

# RADICALIZATION 101

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE • COMMITTEE ON TERRORISM

IACP-COT





Exhibit #P200336 from the United States v. Zacarias Moussaoui.  
A collage of photographs of almost 3,000 victims who were killed  
during the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. (USDOJ)

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Radicalization to violence is the process by which individuals are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs towards extreme views. Radicalization can occur due to a multitude of factors and influences and is not limited to any single ethnic, cultural, religious or political group. Radical thinking only becomes a threat to national security, when it leads an individual to espouse or engage in violence as a means of achieving political, ideological or religious goals.

Violence associated with any radical ideology is of particular concern for law enforcement and security agencies. The inner path from ‘consciousness-raising’ to terrorism is a unique experience for each person. Pre-radicalization indicators are often extraordinarily subtle and no one factor or any set combination of factors implies with certainty the development of a radical mindset or violent agenda. Terrorists are not necessarily “different” from the rest of us, and their ordinariness is what permits them to go unnoticed by law enforcement until it is too late to

stop them from attempting to act. Recent terrorism cases have demonstrated that family ties and authority figures with violent extremist views can strongly influence individuals to adopt radical beliefs.

Working with local communities will assist law enforcement to identify those individuals who are developing extremist views and may seek to take violent action. Communities will be better situated than law enforcement to recognize when member behavior has changed and differs from the norms of that community. Intelligence gathering under the guise of outreach may conflict with community-oriented policing goals and may ostracize community members who could assist in identifying extremist individuals. Law enforcement personnel must establish positive relationships, trust, and transparency with the communities they serve to protect and secure these communities from internal and external threats and violent extremist messaging.

## Radicalization to Violence: *What It Is... And What It Isn't*

Radicalization to violence is a critical subset of the terrorist threat. From a law enforcement perspective, it is critical that our approach to radicalization to violence be rooted in understanding the problem, its causes and its potential outcomes.

Radicalization to violence is the process by which individuals — often, but not always, young people — are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs towards extreme views. Radical thinking is not necessarily problematic in itself. Throughout history, radical thinking has driven much positive social, economic and political change. Radicalization to violence can occur due to a multitude of factors and influences and is not limited to any single ethnic, cultural, religious or political group. Nor is radicalization to violence just about Islam or Islamist extremism. For example, Canada has been dealing with the outcomes of radicalization leading to terrorist violence for over a century, from the assassination of Thomas D'Arcy McGee in 1868, through the FLQ crisis of the early 1970s, to the Air India bombing of 1985. In the United States, John



Omar Shafik Hammami (aka Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki), an American member of the Somali Islamist paramilitary group al-Shabaab. (Photo: open source)

Brown's attacks in Missouri and West Virginia in the 1850s, the assassination of President McKinley in 1901, the Weather Underground campaign in the 1960s and 70s, and the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 are all historical examples of a process that can be characterized as radicalization to violence.

Radical thinking becomes a threat to national security when individuals espouse or engage in violence as a means of achieving political, ideological or religious

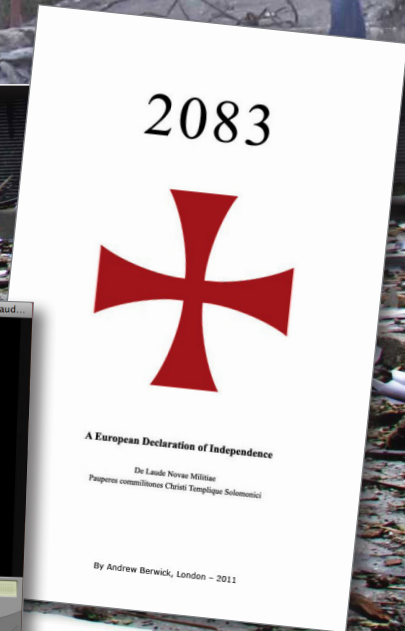
goals. Post-9/11, the issue of radicalization to violence has been thrown into sharp relief, not just in North America but the world over. The Theo Van Gogh killing in the Netherlands, the Madrid bombings, the 7/7 bombings in London, the Toronto 18 Case in Canada and the Ft. Hood shootings in the United States are all reminders of what can happen when radical thinking becomes terrorist practice.

Considerable efforts have been made around the world by law enforcement, government officials, and scholars, to determine what drives people down the road of radicalization towards terrorism. The inner path from 'consciousness-raising' to terrorism is a unique experience for each person. Pre-radicalization indicators — where they exist or are detectable — are often extraordinarily subtle, particularly to an outsider like a law enforcement or intelligence officer.

It is also important to note that terrorists rarely live at the margins of society. Terrorists are not necessarily "different" from the rest of us. In fact, *ordinariness* is often a key factor in the domestic radicalization phenomenon. Ordinariness is what permits apparently



Blast damage from a car-bomb left in downtown Oslo on 22 July 2011 by Anders Behring Breivik, killing eight people in the blast, and hours later shot and killed 69 youths attending a summer camp hosted by the ruling Labour Party's youth wing. Breivik details his own anti-muslim beliefs and his preparations for the attacks in his "2083-A European Declaration of Independence" 1,518 page manifesto which he posted to the Internet prior to the attacks, along with an accompanying video.



*Has your daughter, sister or girlfriend experienced **CULTURAL ENRICHMENT** by the local Muslim community yet?*

## Radicalization to Violence: *What It Is... And What It Isn't*

integrated, nondescript individuals to become radicalized to the point of planning and attempting to carry out terrorist acts; unnoticed until it is too late to prevent them from crossing the extremist line.

Analysis of recent terrorism cases points to a few common factors. However, these can be seen only as factors that may require further investigation. No one factor or — indeed — the presence of any combination of factors provides certainty of the development of a radical mindset or violent agenda. Family ties can play a role in the development of extremist views, particularly if close relatives are actively engaged in either terrorism or support for terrorism. The role of family can be extended to include a whole range of social networks. Similarities in background, age and outlook in social and peer group networks often create a dynamic that can accelerate the radicalization process, encouraging people to adopt attitudes or to take action as a group that they might not consider as individuals. Authority figures with extremist views can also wield a great deal of influence, particularly over young people. Similarly, religious converts may find their way to violence under the influence of an extremist leader or mentor.

It is important to re-emphasize that in the vast majority of cases, such factors and behaviors might suggest nothing more than adherence to a particular creed or political cause. Many ethnic, cultural and religious constituencies in Canada and the United States remain

deeply concerned about “homeland” issues. Indeed, continued identification with cultures and countries of origin remains an important component of the Canadian and American understanding of pluralism and integration.



Scene from “Sovereign Citizens’ and Law Enforcement Understanding the Threat” courtesy of The Southern Poverty Law Center.

## Working With Your Communities to Identify Radicalization to Violence



Photo: Martine Chenier/Steve Denny, RCMP

To effectively identify and counter radicalization to violence it is essential that law enforcement develop and maintain positive relationships, trust, and transparency with the diverse communities they serve. These relationships take time to form and a sustained effort to maintain. The first step in this process is getting to know your diverse communities. Law enforcement personnel must educate themselves about the customs, history, and religions in their domain. In most instances, the onus rests with the police to take the lead and initiate contact with a community and in particular, its leaders. It is essential to recognize the importance of utilizing community partners. The role of law enforcement can change over time depending on the nature of the situation; from keeping the peace to enforcing the law. This means that in order to resolve a problem, law enforcement must from time to time play the role of leader, quiet supporter, coordinator of diverse actors, or enforcer. Communities need law enforcement to fulfill all these roles to effectively confront radicalization to violence.

'Freeman on the Land' / 'Sovereign Citizens' may indicate their anti-federal government beliefs by producing their own license plates.

Law enforcement should be sensitive to the fact that enforcement action and intelligence gathering can conflict with community-oriented policing goals. Communities may be hesitant to develop relationships with law enforcement if they suspect that a department/agency views them as a part of the problem rather than the solution. Emphasis should be placed on supporting local efforts to establish communities that are safe and secure from both internal and external threats, and are resilient to violent extremist messaging. Violent extremism is a challenge many communities face. It is essential that law enforcement work alongside the community in a partnership that will benefit both parties.



Photo: open source

## Al Qaeda Inspired Extremism and Radicalization



While radicalization to violence can occur in many contexts, currently, the greatest threat facing the United States and Canada is radicalization related to violent Al Qaeda Inspired Extremism. Al Qaeda Inspired Extremism is an ideology that endorses the commission of violent criminal acts to advance this view and its implementation. Such an ideology is typically promoted through a narrative that claims the virtues taught by Islam are threatened by the immorality of the West and that Islam itself is threatened by a war waged against it by the West. Canadian and US foreign policy are central components of the narrative advanced by these extremist ideologues. The narrative claims that the proper response and religious duty of Muslims is to take up arms and fight Western nations and Muslim rulers viewed as “apostate”, with an end goal of organizing all aspects of life in what are viewed as Muslim lands according to a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. The single narrative is compelling in its simplicity and remains a significant driver of radicalization to violence for many young Canadian and American Muslims.

This narrative has been developed and is espoused by terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and

its affiliates, as well as many other organizations and individuals. Recently, in messages directed to Western audiences, Al Qaeda and its affiliates have refined this message by emphasizing that the proper role of Muslims in Western countries is not to join the fight overseas, but to take action locally with whatever means are available to them. This aspect of the Al Qaeda Inspired Extremism narrative centralizes the strategic role of domestic radicalization to violence. It is a narrative that is being disseminated through a range of media, including Al Qaeda media statements and videos, lectures delivered in person or recorded and distributed on CD, DVD, or online, and through regular repetition in web forums and chat rooms.

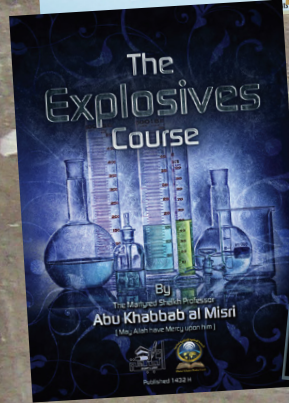
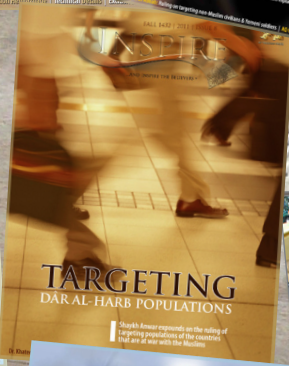
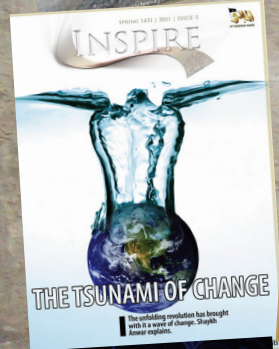
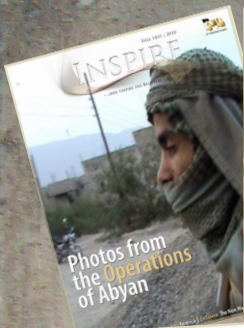
**Top photo:** Convicted terrorist Momin Khawaja.

**Lower photo:** Photo of convicted terrorist Ahmed Ressaym on-screen.

**Opposite Page:** *Inspire* magazines and *The Explosives Course*, English-language jihadist literature published to the Internet.

**Opposite Page Photos:** Top Left, clockwise — screen capture from security cameras of the London 7/7 (2005) bombers entering a transit station; Failed car-bomb attempt in Times Square 2010-05-01 by Faisal Shahzad; Bomb trigger components and arrest of suspects during “ANFO” delivery to ‘Toronto 18’ 2006-06-02.





## Additional Resources

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1995-04-19: Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was bombed by former US Army soldiers Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols. (AP Photo)



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The interiors of Nariman House, Mumbai headquarters of the ultra-Orthodox Chabad Lubavitch movement, are seen after the commando operation in Mumbai, India, Saturday, Nov. 29, 2008. (AP Photo)