HOMEGROWN ISLAMIC EXTREMISM: THREE INDICATORS OF A U.S.-TARGETED ATTACK

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Following the horrific events which occurred on September 11, 2001, the U.S. has become the target of an increased number of domestic attack plots involving homegrown Islamic extremists. In particular, the years between 2008 through 2010 revealed an uptick in U.S.-based attack plots, including three distinct plots advanced by U.S. persons Bryant Neal Vinas, Najibullah Zazi, Zarein Ahmedzay, Adis Medunjanin, and Faisal Shahzad. Each of these five homegrown Islamic extremists participated in attack plots which targeted the people and infrastructure of New York City. Through an analysis of existing scholarship on terrorism, U.S. court documents, online videos, official government press releases, and news reports regarding the three separate homeland plots involving Vinas, Zazi, Ahmedzay, Medunjanin, and Shahzad this thesis demonstrates that each of the three attack plans shared three key similarities. The homegrown extremists relied on the use of the Internet, a support network, and knowledge gained at Pakistan-based terrorist camps in order to advance separate international plots to harm the U.S. As such these three critical commonalities serve as strong indicators of attack planning against the U.S. In order to protect the nation from future harm, homeland security experts must pay attention to and counter these three
critical elements as homegrown extremists and their supporters will continue to pose a grave danger to the safety and security of the United States.
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INTRODUCTION

Little more than ten years have passed since September 11, 2001, the day when coordinated groups of nineteen Islamic terrorists hijacked four separate planes which caused the deaths of thousands of Americans and damage to three of the country’s most iconic buildings in New York City and Washington, D.C. Since that horrific day, America has remained on high alert and increased its national security strategies in order to combat and prevent another devastating attack on U.S. soil; especially an attack perpetrated by Islamic terrorists who have continued to avow hatred towards this country. Whereas the operatives who took part in the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 spent a considerable amount of time outside of the United States, a review of U.S.-based attack plots hatched during the last decade reveals the increasing involvement of “homegrown extremists.”¹ The relatively new term

homegrown extremists, describes a category of individuals who possess both a violent extremist ideology of hatred towards the United States and have spent a significant amount of time within the nation’s borders. The term homegrown extremists can be defined even further to describe a specific category of individuals-homegrown Islamic extremists-who justify their violent extremist ideology through a radical interpretation of the Qu’ran.²

Homegrown Islamic extremists continue to pose a threat to the United States not only because their religious beliefs support violence against Americans and America itself, but also because these individuals possess U.S. person status which allows them to freely travel in and out of the country or remain in the country for extended periods of time without the threat of deportation or removal. Moreover, while in country, homegrown Islamic extremists gain familiarity with the infrastructure, laws, and

notes that 30-odd attempted terrorist plots against the United States or American installations abroad occurred between September 11, 2001 and February 2010; and Schanzer, Kurtzman, and Moosa note 139 Muslim-Americans committed acts of terrorism-related violence or were prosecuted for terrorism-related offenses that involved some element of violence between September 11, 2001 and December 31, 2009. The above-noted authors all agree that America experienced a markedly high number of homegrown extremist events in the year of 2009. Bjelopera and Randol state that between May 2009 and November 2010, 22 arrests were made as a result of homegrown jihadist-inspired plots while Bergen and Hoffman note 11 jihadist attacks, jihadist-inspired plots or efforts were made by Americans to travel overseas to obtain terrorist training during 2009. Jenkins notes that the 13 cases of domestic radicalization in 2009 marked an increase in radicalization, up from an average of four cases per year from 2002 to 2008. Jenkins further notes that in 2009, there was also a marked increase in the number of individuals involved. Only 81 of the 125 persons identified were indicted for jihadist-related crimes between 2002 and 2008 while in 2009 alone, 42 individuals were indicted. Schanzer, Kurtzman, and Moosa did not offer a specific statistic for incidences occurring in 2009 but state a spike of incidents and arrests occurred in that year.

vulnerabilities of the country. The first-hand knowledge and real-time intelligence gained by homegrown Islamic extremists and their network of supporters provides several advantages to include: continuous opportunities to refine attack operations, specific details regarding target locations, and additional insight to avoid scrutiny from U.S. and allied law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Not only can homegrown Islamic extremists independently carry out attack plans, they possess unique insights and offer advantages to any supportive foreign terrorist organization aimed at harming the United States.

Of the previous ten years, the period of time between 2008 and 2010 revealed a rise in the number of domestic attack plots largely attempted by homegrown Islamic extremists. The three years between the beginning of 2008 until the end of 2010 bore witness to three separate attack plans involving homegrown Islamic extremists Bryant Neal Vinas; Najibullah Zazi, Zarein Ahmedzay, and Adis Medunjanin; and Faisal Shahzad. Similarly, all three of these plots aimed to attack the people and infrastructure within the state of New York. An examination of the three cases involving the aforementioned homegrown Islamic extremists will reveal the existence of three key similarities: the use of the Internet, existence of a radical-minded support network and attendance at a militant training facility. Further comparisons of these separate cases will demonstrate that the presence of any one of these factors, especially a combination of all

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3 See Footnote 1 for various studies which all revealed an increase in homegrown terrorist plots to include homegrown terrorist plots advanced by Islamic extremists during 2009 and 2010.
three factors encompassed within a single or group of homegrown Islamic extremists, serve as strong predictors of attack planning against the United States.

Combining analyses of court documents, press releases, video footage, news reports, and the work of established scholars, the proceeding chapters will explore each key predictor in greater detail to highlight the importance they play in the progression of homegrown terrorist plots. Offering a general understanding of each attack plot, Chapter 1 provides background for each case study which remains necessary to adequately analyze the distinct attack plots advanced by Vinas; Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin; and Shahzad. This section also briefly reveals the existence of the three key similarities amongst the three separate cases of homegrown Islamic extremism. The next chapter delves into terrorists’ use of the Internet, specifically as a medium in which these individuals review jihadist material and/or communicate with like-minded individuals to advance terrorism operations which target the U.S. Following a discussion of terrorists’ use of the Internet, the third chapter of this thesis explores the existence of social/support networks and reveals the particular types of assistance these contacts offer to U.S. operatives and the operatives’ terrorist groups. Specifically, the third chapter examines the social/support networks that aided Vinas; Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin; and Shahzad and shows the numerous ways in which the support networks provided emotional, operational and even financial support. A portion of Chapter 3 also discusses how support networks often facilitated entry into terrorist training camps, a topic which leads into the following chapter. The fourth and final chapter fully explores the third essential element of a homegrown extremist-driven plot-training at a terrorist camp.
Broken down into two sections, the fourth chapter highlights two common occurrences which take place at terrorist camps and the dangerous exchanges that occur at these training facilities which advance homeland plots. Specifically, the first half of the fourth chapter examines the instruction provided at terrorist training camps and the ways in which these training courses prepare potential operatives for attacks. The second half of this final chapter also shows how training camps behave as a setting in which operatives interact with terrorist planners and combine forces to devise specific plots against the U.S.

Collectively, Chapters 2-4 will demonstrate that the three commonalities of internet, a support network and terrorist training serve as critical signposts to pay attention to when assessing and identifying potential homegrown Islamic terrorist activity. While the attack plots involving the five previously-mentioned homegrown individuals shared other likenesses, these three particular factors played central roles in the advancement of three, separate U.S.-targeted attack plots. Importantly, this thesis will not focus on these three elements in an attempt to explain how or why individuals become extremists, instead this examination intends to highlight warning signs of extremist activity specifically in relation to U.S. attack planning. As evidenced through the case studies of Vinas, Zazi, Ahmedzay, Medunjanin and Shahzad, these three specific similarities deserve further scrutiny and exploration in order to protect the people and infrastructure of the United States. In light of the analysis offered in Chapters 2-4, the conclusion section will summarize the importance of each key indicator of the three attack plots and suggest countermeasures to explore. Ultimately, the final chapter will
assert that the recognition of the three, aforementioned attack predictors, and thus enactment of tactics to combat these elements, remains necessary for the disruption of future domestic attacks.
CHAPTER 1
THREE CASE HISTORIES OF HOMEGROWN ISLAMIC TERRORISTS

Bryant Neal Vinas

Out of the three referenced plots, only one involved a U.S.-born, American citizen – Bryant Neal Vinas.¹ Born on December 4, 1982 in Queens, New York to Juan Vinas, an engineer from Peru, and Maria Luisa from Argentina, Bryant Neal Vinas grew up in the suburb of Medford, New York.² Vinas, raised as a Catholic, enjoyed several hobbies including piano, guitar, Japanese anime and baseball.³ However, Vinas’ home life changed at the age of fourteen when his father and mother separated.⁴ After the separation of his parents, those close to Vinas, including his mother, noticed Vinas’ anger and frustration due to his altered home life. Vinas’ personality switched from a “sweet, charming, young child with a kind heart,” to a rebellious and disrespectful teenager.⁵ Eventually, unable to handle Vinas, his mother relinquished custody of him and Vinas went to live with his father.⁶

² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid.
Shortly after Vinas graduated from Longwood High School, al-Qa’ida hijackers attacked the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Following this monumental event, Vinas enlisted in the U.S. Army which sent him to infantry training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. From March 12, 2002 to April 11, 2002, Vinas served in the U.S. Army until the service discharged him, for reasons not publicly disclosed. Upon his return to Long Island, Vinas began to spend time with Victor Kuilan, the half brother of a high school friend. Kuilan introduced Vinas to the Muslim faith and provided him an English language version of the Qu’ran. Quickly embracing the teachings of the Muslim faith, Vinas converted and became a follower of Islam. He then began attending the Islamic Association of Long Island Masjid in Selden, New York.

As time progressed, Vinas’ adherence to the Islamic faith deepened and he immersed himself with any materials, both on the Internet and offline, which enhanced his knowledge of his newfound faith in Islamic teachings. Vinas’ affinity for the Islamic religion as well as his regular attendance at the mosque in Selden, New York led him to meet other mosque members, including Ahmad Zarinni, the son of Afghan parents.

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
who had immigrated to Selden. Zarinni, a member of a New York-based extremist group called the Islamic Thinkers Society introduced Vinas to another fellow member named Ahmer Qayyum; who, at the time, had also lived in New York. As the bonds of friendship deepened amongst Vinas, Qayyum and Zarinni, so did Vinas’ extremist ideals. According to Acevedo and Kuilan, Vinas increasingly expressed his anger over U.S. foreign policy, including U.S. support for Israel. Vinas also came to believe that the U.S. was at war with Islam. Eventually, all of these anti-U.S. sentiments compelled Vinas’ to desire to travel to Pakistan to fight with jihadists— a desire which Vinas eventually satisfied.

According to travel records and counterterrorism officials, Qayyum who eventually relocated to Pakistan, helped guide Vinas to Pakistan. On September 12, 2007, Vinas landed in Qayyum’s hometown of Lahore, Pakistan and after a couple days, Qayyum joined Vinas. Although Qayyum denies having actively assisted Vinas’ intent to join jihadists in their fight against U.S. troops in Afghanistan, counterterrorism officials assert that Qayyum served as the “fixer” who eventually introduced Vinas to individuals who would then guide him to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
(FATA) of Pakistan. From there, Vinas, along with other militants, agreed to participate in a raid against American troops in Afghanistan. According to Vinas, planes circulating overhead had averted the scheduled raid and desiring more militant instruction, Vinas traveled back to Peshawar, Pakistan. Later after several failed attempts, he connected with a militant who facilitated travel to North Waziristan, Pakistan to meet al-Qa’ida militants.

In March 2008, Vinas became a member of al-Qa’ida. Between March 2008 to July 2008, Vinas, along with other trainees, undertook al-Qa’ida training courses. He also met fighters and leaders amongst al-Qa’ida’s ranks as well as members of other terrorist groups. In September 2008, after having completed training and waiting for several weeks, Vinas, along with a group of other militants, received orders to travel to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to launch a missile attack on an American base. Vinas

\[\text{\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.}\]
later testified that he “took part in firing rockets at an American base … but the rockets missed and the attack failed.”

Although the attack had not achieved al-Qa’ida’s desired results, Vinas had proven to al-Qa’ida’s leaders his intent to inflict harm against Americans. According to Vinas, after the planned rocket attack, “I consulted with a senior Al Qa’ida leader and provided detailed information about the operation of the Long Island Rail Road system which I knew because I had ridden the railroad on so many occasions.” Further, Vinas explained, “The purpose of providing information was to help plan a bomb attack of the Long Island Rail Road system.” However, whatever plans al-Qa’ida may have had involving Vinas disappeared when he returned to Peshawar, Pakistan where Pakistani security services arrested him and later transferred him into American custody. On November 22, 2008, Vinas was secretly arraigned in a Brooklyn, New York federal court on terrorism charges. After an initial plea of not guilty, Vinas later agreed to cooperate with U.S. investigators and provided valuable, actionable intelligence regarding

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.


numerous al-Qa’ida militants and other extremists in Pakistan’s FATA.\textsuperscript{31} Later, on January 28, 2009, in another private session in a federal court in Brooklyn, New York, Vinas pled guilty to all charges against him which included: conspiracy to murder U.S. nationals, conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, and receiving militant training from a foreign terrorist organization.\textsuperscript{32} Vinas faces a maximum sentence of life in prison but may receive a lower sentence in exchange for cooperation with U.S. authorities.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{Najibullah Zazi, Zarein Ahmedzay and Adis Medunjanin}

Like Vinas, several other homegrown Islamic extremists spent September 2008 in the FATA of Pakistan. According to two superceding indictments returned by federal grand juries in the Eastern District of New York, on approximately August 28, 2008, three friends, a resident of Aurora, Colorado and legal permanent resident of the U.S. from Afghanistan-Najibullah Zazi; a resident of Queens, N.Y. and naturalized U.S. citizen from Afghanistan -Zarein Ahmedzay; and another resident of Queens, N.Y. and naturalized U.S. citizen from Bosnia -Adis Medunjanin departed Newark Liberty


International Airport en route for Peshawar, Pakistan. After having spent a considerable amount of time in New York, the childhood friends who met in Queens, New York, arrived in the FATA, Pakistan with the hopes of joining the Taliban in Afghanistan to fight against the United States and allied forces.

However, according to both Zazi and Ahmedzay, the three were turned away at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and instead recruited by an al-Qa’ida facilitator in Peshawar, Pakistan. From there, the group agreed to travel to Waziristan for militant

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training where they obtained instruction on the operation of several types of weapons. While in training, the three also agreed with al-Qa’ida leaders to conduct suicide attacks in New York City. The discussions with al-Qa’ida members included the timing of attacks and targeting of specific locations, with an emphasis on attacking well-known sites to inflict high numbers of casualties. Moreover, in preparation for the planned attacks, Zazi received additional training from al-Qa’ida in the construction of explosives.

Federal investigations show that following the completion of their training, Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin returned to the United States to carry out the commitment.
they had forged with al-Qa’ida leaders. From January 2009 through September 2009, Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin undertook coordinated steps to prepare for suicide attacks in New York City, set to occur sometime during the month of Ramadan which, for the year of 2009, fell between August 22, 2009 and September 20, 2009. Following Zazi’s return to the U.S., in January 2009, he accessed bomb-making notes—which he had taken during his militant training—from emails that he had sent to himself while in Pakistan. He also conducted research to locate stores, where he would eventually purchase and experiment with ingredients for the explosives that the group planned to use during their attacks. Meanwhile, following Ahmedzay’s return to New York, he evaluated potential bombing targets in Manhattan.

As the plot developed, the group eventually decided to attack the Manhattan subway system. From September 8-9, 2009, after having conducted several experiments using explosives ingredients, Zazi drove from Denver to New York, for the

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42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
second time, with explosives materials and met up with Ahmedzay and Medunjanin.\textsuperscript{47} However, during this second trip, Zazi and Ahmedzay intended to obtain and assemble the remaining components of the bombs which they and Medunjanin hoped to use to carry out the subway attack. As the group finalized their plans, they narrowed down the attack timeframe to occur between September 14, 2009 – September 16, 2009.\textsuperscript{48} Shortly after Zazi arrived in New York from Denver for the second time, the group realized that U.S. law enforcement had knowledge of their plot to achieve an attack in New York.\textsuperscript{49} Abandoning their plans, the three disposed of the explosive materials and Zazi quickly returned to his home in Denver.\textsuperscript{50} U.S. law enforcement agents arrested the three shortly after they disbanded.\textsuperscript{51}


\textsuperscript{49}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid.

On February 22, 2010, Zazi pled 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-Qa’ida. Zazi currently faces a maximum statutory sentence of life in prison for the first two counts of the superseding information in addition to fifteen years in prison for the third count included in the superseding document. On February 24, 2010, a federal grand jury returned a superseding indictment against Ahmedzay and Medunjanin charging the two with five terrorism violations regarding their alleged roles in the Manhattan subway plot. On April 23, 2010, Ahmedzay pled guilty to the same aforementioned violations pertaining to Zazi as well as charges that he received military-type training from al-Qa’ida and making false statements to federal agents. Ahmedzay also faces a sentence of up to life

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in prison for his role in the plot.\textsuperscript{56} Unlike Zazi and Ahmedzay, Medunjanin has not pled guilty to any charges regarding his participation in the plot.\textsuperscript{57} Medunjanin remains in U.S. law enforcement custody awaiting trial.\textsuperscript{58} Zazi and Ahmedzay are awaiting sentencing.

\section*{Faisal Shahzad}

Similar to the aforementioned homegrown Islamic terrorists, Pakistan-born, naturalized U.S. citizen Faisal Shahzad aspired to conduct a large-scale, targeted attack against New York City. Though unlike his predecessors, Shahzad received assistance from a different terrorist group other than al-Qa’ida; Shahzad obtained the help of a Pakistan-based terrorist group known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).\textsuperscript{59} However, Faisal Shahzad had not always harbored hatred towards the United States. In fact, Shahzad initially traveled to the U.S. not to conduct an attack, but to obtain an education.\textsuperscript{60} Born in Karachi, Pakistan, Faisal Shahzad spent ten years in the U.S. before

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.


attempting to conduct a U.S.-based attack.\textsuperscript{61} During his ten-year stay in the U.S., Shahzad attended and graduated from the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut, worked for the Elizabeth Arden Company, and even became a naturalized U.S. citizen in May 2009. However, in June 2009, only one month after receiving U.S. citizenship, Shahzad left for Pakistan for the last time—“trying to figure out a way to get to the Taliban.”\textsuperscript{62}

Shahzad spent six months with his parents in Peshawar, Pakistan until December 9, 2009 when with the help of several Pakistan-based associates, Shahzad traveled to Waziristan, Pakistan to join TTP.\textsuperscript{63} From December 9, 2009 through January 2010, Shahzad lived in Waziristan with members of TTP who “provided him with five days of instruction on bomb-making and bomb detonation” in addition to “approximately $5,000 in cash.”\textsuperscript{64} Additionally, following his February 2, 2011 return to the U.S., Shahzad utilized his own savings as well as funds sent by TTP associates in furtherance of an

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.

attack against the Times Square area of New York City. Upon his final return to the U.S. from Pakistan, Shahzad rented an apartment in Bridgeport, Connecticut and maintained contact with his Pakistan-based network of TTP associates to continue to develop and receive support for a U.S.-based attack. Specifically, Shahzad’s Pakistan-based TTP associates provided cash, on two separate occasions, and exchanged info about the target site of Times Square as well as the method in which Shahzad would carry out the attack.

As the attack plans progressed, Shahzad took deliberate steps to prepare himself and the devices which he intended to utilize. In March of 2010, Shahzad purchased a semi-automatic rifle for use in the event that U.S. authorities attempted to attack or capture him. He also traveled to a firing range in Connecticut to practice utilizing a firearm. During the following month of April, he purchased components for explosives

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67 Ibid., 23.

68 Ibid., 8.

69 Ibid.
devices from various stores in Connecticut and Pennsylvania as well as a Nissan Pathfinder vehicle through an advertisement on the Internet. Shortly before the attempted attack, Shahzad assembled the bombs at his Connecticut residence, intending to use the explosive devices against the crowds and infrastructure of the finalized target of Times Square, New York. During the late afternoon of May 1, 2010, Shahzad loaded the improvised explosive devices into the rear compartment of the Nissan Pathfinder, gathered his semi-automatic rifle into a laptop computer bag and drove to Manhattan. Parking the Nissan Pathfinder near the southwest corner of 45th Street and 7th Avenue in Times Square, New York, Shahzad attempted to detonate the improvised explosive devices inside the vehicle. Expecting the devices to explode shortly after, Shahzad departed Times Square with his rifle hidden in the laptop bag and returned to his residence in Connecticut by train. Despite Shahzad’s objective, the Nissan Pathfinder did not explode and found inside lay multiple propane tanks, gasoline canisters, fertilizer,

70 Ibid.


72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.
fireworks, clocks, wiring and other items as well as keys to Shahzad’s other vehicle, which was located at his residence in Shelton, Connecticut.75

Following his departure from Times Square, Shahzad maintained communications with his Pakistan-based TTP associates as well as media reports of the attempted attack.76 On May 3, 2011, two days after the attempted attack, with the idea that U.S. authorities suspected him as the perpetrator of the attempted Times Square plot, Shahzad purchased an airline ticket to Pakistan.77 With the intent to flee the country, he then drove from Connecticut to the JFK Airport and boarded a flight bound for Dubai, UAE, in hopes of catching another flight to the ultimate desired destination of Pakistan.78 However, Shahzad’s plane did not leave the runway as scheduled and U.S. authorities arrested...


Shahzad before he could depart from the United States. Following Shahzad’s arrest, he later revealed that he had taken his rifle with him and drove his other vehicle to JFK International Airport prior to his attempted departure from the country. During Mirandized interviews with U.S. authorities, Shahzad admitted to all the aforementioned offenses, to include his acquisition of militant training in Pakistan, his attempt to detonate the Nissan Pathfinder in Times Square, New York, as well as his intent to attempt another detonation had authorities not arrested him.

On June 21, 2010, Shahzad pled guilty in a Manhattan Federal Courtroom to all ten counts of the ten-count indictment filed against him in relation to the attempted May 1, 2010 bombing. Several of the counts listed in the indictment included various conspiracy offenses, attempted acts of terrorism and attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction.

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destruction. On October 5, 2010, the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York, the FBI and the New York Police Department announced the sentencing of Shahzad to life in prison for his attempted detonation of a car bomb in Times Square.\textsuperscript{84}


\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
CHAPTER 2
TERRORISTS’ USE OF THE INTERNET

The Internet has become a useful channel of communication, linking terrorists and their followers, spreading propaganda and instructions, launching psychological scare campaigns, and networking terrorist groups and organizations.

—Gabriel Weimann, Terror on the Internet

Vinas, Zazi, Ahmedzay, Medunjanin, and Shahzad all benefitted from use of the Internet to support their violent goals. Although the homegrown Islamic terrorists did not utilize the Internet in the exact same manner, each of the independent case studies adds to the growing body of scholarship centered on the ways in which terrorists have capitalized on the Internet to further their radical aims. Gabriel Weimann, a professor of communication as well as an analyst of terrorism and the mass media, categorizes terrorists’ use of the Internet as either communicative or instrumental.1 Similar to Weimann, James J.F. Forest, Director of Terrorism Studies and Assistant Professor of Political Science at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, agrees that terrorists obtain motivational and operational knowledge through several mediums including the Internet.2 Although both Weimann and Forest use different terms, such as communicative versus motivational or instrumental versus operational, the authors use the terms to describe

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synonymous ideas; both of these authors agree that terrorists turn to the Internet for ideological as well as actual support for their terroristic goals.

Terrorists’ use of the Internet for motivational or ideological purposes concentrates on two related objectives: the spread of extremist propaganda and recruitment of potential members. Conversely, while terrorist groups use the Internet to disseminate their ideas and attract prospective recruits, prospective recruits access the Internet to learn more about terrorist groups and their ideas. To spread their ideas, Forest asserts that the Internet affords terrorist groups the ability to utilize a myriad of online tools to include “audio and video streams, downloadable leaflets, discussion boards, and links to hundreds of other extremist sites,” which display “truth mixed with exaggeration” and “some blatant deception.”\(^3\) Through the Internet, the interested computer user gains exposure to terrorist groups’ “online propaganda campaign” to “indoctrinate,” and “recruit” supporters as well as “incite violence and terrorize.”\(^4\)

Certainly, the use of the Internet contributed to the ideological evolution of homegrown terrorist Bryant Neal Vinas and as statements from Alex Acevedo, a close high school friend of Vinas demonstrate, following Vinas’ conversion to Islam, Vinas’ online activities signaled an increasing belief towards Islamic-extremist ideas and behavior. CNN’s interviews of Acevedo noted, “Websites contributed to Vinas’

\(^3\) Forest, ed., Training, 14.

\(^4\) Ibid.
emerging conviction that the United States was at war with Islam.”⁵ Not only did Vinas’ internet usage contribute to the adoption of a false mindset regarding the U.S. government’s policies against those of the Muslim faith, his online activities introduced him to other fallacies which he later embraced. Despite having originally “felt proud”⁶ to have enlisted in the Army following the attacks against the U.S. on September 11, 2001, Vinas later became “obsessed with online conspiracy theories such as one that said the United States, not al Qaeda, was responsible for 9/11.”⁷ As evidenced by Acevedo’s statements, Vinas’ online searches revealed a relatively sympathetic stance towards Islamic terrorist groups such as al-Qa’ida and his fervent internet usage signaled an escalating shift towards an extremist mindset.

Acevedo’s statements exhibited not only the role that the Internet can contribute in promoting radical Islamic ideology, but also the way in which the Internet can encourage actions which follow the same radical Islamic ideology. Acevedo revealed the influence that the Internet can have on a terrorist’s behavior after recalling an incident where Vinas had watched a YouTube video which alleged that the “Federal Emergency Management Agency was planning to roundup Americans and place them in

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⁷ Ibid.
concentration camps.”\(^8\) The viewing of the video from YouTube, an online video sharing website, fed into Vinas’ growing Islamic-extremist mindset since according to Acevedo, Vinas “became convinced that Muslims would be the target”\(^9\) of FEMA’s supposed detention practices. Moreover, Acevedo believed Vinas was “scared eventually he would be put in a concentration camp because of the way he thought and it [YouTube video] was telling him to get out, get out of the country.”\(^10\) The information Vinas found on the Internet as well as the perceived message he received through the YouTube video clearly affected Vinas’ later actions, since, as previously mentioned, in 2007, he ultimately departed from the U.S. for Pakistan to join the Taliban and fight against U.S. troops.\(^11\)

In addition to Vinas’ close friend, Acevedo, U.S. counterterrorism investigators also noted the importance which Internet usage can play in fostering Vinas’ progression into a terrorist operative. Mitch Silber, the director of intelligence analysis at the New York Police Department stated, “There’s still a lot of questions about precisely what he [Vinas] was doing on the internet, but certainly there’s evidence to believe that he [was]

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\(^8\) Ibid.

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Ibid.

getting encouragement on these websites that jihad was permissible.”  

Further, an unnamed, counterterrorism official specifically noted the effect that online activities played in fostering Vinas’ extremist behavior when noting that Vinas had “largely turned toward jihad on the Internet.”  

Moreover, in addition to assertions made by the aforementioned counterterrorism investigators, Vinas’ confiscated computer revealed the influence of the Internet as exploitation of his computer showed he had visited “jihadist websites” before departing from the U.S. to Pakistan.

While the specific websites which Vinas had visited remains unknown to the public, details about Faisal Shahzad’s online activities provides further proof as to the powerful effect that the Internet can have on a potential terrorist operative. In particular, Shahzad viewed propaganda on the web of which Forest characterizes as “a steady stream of testimonials from well-known persons respected by the target subject” which “transforms his thinking about the world.”  

According to U.S. authorities close to the investigation of Shahzad, but who spoke on condition of anonymity, Shahzad viewed online sermons and internet videos of two well-known Islamic clerics- now-deceased,

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American-born, former al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) leader, Anwar al-Awlaki and Jamaican convert, Abdullah Faisal.\textsuperscript{16} Both Anwar al-Awlaki and Abdullah Faisal have openly espoused sentiments supportive of violent jihad against the perceived enemies of Muslims. According to U.S. authorities, the words of both of these radical-minded Islamic media figures inspired Shahzad to take action against the U.S.\textsuperscript{17} Specifically, Shahzad noted that Awlaki and Faisal were “the only two clerics out there who have got it right.”\textsuperscript{18}

In the same manner that U.S. investigators, those close to terrorists, as well as terrorists themselves disclosed the ways in which the Internet impacted an ideological progression towards extremism, these groups of individuals have also revealed the methods in which terrorists utilize the Internet to complete instrumental tasks in support of terrorism. Author and terrorism scholar, Forest notes the increase from historical


\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.
“terrorist-oriented uses of the web” which show a “one-way dissemination of ideology” towards a “limited (but growing) number of online sources which offer “means by which motivated terrorists can acquire the know-how to carry out a successful attack.”19 The case studies involving Zazi, Ahmedzay, Medunjanin, and Shahzad not only underscore Forest’s assessment that terrorists have increasingly relied on the Internet to accomplish operational tasks, the studies also reveal that these homegrown terrorists used the Internet to communicate with like-minded extremists who possessed the instrumental knowledge and guidance to support a specific, pre-planned attack against the U.S. More and more, terrorists, including the aforementioned Islamic homegrown extremists, have capitalized on the Internet’s ability to allow back and forth communication amongst each other. These terrorists have advanced beyond the observation or dissemination of terrorist rhetoric and effectively used the Internet to transfer and discuss operational information in furtherance of their violent aims.

For example, according to court filings, plea proceedings, as well as official U.S. Department of Justice releases involving Zazi, Ahmedzay, Medunjanin, and their co-conspirators, Zazi used email to plan and coordinate several details of the 2009 attempted attack against the New York subway system.20 Specifically, statements from Zazi himself demonstrated the specific ways in which he utilized the Internet to access and obtain specific information regarding commonly-used devices for a terrorist attack—

19 Forest, ed., Training, 14.

explosives. During a February 22, 2010 court appearance, after receipt of “more training from Al-Qa’ida about how to construct the explosives for attack in the United States,” Zazi noted, “I took notes on the training and later emailed a summary of the notes to myself, so that I could access them in the U.S.”21 Zazi also admitted that following his January 2009 return to the U.S., he again utilized the Internet and “beginning around June 2009, I accessed my bomb-making notes and began researching where to find the ingredients for the explosives…I then used the bomb-making notes to construct explosive [sic] for the detonators in Denver.”22

In addition to Zazi’s own statements, several court documents filed within the jurisdictions of Colorado and New York revealed detailed information as to how Zazi and his co-conspirators used the Internet in support of their attempted attack on New York’s subway system. Within an affidavit filed in support of a complaint and arrest warrant for Najibullah Zazi in the District of Colorado, FBI Agent Garret Gumbinner attested that as a result of a legally-authorized search of Zazi’s rental car, occurring on or about September 11, 2009, FBI agents found Zazi’s laptop computer which revealed a, “jpeg image of nine-pages of handwritten notes. The handwritten notes contain[ed] formulations and instructions regarding the manufacture and handling of initiating explosives, main explosives charges, explosives detonators and components of a fuzing


22 Ibid.
The same affidavit noted that during an interview of Zazi which occurred on or about September 16, 2009 in Denver, Colorado, the FBI specifically questioned him about his email accounts to which Zazi listed three specific email accounts. Based on the similarity of email addresses and the spelling of the passwords for all three of the specific email accounts which Zazi provided, FBI Agent Garrett Gumbinner, believed that Zazi controlled all three of the specific accounts which received the aforementioned handwritten notes by email on early December 2008. The FBI agent’s assertion that Zazi emailed himself explosive instructions corresponded with the aforementioned statements made by Zazi during a later plea proceeding which occurred on February 2, 2010.

In addition to Zazi’s own statements as well as the affidavit filed in support of the complaint and arrest warrant of Zazi, a Memorandum of Law in Support of the Government’s Motion for a Permanent order of Detention for Zazi filed by the U.S. Attorney’s Office of the Eastern District of New York, provided more details regarding Zazi’s specific use of the Internet to support the New York subway plot. Similar to the


24 Ibid., 7-8.

25 Ibid., 8.

affidavit, this memo asserted Zazi’s association with three email accounts (“Email Account 1,” “Email Account 2” and “Email Account 3”) that “were used in furtherance of Zazi’s efforts to manufacture explosive devices.” The memo further cites the same “nine pages of handwritten explosives notes” that agents found during “a consent search of two of the three accounts.” According to the memo, the consent search produced “jpeg images of nine pages of handwritten notes containing formulations and instructions regarding the manufacture and handling of different kinds of explosives.” Again matching Zazi’s own statements regarding his email use while in Pakistan as well as the affidavit in support of the complaint and arrest warrant of Zazi, the court memo noted that “based on email header information, these images had been emailed to Email Accounts 2 and 3 in early December 2008, while Zazi was in Pakistan … [T]he same notes were transferred onto Zazi’s laptop computer in 2009.”

The consent search of Zazi’s computer produced specific notes which Zazi emailed himself and later referred to in order to determine the required ingredients and necessary amounts of chemicals to produce the explosives he, Medunjanin, and Ahmedzay intended to use in their attack. According to details within the “Memorandum


28 Ibid., 4.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.
of Law in Support of the Government’s Motion for a Permanent order of Detention for Zazi,” Zazi’s notes contained “specifications for, among other explosives, the explosive Triacetone Triperoxide (‘TATP’) ... The handwritten notes [also] mention that acetone is found in nail polish remover and that hydrogen peroxide can be found in ‘Hair Salon – 20-30%.’ The notes discuss formulations for mixing hydrogen peroxide with flour, and list ghee oil as a type of fuel that can be used to help initiate the explosive device.”31 The search of Zazi’s computer also reflected that he “transferred the bomb-making instruction notes onto his laptop and/or accessed the notes on his laptop in June and July 2009.”32

Further exploitation of Zazi’s laptop revealed that Zazi not only used the Internet to access these explosives, he also utilized the Internet to access lab safety procedures for explosives experimentation and sought retail outlets to purchase the necessary ingredients for the explosives devices he, Medunjanin, and Ahmedzay intended to use in their attacks against the New York subway system. Specifically, FBI exploitation of Zazi’s laptop also reflected that Zazi “conducted several internet searches for hydrochloric acid during the summer of 2009, and ‘bookmarked’ a site on two different browsers for ‘Lab Safety for Hydrochloric Acid.’ Zazi also searched a beauty salon website for hydrocide and peroxide.”33 A lawfully-authorized search of Zazi’s laptop computer showed that later,


32 Ibid., 5.

33 Ibid.
on September 8, 2009, Zazi used the Internet to search for “locations of a home improvement store within zip code 13354, the zip code for the Flushing neighborhood of Queens, New York. He then searched the home improvement store’s website for muriatic acid, which is a diluted version of hydrochloric acid … Zazi viewed four different types of muriatic acid.”

The U.S. investigation of the New York subway plot involving Zazi, Medunjanin, and Ahmedzay revealed that Zazi not only used the Internet to aid in the construction of explosives and purchase of chemical ingredients, Zazi also used the Internet to communicate with al-Qa’ida members and receive guidance about the planned attacks. According to the superseding indictment, court filings, plea proceedings and official Department of Justice releases of the investigation, the plot involving the three homegrown terrorists was organized by Saleh al-Somali, Rashid Rauf, and Adnan El Shukrijumah; a cadre of al-Qa’ida leaders who, at the time, headed the terrorist group’s “external operations” program which conducted attacks in the United States and other Western countries.

Specifically, court documents allege that on behalf of Saleh al-


35 Foreign Policy, “Superceding Indictment,” The United States District Court Eastern District of New York, United States of America against Adis Medunjanin, Abid Naseer, Adnan El Shukrijumah, Tariq Ur Rehman and FNU LNU, also known as “Ahmad” and “Zahid”, Cr. No. 10-019 (S-3) (RJD), September 24, 2009, www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/100707_zaziindictment.pdf (accessed November 7, 2011); The Investigative Project on Terrorism, “Memorandum of Law in Support of the Government’s Motion for a Permanent Order of Detention,” The United States District Court Eastern District of New York, United States of America against Najibullah Zazi, 09-CR-663 (RJD), United States
Somali, a Peshawar, Pakistan-based individual named “Ahmad” served as the trio’s Al-Qa’ida facilitator. In early September 2009, following his construction of the detonator explosives for the attack, Zazi “emailed ‘Ahmad’ in Pakistan about the proper ingredients for the flour-based main charge explosive.” In particular, on September 6 and 7 of 2009, “Zazi attempted to communicate on multiple occasions” with presumably “Ahmad;” “each communication more urgent in tone than the last – seeking to correct mixtures of ingredients to make explosives.” The email communications between Zazi and “Ahmad” revealed Zazi’s “requests related to flour and ghee oil” which the U.S. government noted as “two ingredients listed in the bomb-making instructions.” In addition to his requests regarding the specific mixture of ingredients for the explosives,


37 Ibid.


39 Ibid.
Zazi reaffirmed the immediacy of his questions. Presumably, no longer needing guidance with the correct amounts and chemical combinations for the explosives, Zazi later emailed “Ahmad” in early September 2009, prior to his departure from Colorado to New York and utilized the code phrase “the marriage is ready” to inform “Ahmad” that the U.S. attack “was ready to be executed.”

Zazi’s own admissions as well as the results of the U.S. government’s investigation of the 2009 plot against the New York subway system demonstrated that the U.S.-based cell as well as their al-Qa’ida facilitators depended, in part, upon the use of the Internet for several instrumental purposes. Like Zazi and his associates, Shahzad as well as his Pakistan-based TTP network leveraged the Internet to accomplish operational tasks in support of the 2010 attempted attack on Times Square. Several court filings by the U.S. government as well as U.S. Department of Justice press releases revealed the specific tools that the Internet offered to Shahzad and his co-conspirators both prior to and following the May 1, 2010 attempted bombing. One of the resources afforded to

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40 Ibid.


Shahzad included the web’s ability to assist in the surveillance of the intended target of Times Square, New York. Counterterrorism analyst and author Forest notes previous instances in which other terrorists, similar to Shahzad, utilized the Internet to conduct surveillance on potential targets. However, while Forest cites examples in which al-Qa’ida utilized static maps of potential targets, Shahzad’s web access provided he and his co-conspirators even greater intelligence as Shahzad’s employment of the Internet allowed for the viewing of “real time video feeds of different areas of Times Square.” In particular, the U.S. investigation of the attempted May 1, 2010 attack revealed that the Internet’s real time video feeds enabled Shahzad to “determine which areas of Times Square drew the largest crowds and the times when those areas would be most crowded.” Importantly, the Internet video feeds helped Shahzad’s operational goal of maximizing the number of U.S.-based casualties as “according to Shahzad, he wanted to

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Forest, ed., Training, 96.

select the busiest time for pedestrian traffic in Times Square because pedestrians walking on the streets would be easier to kill and to injure than people driving in cars.”45 As asserted by the U.S. government, “Throughout the three months leading up to the attempted bombing,”46 the Internet allowed Shahzad to monitor, at any time, multiple viewpoints of Times Square, New York and utilize the information to continually refine plans for his attempted attack.

Besides the benefit of real-time surveillance, the Internet also aided Shahzad in the accomplishment of another operational task—finding a vehicle to house the explosive devices which he would later transport and later place in Times Square, New York. Court filings as well as official Department of Justice press releases revealed that Shahzad found the vehicle, a Nissan Pathfinder, as a result of an advertisement posted on a website.47 According to U.S. law enforcement interviews between FBI’s Connecticut-based Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) agents as well as other JTTF agents, the individual who sold the Nissan Pathfinder to Shahzad had “posted advertisements on


46 Ibid., 1, 7-9, 16.

“several websites” “beginning in early April 2010” which indicated that the vehicle was for sale.\footnote{The Investigative Project on Terrorism, “Complaint,” United States Southern District of New York, United States of America versus Faisal Shahzad, Complaint, 10 MAG 928, Case 1:10-mj-00928-UA, May 4, 2010, 6, http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1242.pdf (accessed November 7, 2011).} According to the U.S. Government’s complaint against Shahzad, the Internet advertisements contained “certain basic information about the Pathfinder, and also included the Seller’s telephone number.”\footnote{Ibid.} In or about the middle of April 2010, upon seeing one of the vehicle advertisements posted on a website, Shahzad contacted the seller of the Nissan Pathfinder.\footnote{Ibid.} On April 24, 2010, after having arranged to meet in a supermarket parking lot in Connecticut, Shahzad purchased the Nissan Pathfinder from the vehicle’s previous, unsuspecting owner and then returned home with this vehicle.\footnote{Ibid., 6-8.}

Not only did Shahzad utilize the Internet to assist with surveillance of Times Square and acquisition of the Nissan Pathfinder for the vehicle-born improvised explosive device, he also chose the Internet to serve as a method of communication. Like Zazi, Shahzad exploited the Internet’s ability to facilitate communication between himself and his extremist associates. According to the “U.S. Government’s Memorandum in Connection with the Sentencing of Faisal Shahzad,” prior to and following May 1, 2010, “Shahzad maintained regular contact with members of the TTP
over the internet.” Specifically, “using software programs that were installed on his laptop computer,” “Shahzad and the TTP were able to exchange information about the bomb he was building, the vehicle he had purchased, and other topics.” Following the execution of the intended May 1, 2010 attack on Times Square, Shahzad returned home to Connecticut and “advised one of his TTP associates via the internet of what he had done.”

Shahzad as well as Zazi’s employment of the Internet served many operational purposes in furtherance of an attempted attack against New York. Both of the extremists’ actions underscore Forest’s assertion that terrorists use the Internet, “not only to learn how to build bombs but also to plan and coordinate specific attacks.” Moreover, for terrorists, especially Islamic homegrown extremists, the manipulation of the Internet’s numerous capabilities has allowed for rapid receipt as well as communication of information. As evidenced by the three case studies involving Vinas, Zazi, Ahmedzay, Medunjanin, and Shahzad, Islamic homegrown terrorists have looked to the Internet not only for ideological purposes but have also manipulated the Internet’s various capabilities for numerous operational purposes. For the aforementioned extremists, a majority of


53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 9.

55 Forest, ed., Teaching Terror, 9 and Forest, ed., Training, 126.
their described Internet usage ultimately preceded an attempted attack against the U.S. or U.S. forces. Whether for motivational or instrumental aims, the employment of the Internet by a radical-minded individual, especially an Islamic extremist with access to the U.S., poses a serious danger to this country and serves as a compelling indicator of possible attack activity.
CHAPTER 3
TERRORIST NETWORKS

There is no clear boundary to the [terror] networks, which often include loose acquaintances, distant relatives, as well as much closer friends and family who actively encourage violence. There is a spectrum of activities, from moral support to actual operations.¹

—Marc Sageman, Leaderless Jihad

The preceding chapters have briefly revealed that these men conspired with other individuals to harm the people and infrastructure of the United States. Not only did these Islamic homegrown terrorists receive moral and/or instrumental assistance by way of the Internet, they also received other forms of aid from support networks that they either already possessed or discovered offline. These critical networks of supporters, comprising individuals who resided inside and outside of the U.S., included both family members and friends. Whether these contacts provided financial, operational or simply moral encouragement, their assistance to each of the homegrown terrorists intrinsically advanced succeeding stages of the various plots to attack the U.S. As such, the advancement of the attack plans occurred as a result of the combined efforts of various groups of individuals, not just the homegrown Islamic extremists, themselves.

One of the closest and strongest networks that supported the Islamic homegrown extremists included members of their own kin. Author, doctor, former Foreign Service officer, and scholar in terrorism Marc Sageman, highlights kinship networks as “one type

of social bond that might foster affiliation to the global jihad.”² Sageman’s study of biographical data on 172 participants in jihad revealed that “kinship played a role in the affiliation of 14 percent of mujahedin.”³ While all three case studies do not necessarily demonstrate Sageman’s assertion that kinsmen compelled the five extremists towards extremism, the case studies do reveal that family members played a crucial role in the eventual development of an attack plot. Whether wittingly or unwittingly, family members of the aforementioned terrorists provided key points of assistance; necessary to progress the New York-targeted attack plans.

While the case study involving Shahzad has not revealed that his family members knowingly supported the U.S.-based plot, they afforded Shahzad a place to stay during his multiple return trips to Pakistan. Prior to Shahzad’s December 2009 entrance into TTP’s FATA-based training camp, he resided with his parents in their native country of Pakistan. According to court transcripts from Shahzad’s June 21, 2010 court appearance in New York, Shahzad stated that following his June 2, 2009 departure where he “left US for good,” he went “to Pakistan to stay there for awhile and was trying to figure out a way to get to the Taliban.”⁴ Specifically, while devising a plan to join the Taliban, Shahzad’s parents provided him a place to stay for “six months” in their home in “Peshawar, Pakistan” until “December 9th” when “with a couple friends” he “went to


³ Ibid.

Waziristan to join the Taliban … the Taliban Pakistan.” The ability to reside at his parents’ Peshawar-based home, for an extended stay, certainly put Shahzad in closer proximity to the very terrorist group he wished to join, and allowed him ample time to eventually build connections with extremist elements who would later provide the necessary resources to further an attack plot.

Like Shahzad’s family members, multiple relatives of Zazi offered varying degrees of assistance throughout the progression of the New York subway plot. However, unlike Shahzad, multiple members of Zazi’s family knowingly assisted Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin with their plot to harm Americans. In order to join extremist elements against the United States, the trio, like Vinas and Shahzad, desired to journey to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region to link up and fight with the Taliban. As previously noted, the threesome did not join the Taliban and instead were recruited by al-Qa’ida shortly after arriving in Peshawar. According to news reports of courtroom proceedings, Zazi’s cousin, Amanullah Zazi, provided assistance, and later pled guilty in January 2010, to various charges regarding his involvement in the New York subway plot. Amongst the various offenses and actions, Amanullah Zazi admitted to providing

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5 Ibid., 22.


7 See Footnote 38 of Chapter 1.
assistance to Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin in order to travel to an al-Qa’ida training

camp in Waziristan. During his testimony at the federal obstruction-of-justice trial of

Zazi’s father, Mohammed Wali Zazi, Amanullah Zazi admitted that he had introduced

Zazi to a Pakistan-based cleric who arranged for Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin to

receive training with al-Qa’ida. In particular, Amanullah Zazi recalled telling the

Pakistan-based cleric, “There are three guys who want to go to Waziristan.” Amanullah

Zazi’s assistance to the trio upholds Sageman’s assertion regarding the importance that

kinship bonds play in the furtherance of jihad. In particular, Amanullah’s assistance to

his professed cousin-in-law Zazi, mirrors Sageman’s analysis which revealed that family

members including “in-laws also provided links for prospective mujahedin to join the

jihad.” Zazi through Amanullah Zazi, had a “family member” “back home” that

“link[ed] and vouch[ed] for them with local terrorist groups” that were “loosely

connected with al Qaeda Central.”

Not only did Amanullah Zazi endeavor to link up the trio with al-Qa’ida, he also

stated that he attempted to cover-up his actions when later questioned by U.S. law

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10 Ibid.

11 Sageman, Understanding Terror Networks, 113.

12 Sageman, Leaderless Jihad, 85.
enforcement agents. During Amanullah Zazi’s testimony against his uncle, Mohammed Wali Zazi, he also revealed that he had initially lied to federal authorities regarding the assistance he provided to the threesome in order to connect them to al-Qa‘ida.\textsuperscript{13} Further, Amanullah Zazi also testified that he had repeatedly lied to U.S. authorities regarding the additional assistance he provided through the destruction of explosives materials; materials which Zazi had attempted to conceal in the garage of their mutual relative, Naqib Jaji.\textsuperscript{14} When asked about his involvement with the entire plot and the specific dates where he recurrently attempted to misdirect the F.B.I., Amanullah Zazi replied, “I don’t know the dates … I lied a lot to them.”\textsuperscript{15} Importantly, Amanullah Zazi did not confess that either his conscience or any sense of responsibility to protect U.S. persons had provoked his courtroom admissions. Instead, Amanullah Zazi testified that his guilty plea and cooperation with U.S. authorities was contingent upon a reduction in the


maximum 30-year sentence he would have received as result of his actions and complicity in the overall attack plot. Had Amanullah Zazi not faced severe punishment for his own involvement in the attempted attack against the New York subway system, he would have likely continued to lie to protect his cousin Zazi, Ahmedzay and Medunjanin.

Besides Amanullah Zazi, Zazi also had other family members who willingly agreed to hide evidence and deceive U.S. authorities on his behalf. According to Department of Justice press releases and news reports of courtroom proceedings, Zazi’s uncle Najib Jaji, mentioned above, also pled guilty to obstructing justice during the course of the U.S. investigation into the attack plan. Jaji corroborated Amanullah Zazi’s story in which he asserted that Zazi stored bomb-making materials in Jaji’s garage in Colorado. During the same trial in which Jaji’s nephew, Amanullah Zazi, testified against Jaji’s brother-in-law Mohammed Wali Zazi, Jaji also admitted that he had lied to


a federal grand jury and to federal investigators about Zazi.\textsuperscript{19} Notably, similar to Amanullah Zazi, Jaji’s testimony against Mohammed Wali Zazi likely occurred as a direct result of a signed cooperation agreement he reportedly made with the U.S. government.\textsuperscript{20} Moreover, akin to Amanullah Zazi’s probable motives, a shortened jail sentence, not consideration for U.S. persons, certainly convinced Jaji to testify about his knowledge and actions in support of the attack plot. In all probability, without the pressure of punishment, Jaji would have maintained the falsehoods he had originally conveyed regarding his knowledge of the three homegrown extremists.

In addition to Amanullah Zazi and Jaji, Zazi maintained another family member who deliberately attempted to minimize and even conceal Zazi and his friends’ involvement in their attack plot—his father Mohammed Wali Zazi. Likely one of the closest members within Zazi’s kinship network, Mohammed Wali Zazi’s actions demonstrated the multitude of ways in which a single family member can aid an extremist-minded relative. Courtroom testimony, lawfully-intercepted telephone conversations, U.S. court documents and other evidence revealed during a July 2011 trial proved that Mohammed Wali Zazi, while not alleged to have actively participated in the planning of the attack plot, knowingly attempted to thwart U.S. authorities during the


course of the U.S. investigation into the bomb plot.\textsuperscript{21} Listed amongst the eight offenses in a superceding indictment, a grand jury charged Mohammed Wali Zazi with several counts related to the obstruction of justice, witness tampering, and making false statements.\textsuperscript{22} Additionally, though not charged for the act, Zazi’s father initially warned his son of U.S. law enforcement scrutiny.\textsuperscript{23}

Mohammed Wali Zazi’s attempts to impede U.S. authorities included the falsification of statements regarding his communications with Ahmed Wais Afzali, a New York-based Imam who alerted Mohammed Wali Zazi, Zazi, and thus, Ahmedzay and Medunjanin, that U.S. authorities had already begun to investigate their extremist


activities. Legally-authorized telephonic surveillance revealed that upon learning from Afzali, “The Imam…in New York,” about U.S. law enforcements’ inquiries into the three, Mohammed Wali Zazi engaged in a telephone conversation with his son, Zazi, on September 11, 2009 in which he warned his son about U.S. authorities’ interest in Zazi and his friends. They had previously spoken about his son, “the one in New York” would telephone Zazi. Mohammed Wali Zazi then urged his son to speak with Afzali “before anything else” to determine whether Zazi needed to go to Afzali or “hire an attorney.” Mohammed Wali Zazi finally asked his son, “What has happened? What have you guys done?” Though the warning call that Mohammed Wali Zazi made to his son did not violate U.S. law, Mohammed Wali Zazi committed a federal offense by falsifying statements about the call to U.S. law enforcement authorities. Just five days after the telephone call, on September 16, 2009, Mohammed Wali Zazi voluntarily appeared at F.B.I. offices and knowingly lied about the events of September 11, 2009. Specifically, affidavits allege that on September 16,
2009 as well on September 18, 2009, Mohammed Wali Zazi denied calling anyone in New York besides his son and falsely stated that he knew no one by the name of Afzali, respectively.\textsuperscript{28} By placing the call to Zazi and lying to F.B.I. personnel, Mohammed Wali Zazi deliberately attempted to provide aid to his son and by association, Ahmedzay and Medunjanin.

Not only did Mohammed Wali Zazi lie to U.S. authorities to aid his son, he also participated in the destruction of explosives materials belonging to Zazi and urged other family members to do the same. As part of the case against Mohammed Wali Zazi, the federal government charged him with several counts in relation to the obstruction of justice.\textsuperscript{29} Specifically, the U.S. government alleged in a superceding indictment that he, “together with others, did knowingly and intentionally conspire to (1) corruptly alter, destroy, mutilate and conceal objects, to wit: glasses, masks, liquid chemicals and containers, and attempt to do so, with the intent to impair the objects’ integrity and availability for use in one or more official proceedings … all relating to federal crimes of terrorism.”\textsuperscript{30} During the trial against Mohammed Wali Zazi, the prosecutor accused him of destroying glasses, masks, liquid chemicals and containers that Zazi had acquired.


\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 2.
during the course of his bomb-making project.\textsuperscript{31} Further, during the same trial, testimony by Amanullah Zazi revealed that in 2009 “Uncle Wali” urged Amanullah Zazi to dispose of a plastic container of peroxide, other chemicals, and additional evidence Zazi had used for bomb-making purposes which he later stored in Naqib Jaji’s Colorado-based garage.\textsuperscript{32} Additional testimony from Najib Jaji corroborated Amanullah Zazi’s statements, in which Jaji advised the courtroom that Mohammed Wali Zazi as well as four other people planned to get rid of bomb-making materials, specifically bleach and nail-polish remover.\textsuperscript{33}

Finally, in addition to his participation and orchestration of a plan to destroy explosives evidence, Mohammed Wali Zazi encouraged his family members to lie about their activities to cover-up these actions. According to Amanullah Zazi, Mohammed Wali Zazi purposefully attempted to deceive authorities and told his complicit family members to refer to the explosives chemicals as “evidence,” in the event that F.B.I. had initiated coverage of their conversations.\textsuperscript{34} Continued courtroom testimony by Amanullah Zazi also asserted that Mohammed Wali Zazi advocated everyone provide


The efforts of Zazi’s family members as well as those of Faisal Shahzad’s parents illustrate the strength of family bonds and the support in which kinship networks can and
have provided to homegrown Islamic extremists. Another type of social network that operates in a similar manner to a kinship network consists of friends of a terrorist operative. Sageman agrees with the importance of both types of social networks noting that for would-be terrorists, “joining the global Islamist terrorism social movement was based to a great degree on friendship and kinship.”\(^{38}\) Specifically, Sageman’s studies of terrorist networks demonstrated that “preexisting friendship bonds played an important role in the formal affiliation of 68% of mujahedin.”\(^{39}\) In line with Sageman’s analysis, the three case studies reveal that the friendship networks of Vinas, Zazi, Ahmedzay, Medunjanin, and Shahzad overwhelming contributed to their extremist intentions and as a result, the progression of three distinct plots to attack the U.S. Whether their friends offered a sympathetic ear, or in many cases, active collaboration, all of the homegrown terrorists possessed a network of extremist associates who espoused violence against Americans.

For Vinas, who had no familial ties to terrorism, or family members who could provide assistance for travel to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region for militant training or combat operations, his friendships with other extremist-minded individuals largely contributed to the advancement of his jihadist-minded activities. A transcript of a January 28, 2009 courtroom proceedings shows that in the fall of 2007, Vinas confessed to leaving his “home in Long Island to travel to Pakistan with the intention of meeting


\(^{39}\) Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 111-112.
and joining a jihadist group to fight American soldiers in Afghanistan.\footnote{The Investigative Project on Terrorism, “Transcript of Plea of Guilty Proceedings,” Sealed Pages of Transcript of Proceedings Taken on January 28, 2009 Before Nicholas G. Garaufis, U.S.D.J. Case 1:08-cr-00823-NGG, Document 22, Filed 07/23/09, Marie Foley, RPR, CRR Official Court Reporter, 31, http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1028.pdf (accessed September 20, 2011).} In order to facilitate travel to Pakistan, Vinas relied on his aforementioned friend, Ahmer Qayyum, whom he had met through another previously-referenced associate, Ahmad Zarinni. According to CNN’s interview with Qayyum, who at the time had relocated from New York, where Qayyum had originally met Vinas, back to Qayyum’s hometown of Lahore, Pakistan, the three (Qayyum, Zarinni, and Vinas) became very close.\footnote{Ibid.} Clearly, an anti-American sympathist, Qayyum hoped that “the evil American empire is not going to last too long, inshallah” and stated, “I love Osama bin Laden like I can’t begin to tell you.”\footnote{Ibid.} While Qayyum denied to CNN that he knew of Vinas’ jihadist intentions, he acknowledged that together, he and Vinas made arrangements to fly to Pakistan in September 2008 and that he had helped Vinas find a madrassa for studies.\footnote{Paul Cruickshank, Nic Robertson and Ken Shiffman, “From Long Island to Lahore: The plot to bomb New York,” CNN, May 21, 2010, www.cnn.com/2010/CRIME/05/14/bryant.neal.vinas.part2/index.html (accessed September 2, 2011) and Paul Cruickshank, Nic Robertson and Ken Shiffman, “The radicalization of an all-American kid,” CNN, May 15, 2010, www.cnn.com/2010/CRIME/05/13/bryant.neal.vinas.part1/index.html (accessed August 29, 2011).} Qayyum’s own statements divulged not only his affinity for anti-American action, but also lent credence to the assertion that he consciously connected Vinas to al-Qa’ida associates.
Interrogation notes and other classified documents also explained that Vinas relied on the assistance of friends to help plan the Lahore trip and establish dialogue with al-Qa’ida members. With little to no knowledge of Pakistan and lacking the ability to communicate in either Urdu, Pashtu, or Punjabi, Vinas’ greatly depended upon his network of associates to help him survive and travel in Pakistan.\(^\text{44}\) Once he arrived in Lahore, Vinas claimed to have telephoned another un-named New Yorker who eventually arranged introductions for Vinas to enter into al-Qa’ida training camps.\(^\text{45}\) While not publicly disclosed by U.S. authorities or by Qayyum, U.S. counterterrorism officials believe that both Qayyum and Zarinni knew very well of Vinas’ intentions to travel to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region to conduct attacks against Americans.\(^\text{46}\) Specifically, U.S. counterterrorism officials say that Qayyum was Vinas’ “friend from New York” who “agreed to help him and introduce him to people who could assist him in getting to Afghanistan.”\(^\text{47}\) According to other classified documents, Vinas and the “New York friend” found another person who could connect Vinas with Shah Saab, a militant


commander conducting armed insertions into Afghanistan from Pakistan.\(^{48}\) From there, Vinas formed his own friendships with other militants intent on conducting attack against American forces in Afghanistan. However, if not for his “friends from New York” Vinas may not have had the means to continue on his path of violence against Americans. Regardless of the extent in which, Zarinni and/or Qayyum actively aided Vinas’ jihadist intentions, at the very least, Qayyum’s assistance brought Vinas to Pakistan and one step closer to his goal to fight American forces located in Afghanistan.

Unlike Vinas, Shahzad’s Pakistani background and family helped him easily traverse from the United States to Pakistan, however, in order to fulfill his ultimate goal of joining the Pakistani Taliban or TTP, Shahzad relied on his network of friends. According to interviews of American officials, a senior Pakistani intelligence official and others familiar with his story, Shahzad’s foray into the world of Pakistani militants began with a Pakistani friend, Shahid Hussain, whom Shahzad had met in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where both men attended business school.\(^{49}\) The two transplants from Pakistan shared many similarities. Both men grew up in Pakistan prior to their moves to America and both students’ fathers worked for the Pakistani government.\(^{50}\) Following graduation in the United States, Shahzad frequently returned home to Pakistan and formed a new circle of friends. Shahzad reunited with Hussain, who had since moved back to Pakistan, and by 2008, had introduced Shahzad to another Pakistan based man,

\(^{48}\) Ibid.


\(^{50}\) Ibid.
Muhammad Shouaib Mughal.\textsuperscript{51} According to an American official, through their interactions with each other, Hussain, Mughal and Shahzad discovered a common interest in the global jihad and exemplified Sageman’s description of a terrorist “clique” which developed out of “long-term bonds” of friendships reinforced by “face-to-face encounters” with other associates who possessed “common backgrounds, education, and beliefs.”\textsuperscript{52} In addition, according to the same American official, the trio’s clique also included other like-minded extremist friends, who “began meeting at one another’s [Pakistan-based] homes.\textsuperscript{53}

However, while Shahzad and his friends collectively possessed a militant, anti-U.S. mentality they lacked what Sageman describes as the “critical and specific element to joining the jihad” which “is the accessibility of a link to the jihad.”\textsuperscript{54} Basically, the group needed an individual to facilitate their entry into TTP “where senior members of the jihad could further evaluate” the men to “become full-fledged mujahed[in].\textsuperscript{55} Again, through friendship networks, the groups’ desires of joining the jihad, as well as Shahzad’s eventual plot to attack the U.S. advanced further through what Sageman describes as a “chance encounter with a formal member of the global Salafi jihad” who

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Sageman, \textit{Understanding Terror Networks}, 152.
\textsuperscript{54} Sageman, \textit{Understanding Terror Networks}, 120.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 121.
served as “the critical element leading to enrollment into the jihad.”

At the Red Mosque, where the men intermittently prayed, the circle of extremist-minded associates met an un-named 17-year-old nephew of a TTP leader who offered to connect them to the TTP network. Through the un-named 17-year-old, TTP accepted Mr. Mughal into their ranks but initially declined Shahzad’s offer, to join, reportedly based on suspicions that Shahzad’s father’s military background indicated Shahzad served as a spy. Eventually, and demonstrating the importance of what Sageman illustrates as “friends” who “can vouch for their loyalty,” Mughal, after having undergone training with TTP and earning enough credibility, convinced TTP to allow Shahzad into their ranks. After months, and probably years of waiting, Shahzad found entry into the ranks of an anti-U.S. militant group – the TTP. Describing this seminal event in his own words, he stated during his plea hearing, “So I left…December 9th, with a couple of friends, I went to Waziristan to join the Taliban.”

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56 Ibid., 121.
58 Ibid.
59 Sageman, Understanding Terror Networks, 109.
Not only did Shahzad’s friendship network help him reach TTP, these associates also helped him coordinate the attempted U.S. attack, even after his exit from Pakistan. As referenced in the preceding chapters, Shahzad received approximately $16,000 in total from TTP in order to carry-out the attack and communicated with the group, via the Internet, regarding the specifics of their planned operations. According to un-named persons familiar with the investigation into Shahzad, after Mughal, Hussain, and Shahzad drove to Waziristan, where Mughal left them with a TTP instructor and two aides, TTP maintained contact with Shahzad through Mughal.\footnote{Andrea Elliott, “Militant’s Path From Pakistan to Times Square,” The New York Times, June 22, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/23/world/23terror.html (accessed April 30, 2011).} In particular, Mughal communicated with Shahzad about the logistics of the attack and personally coordinated the transfer of cash that Shahzad had requested from the Taliban after he returned to the U.S.\footnote{Ibid.} According to statements made by Shahzad during his plea of guilty hearing, he specifically received funds from TTP for the attack, “twice, once in March and the other time in end of April.”\footnote{The Investigative Project on Terrorism, “Plea,” The United States District Court Southern District of New York, United States of America versus Faisal Shahzad, Plea, 10-CR-541 (MGC), June 21, 2010, 23, http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1435.pdf (accessed September 20, 2011).} As such, during the same court proceedings, Shahzad pled guilty to a number of conspiracy charges in relation to the Times Square plot, revealing that the attack required the deliberate work of more than just he, alone. Soon after the May 3, 2011 arrest of Shahzad, Pakistani authorities arrested Mughal, Hussain, and others within
their Pakistan-based extremist network of associates.\textsuperscript{65} The detention of Shahzad’s Pakistan-based friends further corroborated the fact that the plan to attack Times Square evolved as a group effort.

A network of friends facilitated the Times Square plot in a similar manner in which a network of friends, specifically three friends-Zazi, Medunjanin, and Ahmedzay-helped to support a 2009 plan to target the New York subway system. Like Shahzad and his group of friends, the actions of this group of homegrown Islamic extremists agree with Sageman’s findings regarding the power of friendship within terrorist networks. Specifically, the trio’s behavior underscores Sageman’s assertion that “formal affiliation with the jihad also seems to have been a group phenomenon.”\textsuperscript{66} The men’s activities clearly demonstrate the prevalent occurrence in which “friends decided to join the jihad as a group rather than as isolated individuals.”\textsuperscript{67} While the three received support from others, Zazi, Medunjanin, and Ahmedzay comprised the core group of operatives who traveled to Pakistan together, received militant instruction together, and arrived back to the U.S. to conduct an attack. Dangerously, their bonds of friendship mutually reinforced their collective plan to harm Americans. The return of not just one, but all three of men, marked the entry of three homegrown Islamic extremists, trained and willing to carry-out a coordinated attack against the people and a transportation system in New York City.


\textsuperscript{66} Sageman, \textit{Understanding Terror Networks}, 110.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
Initially meeting in Queens, New York as children, Zazi, Medunjanin, and Ahmedzay’s deep-rooted friendship played a significant role in the development of the 2009 plan to attack New York’s subway system. According to official Department of Justice press releases, court filings and the words of Zazi himself, he, Medunjanin, and Ahmedzay conspired with each other during each stage of the attack process in order to reach their ultimate goal to harm Americans. From the beginning, the three friends “having made this agreement in Queens, New York” originally “conspired with others to travel to Afghanistan to join the Taliban and fight against U.S. military and its allies.”

Following the promises they made to each other, on August 28, 2008, the three took a major step towards the realization of their violent aims and “boarded a flight at Newark Liberty International Airport to fly from Newark, New Jersey to Peshawar, Pakistan.”

While not reaching their goal to unite with the Taliban, Zazi noted that they “were recruited by al-Qaeda instead.”

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Demonstrating again, the strength of friendships within a terror network, Zazi, Medunjanin and Ahmedzay all trained with al-Qa’ida, agreed to return to the United States to execute an attack in New York, and maintained contact with each other to coordinate the attack. Despite Zazi’s departure from New York and relocation to Colorado the three continued forward with their plan of attack. Moreover, when Ahmedzay initially displayed reservations about the planned suicide bombing, their bonds of friendship persevered and Ahmedzay “resolved to go forward with the plan.”

According to Zazi, during the coordination phase, he “took trips to New York, and meet [sic] with others to discuss the plan, including the timing of the attack, and where to make the explosives.” In preparation for the attack Zazi also allowed Ahmedzay, to review the bomb-making notes Zazi had obtained from explosives training. The group agreed to accomplish specific tasks for the attack. They placed Zazi in charge of the preparation of explosives, Ahmedzay evaluated potential bombing targets in Manhattan and both of them would assemble the explosives devices while in New York. Estimating the

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72 Ibid.


75 Ibid.
amount of explosives that Zazi could produce, Zazi and Ahmedzay also decided to target subway trains as opposed to a larger structure such as a building. Finally, when it came time to actually conduct the attack, all three of the extremists planned to carry out the “martyrdom operation” together.

During the final stages of the attack plan, on September 10, 2009, Zazi made a second return trip to New York City, where the group “intend[ed] to obtain and assemble the remaining components to build a bomb over the weekend. The plan was to conduct martyrdom operation on subway lines in Manhattan as soon as the material were [sic] ready, Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday” which corresponded to either September 14, 15, or 16, 2009. However, after Zazi’s arrival to New York City, the group realized that law enforcement authorities had already begun investigating their activities. The three then “threw away the detonator explosives and other materials” and Zazi returned to Colorado. U.S. law enforcement agents then arrested the three for their involvement in the bomb plot.

Even after the group failed to complete the attack, their bonds of friendship remained. According to the superseding indictment against Ahmedzay and Medunjakin,

\[76\text{Ibid.}\]
\[77\text{Ibid.}\]
\[79\text{Ibid.}\]
on or about and between September 17, 2009 and September 18, 2009, Ahmedzay “falsely stated to Special Agents of the FBI that he had not had discussions with Najibullah Zazi about attending a camp to receive military-type training.” Further, Ahmedzay denied knowledge of “whether Najibullah Zazi attended a camp to receive military-type training while in Pakistan.” Although Ahmedzay later pled guilty to several terror violations regarding his role in the attack plot, including a conspiracy violation to commit murder in a foreign country, he initially attempted to lie for himself and his friend, Zazi.

As demonstrated in this chapter, friends and family members undeniably supported the plots involving homegrown extremists Vinas, Zazi, Ahmedzay, Medunjanin, and Shahzad. Social networks played critical roles during different junctures of the various attack plots. Not only did family members and friends provide operational assistance, some of them even lied to federal authorities, resulting in criminal action against themselves. The actions of these social support networks demonstrate the ways in which friends and relatives can help advance a U.S.-based attack plot. Clearly, as the case studies demonstrate, the development of an attack plot arose due to the efforts

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81 Ibid.

of a group of individuals, to include the homegrown extremists themselves. Therefore, the existence and potential support offered by sympathetic social networks serves as another strong indicator of a prospective attack plot.
CHAPTER 4  
TERRORIST TRAINING FACILITIES

While ideology drives the motive of the new terrorists, the high degree of sophistication and professionalism witnessed today in terrorist attacks have been a result of the quality of training and levels of indoctrination. Access to training and weaponry is a significant determinant for the threat projection capability of terrorist groups. Training infrastructure has always been an essential ingredient of terrorist organizations, providing its cadre with capability for armament use and much-needed indoctrination to sustain the ideology that drives the group’s members to action.

—James J.F. Forest, ed., The Making of a Terrorist

The preceding chapters have revealed the ways in which the Internet and social networks fostered the goals of the five homegrown terrorists and their co-conspirators. In addition to their common use of the Internet as well as their reliance on supportive networks, each homegrown terrorist deliberately traveled overseas where they sought, and later gained, entry into various Pakistan-based terrorist training camps. Having made the long trip from the U.S. to the FATA, all five of the aforementioned homegrown extremists had already evidenced their desire to harm Americans and sought what they considered the necessary support and skills from militant training groups who could later prepare them to wage an attack against Americans. After admittance into the different terrorist camps, these homegrown terrorists completed various training programs where they received instruction by experienced operational trainers. Amongst the other types of education received at the terrorist camps, Vinas, Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjani specifically obtained lessons from al-Qa’ida trainers on firearms and/or the construction of explosives while Shahzad received a similar course of instruction by TTP. Further,
while at the various FATA-based training sites and under the tutelage of either al-Qa’ida or TTP, all five of the homegrown Islamic terrorists met with senior terrorist leaders and created specific plans to strike targets within the city of New York. In effect, the training camps functioned as a place where extremists acquired dangerous skills and gained operational support from senior leadership. As such, the five terrorists’ attendance and participation in militant training camps remained vital to the development of an attack plot against Americans both at home and in Vinas’ case, American troops stationed abroad.

Vinas, the first out of the five aforementioned homegrown extremists who traveled to Pakistan for terrorist training, also participated in the longest series of instruction by al-Qa’ida, a terrorist group whose “success in conducting well-coordinated guerilla and terrorist attacks has largely been a product of its stringent emphasis on training.”\(^1\) Charged and admitted to “knowingly and intentionally” having received “military-type training from and on behalf of … Al Qa’ida,”\(^2\) Vinas attended several terrorist training courses run by this terrorist group, for approximately three months from March - August 2008. The skills taught by al-Qa’ida were specifically designed to


prepare Vinas for attacks against Americans. In particular, the explosives and weapons training which Vinas received, followed a similar curriculum to the standard courses in which other terrorist groups besides al-Qa’ida, have historically offered to their recruits.³

In regards to his own training, Vinas revealed that “as a member of al-Qaeda, I received training in courses in general combat and explosives.”⁴ Providing greater detail regarding Vinas’ particular training regimen, a New York Times article as well as CNN’s own investigation revealed that Vinas completed a series of three basic al-Qa’ida courses, each with ten to twenty students.⁵ Specifically, the first al-Qa’ida training course introduced Vinas and the rest of the students to several firearms including an AK-47, a machine gun and a pistol.⁶ The second, fifteen-day course focused on explosives in which teachers taught students how to manufacture suicide belts, position the belts, and how to test the battery and voltmeters.⁷ Over the duration of the second course, teachers accustomed Vinas and his fellow classmates to the appearance, smell, and handling of

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³ Forest, ed. Teaching Terror, 35 and Gunaratna, Inside Al Qaeda, 70-76, quoted in Forest, ed., Training, 176.


⁷ Ibid.
various explosives such as TNT as well as plastic explosives. During the third and final course, instructors introduced Vinas and the other trainees to the use of rocket-propelled grenades. Following the conclusion of the series of three training camp courses, Vinas successfully graduated from al-Qa’ida’s terror school upon which instructors deemed him suitably trained for attack operations.

Not only did his participation at an al-Qa’ida camp arm him with lethal attack skills, Vinas’ attendance at the Waziristan-based training facility allowed instructors to physically monitor and measure his progress to ensure that he demonstrated a capable level of operational proficiency in order to carry out attacks against U.S. targets. Like thousands of operatives before him, Vinas undertook a series of al-Qa’ida training courses, designed by a group who had already produced scores of competent operatives. The successfulness and quality of al-Qa’ida’s training courses and thus their planned attacks, rested, in part, on the group’s tradition of tracking each recruit’s training progress. Terrorism scholars Rohan Gunaratna and Arabinda Acharya’s discussion of some of al-Qa’ida’s former training camps reveal the sophistication of al-Qa’ida’s training regimen and comprehensive record-keeping. According to Gunaratna and Acharya, abandoned historic training facilities which had previously operated in

8 Ibid.
Afghanistan during the 1990’s, housed documents consisting of “books, training manuals, student’s notebooks, ledgers, and inventories.”11 The remains from these camps showed that al-Qa’ida had long-learned to track their students’ training progress, having maintained “detailed lists of all the trainees in the camps” which included “training record[s], previous experience, and proficiency of the trainees.”12 Vinas himself corroborated al-Qa’ida’s extensive documentation of their trainee program. According to interrogation notes of Vinas, “soon after [Vinas] had completed the courses, A.S. [not further identified] told him that all of the students underwent a written evaluation of their performance during the courses, and that these reports were kept in the student’s personal file.”13 Vinas’ own accounts demonstrated al-Qa’ida’s continuous emphasis on the tracking and progress of its attendees, a tradition that the group had maintained and found successful. Al-Qa’ida clearly monitored the development of their recruits in an effort to produce qualified operatives to execute attack operations. As noted by remnants of al-Qa’ida’s former training facilities as well as Vinas’ statements, al-Qa’ida’s record-keeping processes helped ensure that their training program provided trainees not only with requisite skills but also provided al-Qa’ida instructors with the confidence that their programs produced qualified attackers prepared to carry out strikes against Americans.

By the end of 2008, al-Qa’ida’s training program prepared Vinas as well as at least three other homegrown Islamic extremists for future attacks. At the end of summer

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11 Forest, ed., Training, 185.

12 Ibid.

2008, Vinas had just finished his al-Qa’ida training as Zazi, Medunjanin, and Ahmedzay prepared to enter into their instructional program. This trio of friends had also traveled to the FATA where they, like Vinas, sought and received militant training from the same terrorist group – al-Qa’ida. Again, like Vinas, the three completed al-Qa’ida training ultimately in hopes of using the skills they acquired at the camp to harm Americans. According to Zazi, while in Peshawar with Medunjanin and Ahmedzay, “we were recruited by al-Qaeda” and “taken by al-Qaeda to training camp in Waziristan [sic]. where we received weapons training.” The superseding indictment against Ahmedzay and Medunjanin provides additional details about their training asserting that during the approximate time period between August 2008 and October 2008, while in the FATA, all three men received “military-type training, from and on behalf of … al-Qaeda.”

According to Department of Justice press releases, during this initial training period, the three received instruction by al-Qa’ida on “several different kinds of weapons.” The trio’s agreement and receipt of training, as well as al-Qa’ida’s recruitment and provision

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of training, reinforced the notion that all involved recognized the tremendous value that
specialized instruction contributed towards their mutual goal of violence against
Americans.

Not only did the three receive basic training from al-Qa’ida, Zazi returned to al-
Qa’ida’s training camps where he received advanced training in further preparation of a
planned attack against New York City. Both Zazi and al-Qa’ida’s instructors felt that this
additional training would only enhance Zazi’s competency as an attacker and increase the
probability of a successful strike against the United States. Upon pleading guilty to
several terrorism charges in relation to the planned attack against New York’s subway
system, Zazi disclosed details about the advanced training session he received and the
indispensable skills taught at the al-Qa’ida camp. According to Zazi, “Later, I received
more training from al-Qaeda about how to construct the explosives for attack in the
United States or to carry martyrdom operation.”\(^\text{17}\) Moreover, Zazi expanded on the
necessity of training when he stated, “I took notes on the training and later emailed a
summary of notes to myself, so that I could access them in the U.S.” Clearly, Zazi relied
on the education as well as the notes he retained from training to prepare for the planned
attack.

Like Vinas, Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin, Shahzad also traveled to the
FATA to seek militant training. However, unlike the previous four attackers, Shahzad

\(^{17}\) CBS News, “Transcript of Criminal Cause for Pleading,” The United States District Court Eastern
District of New York, United States of America versus Najibullah Zazi, Docket No.: 09 CR 663(S-1), U.S.
Courthouse, 225 Cadman Plaza East, Brooklyn, NY 11201, February 22, 2010, 2:30 p.m., 26,
entered the training camps of TTP vice al-Qa’ida, where TTP trainers endeavored to equip him with operational skills and notes to assist in the premeditated attack against Times Square, New York. Press releases by the Department of Justice and multiple court documents provide specific details as to the timing and type of training Shahzad had received from TTP instructors. In particular, the “Government’s Memorandum in Connection with the Sentencing of Faisal Shahzad” notes, “During a forty-day period from December 2009 through January 2010, Shahzad lived with members and associates of the TTP in the remote region of Pakistan known as Waziristan” where he “received five days of instruction on how to build and to detonate different types of bombs from an experienced bomb trainer affiliated with TTP.”

In addition to the “Government’s Sentencing Memorandum,” Shahzad’s own allocution of his TTP training experience provided more information regarding TTP’s training regimen for him. During a June 21, 2010 court appearance Shahzad stated, “In connection with TTP, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan … I did the training to wage an attack inside United States of America [sic].” When asked by the judge what kind of an attack TTP had prepared him to conduct, Shahzad continued with his admission noting, “It would have been any kind of attack, but I was given a bomb training, and that’s what I

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learned there.” In regards to the specific skills taught during bomb training, Shahzad replied TTP taught him “how to make a bomb, how to detonate a bomb, how to put a fuse, [and] how many different types of bombs you can make.” Additionally, part of TTP’s bomb training also incorporated the use of instructional texts. During his plea hearing, Shahzad also disclosed that TTP had a manual written “all in Urdu language” which he “had to make one in English.” Shahzad considered the contents of this training manual, which he described as “my summary of how the thing works,” so necessary as to have not only translated it into English, but he also “brought the file” back from Waziristan to the United States in order to refer to the manual when constructing a bomb.

While at the training camps of al-Qa’ida and TTP, the homegrown terrorists not only received operational skills in hopes of carrying out an attack, they also conspired with terrorist leaders and formed specific plans to target particular sites within New York City. The particular environment of a training camp placed potential attackers face-to-face with senior leaders, allowing for enhanced collaboration between operatives and attack planners. For Vinas, the plot to strike New York City formed even after two failed attempts to target American forces stationed in Afghanistan. According to Vinas, during

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20 Ibid., 19.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 24.
his time with al-Qa’ida, he expressly “consulted with a senior Al-Qaeda leader and provided detailed information about the Long Island Railroad system” which he “knew because [he] had ridden the railroad on many occasions.”24 Vinas further elaborated on the discussions with the unspecified al-Qa’ida leader noting that “the purpose of providing this information was to help plan a bottom attack of the Long Island Rail Road system.” While officials do not believe that the plan to attack the Long Island Rail Road system had escalated to advanced stages, the training camp setting offered the opportunity for a homegrown Islamic operative to confer with terrorist leaders and generate explicit U.S. attack plans.

While Vinas’ suggestion to attack the Long Island Rail Road system did not appear to advance beyond the theoretical stages, the attack plot discussed amongst al-Qa’ida leaders, Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin certainly progressed into the latter stages of a dangerous plan to strike the New York City subway system. Again, similar to Vinas’ case, the genesis of the attack plot began during the operatives’ attendance at an al-Qa’ida camp in Waziristan. While under the tutelage of al-Qa’ida trainers, Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin consulted with senior al-Qa’ida leaders to form a specific plan to attack the major New York City transportation system. According to Department of Justice press releases, while training with al-Qa’ida, the trio met with two al-Qa’ida leaders Saleh al-Somali, who at the time served as head of the terrorist group’s

international operations, and Al Qa’ida operative Rashid Rauf.\textsuperscript{25} While the three homegrown Islamic extremists had initially traveled to Pakistan to fight in Afghanistan, instead, as Zazi explained “al-Qaeda leaders asked us to return to the United States and conduct martyrdom operation [sic].”\textsuperscript{26} The al-Qa’ida leaders explained to the three that they would serve more use to al-Qa’ida and the jihad if they carried out attacks in the U.S. and continued to encourage this plan throughout the trio’s training period in Waziristan.\textsuperscript{27} Convinced by al-Qa’ida leaders, Zazi stated, “We agreed to this plan.”\textsuperscript{28}

While under al-Qa’ida’s supervision and after consenting to conduct a U.S.-based attack, the three had further discussions with al-Qa’ida leaders regarding the timing and target locations in Manhattan.\textsuperscript{29} During these meetings, al-Qa’ida leaders underscored the necessity to strike well-known structures and maximize the number of casualties.\textsuperscript{30}


\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
Additional plans for the attacks resumed even after the three friends had departed Waziristan when Zazi returned, alone, later to receive more explosives training from al-Qa’ida.\textsuperscript{31} According to Zazi, when he “received more training from al-Qaeda about how to construct the explosives for attack in the United States or to carry martyrdom operation,” he also “had discussions with al-Qaeda leaders, including target locations, such as New York City subways.”\textsuperscript{32} As demonstrated through Zazi’s own statements of his training camp experience, the coordination and conversations that took place at al-Qa’ida’s training facilities played an integral part in the formulation and progression of this particular U.S.-based attack plan.

Similar to the four al-Qa’ida trainees, Shahzad’s attendance at a terrorist training camp proved integral to the collaboration and formulation of a U.S.-based attack against a well-known New York City attraction – Times Square. According to the “Government’s Sentencing Memorandum against Shahzad,” during his forty-day stay with TTP members and associates in Waziristan, Shahzad also engaged in specific talks with TTP regarding “his plan to detonate a bomb within the United States, including potential targets.”\textsuperscript{33} A TTP-produced video, recorded while Shahzad resided in

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.


Waziristan with TTP, provides more information regarding the specific plot which the operative and terrorist group agreed to undertake. Released by TTP via the Internet on July 14, 2010, the approximately forty minute-long video entitled “A brave effort by Faisal Shahzad to attack United States in its own Land,” offers, among other details, Shahzad’s own statements about the conspiracy to attack the U.S. Importantly, the video demonstrates that TTP’s sanctioning of the attack occurred while Shahzad resided in Waziristan with the group’s members. Approximately five minutes and thirty-seven seconds into the video Shahzad verified TTP leadership’s involvement in the attack plot stating, “he [Shahzad] did have a chance to meet Hakimullah Mehsud and Qari Hussain … and under their command, we have decided we going to arrange an attack inside America [sic].” Further demonstrating, TTP’s support of Shahzad, a scene beginning approximately thirty eight minutes and thirty nine seconds shows TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud as he happily hugs Shahzad and then shakes his hand. The video also reveals that TTP leaders not only supported the attack, they plotted with Shahzad to target a

34 Ibid., 7.


specific borough of New York City. While the video clip of Hakimullah Mehsud’s embrace with Shahzad plays on the left side of the screen, the right side of the screen features Shahzad as he states, “Today along with the leader of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Hakimullah Mehsud and under the command of Amir Muhammad Mullah Mujahid Hafizullah, we are planning to wage an attack on your side, in Manhattan.”

In addition to the aforementioned video which features Shahzad in Waziristan, another video, disseminated on May 2, 2010-only hours after Shahzad’s attempted attack-again emphasized TTP’s knowledge and support of the attack plan. Moreover, this particular video disseminated to the public even earlier than the video featuring Shahzad, claimed TTP’s responsibility for the attack and further specified the target site as Times Square. The video, approximately one minute and six seconds in length, features Urdu-language audio supplemented by English-language text. The opening scene of the video begins with an animated explosion followed shortly by a message which reads, “ALLAH (SWT) IS WITH THE Steadfast & Patient ones. We will break the jaws of Satan’s USA. Inshallah.” While this message remains on the screen, smaller subtitles below this message read, “We Tehreek-e-Taliban with all the Pride and Bravery, TAKE full responsibility for the Attack on Times Square (NY) USA.”

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37 Amir Muhammad Mullah Mujahid Hafizullah, commonly referred to as Mullah Omar, serves as the current leader of the Afghan Taliban.


40 Ibid.
video capturing Shahzad show, Shahzad’s experiences at TTP’s training facilities cemented the alliance between himself and TTP, with both parties publicly avowing their shared intention to attack Times Square.

Besides the decision to target a specific NY site, the training camp setting also allowed Shahzad and TTP leaders to discuss other attack details such as funding. While in Waziristan and having garnered the approval of TTP senior leadership, the terrorist group provided Shahzad with specific monetary support to help defray the costs of mounting an attack within New York City. According to the “Government’s Sentencing Memorandum,” while in Pakistan, TTP gave Shahzad “approximately $5,000 in cash to help fund the attack.” Shahzad’s own statements made during his plea hearing corroborated the U.S. Government’s claims. Moreover, Shahzad specifically stated that TTP supplied the funds to him while he resided in TTP’s Waziristan-based training facilities claiming, “So I got – I was there for 40 days. I got the training, five days. And I asked them for some cash ’cause I only had – my cash was like 4,500 that I had with me when I was leaving, and I asked for some more cash because I had to do the whole operation here, so they gave me initially 4,900 something. So I came back with 8,000 something in cash, US, with 4,500 my cash and 4,000 their cash.” Additionally, when

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later asked during the plea hearing to “admit that [he] received that cash in connection with the plan [to attack Times Square],” Shahzad responded, “Yes.”\textsuperscript{43} As supported by Shahzad’s own account, the time spent between TTP leaders and Shahzad at the group’s training facilities irrefutably advanced the plot to target Times Square as the terrorist group discussed not only details about the costs, they also provided him cash, while he still remained in Waziristan, towards the later fulfillment of the attack.\textsuperscript{44}

Regardless of which training camp the homegrown terrorists attended, the events which transpired at these facilities undoubtedly furthered plans of attack. Importantly, the training camps served two primary purposes: a place where experienced terrorist trainers passed on attack skills to trainees and a setting in which terrorist leaders collaborated with operatives to formulate and support specific plots to attack the U.S. While the attack plans born at the training camps progressed to various stages, the intended target always remained the same – the United States. As the three case studies reveal, extremists’ travel to and training in areas commonly populated with terrorist training facilities, provided yet another signal of a growing plot to strike the homeland. Moreover, travel from and attendance at these training facilities not only indicated the existence of an attack plan, these actions denoted a plot which had progressed to a more advanced stage. Upon completion from training, the homegrown extremists possessed not only the desire but also operational skills and sponsorship of a terrorist group to help carry out an attack.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 34.

\textsuperscript{44} As noted in the Introductory section as well as Chapter 3, even after Shahzad departed from Pakistan and returned to the U.S., he continued to receive funds from TTP in furtherance of the attack.
CONCLUSION

As demonstrated by cited scholars and educators, terrorist attacks remain a current and deadly threat to the people and places within the United States. Moreover, aforementioned statistics have shown that plots driven by homegrown Islamic extremists and their affiliates, have increasingly posed a great challenge to those individuals charged with protecting the nation from violent actors. Anti-Western supporters, Islamic-based foreign terrorist organizations, and other sympathizers have clearly realized and exploited the liberties which homegrown extremists enjoy as U.S. persons; a status which offers unique advantages to any entities or groups intent on harming this nation. As U.S. persons, homegrown radicals possess the relative freedom to transit through our nation’s borders to more easily stage attacks on U.S. soil.

In order to prevent the success of future homegrown extremist-driven plots, we must learn from previous instances of attack activity. Building upon the current body of research in the field of terrorism, the foregoing analysis has shown that homegrown Islamic extremists’ exploitation of the Internet, supportive networks, and training camp experiences have preceded the execution of recent attempted attacks against the U.S. Particular focus on the cases involving homegrown Islamic extremists Vinas, Zazi, Ahmedzay, Medunjanin, and Shahzad demonstrate that the advancement of three separate U.S.-targeted attack plots depended upon these three factors. Thus, these three key elements serve as strong pre-attack indicators.

As revealed in previous chapters as one of the key precursors of an attack, the Internet has been utilized by homegrown extremists and their allies for both inspirational
and operational purposes. Vinas searched the Internet to immerse himself in anti-
Western rhetoric and Zazi and Shahzad leveraged the Internet to communicate and
receive operational assistance from overseas co-conspirators. Further, Zazi utilized the
Internet to access explosives notes while Shahzad used the Internet to surveil the area of
Times Square. With respect to another critical pre-attack indicator, supportive networks,
each homegrown extremist maintained friends and family members, both knowingly or
unknowingly, aided the attack plots. Certain members of the various support networks
aided entry into terrorist training camps, subverted law enforcement scrutiny and
provided funding for the attackers, amongst other acts of aid. With the completion of a
third element and another precursor to a U.S. based plot—attendance at a terrorist
facility—the homegrown extremists obtained attack skills, operational guidance, and
connected with terrorist planners to concoct specific U.S.-directed attack plans.

The preceding decade of events revealed that Islamic extremists have not ceased
their attempts to attack the United States. Moreover, the three years between 2008 and
2010—which included the three, aforementioned extremist plots—showed an increase in
homegrown Islamic extremist activity. As such, it stands to reason that radical Islamic
groups will continue to incorporate homegrown extremists into their plots. Just as
Islamic-based extremist groups have evolved to take advantage of homegrown
extremists, U.S. security protocols must also change to combat the continuing threat of
homegrown terrorist activity. The individuals responsible for securing the safety of our
nation must work together to monitor and combat the three key factors of adverse Internet
usage, nefarious support networks and attendance at terrorist training facilities.
Recognition and thus additional countermeasures to combat attack activity remains necessary to secure the continued safety of our nation. As such, the following paragraphs offer several possible countermeasures focused on the three, key predictors of homegrown terrorist plots.

The preceding analysis revealed that homegrown extremists and their overseas associates relied upon the tools afforded by the Internet in order to quickly communicate and fulfill several operational tasks. A possible countermeasure to combat this type of nefarious activity could involve the utilization of United States Intelligence Community (USIC) personnel to specifically monitor online exchanges between U.S.-based computer users and overseas associates who attempt to disguise and hide their communications through either encrypted messages, coded language or what they believe to be secure computer platforms. Additionally, USIC personnel covering overseas communications should also pay special attention to transcontinental messages in which the U.S.-based communicant expresses extreme urgency in response to specific messages. National security experts should focus their efforts on monitoring overseas communications, specifically communications between U.S.-based persons and individuals residing in key areas of militant activity. As demonstrated by the three case studies, the U.S. based extremists communicated with terrorist planners who stayed in the FATA, therefore intense inspection of internet activity between U.S.-based users and individuals residing in or near these areas of militant activity should warrant even more attention.

Vinas’ also evidenced that homegrown extremists utilized the Internet in order to explore extremist sites which supported anti-Western ideals. In addition to the
aforementioned recommendations, another method to identify and thus thwart extremists’ Internet activity may require heightened tracking of often-visited extremist websites. Those who monitor online extremist activity should examine the I.P. addresses of those who view certain websites which contain anti-Western propaganda in order to determine if the users reside in the U.S. The amount of time in which users spend on these websites should also be monitored as well as the frequency in which U.S.-based users visit specific websites. Additionally, more scrutiny of suspected extremists’ online contacts can help to map out users’ networks and the degree to which a group of internet users share common extremist beliefs. The content of these online conversations as well as the frequency in which these computer users interact with each other can help provide any indications of early or advanced attack plotting.

In addition to counterterrorism strategies to subvert online extremist activity, national security policies should also concentrate on the identification of extremist networks which exist in dangerous areas across the world. The preceding analysis has demonstrated that each attack plan remained a group effort, requiring commitment by the extremists themselves, sympathetic associates, and bonafide members of terrorist groups. As briefly mentioned, national security analysts should focus on the detection of online extremist networks as well as social networks in which members exhibit an extremist mentality, behavior and anti-Western sentiment. As with the case of Vinas, he increasingly associated with individuals who clearly exhibited extremist mindsets and vocally avowed their hatred for the United States and the countries policies. Law enforcement, moderate religious leaders and especially family members and friends
should also be encouraged to look out for and report signs of an individual’s escalating involvement and association with radical elements. Additionally, regular observation, both visual and online, of known radicalists, both domestic and abroad, can assist with the identification of new associates, especially U.S. contacts who may be in a position to conduct a U.S.-based attack.

With respect to extremist networks, U.S. counterterrorism specialists should also focus on a homegrown extremists’ ability to tap into international contacts and/or family members that can assist with travel and housing should U.S. persons choose to travel abroad to connect with terrorist groups. All five homeland extremists possessed either familial or social contacts that provided assistance to them once they decided to fly to Pakistan to obtain terrorist instruction. Homeland security experts should determine the extent and regularity of contact between potential U.S. extremists and their overseas social and familial networks contacts, with primary focus on contacts who reside in areas where militant training/activity frequently occurs.

In addition to the identification of social and familial contacts in areas of heightened extremist activity, national security analysts should also monitor the frequency, stated reasons and abnormalities of travel for individuals who plan to or who have already embarked on trips to hazardous areas. All five homegrown extremists felt necessary to obtain terrorist training in Pakistan therefore, the U.S. should strengthen its travel regulations with added attention to travel to or from regions of high-conflict. With the case of Vinas, a son of South American immigrants, travel to Pakistan did not regularly occur nor would it seem likely that he possessed familial contacts anywhere in
Pakistan. The same discrepancy could be noted with the case of Medunjanin who originally hailed from Bosnia; it would be reasonable to assume that he did not maintain family ties to individuals who resided in Pakistan. In coordination with visa officers from the Department of State, and liaisons within embassies of countries which contain known areas of extremist activity, security experts should identify and consider U.S. persons’ original citizenship status and scrutinize anomalies in travel in order to discern potential travelers of concern. Moreover, Department of State and homeland security analysts should carefully examine visa applications for an applicant’s specific reason for travel to countries with heightened terrorist activity. Upon exit and entry from the U.S., homeland security officials should extensively question individuals who intend to or have already returned from travel to countries with known areas of extremist activity. Customs agents should directly ask suspicious travelers if they have or are aware of anyone who has participated in terrorist activity. Suspicious travelers should also be required to cite any traveling companions, both on outbound and inbound flights. With this in mind, had homeland security agents grown skeptical of Medunjanin’s travel, they may have linked Medunjanin’s travel patterns with that of Zazi and Ahmedzay and quickly identified the entire trio of homeland extremists.

Lastly, in order to deter travel to overseas terrorist training centers, the U.S. should also maintain our current offensive strategy in areas rife with militant activity. Particularly, continued destruction of terrorist camps and depletion of terrorist safe havens will lessen the number of training camp attendees and terrorist instructors. Eradication of terrorist training facilities would also prevent sustained residence and
education at these training centers making it difficult for trained instructors to pass on any extended guidance to trainees. The United States Government should also work with our allies, especially those agencies operating within the countries where terrorist facilities are found, in order to identify and eradicate additional terrorist training facilities.

In addition to the aforementioned recommendations, national security experts should also craft additional strategies to especially counter the areas of hostile internet activity, supportive extremist networks and travel and training at terrorist camps. In order to avert future homegrown extremist attacks, we must review, recognize and learn from previous instances of attack plotting in order to subvert future attacks. As the analysis of the three case studies have shown, homegrown terrorists and their allies will continue to plot against the U.S. Therefore, our country must persist in securing the safety of our nation by focusing our efforts on the three aforementioned attack precursors and continue to identify additional trends in homegrown extremist activity.
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