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Lone Wolf Islamic Terrorism: Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad (Carlos Bledsoe) Case Study

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This article is a detailed case study examining Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad (born Carlos Bledsoe), a lone wolf jihadist who carried out a fatal shooting at a joint Army-Navy recruiting center in Little Rock, Arkansas, on June 1, 2009. The article explores his early life, including involvement in violent and criminal activities that caused Muhammad to get into trouble with authorities, after which he decided to explore religion as an alternative that could keep him out of trouble. Muhammad found that he was attracted to the Islamic faith, and converted at the age of nineteen. The article explores Muhammad's subsequent turn toward Salafism, and chronicles his increasing extremism with reference to academic debates about the concept of radicalization and the role of religious ideas. Finally, the article explains Muhammad's attack on the recruiting center, and the manner in which he was able to continue his jihad even while imprisoned.

Keywords Al Qaeda, Carlos Bledsoe, jihadism, lone wolf terrorism, radicalization, Salafism, Yemen

June 1, 2009 was a Monday. Shortly after 10:00 a.m. that morning, Private William Long, 24, and Private Quinton Ezeagwula, 18, stood outside the joint Army-Navy recruiting center in northwestern Little Rock, Arkansas, taking a smoke break. The two young men, who were working at their hometown recruiting center before moving on to their first duty station, spoke of where that first assignment would take them. Long mentioned that he would be leaving for Korea the following Monday; Ezeagwula was bound for Hawaii a day earlier, on Sunday.¹ As they made conversation, a black Ford Sport Trac sport utility vehicle pulled around from the commercial parking lot adjacent to the recruiting station.

The SUV's window rolled down. Ezeagwula thought he heard the driver say something, so he turned and looked toward the driver, a black male in his mid-twenties. Almost immediately, the driver—Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, formerly known as Carlos Bledsoe—began firing at both of them with a SKS

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Figure 1. Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad at the time of his arrest (color figure available online).

semi-automatic rifle. Long was hit, and collapsed immediately. He would be declared dead upon arrival at the hospital. Ezeagwula was hit in the back and torso, and dropped to his knees. He began to crawl back toward the recruiting station, trying to find shelter from the gunfire.² Muhammad continued firing through the recruiting station's window, hoping to hit the fifteen Army and civilian personnel who remained inside.³ The SUV then drove off.

Though this initially appeared to be a routine drive-by shooting, Muhammad made his motivations clear after his apprehension by Little Rock police. In his initial discussion with detectives in the homicide interview room, Muhammad said that he was a practicing Muslim, and was motivated to carry out the shooting by the injustices of U.S. foreign policy. It soon became obvious that the shooting had been an act of lone wolf Islamic terrorism, one of only two fatal lone wolf attacks inspired by Salafi-jihadi ideology since 9/11 (that term will be defined subsequently, just as evidence of his Salafi-jihadi beliefs will be provided later in this article).⁴ The U.S. has also seen other fatal attacks that might be described as lone wolf Islamic terrorism—Hesham Mohamed Hadayet's 2002 attack on the El Al ticket counter at the Los Angeles International Airport and Naveed Haq's 2006 shooting at the Seattle Jewish Federation—but the attackers in these other cases do not appear to have been motivated by Salafi-jihadi ideology.

The Muhammad case, which this article examines in detail, illustrates a number of pertinent points about lone wolf Islamic terrorism. The first is the role of religious ideology in individuals' radicalization. Though some scholars argue that religious belief is not a significant factor in radicalizing people toward jihadi violence,⁵ certain behavioral patterns suggestive of religious motivation have emerged in a broad cross-section of jihadi homegrown terrorism cases, and Muhammad's radicalization fits into this pattern. However, there is a question of whether this new ideology played a causal role in his eventual turn to violence, or whether Muhammad brought violent tendencies with him when he converted to Islam.

Second, while this is not necessarily typical of incarcerated terrorists in general, Muhammad illustrates the ability of a lone wolf terrorist to continue his war even

while imprisoned. The amount of damage he did while in jail—including stabbing one guard and threatening another, stabbing an inmate, and constantly defacing his cell—was noteworthy by any measure for the facility in which he was held. In addition, he was even able to win a convert to his cause while imprisoned.

Third, this incident illustrates how difficult it is to protect against lone wolf terrorist attacks in an open and free society such as the United States. The lone wolf attacker simply enjoys too many targets of opportunity for them all to be secured. Further, because of robust constitutional protections—something we as a society do not want to change—it is difficult (though not impossible) to take preventive action against a potential attacker like Muhammad even if authorities have strong information that he has been radicalized and poses a danger of undertaking violence. In this case, Muhammad had already come across the FBI's radar, yet if they had moved to arrest him earlier, federal authorities likely would have lacked a compelling criminal case.

Finally, though it is difficult to prevent attacks like this, the Muhammad case shows why lone wolf Islamic terrorist attacks have had an extremely limited impact. Al Qaeda's propaganda has frequently encouraged Muslims living in the West to carry out attacks on their own,⁶ and al Qaeda can legitimately boast one lone wolf attacker who both did significant damage and also captured the nation's attention (Fort Hood shooter Nidal Hasan). But thus far, lone wolf terrorists have not been the asset that al Qaeda and other jihadis would like them to be.

I conducted field research in Little Rock, Arkansas, for this article. Before traveling there, I read all available court documents and media reporting related to Muhammad's attack, making special note of figures who seemingly had special insight into him and the attack in order to interview them during the field research, and interviewed Muhammad's father (Melvin Bledsoe) by telephone. In Little Rock, the people I interviewed included prosecutor Larry Jegley; Lt. Carl Minden of the Pulaski County detention facility where Muhammad was held; guards at that facility who worked there during Muhammad's incarceration; and Jim Hensley, an attorney who was part of the defense team. I also visited the detention facility itself, where I was provided access to the administrative segregation wing where Muhammad had been held, and was able to gain access to the files that the prosecution used in this case.

Muhammad's Early Life and Conversion

Abdulahkim Mujahid Muhammad was born as Carlos Bledsoe on July 9, 1985, and grew up in Memphis, Tennessee.⁷ His family operated a tour company, Twin City Tours, and Muhammad began to assist the family business when he was eight years old. He would interact enthusiastically with customers. Muhammad's father, Melvin Bledsoe, explained that the company was a big part of Muhammad's upbringing. "He grew up in the business," Bledsoe told me. "He came to work in the summers, after school was out."⁸

Bledsoe described his son as a "fun kid" while growing up. Bledsoe explained, "He loved to have fun, he was a practical joker, he loved high fashion clothes, rap music, girls. Typical young boy." The family had a couple of dogs as pets during Muhammad's youth: it had an American Eskimo up until he was twelve, but after it was killed by a neighbor's dog, the family bought a golden retriever. The American Eskimo was one of the memories that neighbor Curnelia Crutchfield emphasized

after news of Muhammad's shooting became public, recalling that he "seemed like he was a good kid. He was a happy-go-lucky kid. I remember he had a white dog and they were the best of friends."⁹

Muhammad graduated from high school in 2003 and went to college at Tennessee State University in Nashville. Given his involvement in the family business, he wanted to get a degree in business administration, and eventually run the tour company. Melvin Bledsoe and his wife hoped that their son could thus give them an early retirement.¹⁰

Muhammad's recollections of his childhood are less positive than those of his father and the neighbors who described him to the media. Speaking to a psychologist with the Arkansas Department of Human Services before his trial, Muhammad recalled that he was suspended from school several times for fighting, and characterized himself as having been "a gang member."¹¹ (The psychologist's conclusions will be discussed later in this article.) Some of the people I interviewed in the course of my research were dismissive of the claim that he had been in a gang while growing up. However, records from the Shelby County, Tennessee Sheriff's Office suggest that Muhammad's claim may be more than simply an exaggerated view of his pre-Islamic past. A police report from February 2002 describes an incident in which Muhammad was punched in the face by a man named Derrick Moore, who claimed that Muhammad had threatened him. The report concludes by noting that Muhammad and Moore had in the past been "affiliated" with a gang called the Vice Lords.¹²

Muhammad was involved in a couple of other violent incidents before leaving for college. In August 2002, he entered a barbershop and told a man named Derrick Cathey to "step outside so that they could fight."¹³ Cathey refused, and barbershop employees told Muhammad to leave. He later returned with two other men, and a knife was pulled during the course of the ensuing altercation. And in May 2003, Muhammad's car was struck by another driver. Muhammad jumped out of his car, ran to the other driver's vehicle, and started hitting the rear passenger window with chrome-plated brass knuckles. Muhammad yelled, "Bitch I'm gonna kill you, get out, I'm going to kill you when I get your address."¹⁴ Officers who arrived on the scene found the brass knuckles in Muhammad's left rear pocket during a pat-down.

This involvement with violence as a teenager does not, of course, mean that Muhammad would inevitably have committed murder absent his encounters with Islamic extremism. His defense lawyer, Jim Hensley, told me that if Muhammad hadn't been captured by this fringe ideology, "I don't think he ever would have murdered anybody."¹⁵ (Muhammad fired Hensley from the case before trial, but Hensley continued to serve as an informal consultant to Muhammad's father even after being forced out.) On the other hand, prosecutor Larry Jegley, who has tried a large number of murder cases, thought that Muhammad might have ended up a killer even without drifting into Islamic radicalism. "It's possible," Jegley said, that he might not have killed absent becoming radicalized. But on the other hand, "he also could have hooked up with the Crips or the Bloods."¹⁶ Jegley did note, however, that Muhammad had every opportunity to not go down the wrong path, in that he was blessed with a father who had "pulled himself up by his bootstraps, worked hard, took chances, and was part of the American dream. His family members all wanted desperately for him to share in that."¹⁷ Thus, Jegley said, "I'm not going to argue with anybody who says the radical Muslim stuff he was exposed to could have been an influence."¹⁸

So Muhammad had early brushes with the law. But one criminal incident, occurring in Knoxville, Tennessee, in early 2004, would indelibly change Muhammad's life. Around 9:00 p.m. on the evening of February 21, Knoxville police officer Michael Harper pulled over a blue Mazda.¹⁹ A man who had been sitting in the car's front seat fled, and the officer found Muhammad in the back seat. There were weapons in the car, including a SKS assault rifle and a single-shot shotgun, which Muhammad told the officer he had been trying to sell to the man who fled for \$100. A search accompanying the arrest turned up a bag of marijuana in Muhammad's front left pants pocket, and he was charged with unlawful possession of a weapon and drug possession.

Muhammad could have faced up to fourteen years of imprisonment for this offense, which "spooked" him.²⁰ The family hired a lawyer, who argued that he was just a college student who was experimenting.²¹ The prosecutors gave Muhammad a plea deal that included a year's probation, but one condition was that if he got into further criminal trouble, he would have to serve the full fourteen-year sentence.

The experience frightened Muhammad, seemingly instilling in him the idea that he had to show he could do better. He became interested in religion, and would later provide an account of this exploration to journalist Kristina Goetz of Memphis's largest daily newspaper, *The Commercial Appeal*, to whom he wrote from jail.²² Muhammad told her that he first looked into Christianity, the faith in which he had been raised, but no longer believed in it. He found the doctrine of the Trinity "not comprehensible," telling Goetz: "1 + 1 + 1 = 1. That's wasn't clicking to me."²³ (This article retains Muhammad's original spelling and grammar, which is idiosyncratic, when quoting from his writings.)

Thereafter, Muhammad decided to study Judaism, saying that he "was attracted to the belief of monotheism."²⁴ However, he claimed that he was turned away from a couple of orthodox synagogues because he was black. Muhammad wrote of Judaism: "That religion seem to me like too much of racial pride and not for other people. It seem to be all about 'the Jews' or 'Children of Israel.'"²⁵

Then Muhammad began to explore Islam, having known Muslims while growing up. He visited a mosque in Nashville, and reported being "drawn and amazed" by *salah*, the congregational prayer in which about 75 people participated. He attempted to join in the prayer, but it was obvious to the others that Muhammad was unfamiliar with the sequence of standing, bowing, and prostration. So after *salah* was done, one of the congregants asked Muhammad how long he had been Muslim, and he said that he wasn't—that he was just interested in the faith.

Muhammad reported that the congregation responded enthusiastically, with shouts of *Allahu Akbar!* permeating the room. The congregants, he wrote, "embraced me like I was a long loss brother."²⁶ The congregant who had asked Muhammad how long he had been Muslim spoke to him about the fundamentals of the faith, and Muhammad felt attracted to its "pure monotheism, no 1 + 1 + 1 = 1."²⁷ Muhammad was given a translation of the Qur'an, and other books. "I believed in it wholeheartedly," Muhammad wrote, "and decided to become a Muslim."²⁸

Muhammad took his *shahadah*, or declaration of faith, at a mosque in Memphis in 2004, at the age of nineteen.

Muhammad's Radicalization

By his own explanation, Muhammad ascribed to an interpretation of Islam at the time of the shooting that is best labeled *Salafi-jihadi*. By *Salafi*, I mean that he

adhered to an austere religious methodology that seeks to re-create Islam as it was supposedly practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and the first three generations of Muslims. The term *jihadi* refers to the belief that violence should be undertaken in purifying Islam in this manner. Although the term *jihadi* is controversial among terrorism researchers, in large part because it is derived from the religious term *jihad*, it has the benefit of being an organic term, the way those within the movement refer to themselves. Moreover, as the noted academic Jarret Brachman writes, this label has “been validated as the least worst option across the Arabic-speaking world,” including being used in Arabic-language print and broadcast media.²⁹

As previously mentioned, the concept of *radicalization* is hotly debated amongst researchers, especially with respect to the role of religious ideas. It should be clear at the outset that saying religion played a role in an individual’s radicalization or turn to violence is not an indictment of the Islamic faith as a whole. One may hold, for example, that an interpretation of Christianity strongly influenced the Inquisitors from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries—as it surely did—without implying that the Inquisitions represent the totality of Christianity, or its truest interpretation.³⁰ Similarly, Salafi-jihadism is one interpretation of Islam. Many other interpretations also exist, including those that reject religiously inspired violence. Journalist Bruce Livesey has said that less than one percent of the world’s Muslims are Salafi-jihadis, though it is difficult to create a precise estimate.³¹ (A precise estimate is difficult because participation in violence is not the only indicator of Salafi-jihadi beliefs: some will provide “soft” support for jihadism, while others will share its outlook but lack the opportunity to participate in or support violence. Indeed, the explosive growth of Salafism after the Arab uprisings, “sometimes at the ballot box, sometimes at the point of a gun,” suggests that many observers underestimated the strength of this strand of belief before the uprisings began.)³²

As I mentioned, some scholars argue that religion is relatively unimportant to jihadi terrorism, full stop. One study that argues to the contrary, written by Mitchell Silber and Arvin Bhatt (both then of the New York City Police Department, which published their report), is entitled *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*.³³ In it, using a comparative case study method, Silber and Bhatt identify four phases through which they believe homegrown jihadi terrorists progress on their way to undertaking violence.

The first phase is *Pre-radicalization*, the period before individuals begin the terrorists’ journey to extremism. This phase is generally marked by apparent normalcy. The second phase is *Self-identification*, where individuals begin exploring Salafi Islam “while slowly migrating away from their former identity—an identity that now is re-defined by Salafi philosophy, ideology, and values.”³⁴ Frequently a cognitive event—such as the loss of a job, alienation or discrimination, or death in the family—produces an identity crisis that shakes previously held beliefs, and readies individuals to accept a new identity and new beliefs based on Salafism. (If we examine whether Muhammad aligns with this model, that cognitive event could be his arrest and prosecution in Knoxville, which produced his subsequent religious exploration.) The third phase is *Indoctrination*, where the individuals’ newly adopted Salafi beliefs intensify. A person going through this stage “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.”³⁵ The fourth and final phase is *Jihadization*, where individuals “accept their individual duty to participate in jihad and self-designate

themselves as holy warriors or mujahideen.” Ultimately, they “will begin operational planning for the jihad or a terrorist attack.”³⁶

One legitimate criticism of the NYPD’s study is that it takes too determinative a perspective on radicalization, making ideology the central factor. A wide variety of individuals who have come to support terrorism in service of radical Islamic causes were primarily motivated by something other than ideology: for example, political grievance or sense of adventure.³⁷ But though there are other radicalization trajectories that the NYPD’s report does not account for, it does illustrate one trajectory—that of ideological radicalization—that can be observed in a wide variety of Islamist terrorism cases.³⁸ It appears that Muhammad falls into this category. Following his conversion, he began to identify with Salafism, his religious practice became progressively more rigid, and finally he decided to undertake violence during time he spent in Yemen. Indeed, after carrying out his shooting, he explained his actions by reference to religious obligation.

Turning to the specifics of Muhammad’s religious evolution, soon after his conversion to Islam he began to embrace a highly legalistic practice of the faith consistent with Salafism. A legalistic religious practice does not make one radical (many Muslims who fall into this category are just religious conservatives), but many of those who went on to become involved in Islamist terrorism first adopted a highly legalistic religious practice.³⁹ One hypothesis for why religious legalism is often found in those who go on to support jihadi terrorism is that a legalistic understanding of faith can subsume an individual’s own moral agency. If a believer thinks that he cannot make up his own mind about such matters as whether he needs to grow a beard, or whether it is permissible to own a dog as a pet, can he have any agency on larger issues, such as violence in service of the faith? Further, for those who support jihadi causes, legalistic religious practice may be linked to a utopian outlook that can justify religious violence: many believe that if Islamic law (*sharia*) could be implemented fully, a perfectly just society would emerge. Mass movements that believe their ideas can usher in a new utopia have often found it easy to justify violence in service of a perfect future.

Muhammad’s family glimpsed his transformation during his trips back home to Memphis following his conversion. They actually learned that he had become Muslim after Muhammad “took down all the pictures from the walls in the bedroom where he slept,” including a picture of Martin Luther King, Jr. that held particular emotional resonance for the family.⁴⁰ When his family asked why he had done this, Muhammad replied that he had “converted to Islam and that everything he does from now on will be to honor Allah.”⁴¹ Muhammad’s decision to take down the pictures in his room is consonant with certain Islamic rulings holding that pictures depicting anything with a soul are religiously impermissible (although Muhammad was almost certainly motivated by what other Muslims had told him to do, rather than his own scholarly exegesis of the Qur’an and *sunnah*).⁴²

Another aspect of Muhammad’s newfound legalism can be glimpsed in what he did with a dog that he had bought as a pet while in college. As previously explained, Muhammad had grown up with a couple of dogs, and was viewed as inseparable from one of them, so it was natural that he bought a puppy—a Rottweiler—while in college. But a popular interpretation of Islam holds that dogs are religiously impermissible pets. In one *hadith*, for example, the Prophet Muhammad states that “Angels (of Mercy) do not enter a house wherein there is a dog or a picture of a living creature.”⁴³ So Muhammad took his Rottweiler into the wilderness, and simply let it go. It was only a year and a half old when he did so.⁴⁴ Muhammad was likely

unaware of other *hadith* that counsel kindness to dogs,⁴⁵ although on balance more *hadith* are critical of them.

Muhammad adopted a number of other legalistic practices and trappings of the faith that were consistent with a Salafi practice. His father told me that Muhammad tried to grow out a beard, but “it wouldn’t grow right. It would always be thin and ragged, and we would make fun of him about it. He’d be an old man before he would grow a beard, but he kept trying, because he was told that’s what he should do.”⁴⁶ Muhammad rolled his pants legs up above the ankles, another behavioral change often associated with Salafism. He began chewing a *miswak*, a stick used for cleaning one’s teeth that the Prophet Muhammad had reportedly used. In this way, there was external evidence of Abdulhakim Muhammad exploring Salafism, allowing it to define his new identity while moving away from who he was before. Further showing his rejection of his old identity, he legally changed his name from Carlos Bledsoe to Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad on March 29, 2006.⁴⁷ His father told me, “Carlos and Abdulhakim Muhammad are two different people.”⁴⁸

Most significantly, Muhammad began to distance himself from his own family due to their refusal to become Muslim when he tried to push his new faith on them. As Melvin Bledsoe said in congressional testimony, “It had gotten to the point where he had no interest in coming home, even for the holidays.”⁴⁹

Muhammad’s writings from jail provide further evidence supporting Bledsoe’s interpretation of his son’s transformation—both the notion that Carlos Bledsoe and Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad were “different people,” and also the way he distanced himself from his family. (This article often quotes from Muhammad’s own account of his personal history, provided after he carried out the Little Rock shooting. A convicted terrorist’s narrative about his own life is often unreliable: as Marc Sageman has noted, there is a “tendency to distort the past to make it consistent with one’s present self-concept.”⁵⁰ Thus, I find his personal history credible where it is supported by external evidence, and note areas where his account seems dubious.)

In one of his several letters to Kristina Goetz, Muhammad flatly stated, “I’m not Carlos. I’m Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad—a new man, changed man.” He continued by substantiating his post-conversion distance from his family. He analogized his situation to that of the prophet Abraham (who is considered a prophet by Jews, Christians, and Muslims). Muhammad wrote: “Abraham was a friend of Allah but his relatives and people especially his father were enemies of Allah and that’s the situation with me and them. I love Allah, and His Messenger, they hate them. So we are on different sides.”⁵¹

In September 2007, Muhammad left the United States for Yemen. At the time, the imam of Masjid Furooq in Nashville wrote a letter to the Yemen Al Khair Institute on Muhammad’s behalf. The letter explains that Muhammad wanted to go to Yemen because he “seeks knowledge” of Islam. It goes on to describe his religious practice as Salafi: “He follows the Quran and Sunnah according to the understanding of the Salafis Salih. He is Salafi and seeks to increase his knowledge of Quran and Sunnah, and the Arabic Language.”⁵² (Beyond this letter, it is unclear what influence the imam had on Muhammad’s faith and decision to go to Yemen.)

Muhammad’s Time in Yemen

Muhammad arrived in Yemen on September 11, 2007. One unfortunate aspect of his time there, from a research perspective, is that we only have his own account for much of what occurred.

It is clear that by the time he left the U.S., Muhammad self-identified as Salafi, and had adopted the mores, customs, and rules of that practice of the faith. Seemingly, however, it was not until his time in Yemen that he came to embrace the need to undertake religious violence. He told Kristina Goetz, “I’ve loved Jihad ever since I became Muslim. But here in America you have *hypocrites* and *hypocritical sects* preaching against Jihad and the Mujahideen so I fell victim to their false knowledge and cowardly ways.”⁵³ The most reasonable interpretation of this statement is that, when he left for Yemen, Muhammad had not yet come to see undertaking violence in the name of his faith as a religious obligation because of the relative moderation of the American Muslim community.

If we assess Muhammad based on the NYPD’s radicalization model, during his time in Yemen he progressed from self-identification with Salafism into the stage of Indoctrination. In this phase, the radicalizing individual wholly adopts the Salafijihadi worldview and concludes that it is necessary to undertake violence.

Because what happened during Muhammad’s time in Yemen is somewhat obscure, this article offers only a bare outline. He had gone there primarily to learn about Islam and to learn Arabic. Muhammad taught English at two different schools, but that was by no means his primary interest.⁵⁴ In fact, he felt guilty and uncomfortable teaching English because, as he related, “it’s the English and others that are the enemies to the Muslims.”⁵⁵ Thus, Muhammad “felt uncomfortable teaching the Language of the Enemy to my brothers and sisters.”⁵⁶

Muhammad would later express the new worldview that he adopted while in Yemen, and explain how it led him to embrace the need for violent action. As has been the case for many homegrown Islamist terrorists, Muhammad put political rage at the center of his explanation, but fused that political rage with a sense of religious obligation:

What lead to the attack on the Recruiting Center was this. America and it’s allies are waging an all out war on Islam and Muslims. Even before 9/11 it was involved in a war against Islam. The US Foreign Policy regarding occupied Palestine was the sole purpose of 9/11. In Islam there’s a call to duty—Jihad—and it’s of different types but the one I’m mentioning is a defensive struggle or fight with weapons against those who attack, kill, maim the Muslims. And this is apart of Islam . . .

“Like I said” there’s an all out war against Islam and Muslims in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Waziristan, Chechnya, Somalia, Palestine, Phillipines, Yemen etc. And Muslims have to fight back. Like I said before in a past interview we believe in an eye for eye not turn the other cheek. Now it’s a all out war on America and I’m on the other side. The side of the Muslims Yes! The side of Al-Qāeda Yes! Taliban Yes! Al-Shabaab Yes! We are all brothers under the same banner. Fighting for the same cause which is to rid the Islamic world of Infidel and Apostate Hypocritic regimes and Crusader Invaders and re-establish the Caliphate, the Islamic Empire and Islamic Law as was ended officially in 1924 by the fall of the Ottomans.⁵⁷

This is an important passage that tells a great deal about Muhammad’s thinking. He starts out by speaking of his anger over U.S. foreign policy, something he elaborated upon in other letters and statements to authorities. This backdrop, the “war

against Islam,” gives rise to what he describes as a religious obligation to undertake violence. He explains that “there’s a call to duty—Jihad.” Muhammad specifically references the need for a *defensive jihad*: in contrast to an *offensive jihad*, expansionist warfare designed to enlarge the abode of Islam, a defensive jihad may be called when Muslim lands are attacked. When this situation exists, each Muslim has an individual obligation to join the battle. In Islamic jurisprudence, this concept is known as *fard ayn*.

However, Muhammad does not limit the scope of the battle he believes like-minded Muslims should engage in to defending Muslim lands and expelling alleged Western aggressors. Rather, he states that the ultimate goal of his fight is to “re-establish the Caliphate, the Islamic Empire and Islamic Law as was ended officially in 1924 by the fall of the Ottomans.” This indicates the manner in which Muhammad’s political and religious thinking intertwine. His understanding of contemporary foreign policy aimed at the Muslim world gave rise to his belief that aggressions against Muslims have triggered an individual duty to undertake jihad in defense of the *ummah* (worldwide community of believers). But by the end of his explanation, he declared that the fight would not stop until the re-establishment of the caliphate—a far broader goal, and one that has long been shared by al Qaeda and a host of jihadi thinkers.

Muhammad told Little Rock police that he got married while in Yemen, to a Yemeni woman who was a student at one of the schools where he taught.⁵⁸ He said, though, that they divorced before he returned to the U.S. A marriage document issued by Yemen in September 2008 provides verification for his claim of marriage.⁵⁹

It is unclear at what point during his time in Yemen Muhammad came to accept the need to undertake violence, but his writings reveal that he did not receive military training when abroad. He noted that he had wanted to travel to Somalia, but was unable to do so. Muhammad boasted that if he had received this training, the attack he carried out would have been far more successful. As he wrote in grandiose tones, “My drive-by would have been a *drive-in*, with noone [sic] escaping the aftermath!”⁶⁰ But before Muhammad could go to Somalia, Yemeni authorities arrested him in October 2008. There is some dispute in open source reporting over why he was arrested (some sources claim he had overstayed his visa), but the likeliest explanation is that Yemeni officials suspected him of being a militant, especially because he possessed a fraudulent Somali passport at the time of arrest.⁶¹ Muhammad later said that the reason he had the passport was to go to Somalia and receive militant training.⁶²

Muhammad was likely on the FBI’s radar even before his arrest in Yemen. As a senior counterterrorism official in the U.S. government told me, “Carlos Bledsoe was interviewed by an FBI agent from Nashville in Yemen. What was the agent doing in Yemen? He wasn’t there on a TDY [temporary duty assignment]. The embassy didn’t even know he was there.”⁶³ Muhammad corroborated this account, describing his interview with an FBI agent in his public correspondence.

After carrying out his attack in Little Rock, Muhammad would claim that he was associated with al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the jihadi organization’s Yemeni affiliate. In assessing al Qaeda’s organizational structure for *Foreign Affairs*, analyst Leah Farrall noted AQAP’s closeness to al Qaeda’s core leadership, in that it “was created by, and continues to operate under, the leadership of core al Qaeda members.”⁶⁴ Muhammad’s claim that he was a part of AQAP is both vague and circuitous. He told Kristina Goetz that he would not say much about AQAP, but “yes, I’m affiliated with them.” He wrote, “Our goal is to rid the Islamic world of Idols and Idolators, Paganism and Pagans, Infidelity and Infidels, hypocrisy and

hypocrites, apostasy and apostates, democracy and democrats and *relaunch* the Islamic caliphate, the Islamic Khalifah and to establish the Islamic Law (Shari'ah)—Allah's Law on Earth and anyone who strives for this is affiliated with the movement. So yes I'm Al Qāeda and proud to be."⁶⁵ The most noteworthy aspect of Muhammad's claim to be affiliated with al Qaeda is that he explains it based on shared values: based on his desire to purge the Islamic world of paganism and infidels, and to re-establish the caliphate. He does not claim any sort of formal affiliation, such as having taken an oath of *bayat* (a formal oath of allegiance) to the jihadi group.

I spoke with Gregory Johnsen, a former Fulbright Fellow in Yemen and Ph.D. candidate in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, who is a noted AQAP specialist. He told me that "it would have been pretty easy" for Muhammad to come into contact with people who at least believed many of the same things that AQAP did, perhaps even during his time in prison. Muhammad may even have come in contact with actual AQAP members, but "what's even more likely is that he came into contact with people who held anti-American or extremist views." But this contact is different than becoming a formal member of AQAP or swearing *bayat*, which Johnsen doubts Muhammad did—and I agree with him. Among the more persuasive reasons that Muhammad was unlikely to have been a formal member, Johnsen notes that the group did not release propaganda taking credit for his attack. "If they considered him a member," Johnsen said, "they may have taken more credit for this."⁶⁶

Muhammad's time in Yemen gives rise to questions about his social relationships. Many studies on radicalization—including those of McCauley and Moskalenko, and Sageman—highlight the importance of social dynamics. Indeed, often lone wolf terrorists are only alone in carrying out their attacks, and are actively influenced by others in every step leading up to undertaking violence. There are ample hints that this may be the case with Muhammad—that group influences may have played an important role in his turn toward Salafism even before traveling to Yemen, and that his social networks may have further compelled him to embrace violence when he lived in that country. Unfortunately, we don't have much more than hints about these dynamics—but suffice it to say that ideological and social explanations for radicalization may be mutually reinforcing rather than in competition with one another.

The Little Rock Attack

Muhammad was deported back to the United States in January 2009. He lived with his family for about three months in Memphis before moving to Little Rock. His family wanted to help straighten him out, and gave him a job with Twin City Tours in Little Rock as the company expanded to that location.⁶⁷

Even before he returned to the U.S.—during his incarceration in Yemen—Muhammad had formulated the intention to carry out an attack in America. Upon his move to Little Rock, he began developing a specific plan of action, targeting both recruiting centers and Jewish organizations. He looked at possible locations for attack that included "Little Rock, Memphis, Nashville, Florence, Kentucky, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and D.C."⁶⁸

In preparation for an attack, Muhammad bought guns and a great deal of ammunition. Continuing his legalistic practice of Islam, Muhammad refused to use credit cards to buy these supplies because "Muslims don't believe in interest."⁶⁹

At one point, he purchased a .22 rifle at a Walmart to see if the FBI would put a hold on the purchase, or if he would be questioned. No such hold or questioning came. He recalled walking out of the store with the new gun, thinking to himself, "It's on."⁷⁰

But Muhammad's initial journey to try to carry out an attack resembled a farce more than anything else. He first drove to the house of a rabbi in Nashville. He lit the fuse of a Molotov cocktail and threw it at the house, but it bounced off a window. Muhammad quickly left the scene, driving toward the next target he had preselected, an army recruiting center in Florence, Kentucky that he had found on the Internet. However, the recruiting office was closed when he arrived.

Muhammad felt dejected. Gas cost around \$4 a gallon at the time, and he felt that he had spent a lot of money on this unsuccessful expedition. But when Muhammad returned to Little Rock, driving down Rodney Parham Road on June 1, 2009, he saw two soldiers standing in front of the joint Army-Navy recruiting center smoking, and he recognized his opportunity. Muhammad, who had been heading east on Rodney Parham Road, drove through a parking lot adjacent to the recruiting center, approaching them from around a corner so that the two soldiers would be less aware of his approach.

Muhammad's black Ford Sport Trac SUV pulled up next to William Long and Quinton Ezeagwula shortly after 10:00 a.m., and he shot at them with a SKS semi-automatic rifle. Long collapsed immediately, and was pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital less than an hour later, at 10:56 a.m.⁷¹ Tragically, his mother, Janet Long, was sitting nearby, in her car, when Muhammad shot her son. She saw his sudden execution first-hand. As Ezeagwula, who was injured in the shooting, crawled back into the recruiting station, Muhammad continued firing through the window until his ten-round clip was empty.⁷² He then drove away.

Another driver, Woody Mulkey, heard the shooting from his truck, which was at the nearby stoplight at the corner of Reservoir and Rodney Parham.⁷³ He looked over and saw Muhammad's truck, with a gun sticking out the window, and briefly pursued it. However, Mulkey incorrectly anticipated the direction that Muhammad would take in his retreat, and lost sight of him.



Figure 2. Photograph of the Army-Navy recruiting center taken in August 2012 (color figure available online).

But Muhammad's shooting was sloppily executed if he had any intention of escape: he had left his truck's tailgate down, thus making it easier to spot as he fled. Police logs show that officers pursuing Muhammad were told about the tailgate.⁷⁴ An officer caught up with Muhammad as he drove east on I-630.

The arrest itself was uneventful. The officer activated his blue lights and Muhammad pulled toward the right shoulder but didn't stop, then pulled across I-630 to the left lane, and continued onto the I-30 East on-ramp. Muhammad then stopped about halfway up the ramp. The arresting officer drew his service weapon, and made Muhammad keep his hands outside the window of his car. When two other officers arrived, Muhammad was instructed to turn his car off and throw the keys out the window, after which he was arrested.⁷⁵

When Muhammad was brought in for questioning after his arrest, he waived his Miranda rights. In a recorded conversation, he told Detective Matt Nelson and Detective Tommy Hudson that he was a practicing Muslim, and shot the two soldiers because he was angry at the U.S. military. Muhammad also said that "if there would have been more out there I probably would have shot them too."⁷⁶

Muhammad also claimed that the night before he carried out the shooting, he had watched the video *Fitna Exposed*, which was a response to Dutch parliamentarian Geert Wilders's anti-Islam movie *Fitna*. Muhammad explained that this was the sole and unexpected trigger for his shooting: "I started seeing more pictures of just women being raped you know, gang raped and you know it's one woman named Fatima, she's in a (inaudible) prison so she got raped more than nine times on one— one day and uh she was wanting to kill herself and you know it was just—it was a point of insanity, I—I think is what happened and I just like blacked out you know. And—and I just kind of went insane all of a sudden."⁷⁷

That statement suggests that Muhammad's attack was not premeditated, but rather an emotional response to watching an inflammatory film that made him go "insane." Yet thereafter Muhammad's story changed to what is outlined above: that he formulated the intention to carry out an attack while in Yemen, and sought out other targets (in Nashville and Florence, Kentucky) before driving past the Little Rock recruiting station and realizing that the two soldiers out front would be relatively easy targets. The explanation involving premeditation is more credible. Not only did Muhammad stick to this story thereafter, but also it is the most consistent with external evidence, such as his purchase of large quantities of ammunition, and of a rifle at Walmart to make sure authorities were not tailing him.

Muhammad's Detention and Trial

While awaiting trial, Muhammad was detained at the Pulaski County Regional Detention Facility in Little Rock. It is the largest county jail in Arkansas, holding 1,130 inmates (with construction underway to add another 240 cells). There, Muhammad realized that he could continue "waging jihad" even while incarcerated.⁷⁸ He remains notorious among the guards and administrators at the facility.

Muhammad was involved in several violent incidents. The first occurred on October 24, 2009. Another inmate, George McFee, had been pouring juice into Muhammad's cup when Muhammad cut his left hand and wrist with a makeshift knife that he had made from his glasses.⁷⁹ Muhammad explained in a letter from jail that he did this because McFee was "a blasphemer who got mad because I told him to calm down so I could hear the news on TV and he responded by cursing me, my

mother, and the almighty allah.”⁸⁰ He said that because McFee had “blasphemed the Creator,” stabbing him was “a just reward.”⁸¹

Muhammad also stabbed a guard, Deputy Grunerwald, whom he said was an Iraq war veteran. Again he made a shank from his glasses. Guards at the Pulaski County Regional Detention Facility have rather large duty belts (see Figure 3), and Grunerwald reported that he was stabbed in the duty belt. Muhammad did not believe this, saying in a clinical evaluation, “He lied and said I stabbed his belt. I stabbed his stomach, that bastard.”⁸² In explaining why he had stabbed Grunerwald, Muhammad claimed that he was “a Crusader in the Crusader Army and was combat medic just back from Iraq. He bragged and boasted of having killed ‘sand niggers’ and Muslims in front of me so I shanked him as a reward.”⁸³

It is unlikely that Grunerwald actually bragged about having killed Muslims in front of Muhammad. Several of Muhammad’s stories have a fictionalized quality, in which his foes take on the characteristics of movie villains, cartoonish and stereotyped. Jim Hensley, Muhammad’s attorney, did not believe that account of the altercation when I told him of it. “I don’t think that happened,” Hensley said. “Soldiers don’t talk about things like that. I was in the Marine Corps and I was a cop, and I don’t talk about either. The one thing a true warrior who loves his country doesn’t want to do is go to war. Shame on Carlos for saying that.”⁸⁴ It is of course possible that Grunerwald bragged about killing Muslims and “sand niggers” just as Muhammad claimed, but his account does not come across as credible.

In April 2010, Muhammad went on to threaten another of the prison personnel, Deputy Huff, saying, “You’re done, you redneck ass motherfucker. I’m gonna kill your bitch ass, I’m gonna find something better than a piece of motherfucking glasses, you punk ass white boy. I’m gonna stab you in the motherfucking heart. You bitch, I’m gonna kill you. I’m gonna get you better than I got Grunerwald. I’m gonna stab you in the motherfucking heart.”⁸⁵

Even though he was placed in administrative segregation, Muhammad was able to persuade another inmate to splash urine on a guard whom he considered his enemy. Additionally, Muhammad was able to convert another inmate to his cause,



Figure 3. Duty belt worn at Little Rock’s Pulaski County regional detention facility. Deputy Grunerwald claims that Muhammad stabbed his belt, while Muhammad insists that he actually stabbed Deputy Grunerwald’s stomach (color figure available online).

as shown by a letter that Mu'min Abdulaziz (formerly known as Frank Askew, Jr.) wrote to the judge in Muhammad's case. In it, Abdulaziz described Muhammad as "my brother in Islam and the individual who has awakened me."⁸⁶ Muhammad also assaulted another guard, Lieutenant Martin, in October 2010. In that incident, Muhammad was being moved from his cell to the shower when he charged Martin, hitting him in the back of the head when Martin turned to avoid being hit in the face.⁸⁷

Lieutenant Carl Minden, who handles media relations and training for the Pulaski County Sheriff's Office, told me that Muhammad "was renowned for making all sorts of problems for the staff."⁸⁸ This included not only assaults and threats against guards and other inmates, but also vandalizing cells where he was kept. For that reason, Muhammad would only be kept in a cell for a few days at a time before authorities had to move him. Both Minden and also several other guards and officials at the jail whom I was able to interview said that Muhammad was easily in the top percentile of offenders that the jail had seen, in terms of one inmate doing so much damage. The reason for this was not just Muhammad's resolution to wage jihad against guards and others, but also the sheer length of time that he was kept there, 784 days in total. The jail is a pre-trial facility, but given the nature of Muhammad's case, there were multiple delays.

One may question, given Muhammad's history of violence, whether the idea that he was "waging jihad" is a bit too pat of an explanation. Certainly he seems to have had trouble controlling his anger, so not everything he did while in prison can be taken as a calculated response. However, Muhammad's explanation that he was continuing jihad seems credible, particularly given that he was able to provide a religious justification for his human targeting, and was able to convert one of his fellow inmates.

Ultimately, Muhammad was tried by local rather than federal prosecutors. There are various theories about why federal prosecutors did not take the case away from the local Office of the Prosecuting Attorney. Muhammad's explanation was thoroughly egotistical: "I outsmarted them and they know it that's why they don't want to pick these charges up and are leaving me in State Court to be hung. But it's OK people still see pass the smoke and mirrors."⁸⁹ Part of this is clearly hubris: the U.S. is an open society, in which it is impossible to assure that all possible terrorist targets are protected. And further, *intent* to carry out an attack is not in itself a crime, even if federal investigators suspected Muhammad (which they clearly did). Muhammad thus didn't outsmart anybody; and yet he may have a point, that the federal government was hesitant to reveal information about how he had crossed its radar, and the extent of its surveillance.

A senior counterterrorism official in the U.S. government surmised that federal prosecutors may not have taken the case because of hesitation to describe it as terrorism. "Ask yourself why the feds didn't prosecute that case," he said. "The explanations from my friends in the federal government never added up. The federal government taking the case wouldn't do President Obama any good with his liberal base, his conservative critics, or the conspiracy theorists who think he is a secret Muslim."⁹⁰ On the other hand, prosecutor Larry Jegley thinks the explanation may be easier: his office, sadly, has a lot of experience prosecuting murders, as there are anywhere from forty to 100 killings a year in his jurisdiction. Federal authorities may have decided it was best for experienced local prosecutors to handle the case.⁹¹

Ultimately, the Muhammad case went to trial, where the specifics of Muhammad's worldview, motivations, and process of radicalization were not presented to the jury. "We looked at it, but only to see if anything jumped out as an aggravating factor

if we got to the sentencing phase,” Jegley told me. “But it wasn’t part of our case in chief, because motive isn’t something we had to prove beyond a reasonable doubt.”⁹² The case was treated like so many other murders that Little Rock experiences in any given year: terrorism and Islamic extremism played no role in the prosecution’s case.

However, Muhammad’s beliefs did figure in the defense’s case. Though the state psychologist found Muhammad fit to proceed with trial, the defense argued that he was not guilty by reason of mental defect. Psychiatrist Bhushan Agharkar testified that Muhammad had a delusional disorder by virtue of his “fixed, false beliefs.”⁹³ Though brainwashing is not a recognized defense in Arkansas, this was a brainwashing defense by another name.

But we were never able to learn whether this defense would have succeeded. Muhammad unexpectedly took a plea bargain more than a week into the trial, before the case went to the jury.⁹⁴ Muhammad’s lawyers explained to the local press that they had offered a plea because they believed the prosecution was willing to accept one in exchange for taking the death penalty off the table. Muhammad was sentenced on July 25, 2011 to “life without parole, 11 additional life sentences plus 180 years.”⁹⁵ Immediately after the plea bargain, Muhammad was moved from the Pulaski County Regional Detention Facility to a larger state prison, but he left an impression that officials at the regional detention facility won’t soon forget.

Conclusion

As highlighted earlier, the Muhammad case demonstrates several aspects of lone wolf Islamic terrorism. I have outlined the role of ideology in his radicalization—how observable behavior indicated Muhammad’s adoption of a new identity, a hardening Salafi practice, and finally a move toward acceptance of violence. Second, this case also shows how Muhammad was able to continue his jihad from jail, targeting guards and fellow prisoners alike. This imposed costs on the society that he wanted to harm even after he was caught. Third, we can see the overarching difficulty of protecting against lone wolf terrorist attacks in an open and free society. While Muhammad swore that he “outsmarted” federal authorities, in reality his shooting illustrates the advantages that lone wolf actors have in carrying out attacks.

But the shooting also demonstrates the limits of what a lone wolf terrorist might be able to accomplish. At the end of the day Muhammad, not the most gifted operative, shot two people, killing one. The shooting was tragic, but so too are all of the various murders that regularly occur in Little Rock and other cities. When I asked Jegley, he said he thought the incident’s effect on the community was “about the same” as so many other murders. “I think that there was more of an outrage factor than there would be for a street killing down at 15th and Oak between a couple of drug dealers because here it was a man in uniform,” he told me. “But no, I don’t think anybody here was terrorized. You want to see a terrorized community, let’s go back to 1993–1994, when the gangs were tearing this place up. That really terrorized the community.”⁹⁶

Notes

1. *Statement of Quinton Ezeagwula*, Incident No. 09–61198 (Little Rock: Little Rock Police Department, June 1, 2009.)

2. *Information Sheet 2009–61198* (Little Rock: Little Rock Police Department, June 1, 2009) (statement of eyewitness Woody Mulkey); K. P. Baer, *Officer's Report*, Incident No. 09–61198 (Little Rock: Little Rock Police Department, June 1, 2009.)

3. Det. Matt Nelson, *Case Report*, Incident No. 09–61198 (Little Rock: Little Rock Police Department, no date.).

4. This article employs the definition of *lone wolf terrorism* provided by Ramón Spaaij, who holds that the three key features of the lone wolf terrorist are that he a) operates individually, b) does not belong to an organized terrorist group or network, and c) has a modus operandi conceived without direct outside command. Ramón Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 16.

5. Scholars taking this view include Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), especially p. 20; John Mueller, *Terrorism Since 9/11: The American Cases* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, June 2012), 11; Jessica Stern, “5 Myths About Who Becomes a Terrorist,” *Washington Post*, January 10, 2010.

6. See, for example, Adam Gadahn, *A Call to Arms* [videotape] (Al-Sahab Institute for Media Production, March 7, 2010.)

7. Melvin Bledsoe, “The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and That Community’s Response,” testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security, March 10, 2011.

8. Telephone interview with Melvin Bledsoe, August 1 and 9, 2012.

9. Dana Rebik, “Neighbors Shocked ‘Boy Next Door’ Arrested for Little Rock Soldier Shootings,” *Eyewitness News Memphis*, June 2, 2009.

10. Telephone interview with Bledsoe (see note 8 above).

11. R. Clint Gray, *Forensic Report: Abdulhakim Muhammad* (Little Rock: Arkansas Department of Human Services, July 19, 2010), 4.

12. Shelby County (Tenn.) Sheriff’s Office, M.P.D. Visions, Case No. 0202002806ME, February 8, 2002.

13. Shelby County (Tenn.) Sheriff’s Office, M.P.D. Visions, Case No. 0208045660ME, August 17, 2002.

14. Shelby County (Tenn.) Sheriff’s Office, M.P.D. Visions, Case No. 0305006491ME, May 14, 2003.

15. Interview with Jim Hensley, North Little Rock, Ark., August 10, 2012.

16. Interview with Larry Jegley, Little Rock, Ark., August 10, 2012.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. Michael Harper, Knoxville (Tenn.) Police Department Crime Report, Case No. 04–007777, February 21, 2004.

20. Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, letter to Kristina Goetz, May 18, 2010, 2.

21. Telephone interview with Bledsoe (see note 8 above).

22. Muhammad letter to Goetz, May 18, 2010.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. Jarret M. Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2009), 5.

30. See Brian Moynahan, *The Faith: A History of Christianity* (New York: Image, 2002), 440–441; Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

31. Bruce Livesey, “The Salafist Movement,” *Frontline* (PBS), January 25, 2005.

32. See, for example, William Booth, Karin Brulliard, and Abigail Hauslohner, “Salafists Urge Ultraconservative Islam on Post-Arab Spring Governments,” *Washington Post*, October 6, 2012.

33. Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York: NYPD Intelligence Division, 2007).
34. *Ibid.*, 30.
35. *Ibid.*, 36.
36. *Ibid.*, 43.
37. McCauley and Moskaleiko's *Friction*, discussed earlier (see note 5 above), does a good job of illustrating the multiple pathways to support of terrorist violence.
38. For my own study examining evidence of religious/ideological radicalization in 117 individuals in the U.S. and U.K. who have been involved in the illegal support of Islamic militancy, see Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Laura Grossman, *Homegrown Terrorists in the U.S. and U.K.: An Empirical Examination of the Radicalization Process* (Washington, DC: FDD Press, 2009).
39. See *ibid.*, 35–40.
40. Bledsoe, "The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community" (see note 7 above), 2.
41. *Ibid.*
42. For *hadith* on the impermissibility of pictures depicting anything with a soul, see Bukhari 3:428, 4:47, 4:448, 5:338.
43. Bukhari 3:515.
44. Telephone interview with Bledsoe (see note 8 above).
45. See, for example, Bukhari 1:174, 3:551, 3:646, 4:538.
46. Telephone interview with Bledsoe (see note 8 above).
47. Order of Name Change, Seventh Circuit Court for Davidson County, Tenn., March 29, 2006.
48. Telephone interview with Bledsoe (see note 8 above).
49. Bledsoe, "The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and That Community's Response" (see note 7 above), 2.
50. Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 65.
51. Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, letter to Kristina Goetz, September 1, 2010, 8.
52. Imam AbdulAziz, Masjid Furooq, letter to Yemen Al Khair Institute, no date.
53. Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, letter to Kristina Goetz, September 30, 2010, 8.
54. Statement of Abdulhakim Muhammad, Incident No. 09–61198, June 1, 2009, 4.
55. Muhammad letter to Goetz, September 1, 2010, 1.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Muhammad letter to Goetz, May 18, 2010, 7–8.
58. Statement of Abdulhakim Muhammad, 19.
59. *Legal Marriage Document* (Sana'a: Republic of Yemen, Ministry of Justice, September 19, 2008).
60. Muhammad letter to Goetz, September 1, 2010, 3.
61. James Dao and David Johnston, "Suspect in Soldier Attack Was Once Detained in Yemen," *New York Times*, June 4, 2009.
62. Muhammad letter to Goetz, May 18, 2010, 7.
63. Telephone interview with senior U.S. government counterterrorism official, August 15, 2012.
64. Leah Farrall, "How al Qaeda Works," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (March/April 2011): 128–138.
65. Muhammad letter to Goetz, September 1, 2010, 6.
66. Telephone interview with Gregory Johnsen, August 13, 2012.
67. *The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting* (Charleston, SC: NEFA Foundation, June 2009), 7.
68. My information on Muhammad's targeting and travels before carrying out the successful Little Rock attack is taken from Gray, "Forensic Report: Abdulhakim Muhammad" (see note 11 above).
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*
71. Det. Matt Nelson, Case Report, 1.
72. Statement of Abdulhakim Muhammad, 12.

73. Statement of Woody Mulkey, Incident No. 09-61198, June 1, 2009.
74. Event Display Record, Event No. 0906010128, June 1, 2009.
75. Sgt. Blair, Officer's Report, Subject 09-61198, June 1, 2009.
76. Statement of Abdulhakim Muhammad, 12.
77. *Ibid.*, 5–6.
78. Muhammad letter to Goetz, September 1, 2010, 9.
79. Pulaski County Sheriff's Office, Incident No. 2010007680 (Battery 2nd), no date.
80. Muhammad letter to Goetz, September 1, 2010, 8.
81. *Ibid.*
82. Gray, "Forensic Report: Abdulhakim Muhammad" (see note 11 above), 9.
83. Muhammad letter to Goetz, September 1, 2010, 8.
84. Interview with Hensley (see note 15 above).
85. Deputy Huff, Disposition Report, Offense No. 10–7531, no date.
86. Mu'min Abdulaziz, letter to Judge Herbert Wright, received June 13, 2011.
87. Pulaski County Sheriff's Office, Incident No. 10-23225, October 25, 2010.
88. Interview with Carl Minden, Little Rock, Ark., August 9, 2012.
89. Muhammad letter to Goetz, September 1, 2010, 4.
90. Telephone interview with senior U.S. government counterterrorism official, August 15, 2012.
91. Interview with Jegley (see note 16 above).
92. *Ibid.*
93. Kristina Goetz, "Muhammad Day 5," *Commercial Appeal* blog, July 22, 2011.
94. Kristina Goetz, "Former Memphian Abdulhakim Muhammad Gets Life Without Parole in Recruiting-Center Shooting," *Commercial Appeal* (Memphis), July 25, 2011.
95. *Ibid.*
96. Interview with Jegley (see note 16 above).