The Imagined Community of Jihadists
by Rita Katz and Josh Devon

Connecting the Dots of Americans Joining the Jihad
by Dr. Bruce Hoffman

The Women of Jihad

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It is my pleasure to introduce this issue of inSITE. With the recent news of the arrest of American jihadist Colleen LaRose (Jihad Jane) and the suicide attacks on Moscow’s subway system by “Black Widows,” women seem to have become a prime threat emanating from the jihadist movement. As a result, this issue of the newsletter looks at women’s involvement in jihad.

On March 9, 2010, the US government indicted an American woman from Pennsylvania named Colleen LaRose, charging her with having “recruited men on the Internet to wage violent jihad in South Asia and Europe, and recruited women on the Internet who had passports and the ability to travel to and around Europe in support of violent jihad,” according to the press release accompanying the indictment. LaRose is also alleged to have “received a direct order to kill a citizen and resident of Sweden, and to do so in a way that would frighten ‘the whole Kufar [non-believer] world.’”

This case, like many others that we have witnessed in recent years, demonstrates not only the importance of the Internet in connecting and radicalizing the various constituents of the online jihadist network but also the increasingly prominent role that women are playing within the global jihadist movement.

Colleen LaRose, who used various aliases including “Fatima LaRose” and “Jihad Jane,” was a well-known member of the online jihadist community, participating frequently on English-language jihadist forums and working ardently to spread jihadist propaganda through various online media platforms, including YouTube. LaRose is one of many women who populate the jihadist forums, where they engage in many important activities, including holding important administrative positions on the jihadist forums.

Many wonder what led a 46-year-old Christian woman with blue eyes to become a jihadist. This issue of inSITE discusses possible answers to these questions in an article titled, “The Imagined Community of Jihadists.” Authored by my colleague Josh Devon and myself, the article points out to the unique role that the internet has played in connecting disparate jihadists from across the globe into what political scientist Benedict Anderson has defined as an “imagined community.”

LaRose’s actions, as well as the Black Widow suicide attacks in Moscow, have revived the question of the role that women are “told” to take as part of jihad. While women play a very active role on jihadist forums, al-Qaeda’s leaders express a different opinion when it comes to “physical jihad.” Ayman al-Zawahiri, for instance, has been unequivocally clear that women should not engage in operations or attempt to join jihadist groups on the ground. Thus, leaders of the jihadist movement are not actively encouraging women to participate in jihad physically.

Yet, it is important to point out that al-Qaeda and its affiliated branches, including al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula and al-Qaeda in Iraq, understand the important and valuable role of women in jihad. Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula, just like other jihadist groups, dedicates a special section for women in its publication, Sada al-Mulahem, which advocates that women play more of a supporting role for the mujahideen. However, as seen with LaRose case and the suicide attacks in Russia, women continue to engage in violent jihad. “The Women of Jihad” looks at what how the leaders of the jihadist movement are guiding women when it comes to jihad.

Also in this issue, SITE Senior Advisor Dr. Bruce Hoffman explores ongoing developments of Americans engaging in acts of jihad on US soil and abroad in “Connecting the Dots of Americans Joining the Jihad.” He focuses on homegrown recruitment, looking into the cases of Fort Hood shooting suspect, Nidal Hasan, and Somali-Americans going to Somali and Yemen to participate in violent jihad, for example, to illustrate that America is not immune to radicalization. Dr. Hoffman also revisits the cases of US residents plotting terrorist attacks abroad, looking at the case of LaRose and the recruitment men and women on the Internet to wage violent jihad in South Asia and Europe.

Sincerely,

Rita Katz
Director, SITE Intelligence Group
Doku Umarov Claims Moscow Metro Bombings

Doku Umarov, leader of the Islamic Emirate of the Caucasus, claimed responsibility for the 3/29 metro bombings in Moscow in a video released on March 31. Umarov indicated that he personally gave the order to the twin suicide bombings, and declared the attack to be retaliation for the killing of Chechen and Ingush people in Arshyta village on February 11. He also threatened additional attacks to come.

Adam Gadahn Incites for Lone Wolf Attacks

Al-Qaeda’s American spokesman, Adam Gadahn (AKA Azzam the American), praised Fort Hood shooting suspect, Nidal Hasan, and incited Muslims to commit lone wolf attacks in a visual speech released on March 7. In the speech, titled “A Call to Arms,” Gadahn portrayed Hasan as an example all Muslims in Western countries should follow, in not only his act of murdering soldiers, but in his faith in God and dismissal of fatwas that condemn jihad. Gadahn also called Muslims to “seek to further undermine the West’s already-struggling economies with carefully-timed-and-targeted attacks on symbols of capitalism which will again shake consumer confidence and stifle spending.”

Canadian Announced as Slain in Somalia

A Somali-Canadian man identified in the media as Muhammed Elmi Ibrahim, was announced as slain in Somalia in a posting on Youtube on March 15. The Youtube user identified the slain as “Mohamed al Muhajir” from Abu Huraira Mosque in Toronto, Canada, and said he died as a member of the Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement. The video posting shows Ibrahim explaining the historical significance of an area in Saudi Arabia, involving the Battle of Uhud.

Al-Qaeda in Aceh Pledges Jihad

A group calling itself “al-Qaeda in Indonesia, Gateway to Mecca (Aceh),” released an Indonesian-language communiqué and video on a website affiliated within its media arm, al-Ufuq, on March 2. The group declared that despite the pursuit of its fighters by Indonesian police and the arrest and death of some of them, they will continue to do jihad. Al-Qaeda in Aceh also urged Muslims to support jihad. The video contains footage of training exercises performed by the group’s fighters, in addition to clips of speeches from its leaders and clips of speeches by Abdullah Azzam and Usama bin Laden.

AQIM Releases Captive Spanish Woman

AQIM announced its release of Alicia Gmez, one of three Spanish hostages, after she converted to Islam and experienced poor health. The announcement was issued on March 12. With the message, AQIM provided a video showing the other two hostages, Albert Vilalta and Roque Pascual, and urged the Spanish government to heed its demands for their release.

GIMF Releases Letter from Khalid bin Laden

The Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) released on March 14, a letter attributed to Khalid bin Laden, a son of al-Qaeda leader Usama bin Laden, addressing Ali Khameeni over bin Laden family members held in Iranian prisons. Khalid demanded that the Supreme Leader of Iran release his family members, and questioned Iran’s decision to hold in detention those people whose only sin is believing in tenets of Islam.

Jihadist Network Incites for Jihad in Nigeria

The Arabic-language division of the Ansar al-Mujahideen network released a video on March 13 highlighting Nigeria as a new battlefield in the “Crusade” and inciting for jihad. The network argues that the West interferes in Nigeria so as to secure the country’s oil and gas reserves and to alleviate “anxiety” resulting from Boko Haram and its work amongst Nigerian Muslims. Negotiations, they say, will not stop the advancement of the enemies.

Umar Studio Interviews TTP Leader

Tehriek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leader Hakimullah Mehsud appeared in a visual interview with a representative of the group’s media arm, Umar Studio, in a video released on March 1. Hakimullah addressed Operation Rah-e-Nijat, a Pakistani military operation against TTP and jihadi factions in South Waziristan; the Pakistani government offering talks; the American “threat to attack” Pakistan; and the mutual relationship with the Afghan Taliban and TTP. He declared that two conditions must be met before TTP enters into dialogue with the Pakistani government: that the government ceases its relationship with the US, and that the government embraces the Islamic principles upon which the country was founded.

ISI Leader Launches Campaign, Denies Election Results

Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), spoke in regard to the March 7 Iraqi elections in two audio messages, one released on March 18 and the other on March 23. The first message announced a military campaign called the “Axe of al-Khalif,” referring to the Prophet Abraham, who destroyed idols in his father’s shop. Baghdadi drew a parallel to that reference, arguing that democracy and elections are modern-day idols that must be destroyed. His other message took credit for affecting voter turnout in the elections and...
clarified the ISI’s goals in its anti-election campaign. He also declared that the election results do not mean anything.

AQAP Urges Revenge Against Yemen Assault

Abu al-Zubeir ‘Adil al’Abab, a Shariah Official in AQAP, called Yemeni Muslims to support the mujahideen against the “Crusader” assault on Yemen in an audio speech released on March 28. ‘Abab argued that the airstrikes in Abyan and Shabwa in December, 2009, are but examples of US military and political involvement in Yemen and evidences of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh giving his support to the enemy. The official also urged Yemeni Muslims to fight to defend themselves and their faith, and thus join and support AQAP.

AQAP Releases Bio of Slain Commander

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) released a biography of a slain Saudi commander named Abu Jandal al-Qassimi (AKA Ibrahim Saleh Mujahid al-Khalifah). The biography was released on March 13 and is part of a new series by AQAP called, “Martyrs of the Peninsula.” Qassimi participated in the 11/3/2009 attack on three Yemeni security officials in Hadramawt, Yemen, and later died during an undated clash with Yemeni soldiers. The author of the biography notes the slain’s passion for jihad and his motivations to first provide financial support and to smuggle fighters into Yemen, and then physically participate himself.

TIP Denies Website Launched in its Name

The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) cautioned Muslims against accessing a website hosting their materials, declaring in a statement issued on March 28 that they have no affiliation to it. TIP’s media official, Abdullah Mansour, warned that users’ security may be compromised when visiting the site. He added that TIP used to maintain a website on the internet, but it was shut down due to American and Chinese pressure.

Shabaab Destroys Tombs in Support of ISI

The Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement in Somalia reported that its fighters destroyed “polytheist” graves and tombs in the capital, Mogadishu, and throughout Banaadir province, as support for the ISI and its “Axe of al-Khalil” campaign. Its destruction activities thus far took place between March 23 and March 27. The Shabaab said that its fighters have already destroyed “99.9 percent of polytheist graves” in areas under its control.

AQIM Warns Against Supporting US

An official from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Abu Obeida Yusuf al-Annabi, warned peoples and leaders of states in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan regions of Africa against support the US in an audio speech released on March 9. He said that the US and its Western allies seek to use states in the region as proxies to fight the mujahideen, thereby making their lands bear the brunt of the war, rather than its own. The peoples in this region, he argued, must resist the “Crusader” advanced and participate in jihad.

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by Rita Katz and Josh Devon

For many, Colleen LaRose’s alleged attempt to carry out a violent act in the name of jihad is inexplicable. How could a 46-year-old Christian woman from Texas with blonde hair and blue eyes become a jihadist? Was there a traumatic event in her childhood or adolescence that left her susceptible to radicalization? Was she lonely, seduced by jihadist men online and recruited to their cause? Or was she just mentally ill?

The answers to these questions notwithstanding, LaRose’s fervent participation in the online jihadist community remains the common thread between jihadists of all types, whether from Texas or Tunis. Though sometimes stereotyped as a bunch of gullible recluses sitting in their basements in front of computers watching beheading videos, the jihadists active on the internet have instead developed a thriving community capable of radicalizing all kinds of people, regardless of background.

The internet has connected disparate jihadists from across the globe into what political scientist Benedict Anderson called an “imagined community.” Anderson used the term to describe the fact that despite most people never physically knowing the members of their nation, there is nevertheless a shared sense amongst all the members that they are part of the same nation. For instance, most Americans will never meet one another, but they feel a kinship with their unknown countrymen separate from the members of the other nations of the world.

And so it is for jihadists, whose imagined community is borderless and populated with members of every ethnicity, age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Like any other nation, the jihadists share the same culture and media. They read the same books and authors, talk with the same vernacular, listen to the same anasheeds (Islamic chants without music), discuss the same history, watch the same movies, consume the same news, champion the same heroes, and deride the same villains.

Furthermore, while these jihadists might never meet in person, the internet enables them to interact with each other intimately. When someone is sick, others will pray for them. When someone needs help, others offer their expertise and advice. When someone has a question, others try to answer. These exchanges reinforce the strength of the community, leading to the forging of deep friendships, strong relationships, and, above all, the feeling that one is part of a larger community or nation.

Once radicalized, a jihadist eradicates his prior identity and considers himself only to be part of the global nation of jihadists. The transformation into a jihadist does not happen overnight, but it can happen relatively quickly, due to the rich experience the online jihadist community provides its members. In addition to copious propaganda, new jihadists soon find a bustling community of individuals who are imagined to be just like them. New relationships made online with other jihadists can replace relationships from their old communities, leading to a shift in their identities and opening them up to radicalization.

For example, sharing his personal experience on a forum where LaRose participated frequently and was well-known by the other members, one jihadist wrote, “If you had seen me five months ago, you would never ever imagine that today I am spending almost 12-15 hours on Islamic forums and sites - from morning till night just thinking about my role in the Jihad movement.”

Explaining how his involvement within the online jihadist community changed his entire identity, he continued, “Once I started, it was like lost purpose of my life, addiction from day one. I was like a small kid who received his favorite toy after a long wait. It did not only change my life style but changed my approach toward the ultimate goal of my life. All of sudden every previous achievements [sic] became irrelevant.”

Using password-protected messageboards as a platform, al-Qaeda and jihadist groups exploit this change in identity by harping on the idea that a jihadist’s allegiance is first and foremost to fellow Muslims, whom they must defend from “the savage, heartless and bloody Zionist Crusader assault on our religion, sacred places and homelands,” as American al-Qaeda member Adam Gadahn put it in his most recent video message.

By recognizing that jihadists feel an obligation to defend what they perceive as an attack on their nation, it becomes easier to comprehend how LaRose, despite her background, could have been convinced to participate in an alleged terrorist plot to kill a cartoonist demon-
Colleen LaRose in Pictures Posted to Her MySpace Account

ized in the jihadist world. By the time LaRose posted on YouTube that she was “desperate to do something somehow to help” her fellow Muslims, she seems to have demonstrated that her identity and allegiance was not with her American heritage but with the global community of jihadists.

LaRose’s story may sound remarkable, but it is not unique. Recently, we have seen many from the United States who no longer envisioned themselves as part of the American nation but instead viewed themselves as part of the global nation of jihadists. For instance, in late 2009, several young Americans from Minnesota were found to have left the country to wage jihad alongside the Shabaab al-Mujahideen of Somalia. Although these youths were of Somali descent, they came to the Shabaab as jihadists, not as part of a Somali nationalist movement.

In December 2009, five young men from Virginia were arrested in Pakistan and accused of attempting to join jihadist groups and travel to Afghanistan. Although of different heritages, including Egyptian, Pakistani, Eritrean, and Ethiopian, three of the men were born in the United States and the other two had become American citizens. The men all allegedly resolved to wage jihad in Afghanistan—a land to which none had a historical connection. Apparently recruited through YouTube, an increasingly important platform for the online jihadist movement, a report released by the Pakistanis revealed that the youths identified with the jihadist community, stating, “They were of the opinion that a Jihad must be waged against the infidels for the atrocities committed by them against Muslims around the world.”

Another case that baffled many is the alleged Fort Hood shooter, Nidal Hassan. A highly educated physician and soldier in the U.S. Army, Hassan might have been an American patriot; instead, he shot at fellow soldiers. It seems that Hassan, too, lost his American identity by imagining himself as part of the jihadist community. Hassan’s June 2007 PowerPoint presentation hinted at an increasing conflict between his American identity and his burgeoning jihadist sympathies, as one of his slides notes, “It’s getting harder and harder for Muslims in the service to morally justify being in a military that seems constantly engaged against fellow Muslims.”

Omar Hammami, who grew up a Southern Baptist in Alabama, shed his American identity, left the United States, and reemerged in 2007 as Abu Mansour al-Amriki, a leader in the Shabaab. In e-mailed questions posed to him by the New York Times in December 2009, Hammami demonstrated that, like LaRose, he imagined himself a part of the global jihadist community, writing, “I was finding it difficult to reconcile between having Americans attacking my brothers, at home and abroad, while I was supposed to remain completely neutral, without getting involved.”

Of course, the adoption of a jihadist identity is not limited to Americans and has been seen in the Middle East, Europe, Australia, China, and elsewhere. However, one may wonder why today it seems as though the population of jihadists is much more diverse than at any other time in modern history.

The widespread adoption of the internet appears to be an influential factor in ushering in this new era of jihadist diversity. Traditionally, such as during the Soviet-Afghan war, jihadists like Abdullah Azzam, the charismatic preacher who helped found al-Qaeda and mentored Usama bin Laden, needed to travel the world peripatetically in order to preach and change people’s identities. Now, the internet allows the jihadist community to target a global audience with much less effort. Furthermore, Azzam was recruiting from mosques in Muslim communities; the internet, though, knows no such limits and is able to reach a broad array of individuals who otherwise would never have had contact with jihadist propaganda.

Thus, in many ways, LaRose is no exception to the jihadist profile but is the logical outcome of the flourishing reach of the online jihadist community. Although LaRose might have had her own personal factors that facilitated her transformation into a jihadist, her engagement in the jihadist community happened in the same way as it does for many others, regardless of background. Jihadists have been of Jewish origin (Adam Gadahn), Christian (LaRose), and even Hindu (Dhiren Batot). We should no longer be surprised at the ethnic, religious, educational, or socioeconomic origins of jihadists. The jihadist community is as diverse as the nations on the planet.
The conventional wisdom has long been that America was immune to the heady currents of radicalization affecting both immigrant and indigenous Muslim communities elsewhere in the West. It has now been shattered by the succession of cases that have come to light in recent months of terrorist radicalization and recruitment occurring in the United States. And while it must be emphasized that the number of U.S. citizens and residents affected or influenced in this manner remains small; at the same time the sustained and growing number of individuals heeding these calls is nonetheless indisputably alarming.

Homegrown Recruitment and Radicalization

More than a year ago, inSITE reported the first clear evidence of a terrorist radicalization and recruitment process existent in the U.S. Nearly 30 Somali-American youths from the Minneapolis-St Paul, Minnesota had been radicalized and recruited in this country by a terrorist group based in Somalia—calling itself al-Shabaab. The group first surfaced in 2006 as a result of the ongoing civil war that has been fought in Somalia over the past twenty years. Al-Shabaab came into being as the shock troops or military wing of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU or Council of Islamic Courts), a loose coalition of Islamic extremists seeking to seize power from Somalia’s perennially weak central government and impose shar’ia (Islamic law) on the country. With the ICU and its al-Shabaab foot soldiers in control of the southern half of Somalia, including the capital, Mogadishu, key al-Qaeda operatives from East Africa and elsewhere were welcomed back to that country. Among them was the late Saleh Nabhan, who was wanted in connection with the 1998 bombing by al-Qaeda of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya and who was also the mastermind behind the 2002 al-Qaeda suicide attack on an Israeli-owned hotel in Mombassa, Kenya. According to the U.S. government, Al-Shabaab has relied on violence—targeted assassinations of civilians and journalists, and the use of improvised explosives, rockets, mortars, and automatic weapons—to undermine the Somali government, quell the Somali population, and force the withdrawal of foreign troops . . . Al Shabaab has claimed responsibility for multiple suicide bombing attacks, including an attack on Burundian peacekeepers in Mogadishu on April 8, 2008; five simultaneous suicide bombings targeting government, Ethiopian, and United Nations facilities on October 29, 2008; and another suicide attack against Burundian peacekeepers on February 22, 2009. Al Shabaab has declared that its ultimate goal is the imposition of Sharia, or strict Islamic law, throughout Somalia.

Following the death of an al-Shabaab fighter in Somalia as a result of a U.S. cruise missile attack in 2008, the group warned that it would “hunt the U.S. government.” A statement released afterwards addressed “To the other mujahideen included in the American terrorist list” proclaimed further:

O’ mujahideen brothers! . . . May you be successful in your jihad and may you frustrate the enemies. May Allah help you . . . Please know, our beloved ones.

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2 Al-Shabaab is also known as: al Shabab; Shabaab; the Youth; Mujahidin al-Shabaab Movement; Mujahideon Youth Movement; Mujahidin Youth Movement; MYM; Harakat Shabab al-Muajhidin; Hizbul Shabaab; Hizbul Shabab; al-Shabaab al-Islamiya; Youth Wing; al-Shabaab al-Islaam; al-Shabaab al-Jihad; and, the Unity of Islamic Youth.

that we are going through a crucial stage, in which the oppressors have crossed the line. That is why we call upon you to round up and join forces under one leadership and a uniform flag in order to frustrate the enemies of Allah and execute his command . . . . As a result our jihad will be stronger and more harmful to our enemies.

In conclusion, we say to the patron and protector of the cross, America: the wager that you made on the Ethiopians, Ugandans, and Burundians in Somalia was a failure . . . [We] will give them a taste of the heat of flame, and throw them into hell.

The following year, al-Shabaab claimed credit for a mortar attack at Mogadishu Airport that targeted a visiting U.S. Congressman.

The first solid evidence that al-Shabaab was recruiting in the U.S. surfaced in October 2008 when a 27 year-old former University of Minnesota student and naturalized American citizen of Somali heritage named Shirwa Ahmed became the first U.S. citizen to carry out a suicide bombing. Ahmed had staged a suicide terrorist attack on 29 October 2008 in northern Somalia that had targeted United Nations aid workers and killed at least 30 persons. His death had followed by less than a month that of a Seattle, Washington native and African-American convert to Islam, cum ex-felon, named, Ruben Luis Shumpert, who was also fighting in Somalia with al-Shabaab. Then, in early November 2008, news broke that several Somali-American youths from the same Minneapolis, Minnesota immigrant community to which Ahmed belonged had left the U.S. to train and fight with al-Shabaab. The families of three of young men had come forward publicly with information that their sons and three other young Somali-Americans had secretly departed the U.S. for Somalia. Almost without exception, the youths who slipped out of the U.S. in November 2008 were described as good boys who were also good students and from good families and who also had never before been in trouble with the law.

Perhaps the most infamous American recruit to al-Shabaab, however, is a twenty-five year former resident of Alabama named Omar Hammami. Now known by his nom de guerre, Abu Mansoor al-Amriki, “the American,” Hammami, the son of a Syrian Muslim immigrant and an American Christian mother, has been featured in al-Shabaab recruitment videos aimed at both European as well as American audiences. “We’re waiting for the enemy to come,” he confides to the camera in one video. “We’re going to kill all of them.” In another, he explains that, “The only reason we are staying here, away from our family, away from the cities, away from ice and candy bars and other things is because we are waiting to meet the enemy.”

There have been reports of other youths from tight-knit Somali communities as diverse as San Diego, California; Boston, Massachusetts; Portland, Maine; and Columbus, Ohio who have similarly left home to fight in Somalia. The indictment of yet another Somali-American, named Mohamed Ibrahim Ahmed, also known as “Talha,” in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York in March 2010, provides additional evidence of both the geographical dimensions and diversity of al-Shabaab’s efforts in the U.S. Ahmed has been charged with providing “material support and resources” to al-Shabaab: including raising funds for the group and engaging in the recruitment of persons to join al-Shabaab. He is also alleged to have received training at an al-Shabaab camp in Somalia, including bomb making and bomb detonation.

A different kind of case, also previously discussed in in-SITE, involves Major Nidal Hassan, the U.S. Army officer who gunned down 13 fellow soldiers at Fort Hood in November 2009. Hassan appears to have been radicalized or at least encouraged in his extremist beliefs through his e-mail contact with a known radical Islamic cleric named Anwar al-Awlaki. Al-Awlaki, who was born in New Mexico and is an American citizen, is a known al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) senior operative. The AQAP is the same group that trained and dispatched a 23 year-old Nigerian national, and former student at London’s prestigious University College, named Umar Farouk Abdulmuttalab on a Christmas Day 2009 bombing mission. An improvised explosive device concealed in his underwear had failed to ignite on Northwest Airlines flight #253 that day. Alert passengers and crew pounded on Abdulmuttalab and subdued him, thus averting a potential disaster.

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4 Quoted in Ibid.
7 Ibid.
But, in addition to Hassan and Abdulmuttalab, there is still another terrorist incident on U.S. soil that involved both AQAP and the radicalization of an American citizen, that inSITE also previously reported. Last June, an African-American convert to Islam named Abdulhakim Muhammad, returned from Yemen to the U.S. and traveled to Little Rock, Arkansas where he gunned down one U.S. Army recruiter and wounded another. Muhammad has recently claimed that he carried out the shootings in Little Rock at the behest of AQAP.

Finally in 2009 there is the case of the five Muslim-American youths from a Washington, DC suburb who traveled to Pakistan in December 2009 with the intent of receiving terrorist training. They were detained by Pakistani authorities only after their parents—as had occurred both with the Somali-American youths from Minnesota and the father of the Christmas Day would-be bomber—alerted authorities to their respective sons’ disappearance. Apparently, a Taliban recruiter had made contact with one of the youths named Ahmed Abdullah Minni, after he posted laudatory comments on YouTube about videos showing attacks on U.S. troops.

The Threat From Within

While all the preceding evidence some form of “home-grown terrorism” or domestic radicalization, there were three additional cases of an even more alarming character, also previously discussed by inSITE. New information has come to light that significantly fleshes out all three. The first involves Najibullah Zazi, an Afghan-born, U.S. resident; the second involves David Headley (who changed his name from Daood Sayed Gilani in 2006), the son of a Pakistani man and American woman, age 49; and Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a 48 year-old Pakistani-born Canadian; and, the third, a Long Island, New York native of Latino heritage named Bryant Neal Vinas.

On 22 February 2010, Zazi—also known as “Salahuddin”—pledged guilty to a three-count superseding indictment charging him with conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction (explosive bombs) against persons or property in the United States; conspiracy to commit murder in a foreign country; and, providing material support to al-Qaeda.\(^8\) Zazi, a New York City pushcart vendor, and other persons not named in the criminal complaint, allegedly left the U.S. in the summer of 2008 with the intention of joining the Taliban and fighting against U.S. and coalition military forces in Afghanistan. After arriving in Peshawar, Pakistan, however, Zazi and his companions were recruited by al-Qaeda operatives and brought to the Wazirstan region of Pakistan where they were provided with terrorist training. The group was then asked by senior al-Qaeda leaders to return to the United States and conduct suicide terrorist operations. They agreed. After receiving further training in the fabrication of homemade explosive devices, federal prosecutors assert that Zazi allegedly discussed with his al-Qaeda handlers potential targets in New York, including the New York City subway. He also admitted to procuring computers and money for al-Qaeda before returning to the U.S. in January 2009.

Upon his return, Zazi re-located from New York to Denver but made repeated trips back east to meet with his confederates to discuss the attack plan and make the necessary logistical preparations. Between July and August 2009, prosecutors maintain, he purchased large quantities of the components necessary to produce the homemade explosive triacetone triperoxide (TATP), a World War I-era explosive compound long favored by Palestinian terrorist groups for suicide attacks. On 10 September 2009, Zazi returned to New York City for what he planned would be the final time. His intention was to gather the other members of his operational team, arm their homemade explosive devices and implement a series of simultaneous suicide attacks on Manhattan subway lines as close in time as possible to the anniversary of the September 11th 2001 attacks.

\(^8\) United States District Court, Eastern District of New York, Superseding Information, Cr. No. 09-663 (S-1) (RJD), United States of America against Najibullah Zazi, 22 February 2010.
It is believed that he had planned the operations for either 14, 15 or 16 September 2009.

Zazi aborted the plot after learning that he and his cell were under surveillance. He then allegedly discarded the explosives and other bomb-making materials. He was arrested on Sept. 19, 2009. “This was one of the most serious terrorist threats to our nation since September 11th, 2001,” U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder explained, “and were it not for the combined efforts of the law enforcement and intelligence communities, it could have been devastating. This attempted attack on our homeland was real, it was in motion, and it would have been deadly.”

The second case involves the indictment last October of two Chicago men of Pakistani heritage on charges of assisting in the plotting terrorist attacks against targets outside the U.S., including the facilities and employees of the Danish newspaper, Jyllands-Posten. This is the newspaper that published cartoons in 2005 of the Prophet that many Muslims consider as derogatory. The indictment revealed that the two men had links with two of al-Qaeda’s key Pakistani jihadi allies: Lashkar-e-Toiba (“Army of the Pure,” or LeT), the group responsible for the November 2008 suicide terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India; and, Harakat ul-Jihad (“Islamic Struggle Movement,” or HuJI). Headley was also implicated in the Mumbai suicide assault that was perpetrated by the LeT. He allegedly carried out reconnaissance efforts for the group that may have been pivotal to the operation’s success.

The Headley and Rana indictments are troubling for another, significant reason. The operating assumption among American intelligence and law enforcement had long been that if a foreign terrorist entity was ever able to recruit a U.S.-based asset, that person would be used to carry out attacks in the U.S. itself. The fact that Headley and Ranna were tasked with overseas missions may suggest that foreign terrorist groups may have sufficient—or even a surfeit of—assets already residing in the U.S. that can be used for attacks here thus freeing up other operatives for overseas missions.

Finally, in January 2009 26 year old Bryant Neal Vinas pleaded guilty to federal charges that he trained with al-Qaeda in Pakistan for fourteen months during 2007 and 2008. He was apprehended by Pakistani authorities in 2008 and extradited back to the U.S. to stand trial. Vinas admitted helping al-Qaeda to plan an attack that never transpired against a Long Island Railroad train in New York’s Pennsylvania Station and also to participating in two al-Qaeda rocket attacks on U.S. troops in Afghanistan in September 2008.

A Bad Start To A New Year

Only three months into the new year and already there are three more cases of homegrown terrorist recruitment in the U.S. The first, already discussed, again involved another Somali-American indicted in a New York district of the federal court. The second, involves a New Jersey man whose mother is Somali but who hooked up with AQAP in Yemen; and the third is a somewhat peculiar cases involving two female would-be jihadis respectively from Pennsylvania and Colorado.

On 11 March 2010 Yemeni authorities announced that a 26 year-old man named Sharif Mobley had been arrested in that country in early March as part of a police round-up of suspected AQAP operatives. He was being treated at a hospital in San’a, the capital, when he allegedly seized a weapon from a security guard during an attempted escape. In the ensuing gun battle, one Yemeni police officer was killed and another wounded. Mobley, a karate black belt, former high school wrestler and maintenance worker at two nuclear power plants, grew up in the rural southern New Jersey town of Buena before moving to Philadelphia and Newark, Delaware. He was described by his mother as “an excellent person who’s never been in trouble” and as a “good Muslim.” His father told a reporter, “I can tell you this: he’s no terrorist.” Mobley was last employed organizing religious pilgrimages (the haj) to the Middle East for other Muslims. Like Hassan and Abdulmuttalab, he was also in e-mail contact with al-Awlaki—the senior AQAP operative and firebrand cleric now based in Yemen.

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9 USDOJ-Office of Public Affairs, “Najibullah Zazi Pleads Guilty To Conspiracy To Use Explosives Against Persons or Property In U.S., Conspiracy To Murder Aboard And Providing Material Support To Al-Qaeda,” 22 February 2010.

Finally, we have the case of Colleen LaRose, reported by SITE on 9 March 2010, and allegedly of Jamie Paulin-Ramirez. LaRose, a petite, blue-eyed, blonde high school dropout who converted to Islam, and used the aliases “Fatima La Rose” and “JihadJane” in Internet communications, has been charged with having “recruited men on the Internet to wage violent jihad in South Asia and Europe, and recruited women on the Internet who had passports and the ability to travel to and around Europe in support of violent jihad.” She is also accused of having “received a direct order to kill a citizen and resident of Sweden, and to do so in a way that would frighten ‘the whole Kufar [non-believer] world.’” Prosecutors further maintain that LaRose provided material support to terrorists and herself traveled to Sweden in order to plan an attack on an article named Lars Vilk who had drawn a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad on the body of a dog.

LaRose seems an unlikely recruit to jihad. Twice married, she had spent more of her in recent years caring for her boyfriend’s elderly, infirm parents. She boasted in e-mails how, given her appearance, she would “blend in with many people” and also attempted to recruit other Western women who looked like her. According to prosecutors, a man identified as LaRose’s fiancé instructed her to “go to Sweden . . . find location of” Vilk and “kill him . . . this is what i say to you [sic],” LaRose allegedly replied that it would be “an honour & great pleasure to die or kill” for her fiancé, reportedly declaring that “only death will stop me here that I am so close to the target.” Upon her return to the U.S. from Sweden, she was arrested. David Kris, an assistant attorney general in the Department of Justice’s National Security Division, was quoted stating that a suburban American woman accused of conspiring to support terrorists who traveled overseas to implement the plot “under scores the evolving nature of the threat we face.”

Acting on information provided by U.S. authorities, Irish police subsequently arrested four men and three women who had been under electronic surveillance by American and Swedish police in connection with the planned assassination of Vilk. The group included three Algerians, a Croatian, a Palestinian, a Libyan and a U.S. citizen——Paulin-Ramirez, a 31 year-old mother of a six year old son from Leadville, Colorado who had previously worked as a medical assistant and had converted to Islam last year.

The Bad News Worsened

Given this litany of incidents involving homegrown radicals, lone wolves, and trained terrorist recruits, the U.S. is arguably now little different from Europe in terms of having a domestic terrorist problem involving immigrant and indigenous Muslims as well as converts to Islam. The diversity of these latest foot soldiers in the wars of terrorism being waged against the U.S., the West, and other countries, underscores how irrelevant the conventional wisdom about terrorists and terrorism has become and how anachronistic the stereotype of the typical terrorist has been rendered. In the past year alone we have seen suburban white bread Americans and the progeny of hard-working immigrants gravitate to terrorism. Persons of color and Caucasians have done so as well. Women along with men. Good students and well educated individuals and high school drop-outs and jail birds. Persons born in the U.S. or variously in Somalia, Afghanistan or Pakistan. Teenaged boys pumped up with testosterone and middle-aged divorcees. The only common denominator appears to be a new found hatred for their native or adopted country; a degree of dangerous malleability; and a religious fervor justifying or legitimizing violence that impels these very impressionable and perhaps easily influence individuals towards potentially highly lethal acts of violence.

The diversity of this array of recent terrorist recruits presents new challenges for intelligence and law enforcement agencies that are already over-stressed and inundated with information and leads, to run these new threats to ground. ‘There seems no longer any clear profile of a terrorist.’ Moreover, the means through which many of these persons were radicalized over the Internet, suggests that these days you can become a terrorist in the comfort or your own bedroom. ‘This was something unheard of as recently as ten years ago——and can only bode ill for the future.’

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12 Quoted in Ibid.
With the recent news of the arrest of American jihadist Colleen LaRose (Jihad Jane) and the suicide attacks on Moscow’s subway system by “Black Widows,” women seem to have become a prime threat emanating from the jihadist movement. However, despite these high-profile incidents, the leaders of the jihadist movement are not actively encouraging women to participate in jihad physically. Rather, al-Qaeda and related groups instead advocate that women play more of a supporting role for the mujahideen, providing them succor, offering aid, soliciting donations, distributing propaganda, and raising the next generation of mujahideen.

Women play a very active role on jihadist forums and some have expressed frustration with their inability to participate in jihad physically. However, al-Qaeda’s leaders have been unequivocally clear that women should not engage in operations or attempt to join jihadist groups on the ground. When Ayman al-Zawahiri gave an open interview to jihadist forum members in early 2008, one woman asked Zawahiri, “Does al-Qaeda accept women in its ranks?” to which Zawahiri bluntly replied, “No.”

Another asked, “Who is the highest ranking woman in al-Qaeda? Don’t mention names if you don’t want to do so, but what is their duty in the organization?” Zawahiri responded that al-Qaeda had no women in its ranks and that the role of women is to take care of the families of the mujahideen:

“Al-Qaeda has no women, but the women of the mujahideen do their heroic part in taking care of their homes and sons in the roughness of the immigration, movement, unity, and expectation the Crusader strikes. But the Crusaders - who claim defense of liberty and human rights - purposefully strike woman, children, and civilians in their wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Palestine, so as to force the fighters to either retreat or surrender. This is their constant method in their wars. Then after they destroy villages and the homes, the blame falls on the Mujahideen because they were the ones who took cover in the families. These crimes will not - Allah willing - go without punishment.”

In December 2009, Zawahiri’s wife, Umayma Hassan Ahmed Muhammad Hassan, reiterated her husband’s advice to women in a special written statement titled, “A Message to the Muslim Sisters.” In the message, Hassan acknowledges that women do desire to fight in the battlefield alongside men, noting that “There are many women who did martyrdom-seeking acts in Palestine, Iraq and Chechnya, and hurt the enemy and defeated them.” However, while supporting those women who have waged physical jihad, she argues it is extremely difficult for most women to travel to a land of jihad, as “it requires a Mahram [a male Muslim relative who can escort the woman], because the woman must have a Mahram in her comings and goings.”

Instead, Hassan advises most women, who are unable to participate physically in jihad, to play a supporting role, raising money, offering the mujahideen services, educating children to become jihadists, and proselytizing locally and through the internet. Hassan writes:

“The Muslim woman must work beside the man to defend her religion and land, so she must defend with herself. If she is not able then with her money. If she is not able that, then by calling in the name of her religion through the calling upon her Muslim sisters in the mosques, schools, institutions and homes. If she is not able that, then through the internet, in which she writes her call, sends it, and spreads the call of the mujahideen. It will arrive, Allah willing, and it will find open ears and hearts. So I beg of you O Muslim sister, do not tire or get bored from supporting our religion in any way you can.”

Mirroring her husband, Hassan further tells women that before all other activities to support the jihad, their “main role” is to care for the families of the mujahideen, especially after the men have been killed or imprisoned, and ensure that the next generation is taught the proper morals and religion in order to become strong mujahideen. Hassan writes:
“But our main role - that we ask Allah to accept from us - is to preserve the mujahideen in their sons, houses and secrets, and to help them in raising their sons well. Your emigrant sisters – praise be to Allah - are fulfilling a great role in this field; they are patient, steadfast and courageous, and do not care for the world but desire the hereafter. All this despite their hardships, the loss of their husbands, sons and fathers, and the lack of stability. Indeed, some of them have even been imprisoned, but your emigrant sisters are patient.”

Other al-Qaeda branches have similarly maintained that the most effective role for women is to provide shelter and support to the mujahideen while raising jihadist children. In October 2009, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)’s “Echo of the Epics” online magazine carried an article titled, “The Women of Yemen and the Crusader War.” The article lauded several Yemeni women who had helped the mujahideen not by carrying out attacks but by offering aid and support.

The magazine described how “a woman who is nearly sixty [and] is only afraid of Allah” provided sanctuary and protection to leaders of AQAP, including the group’s emir, Abu Baseer al-Wuhayshi who were on the run from the Yemeni government “on the first day of their escape from the political prison.” This woman “sheltered them in her house which lies in the middle of Sanaa, and among the soldiers of Ali Abdullah Saleh, and in the shadow of a large security alert by all the military institutions, and during a state of alert that monitors inside and outside.”

AQAP described another woman who offered her house to hide those immigrating to Yemen to engage in jihad. The group noted her bravery and piety, stating that “she does not rest until she checks on them, and she [does not celebrate any holiday] unless she gives them a (lamb) as a gift.”

The group further championed another “old woman” named Um Hamad who “in the extreme heat and in the extremely dangerous security conditions” transports “food and water on foot to the [area where the immigrants are present], and she gives them the most recent news.” The magazine also noted that she was blessed to have her son killed in support of the jihad, reporting that “the news of the killing of her son in the name of Allah is one of the most beautiful pieces of news she gave.”

The article offered several more examples of women who were actively supporting the mujahideen in Yemen. These women, though, were not engaged in physical jihad, but were rather following the advice given by Zawahiri and other leaders of the jihadist movement. The women lionized in the magazine were offering aid and supplies, providing shelter, and giving their own sons to the jihad.

Although al-Qaeda’s leadership has refrained from exhorting women to participate in jihad physically, other jihadist ideologues have supported the notion that women can engage in battle, although this seems to be more the exception than the rule. Al-Samoud Media Brigade, a virtual jihadist group, issued a new magazine in February 2010 dedicated to women titled, “The Granddaughters of Khansa,” referring to a woman from the time of the Prophet Muhammad whose sons were killed waging jihad and is a female hero for jihadists.

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The magazine contained an interview with an anonymous woman stated to be involved in jihad on the battlefield. When asked whether women should join the ranks of the mujahideen, the woman argues that women should if they are able but at the same time recognizes that for most women, engaging in jihad simply is not practical. Still, she argues, women who are capable should not neglect jihad.
“The faithful woman is able, with help from Allah, to do jihad and raise the banner of Islam on high. We should not ignore the truth of the religious commitments that face the woman in her daily life, like children and the house and the marital requirements, but these matters should not be an obstacle to the jihadi woman who has proven her worth in the battlefields since the days of the Islamic conquests.”

Another article in the same magazine gave several examples of women from the early history of Islam who also participated in battle. However, the article argues that women may only engage in battle in certain circumstances, the first being if “the enemy raids Muslim territories and attacks them in the heart of their home. In this case, it is the duty of every person able to carry weapons, minor or adult, man or woman, to do so and to defend Muslims and to fight their enemy.” The second case is if “Muslims invade their enemy. In this case, women are allowed to march out with a big army where there is no worry that the enemy may defeat them and curse the women with them.”

To this end, the magazine describes a Chechen woman, Havaa Barayev, who took part in a suicide operation after “the enemy invaded her land and humiliated her people.” The magazine explained, “Once her meeting-time with Allah got near, she performed the obligatory prayer, read the Qur’an, bid her parents and her relatives farewell in a scene that makes men’s determination too weak. After that, she got in her truck, entered an enemy center, and turned it into ruin. She then met her Lord as a martyr, as we consider her and we reckon none unto Allah.”

Thus, while certainly women who participate physically in jihad are lauded by fellow jihadists, the obligation of women in jihad is not as clear as it is for men, who are actively encouraged to embark on violent jihad. Although al-Qaeda in Iraq and other jihadist groups have utilized women in their operations, the official directive coming from al-Qaeda seems to be that women should maintain a supporting role in the jihad rather than participating themselves.

Still, as seen in the the magazine “The Granddaughters of Khansaa,” women are encouraged to participate in battle under certain conditions but must not neglect their foremost duties of taking care of their families, raising their children, and supporting their husbands waging jihad. We should expect that women will continue engaging in violent jihad; nonetheless, given the advice the leaders of al-Qaeda are giving women, it is unlikely that we will begin seeing vast amounts of women joining men on the fields of jihad in Afghanistan or Yemen.
Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born radical cleric suspected of providing spiritual support to Fort Hood shooting suspect, Nidal Hasan, spoke in an English-language audio speech inciting Muslims in the US and the West to commit actions similar to those of Nidal. Excerpts from the speech, titled, “A Call to Jihad,” were aired by CNN on March 17, 2010, and the entire 12 minute, 37 second recording became available on Islamist and jihadist forums on March 20. The speech bears similarities to Awlaki’s message following the Fort Hood attack in which he praised the shooter as a “hero.” That message, “Nidal Hasan Did the Right Thing,” and his audio speech, addressed what Awlaki argues is a moral dilemma faced by Muslims residing in the West: how to reconcile adhering to Islam in a country whose soldiers wage war on Muslims abroad. The answer, he contends, is not to stand idly in the face of aggression, but to “fight back and incite others to do the same.”

Following is a transcript of the audio:

“All praise is due to Allah, and may peace and blessings be upon His Messenger, Muhammad, his family and his Companions.

“Peace be upon those who follow the guidance.

“To the American people I say, do you remember the good old days when Americans were enjoying the blessings of security and peace -- when the word terrorism was rarely invoked -- and when you were oblivious to any threats.

“I remember a time when you could purchase an airline ticket from a class five section of your local or college newspaper and use it even though it was issued to a different name because no one would bother asking you for an I.D. before boarding a plane. No long lines, no elaborate searches, no body scans, no sniffing dogs, no taking off your shoes and emptying your pockets. You were a nation at ease.

“But America thought that it could threaten lives of others. Kill and invade, occupy and plunder, and conspire without bearing the consequences of its actions. 9/11 was the answer of the millions of people who suffered from American aggression.

“And since then America has not been safe and nine years after 9/11, nine years of spending, and nine years of beefing up security you are still unsafe even in the holiest and most sacred of days to you, Christmas Day.

“So do you expect to transgress against others and yet be spared retribution? Your decision-makers, the politicians, the lobbyists, and the major corporations are the ones gaining from your foreign policy and you are the ones paying the price for it.

“Following 9/11, the American people gave George W. Bush unanimous backing to fight against the mujahedeen and gave him a blank check to spend as much as needed to fulfill that objective. The result -- he failed. And he failed miserably.

“So if America failed to defeat the mujahedeen and gave its president unlimited support, how can it win with Obama, who’s on a short leash? If America failed to win when it was at its pinnacle of economic strength, how can it win today with a recession at hand?

“The simple answer is America cannot and will not win.

“The tables have turned and there is no rolling back of the worldwide jihad movement. On the eve of 9/11 it was Afghanistan alone. Today it is Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the list is growing.

“How many more body bags are American families willing to receive? How much more can the US Treasury handle? 9/11, the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and then operations such as that of our brother, Umar Farouk, which could have not cost more than a few thousand dollars, end up draining the US Treasury bil-
lions of dollars in order to give Americans a false sense of security.

“For how long can the US survive this war of attrition? What benefit is it to the American people to suffer for the sake of supporting Israel? And what benefit is it to the American people to suffer for the sake of the al-Saud family and the Gulf monarchs?

“Our brother, Omar Farouk, has succeeded in breaking through the security systems that have cost the US government alone over 40 billion dollars since 9/11.

“Obama has promised that his administration will be one of transparency, but he has not fulfilled his promise. His administration tried to portray the operation of brother Nidal Hasan as an individual act of violence from an estranged individual. The administration practiced to control on the leak of information concerning the operation in order to cushion the reaction of the American public.

“Until this moment the administration is refusing to release the e-mails exchanged between myself and Nidal. And after the operation of our brother Umar Farouk, the initial comments coming from the administration were looking the same - another attempt at covering up the truth. But al-Qaeda cut off Obama from deceiving the world again by issuing their statement claiming responsibility for the operation.

“However, we are transparent and open in proclaiming our message to the world. Our objective is to bring back Islam to life. We seek to remove the tyrannical and parasitical rulers of the Muslim world and replace them with men of God who know the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. We seek to apply the rule of Qur’an and make the word of Allah supreme over all other. And God willing, we will strive to achieve these goals with all what we possess and we will fight until the last man against whoever stands in our way.

“We the Muslims do not have an inherent animosity towards any racial group or ethnicity. We are not against Americans for just being American. We are against evil, and America as a whole has turned into a nation of evil. What we see from America is the invasion of two Muslim countries; we see Abu Ghraib, Bagram, and Guantanamo Bay; we see Cruise missiles and cluster bombs; and we have just seen in Yemen the death of 23 children and 17 women. We cannot stand idly in the face of such aggression, and we will fight back and incite others to do the same.

“I for one was born in the US, I lived in the US for 21 years. America was my home. I was a preacher of Islam involved in non-violent Islamic activism. However, with the American invasion of Iraq and continued US aggression against Muslims I could not reconcile between living in the US and being a Muslim, and I eventually came to the conclusion that jihad against America is binding upon myself just as it is binding on every other able Muslim.

“Nidal Hasan was not recruited by al-Qaeda. Nidal Hasan was recruited by American crimes and this is what America refuses to admit. America refuses to admit that its foreign policies are the reason behind the man like Nidal Hasan - born and raised in the US turning his guns against American soldiers. And the more crimes America commits the more mujahedeen will be recruited to fight against it.

“The operation of our brother, Umar Farouk, was in retaliation to American cruise missiles and cluster bombs that killed the women and children in Yemen.

“It is true that we are facing the arsenal of the greatest army on earth with our simple, modest means, but victory is on our side. Victory is on our side because there is a difference between us and you. We are fighting for a noble cause. We are fighting for God, and you are fighting for worldly gain. We are fighting for...
Justice because we are defending ourselves and our families, and you are fighting for imperialistic goals. We are fighting for truth and justice, and you are fighting for oppression. You have your B-52s, your Apaches, your Abrams and your Cruise missiles, and we have small arms and simple improvised explosive devices. But we have men who are dedicated and sincere, with hearts of lions, and blessed are the meek for they will inherit the world.

“Americans need to stop looking at themselves from their own lens, but look at themselves from the lens of the world. They would then see the ugly face of America. America is not despised only by Muslims, but by many millions of people around the world and in America itself. America may be obstinate in believing that the animosity of a few million Muslims wouldn’t really harm them. They would say, ‘We have the most powerful army in the world and we have the strongest economy in the world.’

“Do not you think that such a belief is a bit outdated? Don’t you think that such a belief was more suitable to the days of patriotism that swept over America following 9/11, than it is now with the American Army admitting its inability and the American economy going through intensive care?

“But imperial hubris is leading America to its fate - a war of attrition, a continuous hemorrhage that will end with the fall and splintering of the United States of America.

“If George W. Bush is remembered as the president who got America stuck in Afghanistan and Iraq. It’s looking like Obama wants to be remembered as the president who got America stuck in Yemen. Obama has already started his war on Yemen by the aerial bombings of Abyan and Shabwa. By doing that he has ways to publicity campaign for the mujahedeen in Yemen and within days accomplished for them the work of years.

“As the popularity of mujahedeen in Yemen skyrocketed, the popularity of Obama in America is plummeting. The corrupt Yemeni government officials and some of the tribal chiefs who claimed to be your allies are having a ball these days. The word being passed around them is that this is the time to start the gullible American. Your politicians, military, and intelligence officers are being milked for millions.

“The Yemeni government officials are giving you big promises and handing you big bills. Welcome to the world of Yemeni politicians.

“I would like to close my message to you with an invitation to Islam. We were all created by God on this earth to worship Him, and then after death it is either paradise or hell fire for eternity. So the matter is not one to take lightly, it is your future. I invite you to read the book of the law of Qur’an. You do not have to take anyone’s word for it - decide for yourself whether it is the truth or not.

“To the Muslims in America I have this to say:

“How can your conscience allow you to live in peaceful coexistence with a nation that is responsible for the tyranny and crimes committed against your own brothers and sisters? How can you have your loyalty to a government that is leading the war against Islam and Muslims?

“The Muslim community in America has been witnessing a gradual erosion and decline in core Islamic principles, so today many of your scholars and Islamic organizations are openly approving of Muslims serving in the US Army to kill Muslims, joining the FBI to spy against Muslims, and are standing between you and your duty of jihad. Slowly but surely, your situation is becoming similar to that of the embattled Muslim community of Spain after the fall of Grenada.

“Muslims of the West, take heed and learn from the lessons of history. There are ominous clouds gathering in your horizon. Yesterday America was a land of slavery, segregation, lynching, and Ku Klux Klan, and tomorrow it will be a land of religious discrimination and concentration camps.

“Don’t be deceived by the promises of preserving your rights from a government that is right now killing your own brothers and sisters. Today with the war between Muslims and the West escalating, you cannot count on the message of solidarity you may get from a civic group or political party, or the word of support you hear from a kind neighbor or a nice coworker. The West will eventually turn against its Muslim citizens.

“In closing, I pray that Allah guides us to the truth and grants us steadfastness on the straight path. And may peace and blessings be upon His Messenger, his family and Companions.

“Peace be upon those who follow the guidance.” ▲
The role of women in jihad, as caregivers or fighters, as raisers of children or suicide bombers, is a contentious point amongst male and female jihadists. Al-Qaeda deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri had responded to two questions on this subject in the open interview with jihadist forum members held in early-2008. He said that women are not accepted into the ranks of al-Qaeda and that a woman must travel with a male relative and trusted guide to a field of jihad – Afghanistan in the case of the question. Zawahiri’s answers demonstrate the public position of al-Qaeda on women in jihad, that they are not equals of men. Female jihadists responded with sadness and some criticism to this position. Nearly two years later, in December, 2009, the wife of Ayman al-Zawahiri, Umayma Hassan Ahmed Muhammad Hassan, addressed Muslim women and reinforced her husband’s position. She discouraged women from pursuing an active role in fighting, arguing that their primary role is not to fight but to support their husbands and rear future generations of mujahideen. Umayma, however, reasoned that there are some cases when a Muslim woman may fight, but that is when it is in the service of the mujahideen.

Following is the translated text:

A Message to the Muslim Sisters

Written by Umayma Hassan Ahmed Muhammad Hassan, The Wife of Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri, may Allah Preserve Them

As-Sahab Media Productions

In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious and Merciful

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Peace and prayer be upon the most honorable of the messengers, our master Muhammad, and upon his family, his Companions, and all those who follow his guidance and his traditions.

My honorable Muslim sisters, peace be upon you, and Allah’s mercy and blessings.

I have long wished to talk with you about what our Muslim Ummah is going through in terms of great events and dangerous situations. However, circumstances have gotten between you and I. It is high time that I talk with my honorable sisters. I will, however, start with the family and the beloved ones in our beloved country. I say to them: Do not worry about us. We are, praise be to Allah, in the care and the blessings of Allah the Great and Almighty. Our hearts and our souls are with you, no matter the distance between us. Thus is life, a meeting and a separation that befell us. It is sufficient to us that we are right and we called to the truth, as our Great and Almighty Lord said: “So do not become weak, nor be sad, and you will be superior if you are indeed believers.” [Al-Imran 3:139] May it be that we meet soon, Allah willing, for Allah’s release is soon and His victory is inevitably coming, with permission from Allah the Almighty.

After the family and beloved ones, I direct this speech of mine to my good sisters in our precious Muslim Ummah. I specifically mention our beloved sisters who are united in the lands of jihad all over the world, and our mothers who gave themselves in the Cause of Allah to support His religion, and they nevertheless never tire from supporting this religion. How many sons and husbands and others have they offered? How much were they hurt in the Cause of Allah. Each of us faces the same situation, united women who do jihad who suffer in the Cause of Allah and offer what they have in terms of sacrifices. However – by Allah - all this will not delay us a single moment from supporting our religion despite what we have
So we have these as an example in helping our husbands to fulfill right, bravery and initiative, and we fear none except Allah the Great and Almighty.

As for my second message, it is for my Muslim sisters who are imprisoned in the prisons of the tyrants.

I say to them: You are in our hearts and we will never forget you. Allah willing, we will spare no effort in releasing you. You are our honor and we are your sisters. We never forget you. Allah knows that we are always calling unto Him to protect you from all harm and hasten your release.

As for my third message, it is for the Muslim female masses:

First, I call upon them to commit to all the judgments of Islam, for in them there is happiness in this world and attainment of the afterlife. I especially call them to the hijab, as it is the calling card of the worshiping Muslim woman to her Lord who obeys His commands. In its abandonment there is obedience to Satan. As you know O Muslim sisters, the campaign against the hijab is one of the hardest battles between Islam and infidelity. Those criminal infidels want the woman to give up her religion, and the first thing the woman gives up is her appearance and covering. This is followed by a series of greater abandonment of her religion. So the Muslim woman must be well-aware of this. As you know O Muslim sisters, the West only wants you as a good to sell, and erase with you the appearances of Islam. For Muslim women, the hijab is the first landmark of Islam, and in it there is your meekness, your purity and you covering.

The infidel Western world does not want you to commit to the hijab, because a woman's commitment to the hijab reveals the fall of their morals and their social degradation. The infidel West trades with women and considers a woman a cheap good. To them she is not protected or respects; rather, she is a means of business of obscenity. May Allah forbid from all that.

However, the covered Muslim woman is protected and respected in her house and outside as well, and she is the precious jewel.

As our Lord, the Great and Almighty, said: "O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters, and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks all over their bodies. That will be better, that they should be know so as not to be annoyed. And Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." [Al-Ahzab 33:59] So this is the word of Allah the Great and Almighty to His Messenger, peace and prayer of Allah be upon him, to speak to his wives and daughters and faithful women. Therefore, my faithful sis-
ters we must commit to the Shariah-accorded hijab, for it is good for us in this world and the next.

Second, I call upon my Muslim sisters to raise their sons to obey Allah and love jihad in the Cause of Allah. Incite the brothers, husbands and sons to defend the Muslim lands and their resources and to restore them from the invaders who invaded the lands of Islam and stole their resources. Increase the Ummah’s awareness to break free of those who want to ally with the enemies and sell the lands of Islam.

I call upon them also to help the mujahideen with prayer and money, and help the families of the wounded and imprisoned with money and donations to their children and women. They are in the direst need of those who would help them against the hardships of life. And I remind my sisters of the words of the Prophet: “Fasting is shelter. Charity removes sin as water extinguishes fire.”

I also remind them of his words, peace and prayer of Allah be upon him: “O women! Give charity, for I have seen you as the majority of those in hell.”

I confirm to my Muslim sisters around the world that the role of the Muslim woman is very important in Islamic work, for the women are sisters of men. The Muslim woman must work beside the man to defend her religion and land, so she must defend with herself. If she is not able then with her money. If she is not able that, then by calling in the name of her religion through the calling upon her Muslim sisters in the mosques, schools, institutions and homes. If she is not able that, then through the internet, in which she writes her call, sends it, and spreads the call of the mujahideen. It will arrive, Allah willing, and it will find open ears and hearts. So I beg of you O Muslim sister, do not tire or get bored from supporting our religion in any way you can.

Incidentally, a question has arisen about the role of women in the current jihad. So I say, and Allah will grant success: Jihad is an individual obligation on every Muslim man and woman, but the path of combat is not easy for a woman. It requires a Mahram [a male Muslim relative], because the woman must have a Mahram in her comings and goings. However, we must support our religion in many ways, so we put ourselves in the service of the mujahideen and do what they ask, whether it is helping with money or service, or giving them information or opinion, or participation in battle or even with martyrdom-seeking acts. There are many women who did martyrdom-seeking acts in Palestine, Iraq and Chechnya, and hurt the enemy and defeated them. So we ask Allah to accept them and make us follow them in goodness.

But our main role - that we ask Allah to accept from us - is to preserve the mujahideen in their sons, houses and secrets, and to help them in raising their sons well. Your emigrant sisters – praise be to Allah - are fulfilling a great role in this field; they are patient, steadfast and courageous, and do not care for the world but desire the hereafter. All this despite their hardships, the loss of their husbands, sons and fathers, and the lack of stability. Indeed, some of them have even been imprisoned, but your emigrant sisters are patient. Praise and grace be to Allah.

In conclusion, I remind my sisters that one’s death and fortune are written with Allah, and jihad does not hasten death nor does it detract fortune. Today, jihad has become an obligation, for the foreign enemy infidel has invaded the lands of the Muslims and the Muslim’s three holy sites are now under their control. They have also imposed agent apostate rulers upon the Muslims, and the scholars are unanimous about the necessity of removing an apostate.

As the martyr of Islam - as we consider him - Sheikh Abdul-lah Azzam - may Allah have mercy on him – said, jihad has become an obligation on the Ummah since the fall of Andalusia.

The leaders of the mujahideen call upon the Ummah to go to the battlefields of jihad. So my beloved sisters, we must not fall behind in these Shariah-accorded tasks, and to incite others to them.

I give you tidings that jihad is victorious, and the Western media, despite acknowledging the losses of the Crusaders and the Jews in many battlefields of the jihad, is still only showing part of the truth and hiding most of it. Look at the media of the mujahideen that brings the information from the battlefields and reveals the falsehood of the Western media. Here are before you living proof of the impotence of the Crusaders. After eight years since the start of the Crusade we are still – praise be to Allah - doing jihad from Chechnya to the Islamic Maghreb [North Africa]. So trust in victory from Allah, who says in His Holy Book: “Those who believe, fight in the Cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve, fight in the cause of idols. So fight you against the friends of Satan. Ever feeble indeed is the plot of Satan.”[An-Nisa’ 4:76]

I leave you in His preservation and care.

Our final call is praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and peace and prayer be upon our master Muhammad and his family and his Companions.

And peace be upon you, and Allah’s mercy and blessings.

Your sister in Allah, Umayma Hassan Ahmed Muhammad Hassan, the wife of your brother, Ayman al-Zawahiri

Pray for your mujahideen brothers.
Afghanistan

3/3 - The Afghan Taliban criticized the Afghan government for imposing restrictions on media coverage of militant attacks. In response, the group asked journalists to defy that order and continue to "accurately publish ground realities." They added that this measure taken by the Afghan government originates from the "anti-human" attitude of its American masters.

3/8 - The Afghan Taliban claimed a raid by five "martyrdom-seekers" in Khost province in eastern Afghanistan. The five men reportedly stormed a building of foreign and local intelligence and fired light and heavy weapons inside and launched RPG shells outside at a nearby building. One of the men carried out a suicide bombing, destroying part of the building. The Afghan Taliban added that the four remaining fighters returned to their positions, and that "independent correspondents" said that more than twenty foreign and local soldiers were killed or wounded.

3/15 - Al-Qaeda’s media arm, as-Sahab, released a video showing a BM rocket strike on an enemy air base in Khost province. Footage recorded from a far distance shows a rocket fired from a hill towards the base and hitting a target.

3/16 - Al-Emarah Media Productions, a media unit of the Afghan Taliban, produced a Pashto-language video of military activity by Afghan Taliban fighters in Wardak province. Footage shows the fighters launching rockets at NATO bases and detonating explosives on military vehicles of Afghan and NATO forces in Garez and Nirkh districts.

3/20 - Elif Media released a German- and Turkish-language video showing the results of its 2009 sacrificial animal campaign and thanks to donors from children and adult mujahideen in Afghanistan. Elif Media launched this campaign on November 1, 2009, asking individuals to donate to them $130, the cost of the sacrificial animal. These animals would be delivered to the mujahideen and families of "martyrs" in Afghanistan, and sacrificed for Eid al-Adha.

3/21 - The Afghan Taliban declared that its military strength has not changed in the wage of the US-led offensive in Marjah called Operation Moshtarak. The group said that contrary to enemy expectations, the operation in Marjah did not affect Afghan Taliban fighters as a whole, mentally or physically, and such can be evidenced in recent strikes in neighboring Kandahar province.

3/24 - As-Sahab released a video showing the bombing of an Afghan vehicle in Zabul province in southeastern Afghanistan. Footage shows an individual preparing explosive devices, and then cuts to a scene showing the detonation of explosives beneath the targeted vehicle.
the February 12 attack, in Khost district. Both men indicate their motivation for carrying out a suicide bombing as abuse of the Qur’an by US forces.

3/29- The Afghan Taliban claimed firing rockets at Bagram Airbase during US President Barack Obama’s departure from the base. They reported that three rockets fell inside the base, which is located in Parwan province in Afghanistan, north of Kabul. The attack, they noted, took place when Obama was departing the base for the US.

3/18- AQIM claimed 32 operations between December 5, 2009, and March 8, 2010, 31 of which were in Algeria and one in Nigeria. These attacks, they reported killed and wounded 112 enemy elements. The attacks in Algeria were carried out in Ain Defla, Bejaia, Biskra, Bouira, Boumerdes, Jijel, M’Sila, Medea, Setif and Tizi Ouzou provinces, and utilized explosive devices, guns, and mortar shells. In one attack, in Tizi Ouzou on January 19, AQIM claimed raiding a postal center and stealing a large sum of money.

Iraq

3/3- Ansar al-Islam released a video of bombing a US military vehicle near Tikrit in Salahaddin province. Footage shows the explosion and the activity afterwards of enemy forces clearing the area. Ansar al-Islam reported that the vehicle was damaged and that the footage captured the act of US forces concealing their losses.

3/4- The Mujahideen Army, an insurgent faction in Iraq, issued a response to an initiative proposed by Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) leader Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. Their response consisted of two documents and two videos. Baghdad had proposed a council of scholars to join insurgent factions and mediate differences. The Mujahideen Army reacted positively to the initiative, but took issue with ISI’s past attacks physically against its fighters and media-wise in accusing the group of forming and supporting Awakening councils. The two videos regard an individual identified as Abu Obeida, a former Mujahideen Army official who testified about the group’s fighting the ISI and forming Awakening councils in al-Basam and al-Taji. One of the two videos contains footage of an interview with Abu Obeida by the Mujahideen Army, providing background into his past “testimony” and explaining the reasons for his exaggerations and fabrications.

3/5- The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) declared a curfew throughout Iraq on March 7, the day of Iraqi elections. The curfew was to run from 6am until 6pm. The ISI explained that the elections bring only harm to Sunnis and give Shi’ites and their “masters” a mandate to exercise evil in Iraq and bring the country closer to Iranian control. The group also urged all who read the announcement to communicate it to others. They added that anyone who defies the curfew will “unfortunately expose himself to the anger of Allah and then to all kinds of weapons of the mujahideen.”

3/9- Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) expressed its support to teachers on strike in Algeria and sought to co-opt the cause. Its statement is addressed by the head of AQIM’s Political Committee, Abu Abdul Illah Ahmed. He vilified the Algerian government for its creating a wage system that favors the ruling class and subjugates lower social classes. The wage system, he wrote, makes educators live in penury so that they turn away from educating Muslims children. Abu Abdul Illah urged teachers to realize that their battle and the battle of the mujahideen is one.

3/12 – AQIM claimed a suicide bombings raid in Niger, naming it the “Invasion of Sa’ad Abu Sariya.” The raid happened on March 8. The suicide bomber, Nasir al-Shanqiri, a Mauritanian, struck with an explosives-laden vehicle a military barracks of Niger soldiers in the Tilwa area, and then other AQIM fighters raided the area. AQIM reported 6 dead and 20 injured, as well as AQIM fighters taking a large quantity of weapons and ammunitions from the battlefield.

Algeria

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Jihadi Activity by Region

3/10 - The ISI debuted a new video series from its media arm, al-Furqan Foundation, called, “They Will Rise with Life,” focusing on slain fighters and their wills. The first video in this series focused on three fighters – Abdul Ghani al-Muhajir, Abu Zaid al-Ansari, and Abu al-Jarrah al-Baqmi – who through their wills, each incite Muslims to participate in violent jihad. Between footage of will recitals are clips from slain militant officials inciting for the same. These officials include slain ISI spokesman, Muhareb al-Jabouri, and slain commander of the Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement in Somalia, Saleh al-Nabhan.

3/12 - Ansar al-Islam released a video showing an attack with a C5K rocket on a US Stryker vehicle in Diyala province. Footage shows a rocket launcher covered with a blanket and standing on a road, and then cuts to a scene showing a projectile striking the vehicle as it passes.

3/15 - The ISI claimed the March 3 triple suicide bombing in Baquba, the provincial capital of Diyala. Two suicide bombers detonated explosives-laden vehicles at Iraqi military and police buildings, and a third bomber detonated an explosive-vest in the lobby of a hospital where the victims arrived. According to media reports, at least 31 people were killed and 48 injured as a result of the blasts. The ISI, however, reported that “tens died and more than a hundred among the apostates were wounded…”

3/18 - Ansar al-Islam released a video showing a bombing that targeted an Iraqi troop transport vehicle in Mosul in Ninawa province. Footage shows the explosive detonating as the vehicle approaches, engulfing the area in smoke clouds.

3/21 - Ansar al-Islam remarked on the seventh anniversary of the war in Iraq, or as it called it, the “allied American-British aggression.” The war, they contend, was “masterminded” by Britain to provide for Israel’s security in the region, and it was Britain that “implicated” the US in the war. US military actions and political maneuverings during the past years in Iraq did not achieve the success the enemy had hoped, and this, the group argued, is due in part to their miscalculations on the ability to deter the mujahideen. Ansar al-Islam added that during the course of the war in Iraq, Muslims have come to believe in the necessity of an Islamic state and to view violent jihad as the only means to expose the frailty and weakness of Arab rulers.

3/29 - The ISI released a video focusing on the coordinates strikes in Baghdad on August 19, 2009 – an offensive that they called the “Invasion of the Captive.” The 8/19 attacks consisted of three suicide bombings and a number of mortar strikes targeted Iraqi government ministries and other tar-
gets, and reportedly killed at least 101 people and wounded at least 565. The video does not feature the ISI fighters involved in the attack, but instead focuses on justifying the attack and vilifying Iraqi officials.

Pakistan

3/10- A jihadist on the al-Fallujah and Ansar al-Mujahideen jihadist forums reported that a fellow forum member and military commander, “Ghazwan al-Yemeni,” was killed with three other individuals on March 9. Additional information that followed indicated that Ghazwan was Saddam Hussein Ali Ismail al-Husami, and the three men with him were killed in Miranshah, North Waziristan, as a result of a drone strike. The three men are Abu Jamila al-Kuwaiti, Abu Zahra al-Maghribi, and Akrama al-Punjabi.

3/23– The Shabaab reported destroying more graves and tombs in Banaadir region, between March 24 and March 25. They emphasized the determination of its men to destroy the “polytheist landmarks.”

3/25- The Shabaab claimed downing an enemy aircraft in Marka, the capital of Lower Shabelle region in Somalia. The helicopter, the group reported, was shot down in the port city on March 30 after its fighters had ambushed it. The aircraft reportedly came from the direction of the waters where “Crusader” naval ships allegedly search for pirates.

3/31- The Shabaab claimed an attack on Somali forces in Shibis district in Banaadir region. They said that Shabaab fighters managed to take control of the district building and to kill a number of enemy elements.

Somalia

3/1- The Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement announced its banning the World Food Program (WFP) from operating in Somalia, citing the “detrimental effect” that organization has on Somali Muslims. The announcement came from the group’s Office for Supervising the Affairs of Foreign Agencies (OSAFA). It declared that all Somalis currently contracted to or working with WFTP were instructed to terminate their contracts, and anyone who defies the order will be deemed an accomplice to WFP’s “disingenuous” scheme and will be treated accordingly.

3/23– The Shabaab reported that it destroyed “polytheist” graves and tombs in Karan district in the Somali capital, Mog-