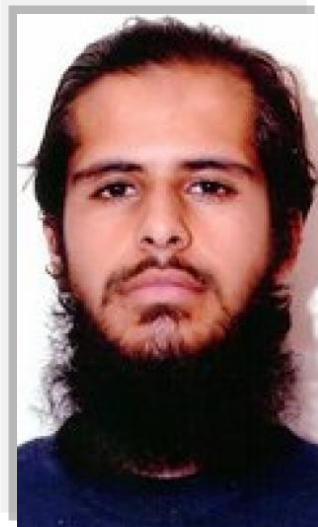




## **Anatomy of a Modern Homegrown Terror Cell: Aabid Khan et al. (Operation Praline)**

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In June 2006, a team of British law enforcement units (led by the West Yorkshire Police) carried out a series of linked arrests in the cities of London, Manchester, Bradford, and Dewsbury in the United Kingdom. The detained suspects in the investigation known as “Operation Praline” included 22-year old British national Aabid Hussain Khan; 21-year old British national Sultan Mohammed; and 16-year old British national Hammaad Munshi. All of the men would later be indicted by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for violations of Section 57 of the U.K. Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act of 2001. In August 2008, following a jury trial at Blackfriars Crown Court in London, Khan, Mohammed, and Munshi were found guilty of charges that included possessing an article for a purpose connected with the commission, preparation, or instigation of an act of terrorism, and making a record of information likely to be useful in terrorism. Khan and Mohammed were each sentenced, respectively, to 12 and 10-year prison terms. According to Karen Jones, the reviewing lawyer in the case from the U.K. Crown Prosecution Service Counter Terrorism Division, “The evidence showed Khan was a committed and active supporter of Al Qaida ideology. He had extensive amounts of the sort of information that a terrorist would need and use and the international contacts to pass it on... Aabid Khan was very much the ‘Mr. Fix-it’ of the group. He preyed on vulnerable young people and turned them into recruits to his cause, using internet chat to lure them in then incite them to fight. He arranged their passage to Pakistan for terrorism training, and talked about a ‘worldwide battle.’”<sup>1</sup>



The de-facto leader of the “cell”—Aabid Khan—was taken into custody at Manchester International Airport upon arriving on a return flight from his native country of Pakistan on June 6, 2006. Khan describes himself as originally hailing from the northwestern Pakistani town of Attock, though his first trip to Pakistan for a visit with family took place in 1989 when he was 5 years old.<sup>2</sup> In 1996, at the age of 12, Khan made his second trip to Pakistan, again to see family members.<sup>3</sup> In 2002 and 2003, Khan again traveled back to Pakistan for a third and fourth time.<sup>4</sup> These trips were fairly lengthy in duration, lasting from between 3-6 months, and had a substantial impact on Khan. Back in the U.K., given his intense religious beliefs, Khan had persistent difficulties fitting in and had failed to secure steady employment. While testifying at Blackfriars Crown Court in London, Khan complained of his “problems working in Bradford, getting a job. [I was] always getting fired.”<sup>5</sup>

Khan has openly acknowledged his relationships with his

<sup>1</sup> “Terrorist ‘Mr Fix-It’ convicted with two others of terrorism offences.” U.K. Crown Prosecution Service Press Release. August 18, 2008. [http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/154\\_08.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/154_08.html).

<sup>2</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 18, 2008.

alleged co-conspirators. He identified Sultan Mohammed as a family “relative” from “the same village” in Pakistan who “lived on the same street in Bradford.”<sup>6</sup> Khan indicated that he had been introduced to Hammaad Munchi by Sultan Mohammed in January 2005 while at the central mosque in Dewsbury which, according to Khan, is “one of the main places for Muslims to gather to listen to a lecture or meet other Muslims. They come from all over the U.K. on a regular basis... I have been a regular visitor for many years.” Following their initial introduction, Khan admitted to “speaking and communicating from time to time” with Munchi, and noted that Munchi “had a general interest that many Muslim youngsters have... religion was the main factor.”<sup>7</sup>

In subsequent sworn testimony before a judge and jury at Blackfriars Crown Court in London, Aabid Khan admitted being what he termed “an orthodox Muslim” with “strong Islamic beliefs.”<sup>8</sup> He also discussed his fascination with computers “from a very young age... going all the way back to 1997 when I first had an Internet-able computer.”<sup>9</sup> In 1997, at only 12 years old, Khan quickly became an avid fan of anything he could find on the Internet relating to jihad and the mujahideen—at the time, mostly “news clippings from Chechnya, certain websites such as Azzam Publications, websites such as Ooqaz, news clippings, and various Islamic books, and items on warfare... pyrotechnics... I felt upset and angry at the onslaught against innocent women and children by countries such as Russia... Opposing the Russians were the mujahideen in Chechnya. I’m sure you’ve seen one of them, his name was Khattab. He was a famous mujahideen commander... At that stage, I would read of the news bulletins on the various news agencies, and sometimes they would post a video along with the news.”<sup>10</sup>

Starting in about 1997, Khan’s level of online activity increased and he began to “use newsgroups and discussion forums to join with people in discussing these issues... jihad and contemporary issues surrounding the Muslims in various countries, various lands... The interest was with regard to the groups that were there protecting Muslims and preventing the harm of the people that were fighting against them.” On the interactive newsgroups and discussion forums, Khan discovered a wealth of information about “military matters... the tactics of the groups, and how they went about defending these various areas, what strategies they used, what weapons they used, the individuals involved, profiles, things like this.”<sup>11</sup> Using the knowledge he was gaining via the Internet, Khan decided to pursue his own so-called “e-war strategy”:

“I had a large interest in hacking since a while[sic], and on the Internet, we would often have challenges to hack websites... Websites of other hackers, derogatory websites, websites that attack the Muslims, to stop them from what they were doing which was quite offensive... I was asked to help in stopping un-Islamic websites, websites which are generally very offensive... trying to send the wrong message, we would try to put an end to that. I would be approached on the Internet by others to help in their task. I would have met them in hacker chat rooms, IRC rooms... It would be necessary to gather information about the website, e-mail addresses... To effectively take down a website or manipulate a website, you would need a substantial amount of information to do a good job... One simple way is to flood it with useless traffic, to flood it and overwhelm it. This would result in the site being suspended.”<sup>12</sup>

Operating under a variety of pseudonyms—including “oceanblue”, “umar al-khattab”, and “abu umar”—Aabid Khan became one of the leading lights in an elite underground online network of English-speaking jihad supporters who were primarily based in Europe, Canada, and the United States. These young men and women—most of whom had never met each other in person—evolved into a tightly-knit circle who shared a common, all-consuming interest in

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<sup>6</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 16, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 16, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 16, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 16, 2008.

computers and global mujahideen movements. The circle, among others, included Khan; 20-year old Toronto, Canada-resident Fahim Ahmad; Ahmad's teenage sister-in-law Saima; 18-year old Atlanta, Georgia-resident Ehsanul Sadequee (a.k.a. "Aboo Khubayb al-Muwahhid")<sup>13</sup>; and, Houston, Texas web developer Sarfaraz Jamal (a.k.a. "Sas Jamal"). The content of the exchanges between and among these individuals was often chilling. On April 18, 2005, from his home in Atlanta, Sadequee wrote a series of online messages to Aabid Khan and other trusted associates retelling a dream he had recently experienced:

"Allaahu Akbar... i saw you and me were in an arcade which was full of military, U.S. military, and i dont know why. so you were playing a game, i think, and there was a solder[sic] sitting next to you. so you quickly took his weapon and you made a run for it, running out the room. but he ran after you... and i was there, sitting... and then i saw you go, and the solder[sic] ran after you... and then, i was feeling all guilty [that] i didnt do something. but i was sitting, and then, in a few minutes, he brings you, all shot up, and you were injured. and i was talking to you and you were almost dead, and you were saying that you see the Hoor [virgins of paradise]. Wallaahi, i don t think i have had such a dream which i remember the details, so much."<sup>14</sup>

These discussions, planning sessions, and—occasionally—quarreling took place over a variety of online environments: e-mail, Internet Relay Chat, PalTalk, and user-populated web discussion forums. The most important of these websites—all English-language based—were ClearGuidance.com, IslamicNetworks.com, and the At-Tibyan Publications chat forum. ClearGuidance (a.k.a. "CG") and IslamicNetworks.com were both the handiwork of Sarfaraz Jamal; whereas, At-Tibyan Publications was the joint product of a network of volunteer administrators and contributors—including Aabid Khan. Rather than merely translating news reports or offering background on particular military operations, At-Tibyan has focused on distributing ideological material designed to convince likeminded individuals to sacrifice their lives in the cause of jihad. In fact, most of the material produced by At-Tibyan offered little in the way of public interest value—it would only be of use to someone with a genuine, deep-rooted interest in participating in violent jihad. A fairly self-evident example is the frequently recurring At-Tibyan document titled "The Clarification Regarding Intentionally Targetting[sic] Women and Children." This 110-page theological and strategic manual lays out in detail the religious justifications for deliberately killing innocent civilians (i.e. women and children), including specifically in acts of premeditated terrorism:

"Indeed, the Shariah of Islam has mentioned some situations during which it is permissible to kill the women and children of the kuffar [infidels] – and has clarified that... there are situations when it becomes permissible to kill them, sometimes intentionally... When a catapult is used, it is permissible to attack the kuffar, even if it kills their women and children in such a situation. And similarly today, a similar analogy can be made for the permissibility of the use of heavy artillery like mortars, tanks, planes, bombs, etc... [It is also permissible] when there is a need to besiege, torch, burn, fumigate, drown the fortresses (and ships) of the kuffar, even if it leads to the killing/death of their women and children."<sup>15</sup>

An assortment of copies of "The Clarification Regarding Intentionally Targetting[sic] Women and Children" along with a wealth of other highly unusual items relating to At-Tibyan Publications were recovered from the property of Aabid Khan at the time of his arrest at Manchester Airport.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See e.g.: Rankin, Bill. "Movie plot was concern for terror suspect." Atlanta Journal-Constitution. March 21, 2008. [http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2008/03/21/terror\\_0322.html](http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2008/03/21/terror_0322.html).

<sup>14</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al-muwahhid1009057832.xml.

<sup>15</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14\MB14 RSK4 LNJ589\E-Books. Targetting women and children.pdf.

<sup>16</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14\MB14 RSK4 LNJ589\E-Books. Targetting women and children.pdf. See also: Exhibit MB14E\1) DISK1\Jihaad.

Most interestingly, Khan's Toshiba laptop hard drive appears to contain numerous sensitive files relating to the actual hosting and administration of the At-Tibyan website and online chat forum. Among other things, it features a file folder labeled "At-Tibyaan Site Work"<sup>17</sup>, a complete archived backup copy of the At-Tibyan Publications website (including its password-protected forum)<sup>18</sup>, and bookmarked "Favorites" web links to secure login pages providing access to control panels exclusively for the use of At-Tibyan Publications website administrators<sup>19</sup> and forum moderators.<sup>20</sup> During an online chat session with an associate, Khan was asked point-blank, "akhee do u run www.tibyan.com or http://www.tibyanpubs.com/forums/", and responded, "both akhee. it's run by our team... tibyan.com is reserved for publications and the tibyanpubs is the forum and media."<sup>21</sup> In other private chat sessions, Ehsanul Sadequee addressed queries regarding the administration of the At-Tibyan forum to Aabid Khan and the other "team" members: "hey akhee, what happened. *At-Tibyân Publications Statistics Threads: 2,095, Posts: 9,163, Members: 799 Welcome to our newest member, abu abdul-kareem ? ...i thought we had 800.*"<sup>22</sup> Under questioning by his own attorneys at the Blackfriars Crown Court in London, Khan acknowledged that the files found on his Toshiba laptop "are the constituent files of the At-Tibyaan forum." He denied being one of the founders of At-Tibyan, but explained instead that because of his skills at web administration, "I was asked to help fix some problems with this website, so I was given this backup... by the administration... They were having some day-to-day problems... It was quite a prominent website, and I didn't charge them for this... I thought it was very good."<sup>23</sup> Khan did not discount the fact that his volunteer technical role became essential to the operation of At-Tibyan: "if there was a problem, we were the first point of contact... this was our job."<sup>24</sup>

Akin to the At-Tibyan Publications forum, Sarfaraz Jamal's creation ClearGuidance.com was, at one time, one of the most popular gathering places for English-speaking supporters of jihad on the Internet. The digital storage devices seized from Aabid Khan at the time of his arrest at Manchester Airport in June 2006 contain offline material saved from the now-defunct ClearGuidance.com library and webforum—including a single compressed .RAR file which alone offers no less than 176 separate HTML pages saved from the ClearGuidance website, including English transcripts of "martyrdom wills" of Al-Qaida suicide bombers in Saudi Arabia.<sup>25</sup> Two other compressed .RAR files—Favorites1.rar and My dukuments.rar—stored on Exhibit MB-14C also contain material relating to clearguidance.com. Favorites1.rar alone includes at least 27 HTML pages saved from clearguidance.com.<sup>26</sup> My dukuments.rar includes copies of at least 93 messages taken from the clearguidance.com chat forum, including posts with such titles as "Fatwa on September 11, 2001" and "-GIVE YOUR OPINION 9-11 Hijacker wills".<sup>27</sup>

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The\_Clarification\_Regarding\_Intentionally\_Targetting\_Women\_a.pdf. See also: Exhibit MB14E\1) DISK1\ekitab. At-Tibyan.doc and At-Tibyan.pdf.

<sup>17</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Websites\At-Tibyaan Site Work\Da'watunaa.zip\Zip Volume and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Websites\At-Tibyaan Site Work\Da'watunaa.zip\Zip Volume.

<sup>18</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Websites\At-Tibyaan Site Work\backup-4.7.2005\_07-52-01\_tibyanp.tar.gz and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Websites\At-Tibyaan Site Work\backup-4.7.2005\_07-52-01\_tibyanp.tar.gz.

<sup>19</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Favorites and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Favorites.

<sup>20</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Favorites and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Favorites.

<sup>21</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\1) DISK1\CONVERSATION\HISH.rtf.

<sup>22</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\almuwahhid4234638375.xml.

<sup>23</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 18, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14\MB14C\Fataawa.rar\Fataawa\FATAAWA (look in this).rar\FATAAWA.

<sup>26</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14\MB14C\Favorites1.rar.

<sup>27</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14\MB14C\ My dukuments.rar.

However, the mission of Aabid Khan and his online associates was far more expansive than merely trading in hardcore terrorist propaganda on social networking forums. In addition to encouraging other English-speaking Muslims to carry out suicide bombing attacks, records of online discussions between Khan and others reveal that these individuals had agreed to take the responsibility upon themselves and began conspiring to carry out a series of terrorist attacks in Western countries—in particular, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States.

During an online chat session with co-conspirators, Khan boasted of his desire “to take out” as many people as possible, even innocent civilians: “attacks are permissible through out this world, so the world a battlefield in my vision, everything, almost, is a target... so if you can find a big target and take it out, say like a military base in uk, then alhamdulillah.”<sup>28</sup> In another similar conversation, Khan confessed, “you dont know how much fury i have towards these american dogs.”<sup>29</sup> Khan was remarkably forthright in laying out his larger plan: “what i want to do is cause trouble for kuffar [infidels] by hit and runs[,] everywhere[,] cause fear and panic in their countries[,] make them nervous so they make mistakes... insha’allah commando training. i was all ready[sic] reported to the airport and police by my parents... [but it is] too late, the terrorists have brainwashed us.”<sup>30</sup> When Khan insisted to another prospective cell member “our duty is to cause damage to the kuffar [infidels] in each and every place possible”, the recruit joked that Khan might not be patient enough to actually reach his chosen target: “the way u talk it seems like ur planning out a fidayee [suicide commando] attack on the plane lol.” Grinning, Khan responded, “if it does not come to that, then we wont insha’allah.”<sup>31</sup>

In late 2004, led by Khan, the various plotters involved quickly agreed on what they considered to be the fundamental first step: obtaining military training at mujahideen camps in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, or conversely in neighboring regions of Afghanistan. According to later testimony in court by Khan, “Pakistan was the obvious point of contact” for seeking training with mujahideen organizations: “the final decision was to emigrate to Pakistan... One of the suggestions was to study in a madrassah... There were a number of places that were discussed... Pakistan, for example.”<sup>32</sup> Khan explained the very basic rationale for ultimately choosing Pakistan as the destination of choice: “if we want to [go to] Pakistan, that’s not a problem, we can sort that out quite easy. Afghanistan, also.”<sup>33</sup>

However, even after settling on Pakistan, there was much debate and disagreement over how to best coordinate the arrival and departure of cell members, what precise cover to use in order to enter Pakistan unnoticed, and with which organization to seek military training. Khan put forward a scheme which would bring together a group of between 6-12 prospective recruits at a staging point in Toronto, Canada. Once in Toronto, the men would assemble in non-descript basement apartments and, for several weeks, finalize their arrangements in Pakistan. Khan was very insistent on the need to gather at a covert staging point before traveling on to Pakistan: “our group is growing, need to plan better, to adapt... as remember we cant have like 12 bearded people just go together to pakistan... i want to get sinaan, ibn mardhiyah, muthaana, and others interested and have at least a group of 12 insha’allah if possible.”<sup>34</sup> Addressing Ehsanul Sadequee and the others, Khan explained, “the basements [in Toronto] will be for the other ikhwaan [brothers] and also prepared for when we come back. if we have the money up, then we can rent it out for a few months ahead of us and others can stay their[sic] insha’allah.”<sup>35</sup> In March 2005, Aabid Khan traveled from his home in Bradford to Toronto, staying in Canada for a period of approximately eight days—according to Khan—for the purpose of resolving “family inheritance issues” and in order to “get married.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. Ismiyy.rtf.

<sup>29</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>30</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14\MB14C\Doc1.rar\Doc1\Conversations\ naji.rtf.

<sup>31</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. akh conv.rtf.

<sup>32</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. Ismiyy.rtf.

<sup>35</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al-muwahhid1009057832.xml.

<sup>36</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

Yet, several of the others—particularly Khan’s contacts based in the U.S.—believed that their own participation in the initial Toronto phase of the mission would be costly and needless. In April 2005, Sadequee wrote an urgent message addressed to Khan and others appealing for them to “contact me! we need to get our dates straightened and organized... i didnt know its going to take months.” After some reluctance, Sadequee agreed to join the other members of the cell in Toronto “and maybe turaab too, but he wants to go to pak directly from here... If the plan seems flowing smoothly by then, then i stay... but if it seems slow still, i come back... but how would my being in [Toronto] help get us go to Pak faster?”<sup>37</sup> Another individual quickly wrote back to Sadequee, “planning man, we cant talk this stuff on the net.”<sup>38</sup> Aabid Khan admonished, “if you are going to rely dot 2 dot on everything thats not good, we have running training you just have to bear with us... these brothers are helping me out at their own costs. so please just bear patience with them. their[sic] on track we just need to get some things sorted so we can go ahead. its like a major thing.”<sup>39</sup>

In another chat session from April 2005, a user known as “Aboo Turaab al-Qurashee” (believed to be an alias for 20-year old Atlanta, Georgia college student Syed Haris Ahmed) wrote to Khan, Sadequee, and others, complaining, “man i was planing to go pak land... whats wrong with my plan... my plan was to study in authentic mad. [madrassah] until you guys joined.... and I think thats better for me..to get ilm while you guys plan the money thing.”<sup>40</sup> Another conspirator involved in the chat mocked, “akhee with wut money... ur not gonna go to pak with 500 dolelrs[sic] spending money... we need to organize here... akhee we need to organize here.” The impatient “Aboo Turaab” demanded to know “who else is gonna join us” in Toronto—and was told “u khubayb [Sadequee] possibly abu umer [Khan] and aboo sulayman for a few weeks, and another somali brother.” “And then we jet to pak?” “Once we get funding, yeah.”<sup>41</sup>

As work on securing basement apartments in Toronto continued, Aabid Khan prowled through his contacts on ClearGuidance.com and other online extremist forums looking for additional suitable recruits and those willing to help finance the cause. In his chat sessions with other users, Khan repeatedly identified Clear Guidance (CG) and social networks of “cg peeps” as excellent venues to find those willing to support their jihad mission.<sup>42</sup> Offering an update on the status of the training project, Khan told an associate that several “brothers” had already volunteered to travel to Pakistan: “i will let you know insha’allah – Their[sic] are many on CG to be exact also who are looking. I know some in canada also... the numbers are increasing, alhamdulillah... at the moment, surely to date are 5/6 i can think off now plus another whom i need to contact which makes 7... then theirs[sic] another down in london who shows interest plus the wives.”<sup>43</sup>

Even the creator of ClearGuidance.com himself, Sarfaraz Jamal, became involved in the training plan. During their discussions of Clear Guidance and its membership, Khan singled out “the likes of sarfaraz jamal” as being ideal candidates for joining their project: “he is showing interest alhamdulillah.”<sup>44</sup> In another chat session, Khan complimented the “keen interest” displayed by Jamal—“maybe he could be persuaded to join the caravan insha’allah... it seems he needs an escape, i will talk to him when i can insha’allah.”<sup>45</sup> Khan’s Toshiba laptop later seized by authorities in the United Kingdom contained records of yet another online conversation, this time between “sasjamal” (a.k.a. Sarfaraz Jamal) and an unknown associate of Aabid Khan. After being informed that Khan was unavailable, Sarfaraz Jamal asked the associate, “what does he want to speak to me abot[sic]?” In response, he was told, “it was an invitation, to join the basketball team – ghuraba foundation team. caravan of players... he is moving around, getting

<sup>37</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\almuwahhid4234638375.xml.

<sup>38</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\almuwahhid4234638375.xml.

<sup>39</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\almuwahhid4234638375.xml.

<sup>40</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\ al-muwahhid1009057832.xml.

<sup>41</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\ al-muwahhid1009057832.xml.

<sup>42</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14\MB14C\Doc1.rar\Doc1\Conversations\ismiyy.rtf.

<sup>43</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. abdil aziz.rtf.

<sup>44</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14\MB14C\Doc1.rar\Doc1\Conversations\ismiyy.rtf.

<sup>45</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14\MB14C\Doc1.rar\Doc1\Conversations\Abdil aziz.rtf.

the team together, making plans.” Jamal immediately inquired how long Khan would be at his present location: “i mean is he stagnant for a while? or is he moving, etc.”<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps one of the most fascinating elements of Aabid Khan’s wide-ranging criminal conspiracy was the role of his strange personal relationship with Fahim Ahmad’s sister-in-law Saima Mohammad, a volunteer teacher and fellow religious extremist. Though the two did not meet in person until well into their courtship, Aabid and Saima formed a powerful and often contentious romance, which played out in public discussions posted on radical Internet chat forums like Clear Guidance, in Internet Relay Chat (IRC) rooms, and over private web-cam sessions. Khan himself acknowledged that the relationship was built in large part on the fact that Saima’s ideological views “fit with my plan on the course of jihad.”<sup>47</sup> In handwritten letters addressed to Khan and later exhibited during his trial at Blackfriars Crown Court, Saima professed her love and her burning desire to follow in the footsteps of Hawaa Barayev, a Chechen woman who carried out a suicide truck bombing: “I know what I want to do. And in one way or the other, it has to be related to the imprisoned ikhwan [brothers]. The more I think about my goal in life... let it be a martyrdom operation.” During online chat sessions with Khan in the spring of 2005, the two explored the issue in detail. At one point, Saima described how “me and faheem were discussing the issue of fidaayee [suicide commando] operations, and i told him what i wanted. mariya [Saima’s older sister] got mad saying if i do something like that, she’ll tell dad... she says women dont have to do it... [but] faheem always encourages me.”<sup>48</sup> Khan agreed with Fahim’s perspective and added, “i give you permission anyway, so no one can over ride that.”<sup>49</sup>

When not serving in her role as a teacher, Saima spent many hours working on behalf of detainees held at the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba—particularly members of the notorious Khadr family from Toronto. She complained to Khan about the cold reception herself and Maha Khadr received when attempting to speak to attendees at local Toronto-area mosques about the issue:

“Sister Maha was literally pleading them to listen you know and she was in tears, telling them how important this issue is, and how she’s lost almost 4 sons because of this... but no one was listening. then I took the mic from her... i dont even remember what i said. i was furious... but it was hopeless aabid... sister maha then announced... that if they need to get more info, then they can contact me. and you know what happened? she was asking them to write the number down, to take out their pens... NO ONE i saw took notice. NO ONE. how pathetic. then this little boy comes to me, and he’s like whats your number sis? i broke down aabid... and you know who this kid was? ...umm ahmed’s son, mahmoud jaballah’s son.”<sup>50</sup>

During subsequent testimony before a jury at the Blackfriars Crown Court in London, Aabid Khan acknowledged his relationship with Saima, describing her as his “wife” and “an active campaigner for the release of Muslim prisoners, Islamic prisoners, from prisons such as Guantanamo Bay... She lectures in Canada... putting pressure on the government, holding campaigns, holding conferences to raise awareness. She is quite upset. She feels strongly about the issue, Muslim prisoners in places like Guantanamo and other prisons.”<sup>51</sup> When asked to explain Saima’s stated interest in carrying out a “martyrdom operation”, Khan responded, “My understanding is... she was upset... This was said out of desperation, because she saw that nothing was being done [about Guantanamo Bay]... So she was quite upset... This is something which people tend to say out of anger, or out of desperation.”<sup>52</sup>

Likewise, it was Saima who provided comfort and advice to Khan when his associates proved unreliable and his confidence in his own plans wavered. On April 22, 2005, Khan vented

<sup>46</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. Abuumar.rtf.

<sup>47</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>48</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>49</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>50</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>51</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 16, 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 16, 2008.

his rage to Saima over the less-than-enthusiastic response he had received from an online associate who was offered the chance to take part in the Toronto training camp project. He fumed, “azdee just said when we invited him, do your own thing with your own money and called our planning a joke. i tell you what: these idiot afghanies and canadians are morons and idiots and a bunch of backstabbers who change by the season. dont trust them, never will... we come all the bloody way to canada and they call our planning a joke?”<sup>53</sup> Grumbling to Saima about the weight on his shoulders, he complained, “you also have to bear in mind i have a large responsibility as head of the brothers. i cant mess. otherwise, the plans will come tumbling down.”<sup>54</sup>

Nonetheless, even Saima expressed reservations about various aspects of Khan’s plan. During one online chat, she demanded, “what if you never return? you expect these kuffaar [infidels] to just let you go if they have even an inkling of what you want to do?”<sup>55</sup> When Saima continued to nag him with other difficult questions, Khan waved her off: “do you want me to explain to you everything we have planned?” Saima pressed, “and there is no other way at all to choose another plan or get another brother to do this?” In response, Khan coldly mocked, “hello everyone out their[sic], look we want to blow you up.”<sup>56</sup> With regards to the issue of his role in jihad, clearly, Khan would accept criticism from no one—not even his own wife. Furious at Saima’s attempts at diverting his commitment to jihad, Khan’s language turned ugly: “no one, and i mean no one, will stop me doing what Allaah has ordained for me. are you listening to me women[sic]?”<sup>57</sup>

As part of their “marriage”, Khan expected Saima to do her part in supporting the Toronto training camp project. In Khan’s view, Saima and her network of female friends were particularly useful in finding potential “wives” for single males seeking to travel to Pakistan for military training. From the context of his conversations with others, Khan clearly believed that male recruits stood a much higher chance of slipping through the nets of law enforcement and intelligence agencies if they were paired with wedded female counterparts. In mid-April 2005, Aabid forwarded a request to Saima on behalf of “two brothers, one masri [Egyptian] one omani. we need sisters from ideally pakistani background, then bangladeshi, indian if no pakistani, and who are ideally here—then over their[sic] in that part of the world—who is over 18 for reasons i.e able to travel alone without being stopped... so 16/17 min.”<sup>58</sup>

This same issue—taking “another wife for the purpose of fulfilling jihad need”—would end up haunting the romantic relationship between Aabid and Saima.<sup>59</sup> As a non-citizen resident of South Asian origin living in Canada, Saima could not offer Aabid the desirable benefits of having a wife “who has a non-muslim name in passport if possible and is not arab or asian ethnically.”<sup>60</sup> The two fought bitterly over the suggestion that Khan would take a second “canadian” wife as “a cover to come their[sic] and someone who could have an apartment ‘legally’ and other things on her name.”<sup>61</sup> Attempting to allay Saima’s jealousy, Khan outlined his practical reasoning for considering taking another wife:

“My intention was i could find someone in america or canada or further down south, kitabiyah (not muslim), who can be a benefit to us strategically, through having easier access i.e not having to be caught up in immigration office and that the woman could easily use her name and details as being born and bread[sic] in that country with citizenship which could be advantage for us when the ikhwaan [brothers] need and as a cover for travelling here... that was one idea, another was marrying a sister who is from that country and a citizen, Muslimah... for the same purpose to facilate[sic] our task.. if

<sup>53</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>54</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>55</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. conversation 1.rtf.

<sup>56</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>57</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>58</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>59</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>60</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>61</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.



their[sic] was/is a way, then i would do it, the same way i would cut my hair and beard and wear their clothes for what task i had to... i have british passport anyway. i need someone in canada, n/s america... from now on dont ask please... what you dont know cant hurt you.”<sup>62</sup>

Unhappily, Saima wrote back, “if you ask me to take a truck full of explosives and run it into a military field, i will do it. aabid, just please please dont ask me for this.. please... i will sacrifice my family for you, for the sake of Allaah and even my life. just please sweetheart dont do this please.”<sup>63</sup> Evidently tired of fighting with his “wife”, Khan appealed to her not to dwell on these “minor” details: “do we have to fight over this when i hope we will not live to see more then five years in the most?”<sup>64</sup> He beseeched, “please just hold my hand and lets prepare together... those who truely wish to fight in Allaah’s path will make preparations like we are doing... if we have a stick, then fight with it. a stone, fight with it. a gun, what ever we have, what ever resources we will use them... i cant have the plans ruined, that will be my ruin and your ruin.”<sup>65</sup>

By the late spring of 2005, talk amongst Aabid Khan and his associates became squarely focused on the prospect of training in regions of the Pakistani NWFP bordering Kashmir at camps run by either Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) or Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET). In an online discussion with Khan, a co-conspirator operating under the name “Abdelaziz al-Gharbi” explained, “i was talking to the lashk contact. he was saying...people of all sizes comes and its not the thin ones that pass the training because some of the larger ones have much stronger imaan and this carries them trthough[sic] more than the ones who were weaker in faith.”<sup>66</sup> Khan responded, “a few of the laskhar offices closed in attock, although i think training with any of them is good insha’allaah. Jaish or Laskhar. they are both better then their likes who are not doing anything.” Al-Gharbi added, “personally i wanted the lashk ones... reason being ...they got links to shesh [Chechnya]... and thats where i always had a soft spot in my heart for.”<sup>67</sup>

A similar preference for Lashkar-e-Taiba was expressed by Ehsanul Sadequee in conversations with Khan and others. Sadequee insisted, “i was thinking, we should be with LT, due to them being same ‘Aqeedah, and they fighting against Hindus, so the Murtaddeen [i.e. the Pakistani government] shouldnt bother us as opposed to if we go to other apostates-haters.” Khan pointed out that he had already witnessed “some arabs with jaysh e m”, but that he would equally consider LET “if we can get on good terms with some ikhwaan, insha’allaah.” Another chat participant countered that this was really an issue appropriately to be “decided on the ground when we get there and see who is available[sic].” Khan seconded, “about all this, we should elect brothers for certain departments when we meet.”<sup>68</sup> During subsequent testimony at the Blackfriars Crown Court in London, Khan was asked by his attorney to describe for the jury the purpose and origins of LET. He acknowledged, “this was a jihadi organization which organizes training, military training. It also is able to organize the migration... contacts in other countries, such as Chechnya which I mentioned before.”<sup>69</sup>

There are frequent indications in the evidence gathered during Operation Praline that Khan felt a stronger personal affinity to JEM over Lashkar. Chatting online with “Abdelaziz al-Gharbi”, Khan bragged that he was already in direct contact with sympathetic representatives from JEM willing to help sponsor groups of foreign jihadists: “what is important is to help them with some of their ticket costs insha’allaah. the rest is payed for i.e training , shelter, clothing.”<sup>70</sup> He added, “the brothers are from Jaish e muhammad alayhis salam. i can ring them up and ask them, then i will give you the number... i can arrange for your pick up at airport etc. they will hopefully pick us up. im arranging everything from here but they will do the escorting in pakistan

<sup>62</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>63</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>64</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>65</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al\_mujtahidah3697273998 - Archive.xml.

<sup>66</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. abdil aziz.rtf.

<sup>67</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. abdil aziz.rtf.

<sup>68</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al-muwahhid1009057832.xml.

<sup>69</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. abdil aziz.rtf.

and look after us insha'allaah as we are foreigners."<sup>71</sup> At trial in Blackfriars Crown Court, Khan was also asked by his attorney to explain to the jury the significance of the above conversations referencing both LET and JEM. Khan replied, "there are two organizations which are referred to... They are trying to find out if [training] is possible via many organizations. They are trying to find out from as many organizations as possible. What is the cost, what is the routes, etc. etc."<sup>72</sup>

When British authorities later seized Khan's Toshiba laptop, it contained a copy of a draft letter written in English to unidentified recipients. The letter, last accessed in May 2005, read as follows:

"It has been quiet a long time since we have been in contact due to various restrictions and problems... I hope that my dear brother ramdhan is in the best of emaan and health and please convey my salaam's to him and to everyone else. I was meaning to ask if you can help arrange for the training of a few brothers from abroad, amongst them are non-pakistan nationals. I hope it can be arranged with their safety and travel, accommodation met which they will pay for and any costs involved in providing the protection and so on insha'allaah ta'aala. I have heard that the pakistani government is now taking down names for anyone wanting to train, is this the case and is their away around this such as lying to them by telling them we are 'villagers'... Please do let me know if the arrangements for their training can be made insha'allaah."<sup>73</sup>

Responding to an inquiry from his attorney at court in London, Khan admitted to the jury, "I wrote this letter in order to arrange some training... training at a training camp... I knew someone was going to Pakistan, so I thought it would be a good time to send a letter with him."<sup>74</sup>

Likewise, the hard drive on Khan's Toshiba laptop also contained an assortment of cartographical and practical information that appears to focus on known bases of mujahideen activity in the regions of Balakot and Mansehra. This data included a detailed map of Mansehra/Muzaffarabad/Balakot<sup>75</sup> and specific background information on Balakot and the Kaghan Valley.<sup>76</sup> The same digital file folder labeled "Balakot" featuring these regional maps also contained a basic language document titled "PAKHTOH FOR IRHAABIES."<sup>77</sup> In Arabic, "Irhabi" literally means "terrorist", and the document represents itself to be a guide to simple expressions in the Pakhto language commonly used by foreign recruits attending jihad training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan—such as "Kill Him!", "Shoot Him", "Bullet", "Gun", and "Sword."<sup>78</sup> At trial in Blackfriars Crown Court in London, Khan admitted that the "Irhaabies" guide "was created by myself... It's similar to books like Computers for Dummies... Pakhtoh is the language of my ethnic background, in the northwest region [of Pakistan]... The transliteration was done by myself. The words were given to me to translate by a friend."<sup>79</sup>

Despite having made the necessary contacts with mujahideen organizations willing to provide appropriate military training, Khan found that several of his associates were still displaying hesitation at committing themselves to his project. "Abdelaziz al-Gharbi" swore to Khan of his desire to travel to Pakistan, but apologized, "i cant come straight away. there are a few things which need sorting out... i cant come with you...thats the problem... its my parents and my sisters, something to do with them."<sup>80</sup> To the chagrin of others, Ehsanul Sadequee repeatedly expressed his impatience with the elaborate "Toronto project" conceived by Aabid Khan and insisted that the "main goal" of the project should be "to get with the Students [i.e. the Taliban in Afghanistan].

<sup>71</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. abdil aziz.rtf.

<sup>72</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\Diary Files\risalahpk.rtf.

<sup>74</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>75</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\1) DISK1\Balakot\ M32600Y16200S1000W500H300.gif.

<sup>76</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\1) DISK1\Balakot\ Balakot.htm.

<sup>77</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\1) DISK1\Balakot\ Pakh-DRAFT.rtf.

<sup>78</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\1) DISK1\Balakot\ Pakh-DRAFT.rtf.

<sup>79</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>80</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. abdil aziz.rtf.

man, the Students are back with full force.”<sup>81</sup> In chat sessions with other members of the conspiracy, Sadequee indicated he was equally open to the alternative of traveling to Europe in order to link up with the notorious cyber-criminal “Irhaby 007” (a.k.a. London-resident Younis Tsouli), who he refers to in coded language as “james bond.” “I am thinking akhee”, Sadequee suggested, “we could meet bond, etc. and even if it means going to two rivers [Iraq]. but we can keep the final goal of MEelaad [the celebration] in mind—and we would go there [to Iraq] only to practice cooking and learning how to cook.”<sup>82</sup> In this case, the words “cook” and “cooking” are obvious examples of coded references to the prospect of receiving military training from authentic mujahideen organizations.

On June 30, 2005, Khan left his home in Bradford and, instead of traveling to Toronto as previously proposed, flew directly from Manchester International Airport to Islamabad, Pakistan, thereupon hiring a taxi to take him to his home town of Attock. Khan apparently made the trip to Pakistan by himself and, upon official questioning, insisted that the purpose of the trip had merely been to marry a Pakistani cousin and “travel about, visiting Islamabad, the local areas to visit, the riverside area for fishing.” Almost exactly three months later, on September 29, 2005, Khan boarded a Pakistani International Airlines (PIA) flight in Islamabad and returned home to the United Kingdom.<sup>83</sup> A year later, in June 2006, when an explosives test conducted on Khan and his belongings returned a positive result, Khan admitted to “handl[ing] fireworks” during “my previous visit to Pakistan [in the summer of 2005]. This is when I celebrated my wedding and I transported them home from the shop... I asked him generally if fireworks would come under explosives if someone had been handling fireworks. He affirmed that it would.”<sup>84</sup>

Both prior to and following Aabid Khan’s summer 2005 trip to Pakistan, there are strong indications that Khan had already eagerly moved on to preparations for the second-phase of his project: launching a coordinated wave of Al-Qaida-style terrorist attacks. Directing a particular query to an online associate originally from the Caribbean, Khan asked, “which side of trinidad/tobago do the ships leave, the port? ...I wanted to find out if any ships sale[sic] out to cuba.”<sup>85</sup> In a separate conversation with another user, Khan confessed, “you know my ambition was to bring down g bay :D insha’allah ta’ala.”<sup>86</sup> Presented this evidence at trial in Blackfriars Crown Court in London, Khan acknowledged that “g bay” was “a reference to Guantanamo Bay.”<sup>87</sup>

On his laptop, Khan was in the possession of two innocently-named compressed .RAR files created in late April 2005: “volleyball contest.rar” and “jimmy’s 13th birthday.rar.” Inside the two compressed archives, respectively, were two video clips—MVI\_0095.AVI and MVI\_0144.AVI—that appear to have been recorded using a cell phone-style camera.<sup>88</sup> The clips consist of crude covert reconnaissance footage of would-be terrorist targets in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area—including the World Bank and a local Masonic temple. They are the same two video clips described in a superseding criminal indictment filed by federal prosecutors in July 2006 in Atlanta, Georgia. According to that indictment, Ehsanul Sadequee and Syed Haris Ahmed physically “traveled to the Washington, D.C., area and recorded brief ‘casing’ video clips of symbolic and infrastructure targets of potential terrorist attacks... The defendants made these video clips to establish their credentials with other supporters of violent jihad as well as for use in support of violent jihad. Defendant SADEQUEE then conveyed, or caused to be conveyed, the video clips to

<sup>81</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al-muwahhid1009057832.xml.

<sup>82</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14E\CONVERSATION\al-muwahhid1009057832.xml.

<sup>83</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>84</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 16-17, 2008.

<sup>85</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. tritob port.rtf.

<sup>86</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. Ismiyy.rtf.

<sup>87</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 18, 2008.

<sup>88</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Intelligence and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Intelligence.

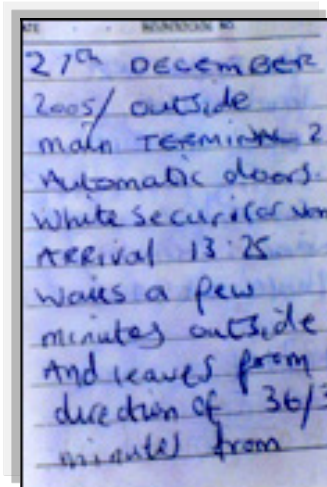
Younis Tsouli, a coconspirator not charged herein, who was located in the United Kingdom and who maintained the video clips along with other violent jihad materials.”<sup>89</sup>

The hard drive of Aabid Khan’s Toshiba laptop seized in June 2006 likewise contained an encyclopedia of other information for which it is difficult to fathom an innocent purpose in collecting. This includes detailed images, charts, and technical data on the London Underground, the London and Tower Bridges, the Washington D.C. Metro system, the New York City subway system, bridges and tunnels leading into Manhattan, truck routes in boroughs surrounding Manhattan, the New York financial district, the U.S. Capitol building, the White House, the Washington Monument, the World Bank headquarters, Masonic temples in the Washington D.C. area, the D.C. Marine Barracks, and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Also of note are various bits of online research regarding the U.S.-Canadian border crossing in Niagara, the purchase of shared passenger railway passes for VIA Rail (Canada) and Amtrak, and options for renting apartments in Toronto, Canada.<sup>90</sup> No less significant are the numerous mainstream media articles saved to his hard drive that outline new government restrictions on the purchase of explosives-grade fertilizer, security techniques in the scanning of airline passengers, and the guidelines used in the inspection of road traffic entering the island of Manhattan.<sup>91</sup>

In December 2005, three months after returning from his trip to Pakistan, Aabid Khan and unidentified associates engaged in a pattern of aggressive surveillance targeting armored vans in the U.K. operated by the company Securicor. Handwritten diary notes exhibited in court during Khan’s subsequent criminal trial leave little room for the imagination: “develop an idea of hijacking a Securicor van or impersonating one, and doing one of their routine routes. One idea is to infiltrate into their ranks. Get placement in one of their routes or any possible targets.”<sup>92</sup> Another document found on Khan’s laptop titled “Securico[r] Observations” (dated December 15, 2005) offers some indication of how focused the interest was:

“...Their[sic] was a securico[r] van waiting outside ‘Sports Soccer’ store in the retail park. Their[sic] was no sign of anyone in the drivers section and the car was turned on... Saturday - A Securico[r] van outside of one financial building on a Saturday at around 12 o’clock approximately. A couple of men and women were spotted coming out of the building presumably[sic] workers. Approximatley[sic] 16:00, two vans - 1 Blue Securicor and 1 van (smaller) turned from the Kings Road Junction with Queen’s Road; going up towards Peel park and most likely straight on. They where[sic] together, Blue then White.”<sup>93</sup>

Other handwritten notes taken from Khan detail covert reconnaissance of a second Securicor van making a pickup on December 21, 2005 “outside [the] main Terminal 2 automatic doors” at Manchester International Airport. Khan’s notes specifically made record of the fact that the Securicor personnel in the van were “wearing protective clothing” and “carrying a safety case.” During questioning by his attorneys at trial, Khan acknowledged that the document was his and that its content had



<sup>89</sup> Superseding Indictment. United States v. Syed Haris Ahmed and Ehsanul Islam Sadequee. United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division. Case #06-CR-147-CC. Filed July 19, 2006.

<sup>90</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Intelligence and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Intelligence.

<sup>91</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Intelligence and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Intelligence.

<sup>92</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17-18, 2008.

<sup>93</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14 RSK4 LNJ589. Observation1.rtf.

been entered “by a friend who was with me at the time... at Manchester Airport... This was the same thing regarding the Securicor van.”<sup>94</sup> Asked about these entries during his later criminal trial in London, Khan explained, “this was a suggestion, quite a complex suggestion, of utilizing systems in various buildings to coordinate a hacking attempt... In the Securicor vans, there is a computer system which could be utilized to launch a mobile attack in a hacking attempt... It is capable of contacting outside, like a phone. An electronic hijacking... It was too complex.”<sup>95</sup>

Throughout this period, Aabid Khan also demonstrated a disturbing fascination with the precursors and fabrication of improvised explosive devices, collecting dozens of digital manuals and recipes. The hard drive of the Toshiba computer seized from Khan at the time of his arrest at Manchester Airport in June 2006 contains an entire file folder on the Windows Desktop (labeled “Xperiment”) which appears to be exclusively for the purpose of accumulating technical information regarding the home production of firearms, explosives, and other makeshift terrorist weapons.<sup>96</sup> The same Windows Desktop contains yet another file folder labeled “Jang” that features step-by-step formulas for the poison ricin, dozens of chemical safety guides, sniper and assassination manuals, instructions on the operation of automatic weapons, and recipes for black powder, improvised explosives, blasting agents, and homemade rockets. The Toshiba hard drive includes a bookmarked web link to an online copy of the “Anarchists Cookbook”<sup>97</sup> and a complete archived copy of the aptly-titled “Terrorists Handbook.”<sup>98</sup> In an online conversation with “Abdelaziz al-Gharbi”, Khan begged him for assistance with handling “sensitive” materials: “i have a few objects with me, that need hiding, somewhere other then your apartment... they need care and storing in low tempature[sic], otherwise they would kill someone akhee... fridge is too cold, something like cellar or away from children... as long as it does not come into contact with detergents, fire, oil etc.”<sup>99</sup>

Using eBay and other similar Internet commerce sites, Khan was also attempting to purchase volatile chemicals and components typically used in the fabrication of an explosive device—in particular, an inexplicably large quantity of industrial-strength acetone. Triacetone triperoxide (TATP)—a highly unstable primary explosive that can be made from combining common household items such as drain cleaner and hydrogen peroxide with acetone—was the same deadly mixture reportedly used by the British Al-Qaida operatives who carried out the July 7, 2005 suicide bombings in London. Under subsequent questioning at Blackfriars Crown Court, Khan conceded to having an interest in purchasing acetone, but insisted it was needed “for cleaning purposes... It is [a] paint remover and overall [useful] for the metal removal of items... We had our home which was being reconstructed. And the home next door which had been abandoned... So we intended to find some overall cheap liquid... and try to sort it out and board it up.” As to why he would require industrial-sized quantities of the acetone, Khan replied that he believed “industrial items” would be “quite cheap and sold in bulk.”<sup>100</sup> Khan was unable to account for why the home renovations he described did not actually occur until over two years after his initial attempts to purchase the acetone. Similarly, Khan dismissed other suspicious material he had acquired via various online merchants—such as fuse components for fireworks—as mere “novelty items.”<sup>101</sup> However, he did admit to having arguments with his parents over his possession of several air guns and an inert assault rifle: “I sold them in 2005. I don’t think my family was happy with me keeping them in the house. Anybody could have gone out in the street with it and gotten shot by the police. They looked real... My family weren’t happy with it.”<sup>102</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17-18, 2008.

<sup>95</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17-18, 2008.

<sup>96</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Xperiment.

<sup>97</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Favorites and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Favorites.

<sup>98</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Jang and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Desktop\Jang.

<sup>99</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB14C. Doc1.rar. abdil aziz.rtf.

<sup>100</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>101</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>102</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

In January 2006, only three months after returning home to Bradford, Aabid Khan once again left the U.K. destined for Pakistan. According to Khan, he had merely been “on holiday” in Britain during the fall of 2005 and now intended to “live in Pakistan on a permanent basis... The plan was to stay there, I didn’t want to come back. But for some reasons, I had to come back.”<sup>103</sup> Upon his return to Pakistan in early 2006, Khan began to conduct “research into what kind of business I could do to sustain myself. I was thinking about business ideas. Phones, mobile phones. Selling mobile phones.”<sup>104</sup> Khan explained in court, “for the people in that area [of Pakistan], not all the people can afford expensive new mobiles. The idea was to import mobile phones and sell them locally... purchase phones from the U.K. and sell them in the village because they were cheaper. I had experience buying and selling phones in the UK – I used eBay to deal in phones, in mobile phones... The phones would be sent by Sultan Mohammed, he had experience buying and selling phones on eBay as well... He would get hold of the phones I needed and send them over... I sold quite a number of phones [in Pakistan].”<sup>105</sup>

Khan also admitted making several trips across the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan in 2006—including the town of Peshawar, approximately 45 minutes by car from Attock on the border of the Afghan frontier. According to Khan, “the purpose of my trips to Peshawar was on business. In Peshawar, you can obtain quite a lot of items of various nature, including electronics, vehicles. It is a stop off place. It is a trading place. There are markets for various items. It is a place for businessmen to purchase items.”<sup>106</sup> Khan indicated that he was specifically interested in purchasing large quantities of used mobile telephones in the markets of Peshawar.

Aside from his forays in Peshawar, Khan testified at length about a particular four-day trip he took in early June 2006—less than a week prior to his final return to the U.K. Khan’s testimony about what occurred during those four days was framed as a detailed narration of the events depicted in a home video recording Khan made of the trip.<sup>107</sup> On approximately June 2, Khan left Attock with roughly six other individuals headed for the town of Balakot: “the purpose of the trip was not to [go to] Balakot specifically itself, but... Balakot is a taxi point to reach other areas... In order to visit the regions further north, we would have had to start in Balakot to take one of those jeeps.”<sup>108</sup> Khan claimed that one of the purposes of his trip was to assess the possibility of providing humanitarian relief to local victims from a recent devastating earthquake in Pakistan and “to evaluate the situation in those regions, including Balakot... As I was from the U.K., I could ask friends and relatives in the UK to help them, money, or whatever they required.”<sup>109</sup> According to Khan, “when I set off from the village [Attock], I was with a few other individuals from the village... They were friends of those in the village who were closer friends with me... They wanted to travel with me.”<sup>110</sup>

The video filmed by Khan shows scenes of the group of men upon first reaching Balakot, a known hotbed of activity for Pakistani mujahideen organizations such as Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET). At one point, Khan focused the camera on an LET propaganda poster affixed to the wall of a building in Balakot. Later, upon reviewing this section of the video in court in London, Khan commented, “this is a poster from a jihadi organization. This is one of their flyers which are typically circulated in towns and cities. These types of posters tend to have addresses and advertise conferences. These are quite frequent in many towns and villages... with their phone numbers and their contact details.”<sup>111</sup>

While in Balakot, Khan and his cohorts came across two other young men also looking for transport by jeep into the surrounding mountains in the direction of Naran, Shogran, and Saiful-Malook National Park. According to Khan, “we hired a jeep along with some other people there who we shared the costs of the taxi with... It was the first time I met them, at that point in

<sup>103</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>104</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>105</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>106</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>107</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>108</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>109</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>110</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>111</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 16-17, 2008.

Balakot. We were looking for a taxi to take us there, and we were haggling the price and we came across these two individuals. We spoke to them, because we found they were also headed to Naran... They came from Karachi, they were students. We decided to share in the costs of this taxi.”<sup>112</sup> The men quickly bonded on the jeep ride and acted in scenes from the video as if they had known each other for years. One of the two students from Karachi—“Humayun”—made frequent appearances in the video, at times standing smiling, arm-in-arm with Aabid Khan and his friends from Attock. Conversing jovially in English, Humayun spoke with a clear American accent, and at several points in the video identified himself as a resident of Los Angeles, California.

Though at first glance the video appears to be relatively innocent, several strange incidents occur in the course of Khan’s trip from Balakot to Shogran. At one point, with no explanation, the camera records an unknown member of the group violently tearing up a green flag—identified by Khan as the Pakistani national flag.<sup>113</sup> Khan did not account for what motivation would have sparked such an extreme reaction. Near the end of the video, Khan hands the camera over to their local guide, and poses with “Humayun” and the others at the top of a mountain peak. As the men smile and laugh, the guide asks them in English, “Where is this terrorist from? This terrorist is from Waisa.”<sup>114</sup> When “Humayun” asks Aabid Khan where he is from, Khan smirkingly responds several times, “that’s classified.” During his trial, Khan insisted that all of this provocative language was meant as part of a light-hearted, humorous exchange and that there was no connection to terrorism. He repeated, “The individual with the American accent was someone we met in Balakot for the first time.” According to Khan, the group split up a short time afterwards when they reached the nearby town of Mansehra.<sup>115</sup>

Less than 48 hours later, on June 6, 2006, Aabid Khan arrived back in Manchester International Airport from Pakistan. Khan explained to the jury at Blackfriars Crown Court, “the purpose of my visit to the U.K. was to try and convince my family to come back to Pakistan... They were quite reluctant to leave the comfort of Bradford for Pakistan. Nevertheless, I still had to try and convince them... Also, business purposes, the phone business, dealing in phones.”<sup>116</sup> At the airport, Khan was taken aside for secondary screening and failed an explosives residue test. A search of his luggage turned up items of female clothing with pieces of paper sewn non-descriptly into the sleeves. The papers included Pakistani telecom bills with various phone numbers and writing on them; a letter certifying the eligibility of “Samaad Khan” to participate in the Canadian government earthquake victim’s assistance program; a photocopy of Samaad Khan’s passport; a copy of an academic transcript for “Numan Arif”; and, a document with technical information about ammunition for an AK-47 and a shotgun. Khan insisted that there was nothing diabolical about the documents hidden in his luggage: “In the NWFP, guns are common... Kalashnikovs and Kalikovs are common, but Kalikov is much more common... The photocopies of the passports were in order to obtain some form of work, visas. These individuals wanted to come and work in the UK. So they gave me these copies to try and find sponsors for them to come. That is what they wanted. I had no problem with that. I would look for employers who would take them up, who were interested in hiring them.”<sup>117</sup>

Cached in dozens of folders on Khan’s Toshiba laptop drive and other digital media in his possession at the time of his arrest, British authorities discovered one of the largest and most extensive collections of Al-Qaida terrorist propaganda ever encountered in a single criminal investigation. When booted up, the Toshiba laptop opened to a Windows desktop featuring profile photos of 9/11 suicide hijackers, with the inscription, “The Battle of New York and Washington.”<sup>118</sup> Khan indicated that the propaganda material had been “accumulated over a number of years, 2001-2005... not everything was downloaded by me... There were some e-books from the Internet... analysis of September 11... various books on Islamic jurisprudence, other

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<sup>112</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>113</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 16, 2008.

<sup>114</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 16, 2008.

<sup>115</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>116</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15, 2008.

<sup>117</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 15-16, 2008.

<sup>118</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

Islamic issues including books on jihad.”<sup>119</sup> This material included an impressive reference library of video recordings produced by Al-Qaida’s official As-Sahab Media Foundation. Multiple Urdu-language copies of the As-Sahab Foundation video “Wills of the Martyrs of New York & Washington” (featuring the last video message of 9/11 hijacker Ahmed al-Haznawi) were recovered from Aabid Khan at the time of his arrest.<sup>120</sup> During the “Wills of the Martyrs of New York & Washington”, first released by As-Sahab in April 2002, al-Haznawi appears speaking with a backdrop of the World Trade Center in flames:

“So until now, there has been no direct confrontation with the head of infidelity, America. As a result, we began thinking of how to reach them... we found no solution and no cure other than carrying out Martyrdom Operation against the enemy’s interests, citizens, and soldiers. These operations’ impact and effectiveness has been observed through the attacks on the American Embassies in Nairobi and Dar As-Salaam and the attack on the American destroyer in Aden... so I have gone out to fight the enemies of Allah – the Americans – anywhere possible, including fighting and killing them in their own land. For I seek martyrdom and strive to attain it, but only after strengthening my religion and slaughtering my enemies.”<sup>121</sup>

Likewise, Aabid Khan’s Toshiba laptop hard drive also contained a copy of As-Sahab’s “The Knight’s Will of the London Blast”—featuring the “martyrdom will” of London 7/7 suicide bomber Mohammed Siddique Khan and recorded statements by Al-Qaida deputy commander Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri.<sup>122</sup> Khan menacingly addresses his fellow Britons: “I am going to keep this short and to the point, because it’s all been said before by far more eloquent people than me. But our words have no impact upon you, therefore I’m going to talk to you in a language that you understand. Our words are dead until we give them life with our blood... I and thousands like me are forsaking everything for what we believe. Our driving motivation doesn’t come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer... I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you’ll be our target... We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation.”

The Toshiba laptop hard drive had at least two separate copies of yet another As-Sahab propaganda film featuring an English-language lecture by Al-Qaida spokesman Adam Gadahn on the fourth anniversary of 9/11 (in September 2005).<sup>123</sup> Sitting in a black mask and turban (and brandishing a weapon), Gadahn swore revenge on his own hometown: “Yesterday, London and Madrid. Tomorrow, Los Angeles and Melbourne [Australia], God-willing... We love peace, but when the enemy violates that peace or prevents us from achieving it, then we love nothing better than the heat of battle, the echo of explosions, and slitting the throats of the infidels. When it comes to defending our religion, our freedom, and our brothers in faith, every one of us is Mohammed Atta. Every one of us is Jamal Lindsey, and every one of us is Mohammed Boieri.”<sup>124</sup>

Aside from the As-Sahab Foundation, Khan’s master collection of terrorist propaganda also included many items originally produced by the highly innovative Al-Qaida branch based in Saudi Arabia—among the first of Usama Bin Laden’s regional “branches” or “affiliates” to adopt the Internet as a primary means to distribute communications and propaganda messages. Many electronic documents, magazines, audio, and video recordings produced by Al-Qaida in Saudi

<sup>119</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 18, 2008.

<sup>120</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\Account 2\Desktop\Hamza Folder and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\Account 2\Desktop\Hamza Folder. See also: Exhibit MB14E(1) DISK1\DAPLOADS\Video. Urdu1.MPG, Urdu2.MPG, and Urdu3.mpg.

<sup>121</sup> As-Sahab Media Foundation. “The Wills of the Martyrs of New York & Washington.” April 2002.

<sup>122</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\Account 2\Desktop\Hamza Folder and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\Account 2\Desktop\Hamza Folder.

<sup>123</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\Account 2\Desktop\Hamza Folder and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\Account 2\Desktop\Hamza Folder.

<sup>124</sup> As-Sahab Media Foundation. “A Message to the People of the West from the fighting brother Azzam the American on the Fourth Anniversary of the Battles of New York and Washington.” <http://www.as-sahaab.com>. MPEG Video; 12 minutes in length. November 6, 2005.



Arabia and distributed over the Internet have become classic works in the annals of the mujahideen and Al-Qaida—perhaps most notably the Sawt al-Jihad (“Voice of Jihad”) Magazine and the Al-Battar training manual (a complete library of both were recovered from Aabid Khan at the time of his arrest).<sup>125</sup> During his subsequent testimony at Blackfriars Crown Court, Khan discussed his interest in and knowledge of Sawt al-Jihad and Al-Battar: “As far as I recall, I did obtain them from the Internet... These magazines, Sawt al-Jihad and the second one, are quite commonly available on Arabic, Asian, and other websites. There are certain websites where you can obtain the entire collection.”<sup>126</sup>

The eleventh issue of Sawt al-Jihad features an article by “Salih al-Hassan” titled “O’ Rearguards – You Are On Good!”<sup>127</sup> Al-Hassan addresses Al-Qaida’s “home front”: the faceless multitude of likeminded extremists around the world who have grown frustrated by living domesticated lives under “non-Islamic” regimes but have been genuinely unable—for one reason or another—to join the mujahideen on an active frontline. He reassures them:

“...you are the cornerstone of the Jihaadi movement and it is not established without you whatever your places and positions are, which, maybe in your eyes petty and small... for wars in our age are established by numerous parts, each completing others and whoever takes up these roles, regardless of how marginalized they may seem... working on support and providing logistic help and the like from the necessities... as for our wars today, then the Mujaahid is required to prepare himself to be from the guerrilla fighters... so if the Mujaahid prepares himself the sufficient military requirements, then let him not after that be disappointed with a front that the Ameer decides to place him in, or a duty that is necessary, regardless of its smallness.”

Paired with Sawt al-Jihad, the “Al-Battar” training manuals sought to spearhead Al-Qaida’s new strategy of avoiding traditional, fixed training camps and instead focused on spawning self-made terror networks across the globe. Al-Battar’s first issue explained, “O’ Mujahid brother, in order to join the great training camps, you don’t have to travel to other lands. Alone, in your home or with a group of your brothers, you too can begin to execute the training program. You can all join the Al-Battar Training Camp.”<sup>128</sup> In another article from the first issue of Al-Battar, a columnist suggested that the manual was being offered “as a gift to the youth of Islam whose hearts burn in support of the religion by means of jihad in the cause of Allah.”<sup>129</sup> Moreover, the introduction to the issue explicitly states:

“Preparing [for jihad] is a personal commandment that applies to every Muslim... Because many of Islam’s young people do not yet know how to bear arms, not to mention use them, and because the agents of the Cross are hobbling the Muslims and preventing them from planning [Jihad] for the sake of Allah—your mujahideen brothers in Saudi Arabia have decided to publish this booklet... The basic idea is to spread military culture among the youth with the aim of filling the vacuum that the enemies of the religion have been seeking to expand for a long time. Allah willing, the magazine will be simple and easy, and in it, my Muslim brother, you will find basic lessons in the framework of a military training program, beginning with programs for sports training, through types of light weapons and guerilla group actions in the cities and mountains, and [including] important points in security and intelligence, so that you will be able ... to fulfill the religious obligation that Allah has set upon you.”<sup>130</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB12A - A3190 - DNB33. See also: Exhibit MB14E\1) DISK1\ekitab.

<sup>126</sup> Testimony of Aabid Hussain Khan. Blackfriars Crown Court; London, U.K. July 17, 2008.

<sup>127</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit CMD28\_MEM0\C\Sawt al-Jihaad Magazine\O’ Rearguards – You Are On Good!.doc.

<sup>128</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB12A – A3190 – DNB33. b1.doc and b1.pdf. Page 27.

<sup>129</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB12A – A3190 – DNB33. b1.doc and b1.pdf. Page 3.

<sup>130</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibit MB12A – A3190 – DNB33. b1.doc and b1.pdf. Page 2.

Though Al-Qaida's operatives in Saudi Arabia were among the first of their colleagues to successfully broadcast high-quality propaganda video recordings over the Internet, the true flowering of the digital video phenomenon occurred in the context of the war in Iraq and under the watchful eye of Jordanian national Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. From November 2004 until his death in June 2006, Zarqawi served as the leader of Al-Qaida's local franchise in Iraq and became a highly visible icon for second and third-generation terrorist sympathizers and recruits. His penchant for and glorification of extreme violence—particularly hostage beheadings and suicide bombings—were an inspiration for like-minded militants around the world.

Yet, it was Zarqawi's tragic suicide bombing attacks, carefully documented on film, that most sparked the imagination of Al-Qaida supporters around the world. Beyond depicting the mere explosions themselves, videos released by Al-Qaida in Iraq focused heavily on planning phases and the pre-execution rituals for "martyrs-in-waiting." Arguably, the single most infamous suicide bombing film produced by Al-Qaida in Iraq was "The Expedition of Omar Hadid," first released in Arabic over the Internet on October 8, 2005.<sup>131</sup> A collection of web bookmarks, or "Favorites", stored on the hard drive of the Toshiba computer seized from Aabid Khan at the time of his arrest featured a saved link to <http://omar-hadeed.net>—the official dot-com website setup by Al-Qaida's Committee in Iraq in October 2005 in order to distribute the Arabic-language propaganda video "The Battle of Omar Hadid."<sup>132</sup> The same hard drive seized from Khan also contained a complete video copy of "The Battle of Omar Hadid."<sup>133</sup> The video itself purports to document the stories of Al-Qaida suicide bombers in Iraq, including a young Libyan national using the pseudonym "Abu Dharr." Abu Dharr eagerly appeals to the camera:

"I ask you... whoever hears or sees this CD or hears this recording, to come join the Jihad in the Land of Iraq... I wish to say to the brothers, to all of the mujahideen, it is obligatory upon you to continue with these martyrdom operations, because they are—by Allah—the things that affect and massacre the Americans the most, and we ask Allah for guidance in this martyrdom operation, and it is the way to the Gardens [of Paradise] and it is the quickest way to the Highest Level of [Paradise], by the Will of Allah, and [God-willing] we will be guided, and [God-willing] we will cause great damage and pain to these infidel Americans and to those who ally themselves with them... We ask Allah to create severe pain and damage amongst the ranks of the Americans, the infidels, and those who ally with them... By Allah, nothing will elevate [Islam], nothing will bring it honor except for Jihad in the Path of Allah, and the strongest Jihad in the Path of Allah in our current times are these martyrdom operations... And I wish to say to my Muslim brothers in all parts of the world, as well as to my brothers from the mujahideen: it is upon you to take this path, since it is—by Allah—the path of honor, and it is—by Allah—the path of miracles... Allahu Akhbar! Allahu Akhbar! Allahu Akhbar! I want to say to America and the helpers of America and the allies of America that we are marching towards you with men who love to die just as much as you love to live! So, by Allah, and by the Will of Allah, the Victory of Islam is coming, and the Honor of Islam is coming at the hands of these martyrs."

In addition to the testimony and encouragement from other suicide recruits, the "Expedition of Omar Hadid" also features excerpts of a song being performed by members of Zarqawi's Al-Baraa bin Malik Martyrdom Brigade in Iraq (responsible for executing suicide attacks). The men giddily chant in unison:

"Shaykh Abu Musab [al-Zarqawi] has raised the banner, and Shaykh Abu Musab [al-Zarqawi] has raised the banner. Our commander is Bin Laden, O' you who terrorizes America. Our power is our [faith] and our weapon is our PK [Kalashnikov]... Our leader is

<sup>131</sup> <http://www.omar-hadeed.net>. October 7, 2005.

<sup>132</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Favorites and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\J-Prince\Favorites.

<sup>133</sup> Operation Praline. Exhibits MB12a\_HDD0\C\Documents and Settings\Account 2\Desktop\Hamza Folder and MB12a Copied 6-7-07\C\Documents and Settings\Account 2\Desktop\Hamza Folder.

the Mullah [Omar], he has not abandoned his religion. All the warriors have sold their souls to Allah. Every warrior has sold his soul to Allah. If they say 'terrorist', then I say this is an honor for me. Our terrorism is praiseworthy, a divine call. Our terrorism is praiseworthy, a divine call. Iraqi police: apostasy and hypocrisy. We have come to you to slaughter you—no, no negotiations. We have come to you to slaughter you—no, no negotiations. We destroyed America with a civilian plane. The World Trade tower is simply a pile of rubble. The World Trade tower is simply a pile of rubble.”

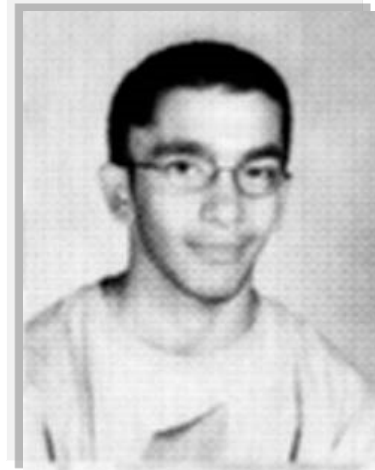
The evidence as outlined above seized during Operation Praline represents what might well be termed a “textbook case” of a modern homegrown terrorist network. Despite the relatively young ages of the conspirators involved and the occasional amateurish errors in their planning, Aabid Khan and his associates were able to successfully organize a far-flung transnational system of covert terrorist cells primarily by using the Internet. The cached material stored on the computers of Khan and other conspirators thematically tracks the most extreme wings of Al-Qaida in Iraq and Saudi Arabia that have specialized in fringe tactics such as beheadings and suicide bombings. There is a specific, disturbing emphasis on rituals associated with suicide bombers and justifying such sacrificial actions, even when they result in the deaths of innocent civilians. Perhaps most significantly, Khan himself has admitted making direct contact with at least two designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations inside Pakistan—Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba—willing to accept English-speaking Westerners as students at locally-run terrorist training camps.

The degree to which Aabid Khan was able to advance forward his homegrown terrorist conspiracy—despite receiving essentially no support from Al-Qaida itself—is testament to the wisdom of a document included on Khan’s Toshiba laptop hard drive titled, “The Mujahideen Poisons Manual.” Along with providing technical details about various chemicals and poisons, the manual offers strategic advice to those seeking to carry out a jihad mission, making note, “training and preparation is nothing compared to the strength of the individual’s character.” Khan’s unwavering intent and relentless enthusiasm for the cause of jihad was enough to often outweigh his lack of formal training or established military credentials. There seems little room for doubt that—given the viral online social circle at Khan’s disposal, his extensive collection of terrorist propaganda and instructional manuals, his disturbing archive of intelligence on potential targets, his acknowledged acquisition of key explosives ingredients, and his developing ties to actual terrorist organizations—Khan’s global jihad network was in possession of sufficient human resources, financing, ideological sanction, technical knowledge, and strategic insights to execute coordinated acts of homegrown terrorism that could wound or kill many innocent victims.

Aside from Khan, Hammaad Munchi, and Sultan Mohammed, the following individuals are facing trial on, or have already been convicted of, criminal charges:

- **Fahim Ahmad**

- On June 2, 2006, Ahmad was arrested by Canadian police and is currently awaiting trial on alleged violations of Section 83 of the Criminal Code of Canada—including knowingly participating in a terrorist group for the purpose of carrying out terrorist activity in Ontario, Canada between March 1, 2005 and June 2, 2006; importing firearms and ammunition into Canada for the benefit of a terrorist group between March 1 and August 14, 2005; collecting prohibited weapons and ammunition for the purpose of carrying out terrorist activity; receiving training for the purpose of enhancing the ability of a terrorist group to carry out terrorist activity between November 27, 2005, and December 31, 2005; providing training for the purpose of enhancing the ability of a terrorist group to



carry out a terrorist act; and, “doing anything with intent to cause an explosion of an explosive substance that is likely to cause serious bodily harm or death” in Ontario between March 1, 2005, and June 2, 2006.

- Ahmad is accused of conspiring with others to carry out a large-scale terrorist attack in southern Ontario, which would potentially have included detonating truck bombs at at least two locations. Police officials have alleged that Ahmad and his co-conspirators also made plans to storm various buildings such as the Canadian Broadcasting Centre and the Canadian Parliament building, and take hostages. Other specific targets reportedly included the headquarters of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). According to RCMP Assistant Commissioner Mike McDonnell, “This group took steps to acquire three tonnes of ammonium nitrate and other components necessary to create explosive devices. To put this in context, the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City that killed 168 people took one tonne of ammonium nitrate.”<sup>134</sup>

- **Ehsanul Sadequee and Syed Haris Ahmed**

- On March 23, 2006, a federal grand jury in Atlanta, Georgia issued a sealed indictment against Syed Haris Ahmed, charging him with providing material support of terrorism. On July 19, 2006, a federal grand jury returned a second, superseding indictment charging both Syed Haris Ahmed and Ehsanul Islam Sadequee with conspiring to provide and providing material support to terrorists and to a designated foreign terrorist organization.<sup>135</sup>
- According to the superseding federal indictment filed in July 2006:

“On or about February 26, 2005, SADEQUEE purchased Greyhound bus tickets for himself and AHMED to travel from Atlanta, Georgia, to Toronto, Canada. On or about March 6, 2005, AHMED and SADEQUEE traveled together from Atlanta to Toronto by bus. They returned from Toronto to Atlanta together on or about March 13, 2005. While in Toronto, AHMED and SADEQUEE met in person with other supporters of violent jihad. During these meetings, AHMED, SADEQUEE, and others identified and discussed strategic locations in the United States that were suitable for terrorist attack, including military bases and oil storage facilities and refineries. They explored how they might disrupt the world-wide Global Positioning System (GPS). They also discussed a plan for members of the group to travel to Pakistan to seek and receive paramilitary training that they would then use to engage in violent jihad. In or about March or April 2005, after their trip to Canada, AHMED and SADEQUEE further discussed these plans for violent jihad in the United States, including the possibility of attacking Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Marietta, Georgia... On or about July 17, 2005, AHMED traveled from Atlanta to Pakistan for the purposes of studying in a madrassa (an Islamic religious school), then obtaining



<sup>134</sup> “Seventeen Arrested on Anti-Terrorism Charges.” Press release from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). June 3, 2006. [http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/news/2006/2006\\_06\\_03\\_e.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/news/2006/2006_06_03_e.htm).

<sup>135</sup> “Superseding Indictment Filed in Atlanta Terrorism Support Case.” Press release from the United States Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Georgia. July 19, 2006. <http://atlanta.fbi.gov/dojpressrel/pressrel06/terroristsupport071906.htm>.

paramilitary training, and ultimately engaging in violent jihad in Kashmir or elsewhere, including in the United States if so requested. AHMED intended to join and fight with Lashkar-e-Tayyiba... On or about August 18, 2005, SADEQUEE traveled from Atlanta through New York to Bangladesh to get married and to further pursue his activities in support of violent jihad... On or about August 19, 2005, having been unsuccessful in his attempt to enter a madrassa (an Islamic religious school) or obtain paramilitary training in Pakistan, AHMED returned to Atlanta... On or about November 27, 2005, AHMED communicated to another supporter of violent jihad AHMED's intent to try again-to go abroad to train for and engage in violent jihad... On or about January 9, 2006, AHMED communicated to another individual his intent to return to Pakistan to try again to train for and engage in violent jihad."<sup>136</sup>



- The indictment charged both Ahmed and Sadequee with four counts: a conspiracy and a substantive charge related to material support of terrorists involved in violent jihad activity in the United States and foreign nations; and a conspiracy and substantive charge related to material support of a designated foreign terrorist organization, the Pakistan-based group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET). Each of the four counts carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison, and a fine of up to \$250,000.
- **Younis Tsouli**
  - In July 2007, Younis Tsouli pled guilty to criminal charges filed by the U.K. Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) of "inciting another person to commit an act of terrorism wholly or partly outside the United Kingdom." According to Colin Gibbs from CPS, Tsouli "admitted... [to] purchasing web sites using stolen identities and credit card details, and us[ing] the websites to publish the extreme propaganda and recruiting material produced by al-Qaeda in Iraq. The material was crafted to incite and recruit suicide bombers accessing the websites and forums internationally... Tsouli set up and administered an Arabic chat forum (al-Ansar) used by supporters of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and similar groups or sympathisers where terrorists were recruited, could become acquainted, inspired and educated from the explosives and weapons manuals and presentations, shared and available for downloading."<sup>137</sup>
  - Following his guilty plea, Tsouli was sentenced to a term of ten years in prison.



<sup>136</sup> Criminal Indictment. United States v. Syed Haris Ahmed and Ehsanul Islam Sadequee. Case #: 1:06-CR-147-CC. United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division. Filed July 19, 2006.

<sup>137</sup> "Three men admit using internet to incite terrorism in first British case." Press release from the United Kingdom Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). July 5, 2007. [http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/archive/2007/137\\_07.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/archive/2007/137_07.html).