

THE EVOLVING NATURE OF TERRORISM—NINE YEARS AFTER
THE 9/11 ATTACKS

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Several disquieting trends converged in New York City's fabled Times Square entertainment district on Saturday evening, May 1st, 2010.¹ First, a foreign terrorist group, with a hitherto local agenda and otherwise parochial aims, once more stretched its wings and sought to operate on a broader, more ambitious global canvas. Second, the conventional wisdom, which has long held that the threat to the U.S. was primarily external; involving foreigners coming from overseas to kill Americans in this country as had occurred on September 11th 2001, was once again shattered. Third, the belief that the American "melting pot"—our historical capacity to readily absorb new immigrants—would provide a "fire-wall" against radicalization and recruitment has fallen by the wayside. Finally, al-Qaeda and its allies have embraced a strategy of attrition that is deliberately designed to overwhelm, distract and exhaust its adversaries.

Thus, the Times Square incident, despite initial claims to the contrary, was not a "one off" event perpetrated by an individual variously described as "isolated" or a "lone wolf" but rather is part of an emerging pattern of terrorism that directly threatens the U.S. and presents new and even more formidable challenges to our national security.²

LOCAL GROUPS WITH NEW GLOBAL AMBITIONS IN ALLIANCE WITH OLD ENEMIES

This was precisely the message that Faisal Shahzad sought to convey when he appeared before a New York Federal District Court in June 2010. Declaring himself a "holy warrior" (*mujahid*) and a "Muslim soldier," who had been deployed by the Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP, or Pakistani Taliban) to wage what he called a "war" in the United States, Shahzad described himself as "part of the answer to the U.S. terrorizing Muslim nations and the Muslim people." He further promised that if Washington did not cease invading Muslim lands and did not withdraw from Iraq, Afghanistan and other Muslim countries, still more attacks on the United States

¹ See United States Of America v. Faisal Shahzad, Defendant, Case 1:10-mj-00928-UA Filed 4 May 2010.

² See the statements by Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, "'This Week' Transcript: McKay, Napolitano, Salazar and Allen," *ABC News*, 2 May 2010 accessed at: <http://www.abcnews.go.com/print?id=10532649>; Denis McDonough, Chief of Staff of the National Security Council on "News Hour," *Public Broadcasting System*, 5 May 2010 accessed at: http://www.pbs.org/newshour.bb/law/jan-june10/timesquare2_05-05.html; and, General David H. Petraeus in Yochi J. Dreazen and Evan Perez, "Suspect Cites Radical Iman's Writings," *Wall Street Journal*, 6 May 2010. See also, Joseph Berger, "Pakistani Taliban Behind Times Sq. Plot, Holder Says," *New York Times*, 9 May 2010 accessed at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/10/us/politics/10holder.html>; and, Associated Press, "Gen. Petraeus: Times Square bomber acted alone," 7 May 2010 accessed at: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iXN8wxcxFxkTel1TWhZtNC1I5XW3QD9FI85E00>.

would follow. Americans, Shahzad explained, "don't see the drones killing children in Afghanistan [They] only care about their people, but they don't care about the people elsewhere in the world when they die." In his view, this means that attacks on children and innocents are both justified and should be expected.³

While it is perhaps tempting to dismiss Shahzad's threats as the irrelevant ranting of an incompetent wannabe terrorist, he and his likely successors present the most serious challenge to the security of the U.S. and the safety of its citizens and residents since the September 11, 2001, attacks. There are at least three good reasons for taking Shahzad at his word.

One, Shahzad's attack may have been rushed and therefore botched, but that does not mean it was not deadly serious. The grand jury investigation into the Times Square plot revealed that the Pakistani Taliban—beyond any doubt a formidable terrorist force in Pakistan—provided Shahzad with explosives and other training in Waziristan, Pakistan during December 2009.⁴ The training was arguably too cursory and too compressed in terms of instructional to provide Shahzad with the requisite skills needed to succeed in Times Square last May. But we can be certain that the terrorist movement responsible for deploying the next attacker to the U.S. will provide that person with the requisite training to ensure the success of that forthcoming attack. "A successful Faisal Shahzad," a senior local law enforcement intelligence analyst told us, "is our worst case scenario."⁵

In this respect, terrorists play the odds: thus perhaps explaining the seeming "amateurish" dimension of the Times Square plot. What appeared as "amateurish" to many Americans may thus in fact be more a reflection of the attack having been rushed and the perpetrator too hastily deployed. At a time when the capability of the Pakistani Taliban and al-Qaeda in Pakistan are being relentlessly degraded by U.S. drone attacks this make sense. Both groups may feel pressed to implement an operation either sooner or more precipitously than they might otherwise prefer. Fears of the would-be attacker being identified and interdicted by authorities may thus account for what appears to be a more compressed operational tempo and faster "soup to nuts" process by which a recruit is radicalized, trained and operationally deployed.

The complaint sworn against Shahzad in federal court revealed a very fast four-month process from planning to training to Times Square.⁶ The Pakistani Taliban as well as al-Qaeda may thus be prepared to accept this trade-off of shorter training periods leading to accelerated plots though less reliable operations in order to dispatch "clean skin" recruits before they can be identified, detected and stopped. For the terrorists groups behind such plots, this arguably represents an

³ Quotes taken from Jerry Markon, "Guilty plea in failed Times Square bombing; Shahzad warns of more attacks unless U.S. leaves Muslim countries," *Washington Post*, 22 June 2010; Ron Scherer, "Faisal Shahzad calls Times Square bomb plot 'war,' please guilty," *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), 21 June 2010; and, "Shahzad pleads guilty to Times Square bombing charges," *CNN.com*, 21 June 2010.

⁴ United States District Court Southern District of New York, United States of America v. Faisal Shahzad, 17 June 2010.

⁵ Interview with NSPG, 8 July 2010.

⁶ United States Of America v. Faisal Shahzad, Defendant, Case 1:10-mj-00928-UA Filed 4 May 2010.

acceptable risk for a potentially huge return on a very modest investment. They will have expended little effort and energy training operatives like Shahzad who present them with new, attractive low-cost opportunities to strike in the U.S.

These groups may also pin their faiths and hopes on eventually simply getting lucky. Over a quarter of a century ago, the Irish Republican Army famously taunted then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher after its bombers failed to kill her at the 1984 Conservative Party conference in Brighton, England with the memorable words: "Today we were unlucky, but remember we only have to be lucky once. You will have to be lucky always."⁷ Al-Qaeda, the Pakistani Taliban and their allies doubtless have embraced the same logic.

Two, a Times Square-style plot is by no means an expensive proposition for any terrorist group to undertake. The grand jury indictment details how two payments totaling approximately \$12,000—roughly the same cost of the 7 July 2005 suicide attacks on London transport were effortlessly transferred from overseas bank accounts to Shahzad via locations in Massachusetts and New York State on two separate occasions. Given the minimal cost of orchestrating such an operation, foreign terrorist groups will likely continue to regard U.S. homeland operations as both desirable and at least financially feasible options. They also understand that even failed plots, such as Shahzad's bungled effort can still pay vast dividends in terms of publicity and attention. Such incidents again virtually guarantee a disproportionate return on a very modest investment given the febrile media coverage that they generate; the heightened security measures that invariably follow in their wake; and, the widespread fear and concern and that remain.

Three, as Shahzad's own words proclaim, his attempted attack should not be regarded as a "one-off" or an isolated incident perpetrated by a lone individual acting on his own, but as part of a continuing effort by al-Qaeda and its allies to target the U.S. This was made clear in the superseding indictment filed by the U.S. Department of Justice on 7 July 2010 in connection with the terrorist plot uncovered the previous September to attack the New York City subway. That indictment unambiguously details a plot directed by "leaders of al-Qaeda's external operations program dedicated to terrorist attacks in the United States and other Western countries" and involving an "American-based al-Qaeda cell." It further describes how the plot was organized by three longstanding and well known senior al-Qaeda operatives—Saleh al-Somali, Adnan El Shukrijumah, and Rashid Rauf.⁸ All three are well known to al-Qaeda watchers.

According to the indictment, Al-Somali and Shukrijumah were directly responsible for recruiting Zazi, the Afghan native and former New York City pushcart operator turned Denver, Colorado airport limousine driver, as well as two of his fellow conspirators, and former classmates from Flushing, New York High School, Zarein Ahmedzay and Adis Medunjanin. While in Pakistan, Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin received instruction from al-Qaeda trainers in the fabrication of improvised explosive devices using such commercially available materials as hydrogen peroxide (e.g., hair bleach), acetone, flour, and oil to carry out the suicide bomb attacks planned for the New York City subway in September 2009. Zazi pleaded guilty to his role in the New York subway

⁷ Quoted in Peter Taylor, *Brits* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), p. 256.

⁸ United States District Court Eastern District of New York, United States of America v. Adis Medunjanin, Abid Nasser, Adnan El Shukrijumah, Tariq Ur Rehman, and FNU LNU, 7 July 2010.

plot last February 2010; Ahmedzay similarly pleaded guilty in April 23, 2010.

It is significant that both Zazi as well as Shahzad had tribal and family ties in Pakistan that they used to make contact either with al-Qaeda or the Pakistani jihadi groups. These links greatly facilitated their recruitment. British authorities have always regarded the high volume traffic between Britain and Pakistan, involving upwards of 400,000 persons annually, as providing prime opportunities for the radicalization and recruitment of British citizens and residents. These same concerns now exist among U.S. authorities given the ease with which Zazi and Shahzad readily make contact with both Pakistan-based terrorist movements.⁹

Four, the Times Square plot marked the second time in less than six months that a local group whom it was believed lacked the capability to operate outside its traditional battleground has struck. On Christmas Day, a young Nigerian student named Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, acting at the behest of another close al-Qaeda ally, the aforementioned al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), nearly succeeded in bringing down a Northwest Airlines flight in the skies over America. As a senior Obama administration official responsible for counterterrorism explained shortly afterward, "AQAP was looked upon as a lethal organization, but one focused [only] on the Arabian Peninsula. We thought they would attack our embassy in Yemen or Saudi Arabia"—not in the skies over America.¹⁰

Nor should we have been surprised by the Pakistani Taliban's role behind the abortive Times Square attack. This was not the first international terrorist operation that the same group has been involved.¹¹ In January 2008 Spanish authorities thwarted a plot orchestrated by the late Beitullah Mehsud, then commander of the Pakistani Taliban and a close confederate of al-Qaeda, to attack the Barcelona subway system.¹² As Spain's leading counterterrorism magistrate, Judge Baltasar Garzon, had stated, "That these people were ready to go into action as terrorists in Spain—that came as a surprise. In my opinion, the jihadi threat from Pakistan is the biggest emerging threat we are facing in Europe. Pakistan is an ideological and training hotbed for jihadists, and they are being exported here."¹³ Judge Garzon could just as easily have been discussing the Times Square plot and the threat from Pakistani jihadis to the U.S. The Pakistani Taliban in fact had already repeatedly threatened to attack in the U.S. in retaliation for the escalated drone attacks that have targeted the group's leaders.¹⁴ Such threats were too readily dismissed.

⁹ Interview with NSPG, 8 July 2010.

¹⁰ Interview with NSPG, 26 January 2010.

¹¹ See, for example, Karin Brulliard and Pamela Constable, "Militant factions with global aims are spreading roots throughout Pakistan," *Washington Post*, 10 May 2010; and, Anne E. Kornblut and Karin Brulliard, "U.S. blames Pakistani Taliban for Times Square bomb plot," *Washington Post*, 10 May 2010.

¹² Jean-Pierre Perrin "Al-Qa'ida Has Lost Its Footing: Interview with Jean-Pierre Filiu", *Liberation* (Paris), 6 May 2010; and, Douglas Farah, "Analysis of the Spanish Suicide Bombers Case," *NEFA*, 22 February 2008.

¹³ Quoted in Farah, "Analysis of the Spanish Suicide Bombers Case,"

¹⁴ See Mark Hosenball and Michael Isikoff, "The Taliban's Threats," *Newsweek* (New York), 1 April 2009; Zahid Hussain and Jeremy Page,

The Obama administration has thus now twice been caught either underestimating or dismissing the possibility that local terrorist groups may harbour grander international aspirations—to attack *in* the United States itself as well as *against* American targets overseas. The Bush administration's similarly believed that al-Qaeda's was not able to strike at the United States *in* this country before the September 11, 2001, attacks.

AMERICA'S NEW—AND GROWING—HOMEGROWN THREAT

Last year was a watershed in terrorist threats and plots in the United States. A record eleven jihadi incidents, jihadi-inspired plots or efforts by Americans to travel overseas to obtain terrorist training, and one tragically successful attack at Fort Hood, Texas, that claimed the lives of thirteen persons, occurred. Furthermore, last year at least twenty-five persons were indicted in the United States on terrorism charges¹⁵—another record (according to CBS News "60 Minutes," the number is over forty).¹⁶ Thus far in 2010 at least as many such episodes have already occurred as throughout the entirety of 2009. It is therefore difficult to see the Times Square incident as a "one-off" or an isolated phenomenon when an average of one plot is now being uncovered per month in the past eighteen months—and perhaps even more are being hatched that we don't yet know about.

By any metric, this is an unprecedented development. While many of the incidents involved clueless incompetents engaged in half-baked conspiracies, as previously noted, some of the plans alarmingly evidenced the influence of an identifiable terrorist command-and-control apparatus.

We thus see a spectrum of adversaries today arrayed against the U.S. At the low end, they include individuals simply inspired, motivated and animated to engage in terrorist attacks completely on their own—such as the plot by four prison parolees and Muslim converts to bomb two synagogues in New York City and an upstate Air National Guard base; the attempt by a Jordanian national who overstayed his visa to bomb a Dallas office building; or a similarly far-fetched plan by another Muslim convert to bomb a federal courthouse in Springfield, Illinois. But in other instances, as we have seen, terrorist groups either actively recruited individuals in the U.S., deliberately motivated others to carry out terrorist attacks on U.S. soil or directed trained operatives in the execution of coordinated strikes against American targets within our borders.

These network-linked incidents are especially worrying. Think of Zazi and his al-Qaeda-directed plans to stage a "Mumbai on the Hudson"-like suicide terrorist attack on, among other targets, the New York City subway; the aforementioned shooting last June outside a military-recruiting station in Little Rock that killed one recruiter and wounded

"Taleban: we will launch attack on America that will amaze the world," *The Times* (London), 1 April 2009; and, "Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud threatens U.S. months after 'death'," *Daily Telegraph* (London), 3 May 2010.

¹⁵ Interview with NSPG, 20 July 2010.

¹⁶ Steve Kroft, "Homegrown Terror," *60 Minutes*, CBS News, 9 May 2010 accessed at:
<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6470178n&tag=contentMain;cbsCarousel>.

another by a self-professed AQAP operative; and the November 2009 massacre at Fort Hood that claimed the lives of thirteen people. Both shooters—Abdulhakim Muhammad and Major Nidal Hasan—were connected with this same local franchise of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda movement that was also responsible for the Christmas Day bomb plot. And the American-born firebrand cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, now a key AQAP operative, was involved in the radicalization of Abdulmutallab, Major Hasan, Shahzad and several others persons arrested in locales as diverse as England, the U.S. and mostly recently Singapore.¹⁷

It is hard to be complacent when al-Qaeda and its Pakistani, Somali and Yemeni allies arguably have been able to accomplish the unthinkable—establishing at least an embryonic terrorist recruitment, radicalization and operational infrastructure in the United States with effects both at home and abroad. Al-Qaeda's grasp thus is deep and wide. And, by working through its local allies, it has now allowed them to co-opt American citizens in the broader global al-Qaeda battlefield.

These accomplishments include the radicalization and recruitment by al Shabaab ("The Youth"), the Somali ally of al-Qaeda's, of nearly thirty young Somali Americans from Minnesota who were dispatched for training in their mother country and five young Muslim Americans from Alexandria, Virginia, who sought to fight alongside the Taliban and al-Qaeda and were arrested in Pakistan. Additional incidents involved the aforementioned sleeper agent, the Pakistan-born U.S. citizen named David Headley (who changed his name from Daood Sayed Gilani) whose reconnaissance efforts on behalf of Lashkar-e-Taiba, a long-standing al-Qaeda ally, were pivotal to the success of the November 2008 suicide assault in India; and both Bryant Neal Vinas and Abu Yahya Mujahdeen al-Adam, two American citizens arrested during the past year in Pakistan for their links to al-Qaeda. While it is easier to dismiss the threat posed by wannabes who are often effortlessly entrapped and snared by the authorities, or to discount as aberrations the homicides inflicted by lone individuals, these incidents evidenced the activities of trained terrorist operatives who are part of an identifiable organizational command-and-control structure and are acting on orders from terrorist leaders abroad.

THE AMERICAN "MELTING POT" THEORY

The wishful thinking that the American "melting pot" theory provided a "fire wall" against the radicalization and recruitment of American citizens and residents, arguably lulled us into a sense of complacency that home-grown terrorism couldn't happen in the U.S. The British similarly believed before the 7 July 2005 London suicide attacks that there was perhaps a problem with the Muslim communities in Europe but certainly not with British Muslims in the U.K. who were better integrated, better educated, and wealthier than their counterparts on the continent.

By stubbornly wrapping ourselves in this same false security blanket we lost five years to learn from the British experience. Well over a year ago we became aware of radicalization and recruitment occurring in the U.S. when Somali-Americans started disappearing from the Minneapolis-St Paul, Minnesota area and turning up in Somalia with an al-Qaeda affiliate, al Shabab ("the youth").

¹⁷ See Nur Dianah Suhami, "Local Muslim preachers need to modernize ways," *Straits Times* (Singapore), 31 July 2010; and Rachel Lin, "Twisted teachings, twisted logic," *Straits Times* (Singapore), 31 July 2010.

The case of the Somali-Americans thus turned out to be a Pandora's Box. And by not taking the threat of radicalization and recruitment actually occurring in the U.S. both sooner and more seriously we failed to comprehend that this was not an isolated phenomenon, specific to Minnesota and this particular immigrant community, but that it indicated the possibility that even an embryonic terrorist radicalization and recruitment infrastructure had been established in the U.S. Shahzad accordingly is the latest person to jump out of this box.

AL STRATEGY'S OF ATTRITION

In assessing the proliferation of terrorist threats to the American homeland, senior U.S. counterterrorism officials now repeatedly call attention to al-Qaeda's strategy of "diversification"—mounting attacks involving a wide variety of perpetrators of varying nationalities and ethnic heritages to defeat any attempt to "profile" actual and would-be perpetrators and overwhelm already information-overloaded law enforcement and intelligence agencies. "Diversity," one senior local police intelligence analyst opined, "is definitely the word."¹⁸ Similarly, in a 30 June 2010 interview at the Aspen Security Forum, Michael E Leiter, Director, National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) also identified this trend. "[W]hat we have seen, which is I think most problematic to me and most difficult for the counterterrorism community," he explained,

is a diversification of that threat. We not only face Al-Qaeda senior leadership, we do face a troubling alignment of Al-Qaeda and some more traditional Pakistani militant groups in Pakistan, and is as well known to this group and most Americans, the threat of Abdulmutallab that has highlighted the threat we see from Al-Qaeda in Yemen, the ongoing threat we see from Al-Qaeda elements in East Africa.¹⁹

This is part and parcel of an al-Qaeda strategy that it also has pushed on other groups. It is a strategy that is deliberately designed to overwhelm, distract, and exhaust al-Qaeda's adversaries. There are two components: one economic and the other operational. In terms of the economic dimension, al-Qaeda has never claimed it could or would defeat U.S. militarily. Instead, it plans to wear us down economically by forcing the U.S. to spend more on domestic security and remain involved in costly overseas military commitments. Given the current global economic downturn, this message arguably has greater resonance now with al-Qaeda's followers and supporters and perhaps even with new recruits. The operational dimension seeks to flood already stressed intelligence and law enforcement with "noise": low-level threats from "lone wolves" and other jihadi "hangers on"—e.g., the "low hanging fruit" who are designed to consume the attention of law enforcement and intelligence in hopes that this distraction will permit more serious terrorist operations to go unnoticed and thereby sneak "beneath the radar" and succeed.²⁰

¹⁸ Interview with NSPG, 8 July 2010.

¹⁹ Aspen Security Forum 2010 "Counterterrorism Strategy with the Hon. Michael E Leiter, Director, National Counterterrorism Center," 30 June 2010.

²⁰ In recent years, writings as diverse as the 1,600-page treatise of Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir Setmariam Nasar (writing under the pseudonyms of either Abu Mus•ab al-Suri or Umar Abd al-Hakim) titled *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance* and Anwar al-Awlaki's "44 Ways to Support Jihad" have forcefully explicated this strategy, amplifying and

CONCLUSION

It is troubling given this concatenation of new threats and new adversaries directing targeting the U.S. that there remains no federal government agency or department specifically charged with identifying radicalization and interdicting recruitment of U.S. citizens or residents for terrorism. As one senior intelligence analyst lamented, "There's no lead agency or person. There are First Amendment [Constitutional] issues we're cognizant of. It's not a crime to radicalize, only when it turns to violence. There are groups of people looking at different aspects of counter-radicalization. [But it] has to be integrated across agencies, across levels of government, public-private cooperation"²¹—which, unfortunately, it is not. America is thus vulnerable to a threat that is not only diversifying, but arguably intensifying.

Our fervent belief that homegrown terrorism couldn't happen here has thus created a situation where we are today stumbling blindly through the legal, operational and organizational minefield of countering terrorist radicalization and recruitment occurring in the United States. Moreover, rather than answers, we now have an almost-endless list of pressing questions on this emerging threat, on our response and on the capacity of the national-security architecture we currently have in place to meet it.

On the threat. What do we do when the terrorists are like us? When they conform to the archetypal American immigrant success story? When they are American citizens or U.S. residents? When they are not perhaps from the Middle East or South Asia and in fact have familiar-sounding names? Or, when they are "petite, blue-eyed, blonde" suburban housewives who, as Colleen La Rose the infamous JihadJane boasted, "can easily blend in"²²?

On our response. Who in fact is responsible in the U.S. government to identify radicalization when it is occurring and then interdict attempts at recruitment? Is this best done by federal law enforcement (e.g., the Federal Bureau of Investigation) or state and local jurisdictions working closely with federal authorities? Is it a core mission for a modernized, post-9/11, FBI? Or for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)? Can it be done by the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), even though it has only a coordinating function and relies on other agencies for intelligence collections, analysis and operations? What is the role of state and local law enforcement? What is the role of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) in homegrown terrorism and recruitment and radicalization? Will coming to grips with these challenges be the remit of the next FBI Director given the incumbent's impending retirement?

On our current national security architecture. Despite the reforms adopted from the 9/11 Commission's report and recommendations and the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, have terrorists nonetheless discovered our Achilles Heel in that we currently have no strategy to counter this type of threat from home-grown terrorists and

building on the similar call to arms in this respect first issued by Ayman al-Zawahiri in *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner* nearly nine years ago.

²¹ Interview with NSPG, 8 July 2010.

²² Quoted in Carrie Johnson, "JihadJane, an American woman, faces terrorism charges," *Washington Post*, 10 March 2010.

other radicalized recruits? Did "the system really work," as we are repeatedly told? Or was a lot of luck involved because of the plot's rushed nature? And finally, can we deter al-Qaeda and its affiliates and associates from attacking in the U.S.? If even a "hard target" like New York City continually attracts terrorist attention, what does this tell us about vulnerabilities elsewhere in the country?

The conventional wisdom has long been that America was immune to the heady currents of radicalization affecting both immigrant and indigenous Muslim communities elsewhere in the West.²³ That has now been shattered by the succession of cases that have recently come to light of terrorist radicalization and recruitment occurring in the United States. And while it must be emphasized that the number of U.S. citizens and residents affected or influenced in this manner remains extremely small, at the same time the sustained and growing number of individuals heeding these calls is nonetheless alarming.

Given this list of incidents involving homegrown radicals, lone wolves, and trained terrorist recruits, the U.S. is arguably now little different from Europe in terms of having a domestic terrorist problem involving immigrant and indigenous Muslims as well as converts to Islam.

The diversity of these latest foot soldiers in the wars of terrorism being waged against the U.S. underscores how much the terrorist threat has changed since the September 11, 2001, attacks. In the past year alone the United States has seen affluent suburban Americans and the progeny of hard-working immigrants gravitate to terrorism. Persons of color and Caucasians have done so. Women along with men. Good students and well-educated individuals and high school dropouts and jailbirds. Persons born in the U.S. or variously in Afghanistan, Egypt, Pakistan, and Somalia. Teenage boys pumped up with testosterone and middle-aged divorcees. The only common denominator appears to be a newfound hatred for their native or adopted country, a degree of dangerous malleability, and a religious fervor justifying or legitimizing violence that impels these very impressionable and perhaps easily influenced individuals toward potentially lethal acts of violence.

The diversity of this array of recent terrorist recruits presents new challenges for intelligence and law enforcement agencies, already over-stressed and inundated with information and leads, to run these new threats to ground. There seems no longer any clear profile of a terrorist. Moreover, the means through which many of these persons were radicalized—over the Internet—suggests that these days you can aspire to become a terrorist in the comfort of your own bedroom.

²³ See for example "America's Muslims after 9/11," VOANews.com, 10 September 2006 accessed at: <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/news-analysis/a-13-Muslims2006-09-10-voa17.html>; "Overview of Muslims in America," PBS series, "The Muslims in America," accessed at: http://www.pbs.org/weta/crossroads/about/show_muslim_americans.html#top; and, "Pew Study Sees Muslim Americans Assimilating," Barbara Bradley Hagerty, National Public Radio, "All Things Considered," 22 May 2007 accessed at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=10330400> 121 Department of Justice, "U mar Farouk Abdulmutallab Indicted for Attempted Bombing of Flight 253 on Christmas Day," January 6, 2010, <http://detroit.fbi.gov/dojpressrel/pressrel10/de010610.htm>.

The threat that the U.S. is facing is different than it was nine years ago. It has also changed and evolved since the 9/11 Commission presented its report six long years ago. Today, America faces a dynamic threat that has diversified to a broad array of attacks, from shootings to car bombs to simultaneous suicide attacks to attempted in-flight bombings of passenger aircraft.