

Case 21: Rockford Mall

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Derrick Shareef had been considering terrorist plots for three years before, at age 22, he attempted actually to carry out an attack in 2006 on a Rockford, Illinois, shopping mall in concert with a man who turned out to be an FBI informant.

His grievances, mainly against what he saw as offensive American actions against Islam in the Middle East, were substantially focused when he lived in Phoenix for a while with another extremist, Hassan Abu-Jihaad, although they eventually broke off over the issue of committing violence. Then, after spouting off about violent jihad in Rockford, he was tagged with the informant, and, as David Bernstein notes, it was only then (and especially after the triggering Israel-Hezbollah war of July 2006), that his plottings became concrete.

They remained, however, daffy. It was his notion that the way to create shrapnel with grenades is to explode them in garbage cans. Since grenades are essentially made of shrapnel, it has been pointed out that his approach would be comparable to shooting somebody through a wooden board in hopes they would be impaled by flying splinters.

Another problem is that he didn't actually *have* any grenades or, indeed, any other instruments of mayhem. Moreover, he didn't even have \$100 to purchase the ones the informant conveniently said he could supply. The price was then lowered to a swap of some stereo speakers, and the deal was consummated—at which point Shareef was arrested.

Whatever his cosmic inadequacies, Shareef was bent on violence, and he might have somehow managed to do something on his own, although one suspects the person far the most in danger of being killed in the effort would have been Shareef himself. More probable, suggests Bernstein, is that he might eventually have managed to hook up with a “smarter and more sophisticated radical,” though how he would find one while avoiding being picked up by the FBI or the police in the meantime remains questionable.

It would be interesting to learn more and to have Shareef explain himself—to the degree that he is able to do so. But we'll have to wait for that one. The Federal Bureau of Prisons has declined to allow him to be interviewed because they have somehow determined such an exercise to be a security threat. For the record, Shareef has been sentenced to 35 years.

Following Guy Lawson, who wrote an article on the case for *Rolling Stone*, Bernstein is set to wondering whether policing resources are best expended—at a time when there is still plenty of violent crime out there—on the expensive pursuit of “loud idiots who discuss grand actions but have no means or ability to bring them about.” It's a thought.¹

¹ For some ruminations on this issue, see John Mueller and Mark Stewart, *Terror, Security, and Money: Balancing the Risks, Costs, and Benefits of Homeland Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), ch. 8.

Linked to this case is one concerning Abu-Jihaad himself, who, as a sailor, passed classified information onto terrorists in the Middle East. He had no plans to commit violence in the United States, and his case is accordingly not included in this book. Some information about that case, however, is provided in an appendix to this one.

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1. Overview

On December 6, 2006 around 12:30PM, Derrick Shareef, then 22 years old, was arrested in a store parking lot in Rockford, Illinois for attempting to swap a stereo system for four hand-grenades, a 9-millimeter handgun, and ammunition to use in a terror plot targeted at CherryVale Shopping Mall, near Rockford, during the busy holiday shopping season. Shareef was unaware at the time that he was attempting to purchase non-functioning grenades and non-functioning ammunition. He was equally unaware that at all stages of his plot he was under intense FBI-surveillance and that his only accomplice was a planted FBI undercover informant.¹

The plot began when Shareef informed an unknown acquaintance that he he wanted to commit acts of violent jihad against targets in the United States as well as to commit other crimes.² This acquaintance, who has never been identified in public reports, immediately reported Shareef's behavior to the FBI, which then sent an undercover informant to Rockford, Illinois, to investigate Shareef and his intentions. Upon meeting Shareef at a Rockford video game store where he was employed, the informant immediately befriended Shareef and offered his home to Shareef, which according to the informant is not unusual as it is a Muslim custom to offer shelter to fellow Muslims in need.³ Shareef, who had bounced around places to live, accepted the invitation and, according to the informant, began discussing jihad early on in their relationship.⁴

After two months of friendship, Shareef told the informant, who went by the name of Jamaal but was later identified as William Chrisman,⁵ of his intent to carry out an act of terrorism.⁶ After discussing with the informant many potential targets for an attack including government buildings and synagogues, Shareef decided that a shopping mall would be a much easier target. On November 30 and December 1, Shareef and the informant conducted surveillance and dry-runs for an attack at CherryVale Mall.⁷ During the first walk-through of the mall on November 30, Shareef concluded that he could cause great damage by throwing

¹ "Federal Task Force Arrest Rockford Man in Foiled Plan to Set Off Grenades in Rockford Shopping Mall," Department of Justice Press Release, December 8, 2006, http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/Chicago/DOJPR_Indictment.pdf

² Mike Robinson, "Man Charged With Planning Mall Attack," AP Online, December 9, 2006.

³ John Christofferson, "Hearing Shows Informant's Work," Associated Press, December 1, 2007.

⁴ Christofferson, "Hearing."

⁵ Guy Lawson, "The Fear Factory," *Rolling Stone*, February 7, 2008. Christofferson, "Hearing."

⁶ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, (D.C. CT.), Federal Bureau of Investigation FD-302 of William "Jamaal" Chrisman, Interview conducted December 2, 2006,

http://nefafoundation.org/file/FeaturedDocs/U.S._v_Abu-Jihaad_FBIInvus.pdf

In this material, the FBI informant is interviewed with FBI agents and submits recordings of interactions with Shareef after November 29, 2006. These interviews were submitted as evidence in a related terrorism trial of Hassan Abu-Jihaad. Also included is an FBI interview with Shareef.

⁷ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

grenades at intervals around the mall with Chrisman's help. Shareef and Chrisman picked December 22, 2006 as the attack day because the Friday would be one of the busiest times of the entire year for the mall. Chrisman also informed Shareef that he could obtain weapons from a friend unknown to Shareef.

On December 6, Shareef accompanied Chrisman to obtain the weapons for Shareef's unopened stereo system from Chrisman's alleged weapons-dealer. Unbeknownst to Shareef, the weapons dealer was actually an undercover FBI agent. Shareef was arrested without incident after placing the dud weapons in Chrisman's trunk.⁸ He was charged with one count of attempting to damage or destroy a building by fire or explosion and one count of attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction.⁹

On November 28, 2007, prior to the trial's scheduled start of December 10, Shareef pled guilty to the charges filed against him. Although there was no plea agreement, the government dismissed the arson charges.¹⁰ On September 30, 2008, Shareef was sentenced to 35 years for attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction.¹¹

2. Nature of the adversary

Derrick Shareef, also known as Talib Abu Salam Ibn Shareef, was born on September 30, 1984.¹² Information on his early life is limited, but his mother, Marie Dunn, said that they moved around a lot as a family.¹³ As a child, Shareef's parents divorced and he was raised by his mother, who eventually remarried.¹⁴ His mother is a self-described Christian, but she allowed her children to pursue whichever religion they felt comfortable with.¹⁵ At age sixteen, Shareef, an African-American, decided to convert to his father's religion, Islam, while living in Detroit.¹⁶ Shareef's father was also a member of the Nation of Islam.¹⁷ According to his mother, Shareef lacked a proper male role model once his parents divorced and he "got linked with the wrong crowd" and became "radical."¹⁸ His mother also has said that when he started to become radical, he began to wear traditional Muslim clothing, which made the family uncomfortable

⁸ Andrew Harris, "U.S. Charges Illinois Man With Plotting Mall Attack," Bloomberg News, December 8, 2006.

⁹ Robinson, "Man Charged."

¹⁰ "Rockford Man Pleads Guilty in Foiled Plan to Set Off Grenades in Rockford Shopping Mall," Department of Justice Press Release, November 28, 2007, http://nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/U.S._v_Shareef_DOJPR_GuiltyPlea.pdf.

¹¹ Nicole Vrsansky, "24 Year Old Derrick Shareef Sentenced to 35 Years In Prison," WIFR.com, September 30, 2008.

¹² U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

¹³ Natasha Korecki, Annie Sweeney, and Dan Rozek, "Mall a terror target: Feds: Muslim convert charged with plotting Rockford grenade attack," *Chicago Sun Times*, December 9, 2006.

¹⁴ Shareef's mother married a man named Schultz and is called Marie Schultz in many news articles.

¹⁵ Lisa Smith, "Suspect had mother worried," *Chicago Daily Herald*, December 9, 2006.

¹⁶ Korecki et al., "Mall a terror target."

¹⁷ "Illinois Man Sentenced for Planning Holiday Mall Attack," ADL.org, October 13, 2008.

¹⁸ Leonard M. Fleming, "Guilty plea in plot to blow up Rockford mall," *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 29, 2007.

because they did not want to be singled out for being terrorists after already being one of the few Black families living in Genoa, Illinois.

One of the most formative influences on Derrick Shareef for his development into a young jihadist was his relationship with Hassan Abu-Jihaad, born Paul Hall, a 27 year old former sailor who was later convicted of passing information that supported terrorism. Although Shareef was already Muslim and somewhat radicalized, his jihadist passions flourished when he met the older man at a mosque in Phoenix in 2003.¹⁹ Abu-Jihaad gave Shareef a ride home from the Islamic Community Center of Phoenix. They immediately bonded, and Shareef soon accepted an offer from Abu-Jihaad to move in with him.²⁰ Shareef experienced both positive and negative motivation from Abu-Jihaad who Shareef grew to view as a brother and mentor.²¹ At age 18, Shareef had not finished school, but Abu-Jihaad convinced him to get his G.E.D. Shareef also later enrolled for a time in community college classes but he had to stop because of a lack of funds. When they met, Shareef expressed a desire to move to Sudan, but when Abu-Jihaad questioned Shareef's intentions for moving, he changed his mind.²² Abu-Jihaad even tried to convince Shareef to enlist in the Navy, which Abu-Jihaad saw as a positive experience. Shareef took the ASVAB (the military entrance exam) but decided against joining for unknown reasons. Even with support, was unable to ever find steady work. Meanwhile Abu-Jihaad furthered Shareef's desires for jihad and provided motivation, background, and religious foundation for jihadist actions.

Although Shareef was a converted radical Muslim, he did not have a history of violence that would lead one to believe that he would have been capable of causing great harm to a mall of strangers. In fact a search of his only police record turned up four traffic tickets issued by the DeKalb County Courthouse, where Shareef lived from 2005 to 2006, and these were for minor incidents such as driving without a license and driving without insurance.²³ However, his reaction to receiving these tickets reveals much about his temperament and anger problems. In response to having to go to the court monthly for traffic hearings about his suspended license, Shareef responded that "I just want to smoke a judge."²⁴ This apparent desire to murder a judge in a secured courthouse may also reveal his unsophisticated nature as a possible violent criminal or terrorist.

Being young, Shareef likely adopted his beliefs for the respect and admiration he received from friends that he himself looked up to, like Abu-Jihaad. However, these beliefs were likely not of strong conviction as Shareef has openly turned against his lifestyle, not surprisingly, since being incarcerated. As can be

¹⁹ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview. It is never explicitly mentioned why Shareef was in Phoenix. However it is possible that he was visiting his father who was suggested to be living there: Smith, "Suspect."

²⁰ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

²¹ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

²² U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

²³ Corina Curry, "Little known about would-be terrorist," *Rockford Register Star*, December 9, 2006 and updated November 28, 2007.

²⁴ Curry, "Little known".

seen in his anger over having to handle traffic violations, Shareef takes his frustration to another level by wanting to attack a government building. Shareef can easily be seen as a confused, moronic kid who became involved with the wrong group of people and made subsequent stupid actions that culminated in an amateur terrorist plot.

According to the court, Shareef now feels that his past views of Islam led by groups such as Al-Qaeda are misguided and unfair to the true teachings of Islam.²⁵ According to his defense attorney, Shareef has now become the Imam of the Metropolitan Correctional Facility, where he is serving his sentence.²⁶ His actions in prison demonstrate that Shareef may have simply been a foolish, misguided young man who got involved with the wrong people, as his mother suggested at the time of his arrest.

3. Motivation

What first led Shareef down the path to radicalism is unknown. According to FBI interviews with Shareef and Chrisman, the FBI informant who was assigned to Shareef, however, Shareef learned much of his jihadist hate while living with Abu-Jihaad in Phoenix. When discussing their desire to commit Jihad, Abu-Jihaad began to show Shareef videos of jihadi fighters in Chechnya and throughout the world and also taught Shareef about “defensive jihad.”²⁷ Shareef and Abu-Jihaad also had multiple discussions about attacking military targets, which never developed into any real plan or actions. However, once Shareef was educated by Abu-Jihaad about Islamic websites and groups that promoted jihad, Shareef no longer needed a teacher to be fueled by terrorist propaganda. Eventually concluding that Abu-Jihaad had “become soft,” Shareef returned to Illinois.²⁸

Shareef had acknowledged that he might die in executing his plot, but remained committed and ready to “defend jihad; to die in submission to Allah.” Taught about “defensive jihad” by Abu-Jihaad, Shareef was very troubled by the 2006 Israeli-Lebanese war against Hezbollah because he felt that the Israelis were the aggressors in the war. Shareef and Abu-Jihaad exalted Hezbollah as a perfect Islamic organization preaching Islamic unity which was why they were “successful” against the Israelis. However, the war between Israel and Hezbollah likely pushed Shareef from simply ranting about wanting to attack to having more serious discussions and developing a plan for violence. According to Shareef’s own admission in conversations recorded for the FBI by Chrisman, Shareef after the war began to seriously plan and scope out synagogues in DeKalb County where he could assassinate a Rabbi in retribution for Israeli action against Muslims in Lebanon. Ultimately, however, he decided against it.²⁹

²⁵ Jeff Coen, “Man Gets 35 Years in ’06 Terror Plot,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 1, 2008.

²⁶ Mike Robinson, “35 years for man who offered speakers for grenades,” *USAToday*, September 30, 2008.

²⁷ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview. According to their discussions, defensive jihad is the act of attacking (U.S.) military installations as retribution if they have attacked Muslim targets.

²⁸ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

²⁹ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

Shareef also made many comments that suggested that he was frustrated with the American government for its foreign policy and its involvement in the Arab world. According to Chrisman, as early as their first night, Shareef was already discussing his “issues with the U.S. government.”³⁰ In a recorded video of Shareef, in which he is dressed like a mujahedeen warrior, Shareef threatens to target Americans in their places of business and their homes. He calls Americans “enemies of Islam” and says that “for the sake of Allah, we are coming for you.”³¹ Shareef has also expressed his hate of the U.S. justice system, fueling further hate for the government. In a recorded conversation, Shareef said “No, hell, I don’t talk calm when it comes to this... ‘cause man the courthouse in DeKalb where I be going every month them niggers do weak as hell.”³² In this conversation, Shareef was likely expressing frustration over qualms with the county courthouse over traffic violations. Again, Shareef can be seen as a frustrated young man looking to cause harm to the government and nation that he believed has wronged him.

Once Shareef was away from Abu-Jihaad and living in Illinois, he became largely self-motivating and mentioned on many separate occasions that Abu-Jihaad was too passive and would never actually go through with any act of violence.³³ Educated on Islamic websites and an avid reader of propaganda, Shareef said that he had been on edge for a year and that the 2006 Israeli-Lebanese War pushed him over the edge.³⁴ As he began to conduct surveillance on CherryVale Shopping Mall, Shareef also watched more speeches such as one in which Azzam al Amriki argued that it was okay to kill women and children in acts of violence.³⁵ He also watched a martyrdom video from one of the July 2005 London bombers, and was extremely pleased when Chrisman suggested that Osama bin Laden would be talking about Shareef after he attacked the mall.³⁶ Like many other homegrown radicals, Shareef fed off jihad propaganda on the internet and found enough self-motivation to be able to conduct a terrorist plot essentially by himself with some assistance from the Chrisman.

On December 2, 2006, after days of conducting surveillance on CherryVale Shopping Mall, Shareef recorded a martyrdom video in case he died while executing his plans. In the video, Shareef says “this tape is to let you guys know, who disbelieve in Allah, to let the enemies of Islam know, and to let the Muslims alike know that the time for jihad is now...This is a warning to those who disbelieve, that we are here for you, and I am ready to give my life.”³⁷ Through this video, Shareef shows that he was motivated by trying to bring fear

³⁰ Michael P. Mayko, “FBI Informant Testifies in Terror Case,” *Connecticut Post*, November 30, 2007.

³¹ Ben Bradley, “Special Segment: The Making of a Terrorist,” WLS News, February 15, 2011.

³² U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006, http://nefafoundation.org/file/FeaturedDocs/U.S._v_Shareef_Complaint.pdf. This is the original complaint from the government against Derrick Shareef.

³³ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

³⁴ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 4.

³⁵ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 5.

³⁶ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

³⁷ U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

and violence to those who do not follow Islam and that those who are opposed to his beliefs should be afraid.

4. Goals

Shareef's goals for his attack were never clearly expressed. However, he said in recorded conversations and in FBI interviews that he wished to enact the will of Allah. He did express pleasure at the idea that Osama bin Laden might discuss him after the attack, but it was not his intentional goal to gain awareness from bin Laden or al-Qaeda.³⁸

5. Plans for violence

From 2003 until his arrest, Shareef had expressed multiple desires to be a part of a terrorist plot against various sources. While in Phoenix, Shareef discussed with Abu-Jihaad the possibility of attacking a military base in San Diego or military recruiting station in Phoenix.³⁹ Shareef even claimed that Abu-Jihaad sent him to conduct surveillance of the targets. However, these discussions never materialized into any plans and Shareef moved away from Phoenix when he felt that Abu-Jihaad had become soft. After being angered by the Israeli-Lebanese War in 2006, Shareef claims that he desired to attack a synagogue and stab a Rabbi in DeKalb County and he also conducted some surveillance of possible targets, but again nothing materialized.⁴⁰

However, when Shareef began living with Chrisman, early discussions of taking action against those who wrong Muslims developed into discussions of possible targets for attack in only a few weeks' time.⁴¹ Shareef was first interested in targeting federal buildings and government targets, such as court houses (including a strong desire to kill a judge), post offices, and police departments.⁴² However after discussions with the Chrisman, Shareef came to the conclusion that a shopping mall would be a much easier target, that attacking it during the Christmas shopping season would cause general chaos in the United States, and that the attack would have maximum effect if it was conducted the last Friday before Christmas when the shopping mall was busiest.⁴³

Shareef's actions and comments throughout the planning paint him to be violent and unstable. For example, when discussing the possibility that his plot would kill innocent women shopping in the mall, Shareef responded coldly that "they kill ours." Even Abu-Jihaad confided with the FBI source that Shareef was a "loose cannon" and that he [Abu-Jihaad] would "not follow Shareef onto a battlefield." But he also appears to be incompetent and unsophisticated. He said he planned to throw the grenades in trashcans in the mall and put bags of nails next to them to magnify the effect of his explosions.⁴⁴ However, he did not

³⁸ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

³⁹ Christofferson, "Hearing."

⁴⁰ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

⁴¹ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

⁴² U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 1.

⁴³ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 2.

⁴⁴ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

consider the likelihood that a trashcan would deaden the explosion of the grenade rather than magnify it.

Although Shareef was arrested weeks before his attack was scheduled to take place, he had taken multiple steps that showed that he was serious about going through with the plot. On November 29, 2006, Shareef had a falling out with Abu-Jihaad in an online conversation and felt that Abu-Jihaad would never be ready for serious action in a jihadi terrorist plot. After this, Shareef made it clear that he was serious about a plot and picked CherryVale Shopping Mall as his target.

On November 30, 2006 Shareef and Chrisman conducted a surveillance run on CherryVale Shopping Mall, outside of Rockford. Concluding that the mall would be an easy target, they set the date for the attack for Friday December 22, 2006 and began to discuss the tactics and how they would execute the plot. They discussed that they would wear hooded sweatshirts with large front pockets in which they could hide hand grenades. At first they planned to roll grenades under food stands and then walk away in opposite directions while dropping grenades at intervals as they walked out of the mall. Shareef estimated that the grenade would take 15 seconds to explode once he pulled the pin, showing that he had no experience with hand grenades and was plotting this violence with only the most amateurish ability.⁴⁵ During this planning, Shareef showed no concern that he would be killing women, finding justification in an online video that this is allowed when carrying out jihad.⁴⁶

On the first days of December 2006, Shareef and Chrisman conducted dry-runs at the mall. On December 1, they discussed the timing of their attacks and scouted out possible exit routes. Shareef also discussed his plan to make a martyrdom video and spend time with his family before the attack in case he did not survive. Although Shareef and Abu-Jihaad were not on good terms anymore, Chrisman spoke to Abu-Jihaad—Shareef had previously introduced them to each other over the internet—and Abu-Jihaad said that he wanted nothing to do with Shareef anymore. Shareef, who had earlier asked Abu-Jihaad over the internet for help with basic logistical planning such as setting up code words for when they were talking about any possible plot, did not inform Abu-Jihaad on details of his plan to attack the mall.⁴⁷

On December 2, Shareef and Chrisman conducted their final dry-run. They picked their exit route, and Shareef decided that he would throw the grenades in trash cans, while putting down nails in empty Krispy Kreme Donut bags next to the trashcans to magnify the effects of the grenade explosions and rain shrapnel throughout the mall. Shareef also suggested that after the attack, if he survived, he and Chrisman should plan to hide either in Chicago with friends

⁴⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M67_grenade

⁴⁶ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 2-3.

⁴⁷ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview. All information in this paragraph comes from separate FBI interviews with Chrisman and Shareef, as well as recorded audio tapes of Shareef that Chrisman conducted from November 30-December 6, 2006 for the FBI.

or in Maine. Shareef eventually planned to move to Morocco once it became safe for him to surface from hiding.⁴⁸

Although Shareef spent two days planning and practicing how he would execute his plot, he did not have the means to obtain weapons by himself. The plot required, he estimated, four grenades, two for each of them, at \$40-50 a piece, and a Glock 33 handgun. Initially Shareef said that he would be able to obtain guns, but later had to ask Chrisman who had mentioned that he would be able to get weapons for the attack.⁴⁹

When Chrisman said that all he would need is \$100, Shareef still could not come up with that amount of money.⁵⁰ Accordingly, he and Chrisman agreed on December 2, 2006 that he would swap Shareef's unopened stereo system for four hand grenades and two handguns. This shows that while Shareef might have had a hostile intent, he would have been unable to mastermind a plot completely by himself. However, Shareef stated in a December 2, 2006 recorded conversation with Chrisman that though he would not have had the means for an attack without the assistance of Chrisman, he would have done "something like this"⁵¹ and brought up his past desire to attack a Rabbi outside of a synagogue in DeKalb County with a butcher knife. Furthermore, when Chrisman asked Shareef if he would go through with the plot even if a freak accident happened and Chrisman died before being able to execute their plans, Shareef answered that he would still go through with the attack.⁵²

On the same day he recorded a martyrdom video in which he made his plans clear, justified his actions, and prepared for the possibility that he might not survive his plot. By recording the video, one can infer that Shareef was extremely serious about actually executing his plot. In his video, Shareef, dressed in traditional Muslim garb with a heavy beard, made these telling statements:

This may be my last will and testament, the last words that I have spoken to those who know me, to those who do not know me. My name is Talib Abu Salam Ibn Shareef. I am 22 years of age. I am from America, and this tape is to let you guys know, who disbelieve in Allah, to let the enemies of Islam know, and to let the Muslims alike know that the time for jihad is now...Be strong, oh Mujahideen. Be strong oh brothers who want to fight for jihad... This is a warning to those who disbelieve, that we are here for you, and I am ready to give my life...May Allah protect me on this mission we conduct...So do not cry, do not mourn for me. Do not believe what the kafir [infidel] will say about me when you read in the newspapers and when you see the television articles about me. Do not believe this. Understand that your son is a strong man...who believes and fears his Lord to the degree that he will give his life.⁵³

⁴⁸ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 1-5.

⁴⁹ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 2-3.

⁵⁰ Lawson, "The Fear Factory," 62.

⁵¹ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

⁵² U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

⁵³ U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

This excerpt shows that Shareef was fully committed to his plot and to the possibility that he would not survive his attacks.

Two days later, on Monday, December 4, 2006, Shareef got in contact with Chrisman's weapons dealer, who was actually an undercover FBI agent. In a telephone conversation, Shareef and the undercover agent agreed to swap Shareef's stereo system for four hand grenades, which they referred to as "pineapples," and a 9 millimeter handgun, which they referred to as a "9."⁵⁴ They agreed to meet up on Wednesday, December 6 to make the actual exchange.

At about 12:30 PM on Wednesday, December 6, 2006, Shareef drove with Chrisman in Chrisman's car to a store parking lot in Rockford. The undercover agent, disguised as an illegal weapons dealer, was waiting for them and introduced himself to Shareef. After Shareef showed him his stereo system and moved it to the agent's car, the agent showed and gave Shareef a locked case with four non-functioning grenades and a 9-millimeter handgun with non-functioning ammunition. Once Shareef took the box to Chrisman's trunk and took the keys for the case, the undercover agent signalled agents from Chicago's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) who were conducting surveillance. They then moved in, and Shareef was arrested without incident.⁵⁵

Although Derrick Shareef and his plot against the mall were undeniably amateurish, he still proved that he could be capable of helping to plot actions that would have led to the suffering and potential deaths of many innocent people. However, Shareef did not have much training that would have aided him in actually carrying out his plot. In Phoenix, he, Abu-Jihaad, and some of their other friends allegedly practiced rapid entry through a doorway, a technique they felt might be utilized during an attack, but that was about the extent of Shareef's tactical training. One of Abu-Jihaad's friends offered sniper lessons and Shareef for a time thought about taking some, but never did so.⁵⁶

6. Role of informants

The role of an FBI undercover informant, William Chrisman who called himself "Jamaal" when working on Shareef, was clearly paramount to the investigation and arrest. Although Shareef had pondered terrorist plots as early as 2003, it was only after he started living with Chrisman that these discussions developed into a concrete terrorist plot.

Chrisman, 34 at the time of Shareef's arrest, grew up with an interesting background that led him to work for the FBI. He was a gang member in Camden, New Jersey who sold crack cocaine and ended up in prison for attempted armed robbery and possession of a stolen car, and there converted to Islam.⁵⁷ After his conversion, Chrisman would have been a great asset to any terrorist organization. Being a white American, he does not fit the typical mold of an Islamic jihadist, and being a devout Muslim he possesses the ability eloquently speak about his religion. However, Chrisman gave up his life as a crack dealer and instead

⁵⁴ "Federal Task Force Arrest Rockford Man in Foiled Plan."

⁵⁵ "Federal Task Force Arrest Rockford Man in Foiled Plan."

⁵⁶ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

⁵⁷ Christofferson, "Hearing."

focused on the peaceful aspects of Islam rather than the distorted versions terrorists justify their actions with. Chrisman wanted to join the United States military after the Persian Gulf War to help fight against virulent forms of Islam, but was unable due to his criminal record.⁵⁸ After September 11, 2011, he was motivated by Muslim scholars in Saudi Arabia and Morocco who said it was incumbent upon Muslims to stop terrorists. In court Chrisman said “Anyone involved in terrorism was deemed the brother of the devil.”⁵⁹

According to Chrisman, in the fall of 2006 while he was working as a sheep farmer in Illinois, he was asked by the FBI to contact Derrick Shareef who worked at a video game store in Rockford, Illinois.⁶⁰ Chrisman then invited Shareef, who was in between places to live at the time, to move in with him and his family. While living together, Chrisman realized that Shareef’s violent rhetoric had the potential to be backed up with violent terrorism. Shareef and Chrisman were the only two true participants in the mall plot.

The media and Shareef’s defense attorneys have raised the issue of whether Shareef was more a victim of FBI entrapment than a true terrorist threat. Although Shareef was a more than willing participant, many crucial steps in the plot were led by Chrisman. Chrisman steered the conversation when Shareef and Chrisman were discussing potential targets, and Chrisman managed to refocus Shareef from targeting government buildings to the CherryVale Shopping Mall.⁶¹ Chrisman was also essential in providing a way for Shareef to obtain necessary weaponry for his attack. In a recorded conversation in which Chrisman asked Shareef whether he would have ever participated in an attack like the mall plot had he never met Chrisman, Shareef answered that he would have done the attack without Chrisman but would have never had access to grenades.⁶² Shareef also reinforced his commitment in recorded conversations with Chrisman in early December: asked by Chrisman if he was still committed to the plot, Shareef responded “I’m down,” noting that he was not afraid of getting caught by the police.⁶³

Although Chrisman’s role in the mall plot was facilitating, entrapment of Shareef by the FBI was ruled out. On multiple occasions Shareef emphatically declared that he was self-motivating and the leader behind the attack. In an interview with the FBI after his arrest, Shareef said he has been pushing himself to launch a jihadist attack for a long time and that not even his mother could have stopped him.⁶⁴ A *Rolling Stone* article by Guy Lawson entitled “Fear Factory” looked at the possibility that the FBI is fabricating its own terrorist plots through its intensive undercover investigations. However, early in the article, he concedes that with the great deal of audio and video recordings of Shareef incriminating himself, he could not argue entrapment as a viable defense and instead pled

⁵⁸ Christofferson, “Hearing.”

⁵⁹ Mayko, “FBI Informant.”

⁶⁰ Christofferson, “Hearing.”

⁶¹ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 2-3.

⁶² U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 4.

⁶³ Lawson, “The Fear Factory,” 62.

⁶⁴ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 8-9.

guilty.⁶⁵ However, in court, Shareef argued that he was “coerced and trapped into doing things.”⁶⁶ Whether Shareef had the capabilities and competence to develop a terrorist plot on his own is questionable. However, given his radical rhetoric that stems back at least to 2003, he was unquestionably angered and willing to pursue a violent outlet to express his radical feelings.

Chrisman’s relationship with Shareef also allowed the FBI to pursue Hassan Abu-Jihaad for emailing Navy information to terrorist-related websites after Shareef opened up to Chrisman about his past with Abu-Jihaad (see appendix).⁶⁷

For his work as an undercover informant, Chrisman has been described by the FBI as a reputable and valuable asset.⁶⁸ According to Chrisman, he was paid \$8,500 for his two-month work on the Shareef case in 2006 and \$1,200 the prior four years for work in Buffalo, Atlanta, and Philadelphia. According to an FBI agent, Chrisman has been paid \$22,000 for his services since 2001 by the FBI.⁶⁹ Although it is unknown if Chrisman continued his work with the FBI after the Shareef case, his photograph was published in the media reports that came out after Shareef’s arrest and during Abu-Jihaad’s trial, likely dampening his effectiveness as an undercover informant.

7. Connections

In his shopping mall plot, Derrick Shareef was operating outside of any established terrorism network. Furthermore, except for his relationship with Abu-Jihaad which only produced hypothetical conversations of possibly attacking a military base, Shareef never even operated with other accomplices. As he has said himself, he was self-motivating and had an internal drive to please Allah through a jihadist act.

Although Shareef had no connections to terrorist organizations, he seemed thrilled at the possibility that Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda might be pleased with his Rockford plot.⁷⁰

8. Relation to the Muslim Community

The Rockford, Illinois shopping mall plot also had little relevance to the Muslim community. Shareef converted to Islam as a teenager and attended mosques, but no information suggests that he attended on a regular basis or that he experienced any radicalizing or significant experiences in mosque that affected his role in the CherryVale Shopping Mall plot.

Shortly after Shareef’s arrest, the imam of the Muslim Association of Greater Rockford, Shpendim Nadzaku, responded to the media that “No one in the [Muslim] community has any clue as to who this person is, he’s completely

⁶⁵ Lawson, “The Fear Factory,” 65.

⁶⁶ Lawson, “The Fear Factory,” 65.

⁶⁷ Mayko, “FBI Informant.”

⁶⁸ Christofferson, “Hearing.”

⁶⁹ Mayko, “FBI Informant.”

⁷⁰ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

anonymous.” Furthermore, the imam commended the FBI for intervening in Shareef’s plot and condemned all “terrorism in the name of Islam.”⁷¹

9. Depiction by the authorities

Overall, the authorities depicted Shareef’s shopping mall plot responsibly and did not seem to exaggerate the facts of the case or the danger Shareef posed to the general public. In the Department of Justice press release on Shareef’s indictment, FBI Agent Robert Grant said “Once the threat Shareef posed was detected by the Joint Terrorism Task Force, his activities and movements were under constant surveillance and there was no imminent risk to the public...This case demonstrates the value of teamwork and the partnership embodied in the JTTF [Joint Terrorism Task Force].”⁷² Grant also accurately described Shareef’s plot as “unsophisticated” immediately after his arrest.⁷³ Grant’s description of Shareef’s plot wisely does not try to exaggerate the actual immediate danger that Shareef posed, and rather focuses on the hard work of the authorities to bring Shareef’s investigation to a safe conclusion. However, the FBI, and Grant specifically, used Shareef’s case to argue that America’s main threat is not foreign terrorists, but home-born radicals like Shareef. Grant described a plot like Shareef’s as more likely than an Al-Qaeda inspired attack.⁷⁴

After Shareef’s guilty plea and sentencing, authorities again presented a rather fair depiction of Shareef and his crimes. After sentencing, the prosecutor who tried Shareef made the assessment that “there is absolutely no question that he intended to carry this [the plot] out—it would have killed many people” and later described Shareef as a ticking time bomb.⁷⁵ Many times in interviews and recorded conversations, Shareef made it evident that he intended to carry out his attack and had no qualms about killing innocent people. Additionally, after Shareef was sentenced to up to 35 years in prison for his crimes, U.S. District Judge David Coar described Shareef as a “respectful young man and not fundamentally evil.”⁷⁶ Although Judge Coar possibly felt that Shareef truly was a misguided, confused young man, he also felt that his crimes and violent intent warranted the 35 year prison sentence.

Despite a tempered reaction after Shareef’s arrest, the FBI responded harshly to Lawson’s *Rolling Stone* article, “The Fear Factory,” that argued that Shareef was a “wannabe jihadi” and incapable of causing violence without the assistance of the FBI undercover informant. In a letter-to-the-editor published in *Rolling Stone*, John J. Miller, FBI Assistant Director, argued that Shareef had all the “traits necessary to harm or kill citizens,” that Shareef possessed a “poisonous ideology” and a “single-minded desire to take action,” that when coupled with his documented intent to kill, he posed a true threat to American citizens, that men with the same skill set as Shareef, such as the D.C. snipers, have caused harm to

⁷¹ Robinson, “Man Charged.”

⁷² “Federal Task Force Arrest Rockford Man in Foiled Plan.”

⁷³ Harris, “U.S. Charges.”

⁷⁴ Bradley, “Making of a Terrorist.”

⁷⁵ Associated Press, “Islam convert gets 35 years in mall plot 24-year-old charged with scheming to blow up grenades at Illinois center,” MSNBC, September 30, 2008.

⁷⁶ Coen, “Man Gets 35.”

innocents, and that if the FBI chose not to intercede in a case such as this they would not be doing their job of protecting the innocent.⁷⁷ These statements depict Shareef as a much more dangerous terrorist than the FBI's initial press releases.

10. Coverage by the media

Initially after Shareef's arrest, the media gave responsible coverage of his plot, emphasizing its potential severity while also highlighting that the public was in no danger as in the first Associated Press report after Shareef's arrest, published on December 9, 2006, by journalist Mike Robinson⁷⁸ or in an article in the *Chicago Daily Herald* stressing that the whole plot was devised under the undercover surveillance of the FBI and that Shareef was not actually close to carrying out his plan.⁷⁹

Throughout Shareef's indictment, guilty plea, and sentencing, his case did not receive a great amount of media coverage possibly because he pled guilty and removed the attention that a trial would attract, or possibly because the plot was so amateurish, so far from execution, and in a small city in Illinois. Most articles were factual about his plea or sentencing, and were not extremely investigatory about what led him from a normal American boy to want to become a terrorist. However, his story received more media attention after it was featured in Lawson's *Rolling Stone* article in 2008.

Lawson details the ineptitudes of Shareef's plot and his incompetence as a person to suggest that the FBI's anti-terror investigation tactics were the driving factor in the plot. For example, Lawson highlights a conversation in which Chrisman seemed to be prodding Shareef into buying grenades from Chrisman's "source." Since Shareef did not even have \$100 to buy them, they settled on two stereo speakers as the price for the transaction.⁸⁰ Lawson uses this to show that, in addition to not knowing where to buy grenades without the FBI's help, Shareef still would not have been able to purchase weapons. Lawson believes, and demonstrates persuasively, that the FBI facilitated a terrorist plot that would have never occurred if Shareef had not met the FBI undercover informant. Lawson continues his article by highlighting the anti-terrorism tactics of the FBI and the FBI-led Joint Terrorism Task Force's that are spread throughout the country. Lawson suggests that these task forces are ineffective anti-terrorism weapons against homegrown threats whose existence and danger to the public are often overblown.

With public discussion that the FBI may be concocting more terrorist plots than they are actually preventing, Shareef began corresponding from prison with a Chicago reporter at ABC suggesting that he was entrapped by the undercover informant whom he thought was a friend and that he is not evil and only "knew the wrong people."⁸¹ According to the reporter, Ben Bradley, Shareef is arguing

⁷⁷ John J. Miller, "FBI Response to Rolling Stone Magazine Article," *Rolling Stone*, February 22, 2008.

⁷⁸ Robinson, "Man Charged."

⁷⁹ Rob Olmstead and Joseph Ryan, "FBI thwarts mall attack: Arrest made in Rockford area," *Chicago Daily Herald*, December 9, 2006.

⁸⁰ Lawson, "The Fear Factory," 62.

⁸¹ Bradley, "Making of a Terrorist."

that he was entrapped, even though he could not defensibly argue it in court. Additionally, Bradley wrote that Shareef was very willing to be interviewed by ABC7 television in Chicago but the Federal Bureau of Prisons declined to allow the interview, deciding that it would be a security threat.⁸²

11. Policing costs

Total policing and trial costs entailed in the Rockford case have never been explicitly tallied. In “The Fear Factory,” Lawson argues that the FBI consumed a huge amount of resources to bring about Shareef’s conviction, but he does not supply any numeric estimates of the costs.

However, a great deal of man-power, effort, and resources were put into the investigation and trial of Shareef to ensure that he will spend the next thirty-five years in prison. For two months, the FBI paid informant Chrisman to report on Shareef’s discussions and behavior and paid him \$8,500 for approximately two months of work.⁸³ Additionally, FBI agents were used for surveillance when Shareef and Chrisman conducted reconnaissance trips to the CherryVale Shopping Mall. Also, an undercover FBI agent posed as Chrisman’s weapons-dealer contact.

The investigation was supervised by the Northern District of Illinois Joint Terrorism Task Force, run by the FBI. Although the intention of the task force is to work in coordination with local law enforcement agencies and other federal agencies such as the IRS, Immigration and Customs, and even occasionally the CIA, the local Rockford police department was never informed in advance of Shareef’s plot, investigation, and arrest.⁸⁴ According to the Rockford police chief in December 2006, the cooperation between the levels of law enforcement in Illinois was “not good.”⁸⁵

Two Assistant U.S. attorneys oversaw Shareef’s trial. Shareef was indicted on January 4, 2007. However, his trial costs were limited as Shareef pled guilty on November 28, 2007 and avoided having to go to an actual trial that was scheduled to begin December 10, 2007. Shareef was sentenced on September 30, 2008.⁸⁶

12. Relevance of the internet

In the Rockford Mall plot, Derrick Shareef used the internet as a venue to listen to and read jihadist and radical material. In Phoenix in 2003, Abu-Jihaad showed Shareef certain radical websites that backed up the jihadist ideology that Abu-Jihaad was discussing with the younger man.⁸⁷

In late November and early December 2006, as Shareef was moving forward with his plot, he would go to the internet to find motivation and justification for the attack he was planning. For example, he frequented the

⁸² Bradley, “Making of a Terrorist.”

⁸³ Mayko, “FBI Informant.”

⁸⁴ Lawson, “The Fear Factory,” 65.

⁸⁵ Korecki et al., “Mall a terror target.”

⁸⁶ “Rockford Man Pleads Guilty in Foiled Plan.”

⁸⁷ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 8-12.

website Kavkazcenter.com that provided “news from a different view point.”⁸⁸ He also watched a martyr video from one of the London suicide bombers in which he justifies his actions and listened to an online speech by Azzam al Amriki that justifies killing women and children while committing acts of jihad.⁸⁹ Although Shareef claims he never saw any speeches arguing for violence against Americans and only read a fraction of the articles that Abu-Jihaad would send him to read on the internet, the internet content he did view gave him immediate motivation and justification to continue his actions.⁹⁰

While plotting the mall attack, Shareef used the internet to communicate with Abu-Jihaad via online chat rooms. However, the falling out between the two in late November 2006 removed Abu-Jihaad from having any direct role in the Rockford plot.

13. Are we safer?

In attempting to determine whether the U.S. public is actually safer with Shareef in prison, many factors must be considered. Shareef had no prior history of violent crime, was incapable of holding employment or being able to support himself with proper shelter, and had no money. However, from his teenage years, he began to become a radicalized Muslim convert. Especially when he befriended Abu-Jihaad, possibly looking up to him as the father-figure he never had, he became engrossed with radical ideology and began spewing out violent plans for jihad. Although a strong argument could be made that the FBI facilitated Shareef’s mall plot, he could have been brought in to any terrorist plot to be a willing and anxious partner in plans to cause harm to the American public and government. On many separate occasions, Shareef exclaimed his commitment to the plot and believed that he was carrying out the will of Allah. He said that he would have acted without the informant and that his own mother could not have convinced him to not launch a potentially-suicidal attack.⁹¹

Because of his virulent anger against those who he felt have wronged him and Muslims, namely the American government and Jews, the American public is probably safer with Shareef in prison. Although it is unlikely Shareef ever could have orchestrated and executed a successful terrorist plot by himself, he was a prime candidate to be used as a pawn by a smarter and more sophisticated radical. At different times over a few years span, Shareef desired to attack an army base, stab a Rabbi outside a synagogue, and blow up a government building. Though he was merely a young man when he began his mall plot, Shareef showed that he could get over the fact that he would be killing innocent women, children, and might even lose his own life to execute an incompetent plot against a shopping mall. However, unless someone else was organizing and commanding his actions, Shareef scarcely possessed the resources, competence, organizational skills, or tactical tradecraft for executing a terrorist plot that would lead to harming innocent people.

⁸⁸ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 11.

⁸⁹ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview, 8-12.

⁹⁰ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

⁹¹ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

14. Conclusions

According to the Terrorist Trial Report Card prepared by the Center on Law and Security at NYU School of Law, directed by terrorism expert Karen Greenberg, “93% of federal terrorism prosecutions between 2001 and 2009 brought about at least in part by an informant resulted in conviction.”⁹² As Guy Lawson also points out, the FBI continues to use undercover informants to infiltrate, investigate, and eventually prosecute potential terrorist threats. However, as Lawson also argues, these informants may be part of the problem themselves. For example, like the Rockford Shopping Mall plot, in the 2009 Bronx Synagogue bomb plot (Case 25), an undercover informant helped four incompetent petty-criminals prepare a bomb plot against two synagogues and an Air Force base in Newburgh, NY. Like Shareef, the four men were uneducated, jobless, misguided African-American Muslim converts. Also like Shareef, they seized an opportunity to be a part of a terrorist plot partially facilitated by an FBI undercover informant. Similarly, a strong argument could be made, and has been made by the convicted men’s defense attorneys, that they were coerced and trapped into their plot by the FBI undercover informant.

In his article, “What Terrorists Really Want,” Max Abrahms argues that terrorists are guided more by their social and communal bonds to their terrorist group than by a desire to maximize political goals.⁹³ Although Abrahms’ argument is based more on the history of established terrorist organizations, Shareef’s radicalization process may have followed along Abrahms’ theory. Shareef became a radical Muslim because of the people he was friends with and only gave it a second thought after he had been imprisoned.⁹⁴ Furthermore, he looked to Abu-Jihaad, the person who taught him much of what he knew about jihad, like a mentor or brother.⁹⁵ Not surprisingly, Shareef became reinvigorated with his radical ideology when he thought he had befriended Chrisman. Possibly, Shareef was merely fitting in with his friends rather than committing to a violent ideology at such a young age.

It may be useful to consider another question: why is the government investing so much time and resources on someone like Shareef? As Lawson argues in “The Fear Factory,” Rockford has some of the highest murder rates in Illinois, yet the 10 FBI agents stationed in the city focus their attention on “concocted” terrorist plots rather than homicide and street crime.⁹⁶ As the Rockford plot bears resemblance to many other recently prosecuted terrorist plots because of the FBI’s use of an undercover informant, the FBI’s anti-domestic terrorism methods should be analyzed to ensure they are ensnaring actual violent radicals instead of loud idiots who discuss grand actions but have no means or ability to bring them about.

⁹² Stewart Ain, “Implications of Riverdale Case Unclear,” *Jewish Week*, October 12, 2010.

⁹³ Max Abrahms, “What Terrorists Really Want,” *International Security*, Spring 2008, 78-105.

⁹⁴ Bradley, “Making of a Terrorist”.

⁹⁵ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview

⁹⁶ Lawson, “The Fear Factory,” 65.

Although their methods of investigation are questionable, in Shareef's case, the FBI and Justice Department imprisoned a young man who had a great deal of hate in his heart. Justifying this imprisonment are the many recorded discussions and videos in which Shareef adamantly insists that he wants nothing more than to do the will of Allah through jihad by killing innocent Americans.⁹⁷

Additionally, looking at Derrick Shareef's life begs the question of how an American boy grew up to be the man who will sit in prison for the next three decades. As argued before, much of his radicalization was likely caused in part because he was looking for friendship and camaraderie wherever he could find it, and he just happened to befriend the wrong people. This argument leads one to wonder whether his absent father, who was a known Nation of Islam member and left Shareef when he was a young boy, left a hole in Shareef's personal life that he filled with radical Muslims while befriendng radical members of his father's religion. Shareef often described Abu-Jihaad like a brother, but their relationship was almost more paternal as Abu-Jihaad convinced Shareef to finish school and get a job. However, this seemingly positive force was also indoctrinating Shareef with jihadist ideology reinforced by resentments against American foreign policy actions. Just as Shareef's father abandoned him at a young age, Abu-Jihaad also abandoned Shareef after Shareef made it clear to Abu-Jihaad that he was ready to take their discussions a step further with actual violence. Although Shareef stated his motivation was to harm those who harmed Muslims, perhaps he was also motivated by feelings of abandonment and trying to get respect and recognition from those whom he loved but had spurned him.

⁹⁷ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman, interview.

Appendix: The case of Hassan Abu-Jihaad

Derrick Shareef's plot to commit violence at CherryVale Shopping Mall in Rockford, Illinois, is notable for being closely related to the case of Hassan Abu-Jihaad in 2008. Abu-Jihaad was arrested, convicted, and sentenced to up to 10 years in prison for disclosing classified information while serving in the U.S. Navy. This included sending movements of the United States Navy battle group to Azzam Publications, a London based company that allegedly provided material support to terrorists, in 2001.⁹⁸

The FBI learned much of Abu-Jihaad's guilt through their investigation of Shareef because Shareef opened up to Chrisman, the undercover informant, about Abu-Jihaad's past. However, Abu-Jihaad has argued that, despite some discussion with Shareef about attacking military targets in San Diego or Phoenix, he never had plans to be a part of a terrorist act and that Islam does not allow terrorism to be used except in defense.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Department of Justice, "Former Member of U.S. Navy Sentenced to 10 Years in Federal Prison for Disclosing Classified Information," Office of Public Affairs, April 3, 2009, www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2009/April/09-nsd-306.html

⁹⁹ U.S. v. Abu-Jihaad, Chrisman interview; see "defensive jihad" and 8-12.