendants never had possession or control of a bomb, according to the court records, Mr. Siraj already had a computer disk containing instructions for making different explosive devices, had showed it to the police informant and had asked him to make copies of the CD. This file was called the "Cookbook". <sup>122</sup>
- **Al-Muhajiroun Two.** Babar was arrested in New York City in April 2004, after his return from Pakistan. <sup>123</sup> Almost two years later, in June 2006, British authorities arrested Syed Hashmi, the Brooklyn College graduate, in London's Heathrow Airport for his suspected role in aiding an al-Qaeda plot to attack targets in London and delivering military equipment and funds to radical Islamists in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
  - At the end of April 2007, following the successful conviction of five individuals in the U.K. responsible for the Fertilizer (CREVICE) Plot, Queens-raised Babar was exposed as a key al-Qaeda support operative, facilitating the transit and training of both the CREVICE Plot conspirators as well as one of the July 7, 2005 bombers to a training camp in Malakand, Pakistan in July 2003. <sup>124</sup>
    - At this camp, Omar Khyam (CREVICE) and Mohammed Siddique Khan (London 7/7) learned how to handle weapons and explosives. <sup>125</sup>
    - Babar confessed to having supplied people who attended the training camp with aluminum powder and attempted to buy ammonium nitrate for them "with the knowledge that it was going to be used for a plot somewhere in the U.K." <sup>126</sup>
  - When British security officials apprehended Hashmi in 2006, he had been preparing to board a plane for Pakistan carrying a large amount of cash and supplies. <sup>127</sup>
    - The supplies had included ponchos, torches and boots, useful for recruits fighting US troops in remote parts of Afghanistan. <sup>128</sup>

# Trajectories of Radicalization Inside the United States

	Pre-Radicalization	Self-Identification	Indoctrination	Jihadization
<p><b>LACKAWANA</b></p> <p>Mukhtar Al-Bakri Sahim Alwan Faysal Galab Shafal Mosed Yasein Taher Kamal Derwish Yanya Goba Jaber Elbaneh</p>	<p>American-born of Yemeni descent Counselor at job training facility High school soccer star; gambler Worked at collection agency High school soccer co-captain Buffalo-born; moved to Yemen/Saudi Bronx-born; moved to Yemen 37 year-old taxi driver</p>	<p>Attends Derwish sessions at apartment Seeks more knowledge of Islam Attends Derwish sessions at apartment Attends Derwish sessions at apartment Attends Derwish sessions at apartment Returns to Lackawana via Yemen 1998 Moves in with Derwish 1998-99 Attends Derwish sessions at apartment</p>	<p>Decides to participate in trip to Afghan Interested in trip as religious quest Decides to participate in trip to Afghan Decides to participate in trip to Afghan Decides to participate in trip to Afghan Discusses religious pilgrimage 2000 Becomes #2 in group Decides to participate in trip to Afghan</p>	<p>Cluster travels to Afghanistan spring 2001; Some seek to leave AQ camps early- return to U.S. summer 2001; Elbaneh arrested in Yemen</p>
<p><b>NORTHERN VIRGINIA</b></p> <p>Ali al-Tamimi Randall Royer Yong Ki Kwon Masoud Khan Seitullah Chapman Hamamad Raheem</p>	<p>DC- born; PhD biology at GMU St. Louis born; American U. drop-out South Korean born; converted 1997 U.S.-born; raised in Pakistan/Saudi Former U.S. Marine; college grad Served U.S. Army; fought Gulf War</p>	<p>Frequent lecturer at Dar al-Aqram Bosnia vet; spokesman for CAIR 1994 Travels to Pakistan following conversion Works as kitchen designer in Maryland Converts after marrying 2nd wife Converts; earns engineering degree-VA</p>	<p>Private discussions on jihad 2000 Travels to Let camp in Pakistan 2000 Attends private meetings 2002 Trains with firearm in PA-mid 2000 Serves with Let in Pakistan 9/01 Military tactics paintball training 3/00</p>	<p>Cluster decides to join jihad 9/15/01; Members travel to Pakistan to Let camps 9/20/01; Some train in U.S.</p>
<p><b>PORTLAND</b></p> <p>Maher Awash Jeffery Battle Habis al-Saoud Parice Ford Ahmed Bial</p>	<p>Former Intel software engineer Cosmetics rep; washed out of military Jordanian veteran of Afghan jihad Majorled in Chinese -Portland State U Ran small landscaping business</p>	<p>Father dies 2000; devout after haj 2001 Meets Hawash via Salafi mosque 2001 Amir of cluster at Salafi mosque 2001 Model intern Portland City Hall 1998-9 Regular at Masjid as-Saber (Salafi)</p>	<p>Visited by al-Saoud for private talks Organizes martial arts, military training Preaches martyrdom benefits 2000-1 Participates in shooting practice 9/01 Cluster adopts name-Squad of Death</p>	<p>Al-Saoud suggests joining Taliban 9/01 Entire cluster leaves for Pakistan via China 10/01</p>
<p><b>NEW YORK</b></p> <p>Syed Hashmi Muhammad Babar</p>	<p>Brooklyn College political science Queens raised -St. Johns U drop-out</p>	<p>Graduates; Al Muhajiroun recruiter 2003 Recruited into Al Muhajiroun</p>	<p>Links with UK extremists; London plot Traveled - Pakistan to provide aid to AQ</p>	<p>Arrested 2006 Arrested 2004</p>
<p><b>NEW YORK Herald Square</b></p> <p>Shahawar Siraj James Eishafay</p>	<p>Illegal Pakistani immigrant Egyptian-Irish from Staten Island</p>	<p>Works at Islamic bookstore -Brooklyn Begins to gravitate to Siraj 2003-04</p>	<p>Begins to discuss taking action 2003 More time spent with Siraj and informant</p>	<p>Maps, Recon 34th subway station; Arrested August 04</p>

## SEPTEMBER 11 REVISITED

**HAMBURG (September 11, 2001 Attack).** On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen terrorists hijacked four commercial passenger jet airliners. Each team of hijackers included a trained pilot. The hijackers intentionally crashed two of the airliners into the World Trade Center in New York City, resulting in the collapse of both buildings, the death of nearly 3,000 people and irreparable damage to nearby buildings as well as to the families of those who were killed and injured. The hijackers crashed a third plane into the Pentagon near Washington, D.C. Passengers and members of the flight crew of a fourth aircraft attempted to retake control of their plane from the hijackers; that plane crashed into a field near the town of Shanksville in rural Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

The 9/11 hijackers were comprised of two different groups of young Middle Eastern males. One group, the leaders/pilots, had spent considerable time in the West, specifically in Hamburg, Germany, while the others, primarily the Saudis, had spent their formative years in the Middle East. The radicalization of the leaders/pilots of the 9/11 hijackers occurred primarily in Hamburg, Germany and followed almost the same exact trajectory that young Westernized men in Madrid, Amsterdam, London, Sydney/Melbourne and Toronto would ultimately follow.

A review of some of the lives and experiences of the 9/11 hijackers shows glaring similarities to the lives and circumstances of those involved in previously discussed case studies.

### STAGE 1: PRE-RADICALIZATION

- **The Environment.** In the 1990's, the Arab community in Hamburg was relatively small—small enough where people knew each other and each other's religious inclinations. The younger, more Salafi-minded Arab Muslims, usually between the ages of 16-30, did not have their own group or clique; rather they were distributed among the various informal groups—some religious, some not.<sup>129</sup>
- **The Candidates.** The members of the Hamburg cell were part of a larger and more dynamic group of like-minded individuals. Primarily these were students from the Middle East, not very religious, apolitical, and with unremarkable backgrounds. Most were fluent in English, Western-educated, and accustomed to the Western lifestyle. Few, if any, had ever held a firearm prior to receiving training in al-Qaeda camps.
  - Mohammed Atta began his transformation as an accomplished Egyptian student in architectural design, while studying in Germany in 1992. He was raised in a strict but relatively secular, middle-class family.
  - Marwan al-Shehhi was a former UAE soldier who had qualified for a scholarship to study in Germany in 1998. He was a quiet man who always wore western clothes.
  - Ziad Jarrah, a Lebanese, was raised in a wealthy family that lived a secular lifestyle. Jarrah, who was pursuing a technical degree, dated a Turkish dental student while studying in Germany. Jarrah was described as the

- “playboy” of the group. He frequented popular discos and drank beer with his classmates.
- Ramzi bin al-Shibh was Yemeni and came from a moderately religious family and he was familiar with the Quran. From 1987-1995, he worked as a clerk for the International Bank of Yemen. He applied for asylum in Germany using false documentation and moved to Hamburg where he met Atta in 1995.<sup>130</sup>
  - Zakariya Essabar was a Moroccan citizen who moved to Germany in 1997 and to Hamburg in 1998. He studied medical technology and met bin al-Shibh through the mosque.
  - Said Bahaji was born in Germany but raised in Morocco. He attended the Technical University of Hamburg-Harburg (TUHH) in 1996 in pursuit of a career as an electrical engineer. He had no formal Islamic education and was known to be a fan of video games and Formula One Racing.
  - Mounir Motassadeq, a Moroccan who came to Hamburg in 1995 to study electrical engineering at TUHH.<sup>131</sup>

## STAGE 2: SELF-IDENTIFICATION

- **Gravitating to Salafi Islam.** As one of the few gathering places for Middle Eastern Muslim students in Hamburg, the Al Quds Mosque in Hamburg became the ideological incubator for the Hamburg cell. In fact, many of the 9/11 terrorists met in the mosque and galvanized the relationship that ultimately formed the Hamburg cell.
  - Mohammed Atta arrived in Hamburg seeking to be a successful architectural designer. While he had numerous acquaintances, his introverted and dour personality closed him off from much of German culture and society. As his isolation from his friends and family in Egypt grew, a newly-found reliance on religion took hold. Atta began praying five times a day, strictly observing a halal diet, and avoiding normal student social events like clubs and sporting events.<sup>132</sup>
    - Following a trip to Egypt and his return from hajj in 1995, Atta became returned even more reserved, intolerant, and intense in his observance of sharia. He began to grow a beard and spent increasing amounts of time at the mosque.<sup>133</sup>
  - Jarrah’s religious transformation followed his 1996 trip to visit his family in Lebanon during holiday break.
    - It is unclear what occurred there, but Jarrah returned more devout, causing friction with his secular girlfriend in Germany. He began to chastise her for not being sufficiently devout.<sup>134</sup>
    - By 1998, Jarrah began spending time at the Al Quds mosque with bin al-Shibh and eventually Atta.<sup>135</sup>

- The death of Marwan al-Shehi's father may have been the catalyst for his transformation. Soon after his father passed, he became more pronounced in his faith and stopped wearing Western clothes. In early 1998, he transferred to school in Hamburg and soon joined Atta's religious study group.<sup>136</sup>
- **The Salafi Mosque.** Al Quds Mosque served as the initial radicalization venue for the members of the Hamburg cell. Founded by Moroccans, but with an ethnically diverse congregation, the Al Quds mosque was known for its harsh jihadi-Salafi rhetoric. The mosque would regularly sponsor radical imams, who encouraged killing of unbelievers, martyrdom and jihad.
  - By 1996, Atta had developed a circle of acquaintances and was also led many of the student religious study groups.
  - As members of these different study groups, Atta met both Mounir Motassadeq, the Moroccan electrical engineering student and Ramzi bin al-Shibh.
  - Over time, Atta and bin al-Shibh become religious mentors for the study groups—accelerating the proliferation of the Salafist message for other students, who were seeking identity through religion to include Zakariya Essabar, Said Bahaji and Mounir Motassadeq.
    - The Hamburg cell formed as these men spent countless hours thinking, talking, reading and debating this interpretation of Islam.<sup>137</sup>

### STAGE 3: INDOCTRINATION

- **Withdrawing from the Mosque.** In 1998, as the Hamburg cell became further radicalized, the group moved their meetings from the mosque into both a bookstore near the mosque and Atta's residence—an apartment with which he shared with al-Shehi, bin al-Shibh and others.
  - A year later, Atta and some of his friends moved to another apartment, which they named "Bait al-Ansar" or The House of the Supporters of the Prophet. The group, along with some others, held weekly meetings at the residence with a focus on jihad<sup>138</sup>
- **Politicization of Beliefs.** Mohammed Haydar Zammar, an auto mechanic and one of the members of the Hamburg jihadi-Salafi community, was instrumental in advancing the group's objective towards political activism. He was the Hamburg group's "spiritual sanctioner". As a jihadi veteran who had fought in Afghanistan and Bosnia, the 300-pound, Syrian-born Zammar used his bona fides as a mujahedeen to support the legitimacy of jihad and the necessity for it in response to the conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya.



Additionally, Atta was already studying other terrorist groups with political agendas.

- Atta had a home page on the university's server and with two clicks of the mouse, he was able to access the home page for Hamas, the Palestinian terrorist group.<sup>139</sup>

#### **STAGE 4: JIHADIZATION.**

Although the concept for the September 11 plot was already in the planning stages of al-Qaeda in 1996, it wasn't until 1999 that the critical piece to conducting the attack arrived on bin Ladin's doorstep: the first four members of the Hamburg cell--fluent in English, Western-educated, and accustomed to Western culture and lifestyle. Upon having accepted jihad as a means to an end while in Hamburg, Mohammed Atta, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Marwan al-Shehi and Ziad Jarrah departed Germany for jihad in Afghanistan.

In years following September 11, 2001, both the Al-Muhajiroun Two and Mohammed Siddique Khan, the leader of the 7/7 London bombers, among others, would follow Atta and the Westernized 9/11 hijackers' footsteps, coming to Afghanistan/Pakistan with the intention to conduct jihad as mujahedeen in the region, but instead be re-directed to launch a terrorist attack in the West.

- **Accepting Jihad/Decision to Commit Jihad.** According to his former students, at a certain point, Mohammed Atta began to both believe and preach that the Quran provided the answer and necessity of jihad – to get rid of the Jews and Americans.<sup>140</sup> He used his religious study sessions to further push the group towards a similar acceptance of jihad.

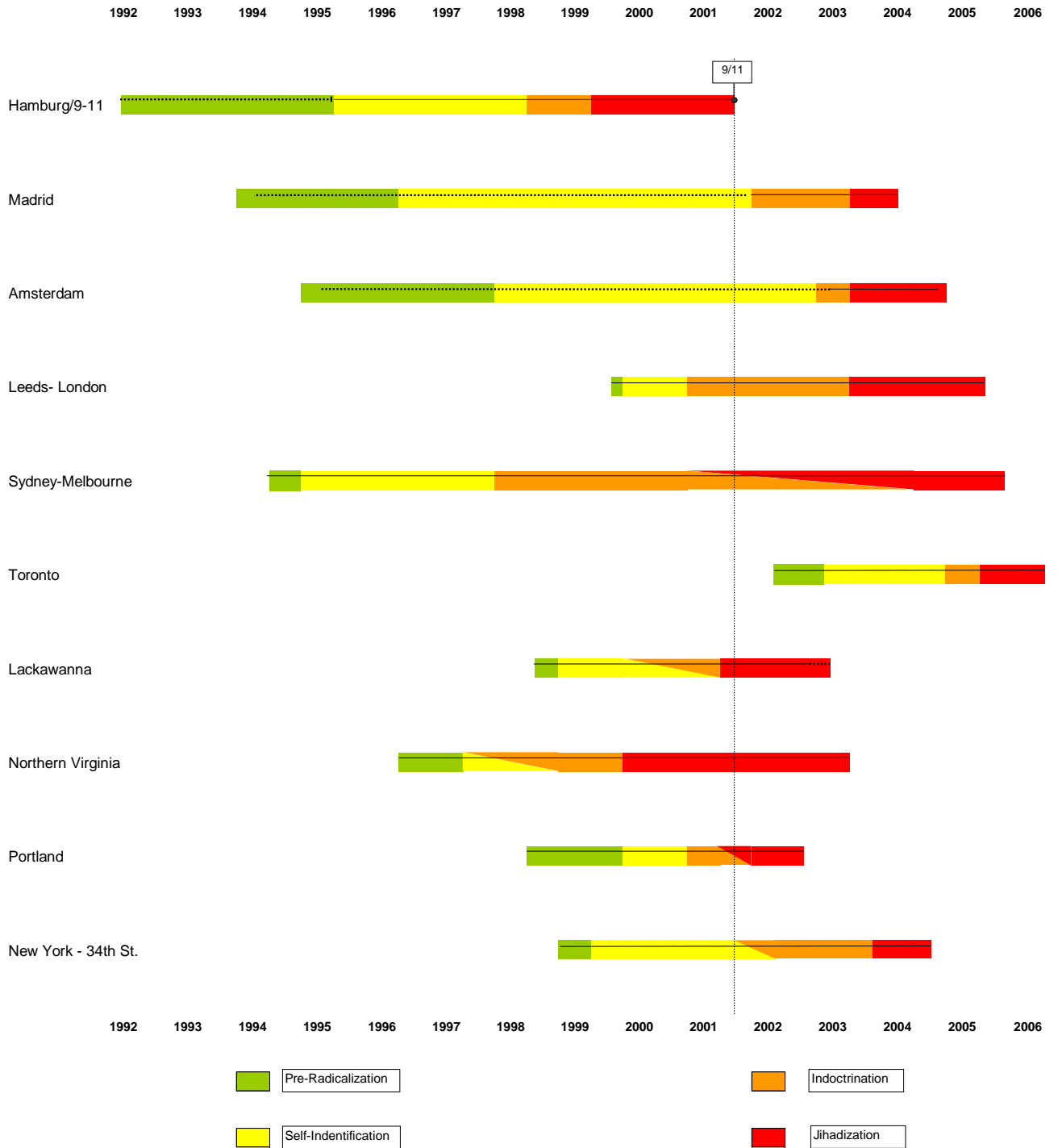
By the end of 1999, the group's adoption and indoctrination into jihadi ideology became complete. Discussions shifted from debates on whether or not jihad was legitimate or not to where and how should they become jihadists. The group now wanted to fight; it just had to choose the war.

- Originally, the group had planned to go to Chechnya to fight the Russians. Russian atrocities against Muslims in Chechnya had motivated them to join the jihad. However, as a result of a chance meeting on a bus, they were discouraged from going to Grozny and instead decided to go to Afghanistan for training.
  - Mohammed Zammar, the auto mechanic and former mujahedeen, played an important role in helping them realizing their goal of participating in jihad as he ran a "travel agency" for jihadists seeking to go to Afghanistan.<sup>141</sup>
  - In November of 1999, Atta, al-Shibh, al-Shehi and Jarrah departed Germany for jihad training in Afghanistan. Following a route designed by Zammar, at least two flew via Turkish airways to Karachi, Pakistan via Istanbul, Turkey. From there it was on to Kandahar, Afghanistan.<sup>142</sup>

- **Training/Preparation.** Once in Afghanistan, Atta and company were approached by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and recruited for the September 11 plot. There they met other al-Qaeda-trained conspirators Hani Hanjour, Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi.
  - Upon Atta and his three fellow compatriots' return to Germany, in the spring of 2000, another four from the Hamburg cell--Abdelghani Mzoudi, Mounir Motassadeq, Zakariya Essabar, and Said Bahaji—left Germany to train in Afghanistan.<sup>143</sup>
- **Attack Planning.** Although the targets and mode of attack had already been determined by al-Qaeda, upon his arrival in the United States Mohammad Atta planned every phase of the September 11 operation, including designing the teams and assigning roles for all four groups of hijackers, arranging the flight training, reconnoitering the airplanes and the flights and lastly, choosing the date.
  - Atta was not a veteran mujahedeen, nor was he an experienced or accomplished terrorist. Yet, the September 11 plot's success was enabled by an intelligent and disciplined individual who became radicalized while in a Western country, and "joined" al Qaeda (not recruited from above) while seeking an opportunity to fight in Chechnya. He took on the role of "operational leader" for this plot.
- **The Result.** On the morning of September 11, 2001 the nineteen hijackers carried out their devastating attack on the United States.

Without a group of radicalized jihadists, who had been homegrown in the West to lead this plot, the chances of the 9/11 being a success would have been reduced considerably. The Hamburg group underwent a process of homegrown radicalization that matched almost exactly those of the Madrid, Amsterdam, London, Sydney/Melbourne and Toronto clusters. The primary difference between the 9/11 hijackers and the 7/7 bombers was that when the members of the Hamburg cluster came to Afghanistan in search of becoming mujahedeen, they were recruited for a plot against a third country -- the U.S.-- and not redirected to conduct jihad against their place of residence in the West, as was Mohammed Siddique Khan -- against the U.K.

# RADICALIZATION TIMELINE



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## FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

### ***FINDINGS***

- Al-Qaeda has provided the inspiration for homegrown radicalization and terrorism; direct command and control by al-Qaeda has been the exception, rather than the rule among the case studies reviewed in this study.
  - The four stages of the radicalization process, each with its distinct set of indicators and signatures, are clearly evident in each of the nearly one dozen terrorist-related case studies reviewed in this report.
    - In spite of the differences in both circumstances and environment in each of the cases, there is a remarkable consistency in the behaviors and trajectory of each of the plots across all the stages.
    - This consistency provides a tool for predictability.
  - The trans-national phenomenon of radicalization in the West is largely a function of the people and the environment they live in. Much different from the Israeli-Palestinian equation, the transformation of a Western-based individual to a terrorist is not triggered by oppression, suffering, revenge, or desperation. Rather, it is a phenomenon that occurs because the individual is looking for an identity and a cause and unfortunately, often finds them in the extremist Islam.
  - There is no useful profile to assist law enforcement or intelligence to predict who will follow this trajectory of radicalization. Rather, the individuals who take this course begin as “unremarkable” from various walks of life.
  - Europe’s failure to integrate the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of its immigrants into society, both economically and socially, has left many young Muslims torn between the secular West and their religious heritage. This inner conflict makes them especially vulnerable to extremism—the radical views, philosophy, and rhetoric that is highly advertised and becoming more and more fashionable among young Muslims in the West.
  - Muslims in the U.S. are more resistant, but not immune to the radical message.
    - Despite the economic opportunities in the United States, the powerful gravitational pull of individuals’ religious roots and identity sometimes supersedes the assimilating nature of American society which includes pursuit of a professional career, financial stability and material comforts.
  - The jihadist ideology combines the extreme and minority interpretation [jihadi-Salafi] of Islam with an activist-like commitment or responsibility to solve global political grievances through violence. Ultimately, the jihadist envisions a world in which jihadi-Salafi Islam is dominant and is the basis of government.
    - This ideology is proliferating in Western democracies at a logarithmic rate. The Internet, certain Salafi-based NGO’s, extremist sermons /study groups,
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Salafi literature, jihadi videotapes, extremist-sponsored trips to radical madrassas and militant training camps abroad have served as “extremist incubators” for young, susceptible Muslims -- especially ones living in diaspora communities in the West.

- The Internet is a driver and enabler for the process of radicalization
    - In the Self-Identification phase, the Internet provides the wandering mind of the conflicted young Muslim or potential convert with direct access to unfiltered radical and extremist ideology.
      - It also serves as an anonymous virtual meeting place—a place where virtual groups of like-minded and conflicted individuals can meet, form virtual relationships and discuss and share the Salafi-jihadist message they have encountered.
    - During the Indoctrination phase, when individuals adopt this virulent ideology, they begin interpreting the world from this newly-formed context. Cloaked with a veil of objectivity, the Internet allows the aspiring jihadist to view the world and global conflicts through this extremist lens, further reinforcing the objectives and political arguments of the jihadi-Salafi agenda.
    - In the Jihadization phase, when an individual commits to jihad, the Internet serves as an enabler—providing broad access to an array of information on targets, their vulnerabilities and the design of weapons.
  - Individuals generally appear to begin the radicalization process on their own. Invariably, as they progress through the stages of radicalization they seek like-minded individuals. This leads to the creation of groups or clusters. These clusters appear almost essential to progressing to the Jihadization stage—the critical stage that leads to a terrorist act.
    - “Group think” is one of the most powerful catalysts for leading a group to actually committing a terrorist act. It acts as a force-multiplier for radical thought while creating a competitive environment amongst the group members for being the most radical.
  - Although there are many groups or clusters of individuals that are on the path of radicalization, each group needs certain archetypes to evolve from just being a “bunch of guys” to an operational terrorist cell. All eleven case studies had:
    - A “spiritual sanctioner” who provides the justification for jihad—a justification that is especially essential for the suicide terrorist. In some cases the sanctioner was the nucleus around which the cluster formed.
    - An “operational leader” who is essential as the group decides to conduct a terrorist act--organizing, controlling and keeping the group focused and its motivation high.
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- The full radicalization of a Western individual, or groups of individuals, does not always result in the committing of a terrorist act in the West. Many fully-radicalized individuals have first looked to conduct jihad by becoming mujahedeen and fighting in conflicts overseas.
    - The image of the heroic, holy warrior or “mujahedeen” has been widely marketed on the Internet as well as in jihadi tapes and videos. This image continues to resonate among young, especially Muslim, men 15-35 years-old—men who are most vulnerable to visions of honor, bravery and sacrifice for what is perceived as a noble cause.
    - Among those individuals who travel abroad in search of jihad, some end up as mujahedeen and fight in foreign lands; some are re-directed to commit acts in the West, often in their country of origin, while others give up and return home because they can’t endure the training or have a change of heart.
    - For those groups of homegrown radicalized individuals who do not seek jihad abroad, the dedication and commitment of their leader to jihad is often the main factor in determining whether the group will commit a terrorist act, or not.
  - Although the 9/11 attack, with its overseas origins, is more of an exception in terms of how terrorist plots have been launched since the destruction of the Twin Towers, it has probably been the most important factor in proliferating the process of radicalization, especially in the West. More importantly, 9/11 established the current trend of committing an act in the name of global jihad as a natural culmination of full radicalization and the ultimate responsibility for the fully radicalized jihadist.
    - Prior to 9/11, the entire radicalization process moved at a much slower rate. There was no direct link to jihad, other than to become a mujahedeen. Aspiring jihadists would travel to Afghanistan without any idea that they could become actual terrorists. Now, there is no longer any illusion as to what the adoption of jihadi-Salafi ideology means.
    - The radicalization process is accelerating in terms of how long it takes and the individuals are continuing to get younger. Moreover, with the higher risks associated with heading down this pathway, individuals will seek to conceal their actions earlier, making intelligence and law enforcement’s job even more difficult.
  - It is useful to think of the radicalization process in terms of a funnel. Entering the process does not mean one will progress through all four stages and become a terrorist. However, it also does not mean that if one does not become a terrorist, he or she is no longer a threat. Individuals who have been radicalized but are not jihadists may serve as mentors and agents of influence to those who might become the terrorists of tomorrow.
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- The subtle and non-criminal nature of the behaviors involved in the process of radicalization makes it difficult to identify or even monitor from a law enforcement standpoint. Taken in isolation, individual behaviors can be seen as innocuous; however, when seen as part of the continuum of the radicalization process, their significance becomes more important. Considering the sequencing of these behaviors and the need to identify those entering this process at the earliest possible stage makes intelligence the critical tool in helping to thwart an attack or even prevent the planning of future plots.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The global jihadi-Salafi movement poses a significant challenge to law enforcement and intelligence since the radicalization phenomenon that drives it is spontaneous, indiscriminate, and its indicators are subtle. Identifying whether an individual is being radicalized is hard to detect, especially in the early stages.

- The individuals are not on the law enforcement radar. Most have never been arrested or involved in any kind of legal trouble. Other than some commonalities in age and religion, individuals undergoing radicalization appear as “ordinary” citizens, who look, act, talk, and walk like everyone around them. In fact, in the United Kingdom, it is precisely those “ordinary” middle class university students who are sought after by local extremists because they are “clean skins”.
- In the early stages of their radicalization, these individuals rarely travel, are not participating in any kind of militant activity, yet they are slowly building the mindset, intention, and commitment to conduct jihad.

As evidenced by all eleven case studies these groups, or clusters of extremists:

- Act autonomously, can radicalize quickly, and often are made up of individuals, who on the surface, appear to be well-integrated into society.
- Are not “name brand” terrorists or part of any known terrorist group. For the most part, they have little or no links to known militant groups or actors. Rather they are like-minded individuals who spend time together in clusters organized, originally, by previously established social network links.
- Are not crime syndicates and therefore, applying organized crime strategies will fail.

The challenge to intelligence and law enforcement agencies in the West in general, and the United States in particular, is how to identify, pre-empt and thus prevent homegrown terrorist attacks given the non-criminal element of its indicators, the high growth rate of the process that underpins it and the increasing numbers of its citizens that are exposed to it.

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Salafi** – From the word "Salaf" which is short for "Salaf as-Salih" meaning (righteous) predecessors or (pious) ancestors

Salafi is a generic term, depicting a Sunni revivalist school of thought that takes the pious ancestors of the early period of early Islam as exemplary models. Consequently, Salafis seek to purge Islam of all outside influences, starting with the cultures and traditions of contemporary Muslim societies, and restore it to that of an imagined 7<sup>th</sup> century utopia (the Caliphate). The Salafi interpretation of Islam seeks a "pure" society that applies the Quran literally and adheres to the social practices and Islamic law (sharia) that prevailed at the time of the prophet Muhammad in the 7<sup>th</sup> century in Arabia.

**jihadi-Salafi** – A militant interpretation of the Salafi school of thought that identifies violent jihad as the means to establish and revive the Caliphate. Militant jihad is seen not as an option, but as a personal obligation. This obligation is elevated above other moral standards, which may be abrogated.

**Mujahedeen** – holy warriors who fight infidels as a religious duty

**Takfir** – the practice of declaring that an individual, or a group previously considered Muslims, are in fact kaffir(s) (non-believers in God), an act of accusing others of disbelief, used in the context of branding certain persons or whole communities as unbelievers to religiously justify jihad against them.



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