#### Case 26: Little Rock

John Mueller June 4, 2011

Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, born Carlos Leon Bledsoe, is an African-American who has been a fairly consistent loner—and loser. After shopping around for religions after almost being sent to jail for various infractions, he settled on Islam. Increasingly radical and outraged at U.S. foreign policy, he came to yearn for martyrdom and ventured to Yemen 2007 to get training. But he was instead incarcerated by authorities there for various infractions and then deported back to the United States.

Questing for targets to attack, he conducted Google map searches related to "Jewish entities," a Baptist church, Times Square, a child care facility, a US post office, and military recruiting centers in six different cities. In 2009, he decided to kill Rabbis in Little Rock, Arkansas, and in Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee, after which he planned to attack army recruitment centers in several cities (as he put it later, he wanted "to kill as many people in the Army as he could"). But the effort to kill the Nashville Rabbi with a Molotov cocktail failed miserably: the explosive bounced off the Rabbi's window and, regardless, failed to explode, and, moreover, was aimed at the wrong house. He then decided to shoot up a military recruitment center in Florence, Kentucky (chosen because "it was near an interstate highway and bordered Ohio") only to find that the office was closed. Finally, he went home to Little Rock and with no plan at all, shot at a recruiting center three miles from his apartment, killing one soldier who was on a smoke break and wounding another. After making a wrong turn in his getaway car, he was captured by police, 12 minutes after the shooting.

Although great efforts have been made to determine which targets are attractive to terrorist, the Little Rock shooter's procedure suggests that the process effectively comes close to being a random one. Additionally, his history does not fit well with the notion that homegrown terrorists go abroad for training and then return to apply their new skills. He does seem to have tried to do that, but was unsuccessful in the mission.

His choice of weapon was also somewhat random. As Michael Coleman notes, he had originally envisioned using bombs, but when his efforts to get trained in bomb-making failed, he defaulted to drive-by shootings. Given the difficulty terrorists have had with making and detonating bombs, it would seem that this simpler method of mayhem would have recommended itself to more of them.

Except for the El Al and the Fort Hood killings, also accomplished by shootings (Cases 4 and 32), this miserably pathetic, if murderous, venture is just about the only instance in which someone has been killed in the United States by a Muslim extremist since 9/11. Nonetheless, it inspired little public reaction and not much press.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> NEFA Foundation, "Target: America: A NEFA report on the Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," nefafoundation.org, June 2009, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 2.

Also of interest: these cases are the only true "lone wolf" attacks in this book—attacks in which the perpetrator or would-be perpetrator was unaided by trainers, by fellow conspirators, or by FBI agents and informants.

#### Case 26: Little Rock

Michael Coleman

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## 1. Overview

On June 1, 2009 around 10:20am, <sup>1</sup> Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, a convert to Islam, fired an SKS semiautomatic assault rifle<sup>2</sup> at soldiers outside an Army recruitment center in Little Rock, Arkansas, killing Private William Long and wounding Private Quinton Ezeagwula<sup>3</sup> in a self-professed jihadist attack. Approximately 12 minutes after the shootings, <sup>4</sup> Muhammad was arrested by the Little Rock Police Department near a highway intersection. <sup>5</sup>

He has been charged with capital murder, attempted capital murder, aggravated assault, and 16 counts of committing a terrorist act. Despite his desire to plead guilty, he is unable to do so under Arkansas state law because he faces the death penalty. Prior to this, Muhammad had planned several jihadist attacks on U.S. military centers as well as on Jewish institutions in multiple American cities. For a detailed timeline of the events, see the Appendix.

## 2. Nature of the adversary

Muhammad is an African-American male born Carlos Leon Bledsoe on July 9, 1985 in Memphis, Tennessee to Linda and Melvin Bledsoe. All things considered, he lived a normal life growing up. A middle-class American citizen, he attended a Baptist church with his family, played youth basketball, and worked at a Chuck E. Cheese's. After his arrest, Muhammad underwent a psychological evaluation at Arkansas State Hospital. There, he told the psychiatrist that he began using alcohol around the age of 15 or 16 but only drank a few times per year. He also admitted to smoking a marijuana joint or two every month since he was 14. Since middle school, he had been suspended several times for using guns and knives in school fights and claimed to be a member of a gang. In 2003,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "One Shot, One Dead Outside LR. Recruiting Office," Wreg.com, June 1, 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> A Soviet semi-automatic carbine. See "SKS," Wikipedia, accessed December 3, 2010.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> David Goins, "Little Rock Shooter May Have Had Other Targets," FOX16.com, Little Rock, AR, June 3, 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> "One Shot."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Kristina Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier in Arkansas Says He Wanted to Cause More Death," Knoxnews.com, November 13, 2010. This source from the *Commercial Appeal* of Memphis is particularly comprehensive. It gives a detailed account of Muhammad's life, psychological state, and motives. Muhammad has written seven letters directly to the *Commercial Appeal* during the course of his incarceration, the details of which are reported verbatim in the article.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Bob Smietana, "The Iconoclast," *New English Review*, July 29, 2010.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>11</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

just before his 18th birthday, he was involved in a criminal incident. After a woman failed to yield at a stop sign, he jumped out of his car with brass knuckles on his hands and approached the woman's car window and threatened to kill her. <sup>14</sup> The case stayed out of the courts and was instead handled by juvenile authorities. <sup>15</sup> According to the police report, Muhammad was affiliated with the M.O.B. gang. <sup>16</sup>

After graduating from Memphis' Craigmont High School in 2003, Muhammad attended Tennessee State University in Nashville to study business administration for three semesters. There, his drinking and drug use increased significantly to several times per week. In February 2004, during his freshman year he was a passenger in the backseat of a car pulled over by the Knoxville police for an equipment violation. The police found an SKS assault rifle and two shotguns in the car and marijuana and a switchblade on him. Although he faced 14 years of imprisonment, he got off on a plea deal that stipulated a one year probation and no criminal activity. <sup>17</sup>

After the incident, Muhammad began exploring various religions to turn his life around and he quickly abandoned Christianity, the religion of his childhood, because he could not comprehend the trinity. Although he was attracted to Judaism because of monotheism, he says he was turned away from synagogues because he was black. He found the religion to be full of racial pride and instead moved on to Islam. He started attending the Masjid As-Salam mosque in Memphis in 2004, where he came to accept the religion at the age of 19. Muhammad felt immediately welcomed as a brother and soon thereafter dedicated his life to Allah. He considered himself a mujahid—one who participates in jihad—a term he selected as his middle name in 2006.

In a 2010 psychiatric report at the time of his trial, Muhammad said he "loved jihad ever since he became a Muslim." Interestingly, members of the Masjid As-Salam mosque said they did not see him often but knew him as a calm young man. Likewise, his family members—who were supportive of his religious conversion—never heard him talk about extremist behavior. The psychiatric evaluation corroborated his claim to gang membership and concluded he was sane and able to stand trial.<sup>23</sup>

He dropped out of college and starting living in cheap apartments in the Memphis area.<sup>24</sup> On March 26, 2006, he legally changed his name from Carlos Leon Bledsoe to Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad.<sup>25</sup> In 2006 and 2007, he made

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>15</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> A Memphis based gang. For further information see Jody Callahan. "Police Shut down New Mexico Branch of 'Memphis M.O.B'," *Commercial Appeal*, April 9, 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 4.

several trips to Columbus, Ohio and attended the same mosque<sup>26</sup> once frequented by convicted terrorists Nuradin Abdi, Iyman Faris, and Christopher Paul (Case 6), although it is uncertain whether he had any ties with them.<sup>27</sup>

On September 11, 2007, he traveled to Yemen to teach English with the British Council. He also took Arabic classes at the City Institute and studied Islam.<sup>28</sup> In Yemen, Muhammad converted to Sunni Islam and married an elementary school teacher to whom he taught English.<sup>29</sup> Later, he would regard English as the language of the enemy.<sup>30</sup> When his sister found out about his change of faith, she worried that he would become a militant Muslim. Muhammad addressed her concerns by vehemently stating that he was not "one of those Muslims."<sup>31</sup>

On November 14, 2008, just two months after his marriage, Muhammad was arrested at a roadside checkpoint in Aden for overstaying his visa. The police found him in possession of a fake Somali passport, videos about the daily operations of Muslim soldiers, and literature by Anwar al-Awlaki, a radical Islamic cleric who left the United States in 2002 and who spreads internet messages of al-Qaeda and instructions on how to construct explosives. Muhammad was imprisoned in Yemen's Political Security Organization for two months, during which time he is reported to have started planning his jihadist attacks. During his incarceration, the FBI interrogated him on several occasions with concerns that he was being trained by terrorist cells in Somalia. Somalia.

He had moved to Yemen to join his Mujahideen brothers and to get training in car bomb making and weapons use. He says he was encouraged there to commit an act of martyrdom. His arrest seemed to have impelled plans that he had long since developed. In other words, his plan of attack was not conceived in spite of his imprisonment; they were merely altered. Muhammad later said that, had he made it to Somalia for training, the drive-by attack he eventually committed in Little Rock would have been a drive-in.<sup>36</sup>

On January 29, 2009, Muhammad was deported back to the United States. Upon his return, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Investigation visited him a number of times as part of a preliminary investigation that turned out to be inconclusive.<sup>37</sup> As a result, the FBI could not tap his phone or put him under surveillance.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Maybe attended the Omar Ibn el-Khattab mosque in Columbus: see "Soldier Killed at Arkansas Army Recruiting Center," adl.com, Anti-Defamation League, June 10, 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Al-Awlaki is thought to have encouraged Hasan to execute the Ft. Hood shootings (Case 32). See Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 7.

In April 2009, Muhammad moved to Little Rock to work for his father's tour bus company. 38 Days before the shootings, Muhammad was seen driving a Little Rock Hilton Hotel sightseeing van.<sup>39</sup>

#### 3. Motivation

In examining the many reasons Muhammad gives for his attack, the two primary motivations appear to be revenge for a U.S. foreign policy that results in the death of Muslims and a fantastical desire for martyrdom. Muhammad told the Little Rock Police Department that his goals were "to kill as many people in the Army as he could" as retribution for "what they had done to Muslims in the past" and he cites American involvement in the Middle East as a harm to Islam, which justifies a jihad. 41 Judging from his testimony, his jihad thus seems highly enveloped in religious and political motivations. His possible plans to attack daycare centers and his regard for English as the language of the enemy<sup>42</sup> indicate that he may also have detested American culture. That said, his religious and political motivations are expressed much more explicitly.

### 4. Goals

The goal of his jihad was to help convince the U.S. government to fully remove troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and to stop its support for Israel's massacre of Muslims. 43 According to Muhammad, more American bloodshed would ensue if these "goals" were not accomplished. 44 From his jihadist attacks, then, he sought to send a simple message: leave the Middle East or there will be more American bloodshed.

### 5. Plans for violence

In April of 2009, After Muhammad moved to a small apartment in Little Rock to work for his father's company, he began stockpiling weapons and even purchased a .22 caliber handgun at a Wal-Mart to see if he was being watched by the FBI. 45

His plan was to assassinate three Zionist rabbis in Memphis, Little Rock, and Nashville and then target recruitment centers from the South to the nation's capital. 46 While in Nashville, he lit and threw a Molotov cocktail at what he believed to be the home of an orthodox rabbi. It turns out that he had the wrong house, and at any rate, the Molotov cocktail bounced off the window and failed to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 8; little supporting

NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 2.
NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> James Dao and David Johnston, "Report of Motive in Recruiter Attack," New York Times, June  $^{2},\,2009.$   $^{44}$  Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>46</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

explode.<sup>47</sup> After this blunder, he drove to an Army recruiting center in Florence, Kentucky. He had researched recruiting centers using Google Maps<sup>48</sup> and chose one in Florence because "it was near an interstate and bordered Ohio. Easy to get away."<sup>49</sup> The office, however, was closed.<sup>50</sup>

Muhammad told the Arkansas state psychiatrist that the Little Rock shooting was actually unplanned.<sup>51</sup> On June 1, 2009, he watched a subversive video, and this sparked him into action.<sup>52</sup> He used a SKS semiautomatic assault rifle in a drive-by attack to kill a soldier at an army recruitment office while wounding another in the Ashley Square Shopping Center in Little Rock,<sup>53</sup> just three miles from his apartment. The soldiers, dressed in fatigues, were on a smoke break outside of the center when Muhammad drove by in his Ford Sport Trac SUV and opened fire.<sup>54</sup> He made a wrong turn on his get-away path and as a result the Little Rock police were easily able to corner and arrest him near the I-30/I-630 intersection.<sup>55</sup> He surrendered without a fight. The police found 562 rounds of ammunition, homemade silencers, and military books in his car.<sup>56</sup> He had intended to kill more soldiers in the Little Rock shooting and in future attacks against military recruiting offices, Jewish organizations, and daycare centers in New York, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Louisville.<sup>57</sup>

After his arrest in Little Rock, Muhammad wrote seven letters to the *Commercial Appeal* in Memphis stating his plans to kill further, and confirming FBI suspicions of his false Somali passport: he had planned to travel to Somali to join his Mujahideen brothers in weapons training and car bomb making. His original ideas was to attack his targets with bombs, but after his initial plans were foiled by his arrest in Aden that kept him from going to Somalia for training, he mostly defaulted to drive-by shooting.<sup>58</sup>

In prison he has twice been charged with aggravated assault: for trying to stab a guard and, in another incident, another inmate with makeshift weapons.

### **6. Role of informants**

There were no informants on this case.

## 7. Connections

Muhammad moved to Yemen where he studied Arabic and taught English to make money. <sup>59</sup> As noted, he had planned to travel to Somali to receive

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Pierre Thomas et al., "Recruiter Shooting Suspect Had Ties to Extremist Locations," ABC News/Politics, ABC News, June 3, 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>50</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Thomas et al., "Recruiter Shooting."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Thomas et al., "Recruiter Shooting."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

weapons training from his Mujahideen brothers, but failed to make it due to his arrest in Aden. After the Little Rock shooting, the police found literature in his car by Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical Islamist cleric linked to the Ft. Hood attack. However, there is no indication that Muhammad had any line of communication with al-Awlaki.

After his arrest in Little Rock, Muhammad said he acted alone. During the trial process, however, he has switched his plea from not guilty to guilty, now claiming that he was sent by al-Qaeda based in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and that he devised the plan with the help of that organization. The Fall 2010 issue of *Inspire*, an English language magazine published by AQAP, contains an article that urges jihadists to follow Muhammad's type of attack. However, the publication does not indicate that AQAP had sent him to commit the Little Rock shooting. Overall, it is unlikely that the Little Rock shooting was coordinated by a terrorist network. Muhammad was certainly inspired by radical clerics and the AQAP, but more likely than not he planned the entire attack on his own. He also told police that the impetus for the attack came after he watched a video with "subversive activities."

## 8. Relation to the Muslim community

He had a direct tie to the Muslim community, both in the United States and abroad in Yemen and possibly Somalia. After converting to Islam in 2004, Muhammad started attending the Masjid As-Salam Mosque in Memphis and frequented a mosque in Columbus, Ohio in 2006 and 2007. It is important to note that his jihadist actions were not supported by the mosque he attended in Memphis. One imam clarified that Islam means "peace" and that violent acts, such as those committed by Muhammad, are not supported by the Muslim community. His time in Yemen further and more narrowly links him to the Muslim community, and his possession of a fake Somali passport and the Anwar al-Awlaki literature found in his car suggest extremist behavior.

### 9. Depiction by the authorities

The authorities were competent and responsible in their handling of the Little Rock shooting. Even initial reports were highly factual, including information about Muhammad's travels to Yemen and possession of a fraudulent Somali passport. Authorities also reported that he dropped out of Tennessee State University, changed his name, and converted to Islam in 2004. They were also surprisingly accurate when describing his background and motives. Little Rock Police Chief Stuart Thomas told the Associated Press it was unlikely that Muhammad had any connection to terrorist organizations in the Middle East or that he was part of a larger group; rather, he was thought to have acted alone. 65

<sup>60 &</sup>quot;Soldier Killed at Arkansas Army Recruiting Center."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Thomas et al., "Recruiter Shooting."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 4.

<sup>64</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>65</sup> Thomas et al., "Recruiter Shooting."

Authorities also knew that his attack was a form of retribution against the U.S. military for its killing of Muslims in the Middle East. 66 Later reports, particularly by the *Commercial Appeal* of Memphis and by the NEFA Foundation, add dates and comprehensive background information on Muhammad not included in the earliest reports, but the central facts of the case remain the same.

The authorities' surprisingly accurate depiction of the event is perhaps better explained by the substantial amount of knowledge federal agencies had of Muhammad prior to the shootings. The Department of Homeland Security released a report on the evening following the shooting stating that Mohammad used Google Maps to research other Army recruitment offices, Jewish organizations, and even daycares centers. Additionally, the FBI's Joint Terrorist Task Force had interrogated Muhammad while he was imprisoned in Yemen and on several occasions after he had been deported back to the United States in January 2009. Federal authorities already knew of Muhammad and suspected him of extremist ties but never had enough evidence to issue wiretaps or put surveillance on him. While authorities had no warning of the Little Rock shooting, they did already have a profile on Muhammad and because of this, even local authorities were accurate in their analysis of what otherwise would have appeared to be a random act of violence.

## 10. Coverage by the media

The press coverage was relatively impartial and accurate, considering the apparent randomness of the shootings. The *New York Times* and ABC News commented on Muhammad's suspected ties to extremist locations<sup>70</sup> and their suspicions were corroborated by later evidence. Due to federal authorities' prior knowledge of Muhammad, the media had a fair amount of information to work from when reporting the shooting. Although several sources comment on his link to extremist groups, none jump to call him a terrorist or assume that his attack was an act of jihad. Like the authorities, the media were competent and responsible.

Muhammad's lawyer, James Hensley,<sup>71</sup> had a strong predilection for the press and proved rather raucous early on in the case, asserting that his client was brainwashed while imprisoned in Yemen.<sup>72</sup> Hensley was so keen on making wild public statements that the Pulaski County judge issued a gag order on the case just one week after the shootings, finding his commentary to be harmful to his client.<sup>73</sup> In this regard, the case became somewhat sensationalized, but much more on account of the lawyer's histrionics than the media's coverage.

# 11. Policing costs

<sup>66</sup> Dao and Johnston, "Report of Motive."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Thomas et al., "Recruiter Shooting."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Thomas et al., "Recruiter Shooting."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> "Lawyer: Arkansas Shooting Suspect 'brainwashed'," CNN.com., June 5, 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> NEFA Foundation, "The Little Rock, Arkansas Recruiting Station Shooting," 8.

The FBI interrogated Muhammad on two separate occasions when he was arrested in Yemen while possessing a false Somali passport. Although they had suspicions that he had extremist ties, the results of their investigation proved inconclusive and they were unable to wiretap him or put him under surveillance. When he was deported back to the United States in January 2009, the FBI's Joint Terrorist Task Force visited him on a number of occasions but as was the case in Yemen, they had nothing to pin him to. Policing costs are thus relatively low. Court costs, on the other hand, are likely very high: the case has been ongoing since June 2009 and the next trial date is set for February 2011.<sup>74</sup>

#### 12. Relevance of the internet

Muhammad used Google Maps to research the locations of military recruitment offices, Jewish organizations, and daycare centers in New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Louisville, and Memphis.<sup>75</sup>

### 13. Are we safer?

Certainly, it is best that Muhammad is locked away. He had a stockpile of firearms and ammunition, and he could have done, and was planning to do, more harm. From his use of Google Maps, stockpile of ammunition, and purchase of a rifle at a Wal-Mart to "test" the FBI's surveillance on him, Muhammad was ostensibly well organized. His living stint in Yemen and his possession of a fraudulent Somali passport rendered him suspect and tied him to Islamic extremist groups. He had a detailed plan to target military centers in different geographical locations, which follows a pattern similar to al-Qaeda, and he stockpiled ammunition that would have sustained multiple attacks of the Little Rock nature.

Looking at the case as a whole, though, it is a stretch to say that we are really safer. Muhammad proved clumsy and amateurish on more than one occasion. He could not even throw a Molotov cocktail through a house window—and he had the wrong house anyway. Then he planned his first drive-by attack in Florence, Kentucky, for a day the recruitment office was closed. His basic research skills and common sense are thus drawn into question. Moreover, upon fleeing the Little Rock recruitment center after the shooting, Mohammad made a wrong turn and the police were easily able to corner him.

How much are we to feel endangered by a man who cannot navigate a basic route, look up business hours, or properly use a simple-to-construct explosive device? Based on his plan, only a very small percentage of military officers working at recruitment centers and Zionist rabbis had anything to fear.

Although he researched day-care centers in New York, no evidence is available to suggest that he would have actually carried out an attack on children. In his letters to the *Commercial Appeal*, Muhammad justified his attack as an eyefor-an-eye retribution against the U.S. military for its murdering of Muslims in the Middle East. He also commented on American soldiers raping Muslim women and was deeply troubled by children injured and killed as a result of the conflict.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>75</sup> Thomas et al., "Recruiter Shooting."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

Perhaps he sought retribution on American children for the death of Muslim children? Such a conclusion is highly speculative. At best, though, the potential attack on day-care centers underscores Muhammad's lack of a central motive. As a result, his planning seems haphazard, which only decreases the societal threat he posed and the likelihood that he could have pulled off more attacks. He was obviously violently-disposed, so we are safer with him in jail, but the amount of damage he was likely to do is limited.

#### 14. Conclusions

The Little Rock case serves to underscore the changing dynamic of terrorist activity—commonly referred to as homegrown terrorism—in the United States. Jihadist attacks of this category involve lone wolf belligerents carrying out unexpected, small scale attacks on military organizations, religious institutions, and public facilities. The danger this type of terrorist poses to the general public, however, is not yet validated.

Muhammad started engaging in criminal activity at a very early age (middle school) and continued that behavior even into his current incarceration. Taking his lengthy criminal history into full account, it is likely that Muhammad would have been prone to violence no matter what religion or ideology he joined. We must therefore consider the possibility that jihad and other forms of radical Islamic activity have become fads—convenient ways for angry, confused, lost, and/or belligerent individuals to express themselves. This assertion is substantiated by numerous Islamic scholars who note how radicalized Muslims grossly misinterpret the meaning of jihad and the central tenements of Islam, for that matter.

Muhammad's overt and rather pathetic desire to practice jihad is also worth discussing. He changed his middle name to Mujahid—meaning one who practices jihad—and departed for Yemen on the sixth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. He read literature by a radical Islamic cleric of celebrity status and researched plot locations using Google Maps. His actions, when looked at in aggregate, come off as if obtained from a how-to-become-a-terrorist 101 manual. After all of his strategic planning, a botched Molotov cocktail plot, and a failed first shooting attempt at a closed military recruitment center, Muhammad was finally able to carry out an attack. The irony, though, is that his first and only successful attack was unplanned: he decided, almost on whim, to do a drive-by shooting on the Little Rock military recruitment center after watching a video depicting "subversive activities."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier."

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# **Appendix: Timeline of events**

