

Case 27: Boyd and Quantico

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Information on this case is thus far confused and confusing, and more will presumably emerge in due course.

Alleged ringleader and Muslim convert Daniel Patrick Boyd has said, or is said to have said, that he fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan after 1992, but the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist in 1991.

And, as Kelly Stritzinger points out, key early accusations are that Boyd trained abroad to bring the fight to the United States (something that was said to be a new “trend”), and, most arrestingly, that he was plotting to attack the Marine base in Quantico, Virginia. However, after his plea bargain in 2011, he is accused of planning to commit mayhem overseas, not in the United States, and Quantico isn’t mentioned.

There may also be something to the comment of one watcher of the case that Boyd had a reputation for exaggerating his exploits abroad and "that may have played a large part in the trouble he has gotten himself into."¹

¹ Reuters, “North Carolina man guilty in terrorism case,” February 10, 2011.

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1. Overview

On July 22, 2009, Daniel Patrick Boyd, his two sons Zakariya and Dylan, as well as five other men were indicted by the court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, Western Division.¹ Boyd, 39, a US citizen and North Carolina resident is considered the ringleader.²

The indictment states that between the years of 1989 and 1992, Daniel Boyd visited Pakistan and Afghanistan and participated in military training for the purpose of “engaging in violent jihad.” Boyd is later said to have fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. All of the men were charged with conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists and to murder persons abroad.

On September 24, 2009 a superseding indictment charged Boyd and one of the men, Hysen Sherifi, with conspiring to murder US military personnel at the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Virginia. Boyd, Sherifi, and one of Boyd’s sons were further charged with possessing weapons in furtherance of a violent crime. Lastly, Boyd was charged with providing a Ruger mini 14 rifle and ammunition to a convicted felon.

Seven of the men (the eighth is thought to be in Pakistan) were arrested on July 27, 2009, an effort that involved more than 100 law enforcement officers, four SWAT teams from several states, and an FBI Hostage Rescue Team. All the arrested were held without bond while awaiting a trial. Later, after testimony began, US Magistrate William Webb deemed them a potential flight risk and a danger to the community if released.³

A trial for this case was set to take place in September 2010, but the defense attorneys were bogged down with thousands of pages of documents as well as video and audio recordings, and on November 16, 2010 they asked for an extension.⁴ On February 9, 2011, Boyd pleaded guilty to two counts: conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists and conspiracy to commit murder, maiming and kidnapping overseas. The second count potentially carries a life sentence. In exchange for his plea and for his cooperation against the remaining defendants, the government dismissed nine counts against him.⁵

2. Nature of the adversary

Daniel Boyd’s background and appearance altogether do not fit what most Americans think of when they imagine a terrorist. A white man with light-colored

¹ U.S. v. Boyd. (E.D.N.C.), No. 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, Indictment, Filed July 22, 2009. dig.abclocal.com/wtvd/Boyd%20Indictment.pdf

² NEFA Foundation, “The North Carolina Jihad Cell and the Quantico Marine Base Plot,” November 2009.

³ Kelcey Carlson and Stacy Davis, “Terrorism suspects held without bond, moved to Virginia,” WRAL, August 2009.

⁴ NBC 17, “Attorneys Ask For Extension In Triangle Terror Suspects Case,” November 2010.

⁵ Wikipedia. Reuters, “North Carolina man guilty in terrorism case,” February 10, 2011.

hair, Boyd was born in the US and raised an Episcopalian by his parents Thornton and Patricia Boyd. His father was a US Marine Corps captain, and the family moved around very frequently. His parents separated in 1974 and were later divorced, and Daniel began living under much more difficult conditions with his single mother. At one point, Patricia and her children were struggling so much to scrape together food that they were “reduced to gathering leaves to make into soup in the living room fireplace because the electricity had been shut off.”⁶

Daniel’s mother later married William Saddler, a lawyer from Washington, DC, who was an American Muslim. This was Daniel Boyd’s first notable interaction with anyone in the Muslim community, and perhaps new ideas and values that he acquired through this relationship were the primary reason for his later conversion to Islam upon graduation from T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia. Boyd married his high-school sweetheart, Sabrina, who converted to Islam just before their marriage ceremony at a mosque at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.⁷

An FBI agent later testified that Boyd had admitted attending training camps in Connecticut during the late 1980s before leaving in October of 1989 for Peshawar, Pakistan, with his brother Charles. He was initially assisting Afghan refugees by working as a mechanic, but he also received military training in terrorist camps, intending to use these skills to engage in violent jihad. Boyd also insists he fought alongside others in Afghanistan.⁸

Boyd’s first run-in with the law happened while he was overseas. He and his brother were accused of robbing the United Bank in Hayatabad in June 1991. The Manager of the bank reported that one man with “a golden beard” and another with “a beak-like nose,” robbed his establishment of \$3,200 (80,000 rupees) and that he had fired at both men with a pistol when they fled. When the Boyd brothers were arrested, they were allegedly carrying cards implying their membership in Hezb-e-Islami, an Afghan militant group. However, Boyd felt that the entire incident was a set up orchestrated by a bank employee who had tried to make advances toward his wife. The case relied strongly on witness accounts and a disputed confession from Boyd; therefore it is possible that Boyd’s version of the story may have been true to some degree.⁹ The brothers were sentenced in September 1991 to have their right hands and left feet cut off. However, the CIA quickly became involved and convinced the Pakistani Supreme Court to overturn the convictions.¹⁰ The officials who interacted with Boyd and his brother during this incident all noted that they were very well-behaved and even issued apologies for having done anything wrong when their appeal was granted.

When he and his brother were freed, Boyd left Pakistan for America and moved to Massachusetts with his family. Dylan Boyd, Daniel’s son, later stated during an FBI interview that “after a period of...not following through on the

⁶ “The Nicest Terrorist I Ever Met,” CBS News, July 30, 2009.

⁷ M.J. Stephey, “Daniel Boyd: A Homegrown Terrorist?” *Time*, July 30, 2009.

⁸ NEFA Foundation, “The North Carolina Jihad Cell and the Quantico Marine Base Plot, Training.”

⁹ “The Nicest Terrorist I Ever Met.”

¹⁰ Stephey, “Daniel Boyd: A Homegrown Terrorist?”

Muslim practices, the family attempted to return to practicing Muslim.”¹¹ In light of his behavior upon return to the US, Daniel Boyd’s time spent in custody in Pakistan might be seen as a period where he may have become more radicalized.

When he returned to the U.S., Boyd filed for bankruptcy while he had a job in Raleigh working as a metal framer. He soon began working with his sons and started a new business, Saxum Walls & Ceilings, which was incorporated in 2004. Soon afterwards, a home was purchased under Sabrina Boyd’s name in Willow Spring, NC. The first FBI investigations of Boyd took place in 2005.¹²

Another turning point in Boyd’s life may have occurred when tragedy struck only two years later. His son Luqman, who was only 16 at the time, died as the result of a car accident in which he was apparently going 75mph in a 55mph zone. This unexpected death seems a very likely cause for Boyd to begin thinking differently about his own faith and his role in life as a Muslim. It is reasonable to expect that such an event would create more turmoil in Boyd’s life, which may very logically lead to more unpredictable patterns of behavior. Later in 2007, Boyd opened his Blackstone Market with a business partner named Abdenasser Zouhri who had previously been impressed by Boyd’s strong expression of a devotion to Islam.¹³

Shortly after opening this market, officials note a worrisome shift in Boyd’s practice of Islam. Boyd stopped attending the local mosques in his area because of “ideological differences,” and also started to host Friday prayer services at his home. In 2006 and 2007 Boyd also demonstrated a new direction in his faith because he began to make more active efforts to expose his own sons to Islam, as well as providing weapons training to Muslim men within the US. Trips to Israel with one of his sons during those years may possibly have been attempts to engage in violent jihad overseas, or to expose his son to ideas which would make him more inclined to participate in jihad at home. There is also a possibility that Boyd may have simply wanted an opportunity to bond with his sons, especially in light of the recent loss of Luqman. During the 2007 trip to Israel, Boyd and his son were denied entry and held for two days. Regardless of the true purpose of the trips, Sabrina Boyd insisted that the second trip was in fact a “holy pilgrimage.”¹⁴ Sabrina also said the trips were to serve as an exposure for her sons to Arabic culture.

The Department of Justice later alleged that Boyd intended to radicalize others in order that they may take seriously the idea that jihad was “a personal obligation on the part of every good Muslim.”¹⁵ Recordings suggest Boyd made statements to members of his own family that furnish evidence that he was becoming more radicalized. On June 26, 2009, he addressed his wife and two sons, “Allah knows, I love jihad...rejoice at the opportunity to punish the Kuffar.

¹¹ NEFA Foundation, “The NC Jihad Cell and the Quantico Marine Base Plot, Daniel Patrick Boyd: Background.”

¹² NEFA Foundation, “The NC Jihad Cell and the Quantico Marine Base Plot, Daniel Patrick Boyd: Background.”

¹³ “The Nicest Terrorist I Ever Met.”

¹⁴ Stephey, “Daniel Boyd: A Homegrown Terrorist?”

¹⁵ U.S. v. Boyd (E.D.N.C), No. 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, Superseding Indictment, Filed September 24, 2009.

Achieve a high station of honor, Allah has placed on the Mujahid.” He also stated, “when you leave jihad, you leave Islam. What is wrong with you that you don’t fight for the cause of Allah.”¹⁶ These statements both indicate pretty clearly that Boyd had begun to see jihad as a necessary condition of being a Muslim, and he also seems increasingly frustrated when implying that other Muslims in his community may not take jihad seriously.

Books and documents seized from Boyd’s home after his arrest in July 2009 seem to further legitimize the idea that he was becoming increasingly radicalized, more particularly, to the extent where he developed desires to engage in violent acts of jihad. Items seized from Boyd’s home by authorities include: “The Palestinian Holocaust,” “In the Shade of the Qu’ran,” “Jihad in Islam,” and Osama bin Laden’s 1998 “Fatwah Urging Jihad Against Americans.”¹⁷ All of these titles seem to imply that Boyd had been studying and becoming increasingly influenced by literature which highlighted the importance of violent action as a part of being a good Muslim. The 1998 Fatwah implies a glorification of the act of killing Americans, and it would not be surprising if reading this type of material helped to solidify Boyd’s plans to engage in violent jihad within the United States, as he was later charged with plots at the US Marine Base in Quantico, Virginia.

Dylan Boyd, like his father, does not fit what some may describe as a traditional terrorist profile. He was involved in the band during high school and continued on to study psychology for two years at North Carolina State University, possibly hoping to become a doctor.¹⁸ He says he had “complete trust and confidence in his father about everything and anything.”¹⁹ Through FBI interviews, he demonstrates the belief that “The American army now overseas are raping and killing ‘their’ sisters. Jihad is right to protect your Muslim sisters.”²⁰ Further, “September 11 was a[n] inside job that was set up to alter the markets.” Dylan appears to have had a very high level of trust with his father, and it would therefore make sense that many or even all of his ideas about Islam may just have resulted from his acceptance of everything his father told him about the religion.

Dylan’s critical view of the American army and his apparent belief that the September 11 attacks were a setup reveals that Daniel Boyd himself probably expressed such opinions. The authority figure of a parent is extremely difficult for many to challenge, so the fact that Dylan seems to follow in his father’s footsteps in embracing jihad is not very surprising.

Dylan’s brother Zakariya also does not fit what anyone might imagine a typical terrorist profile to be. He was an Eagle Scout and member of the National

¹⁶ NEFA Foundation, “The NC Jihad Cell and the Quantico Marine Base Plot, Daniel Patrick Boyd: Radicalization of Others.”

¹⁷ NEFA Foundation, “Daniel Patrick Boyd: Radicalization of Others.”

¹⁸ NEFA Foundation. “The NC Jihad Cell and the Quantico Marine Base Plot, Daniel Patrick Boyd: Dylan Boyd.”

¹⁹ U.S. v. Boyd (E.D.N.C.). No 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, FBI interview of Dylan Boyd, Filed August 25, 2009.

²⁰ U.S. v. Boyd (E.D.N.C.). No 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, FBI interview of Dylan Boyd.

Honor Society at West Johnson High School.²¹ Dylan described his brother as having gone through a phase where he drank alcohol and dated girls while straying from the Muslim practices. However, Zak apparently became frightened by “The Fire Man,” or the idea of hell, and dropped out of UNC-Pembroke because of the amount of partying.²²

Hysen Sherifi, 24, is a Kosovo native and US legal permanent resident residing in North Carolina. His first contact with Boyd was through an April 28, 2008 e-mail Boyd sent that had attached “literature extolling the virtues of dying *shahid*.” In June of that year, Sherifi contributed \$500 to Boyd for the cause of jihad and visited Boyd’s house in July where he learned how to use an AK-47.²³

Ziyad Yaghi, 21, a US citizen and North Carolina resident, had travelled to Jordan to engage in violent jihad in October of 2006. He met Dylan Boyd through an acquaintance Mohammed Omar Aly Hassan, 22, a US citizen and NC resident, who was then a student at North Carolina State. Both Yaghi and Hassan both came to Daniel Boyd’s house frequently and hung out “to learn more about the ‘deen’ or the ‘faith’.”²⁴ It should be noted that after Yaghi came back from an attempted trip to Tel Aviv, Israel, he cut off contact with Daniel Boyd at about the same time that rumors were spread among the Muslim community that he was interested in jihad.²⁵ Yaghi’s background reveals previous crimes. For instance, he pleaded guilty to felonious restraint charges for his involvement in a 2008 gunpoint robbery of an acquaintance and was wanted for theft of copper pipe in Texas.²⁶ Hassan, who had also tried to travel to Tel Aviv in 2007, would hang out with Yaghi at Boyd’s house. He had attended NC State with Dylan Boyd and, like Yaghi, cut off his ties to Daniel Boyd when he returned to the US. Aside from his guilty plea to misdemeanor charges for indirect involvement in the 2008, he was also convicted for marijuana possession and for assaulting his girlfriend.²⁷

Anes Subasic, 33, a naturalized U.S. citizen and NC resident, attended a training seminar in Las Vegas where he learned about performing executions and escape culture. He had a form of “coded” conversation with Daniel Boyd in April 2008 where “they discussed preparing to send two individuals overseas to engage in violent jihad,” while also talking about what it meant to be a good Muslim.²⁸ When Subasic’s home was searched in 2009, ammunition, knives, a rifle scope box, counterterrorism literature and CDs labeled “September 11, 2001” were

²¹ NEFA Foundation, “The NC Jihad Cell and the Quantico Marine Base Plot, Daniel Patrick Boyd: Zakariya Boyd.”

²² U.S. v. Boyd (E.D.N.C.). No 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, FBI interview of Dylan Boyd, Filed August 25, 2009.

²³ NEFA Foundation. “The NC Jihad Cell and the Quantico Marine Base Plot, Daniel Patrick Boyd: Hysen Sherifi.”

²⁴ U.S. v. Boyd (E.D.N.C.). No 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, FBI interview of Dylan Boyd, Filed August 25, 2009.

²⁵ Sarah Ovaska and Mandy Locke, “FBI Agent: Boyd Spoke of ‘Jihad Right Here,’” *News & Observer*, August 5, 2009.

²⁶ “Boyd’s Co-Defendants’ Histories Come to Light,” *News & Observer*, August 5, 2009.

²⁷ Sarah Ovaska, “Terror Arrests Weren’t First Brush With Law,” *News & Observer*, July 29, 2009.

²⁸ U.S. v. Boyd (E.D.N.C), No. 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, Superseding Indictment, Filed September 24, 2009, and U.S. v. Boyd (E.D.N.C), No. 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, Government Exhibit 30.

found along with a handgun permit.²⁹ In addition, Subasic's background is quite unnerving since he was apparently charged with attempted murder, extortion and robbery in Bosnia. In the FBI interviews with Dylan Boyd, Subasic was portrayed as being "very regimented about the basics of Islam and they have to be a certain way," to the extent that the Boyd family no longer wanted him to be around their house in case he might become "another witness."³⁰

Jude Kenan Mohammad, 21, who reportedly first met Dylan Boyd in 2007, moved from Pakistan to the U.S. with his mother. On October 7, 2008 he left the US to visit Pakistan "in order to engage in violent jihad." However, he was arrested near Peshawar because an officer thought he "looked like a Taliban spy." Mohammad had a laptop and a hidden knife when he was arrested.³¹ His location is not currently known, but he is believed to be in Pakistan.³²

3. Motivation

Daniel Boyd and his sons seem to have been caught in a spiral of Islamic radicalization that may have been triggered by personal events in the lives of all three, but particularly by events that affected Daniel personally. Growing up at times in poverty, it is conceivable that Boyd might have had bitter feelings toward his biological father, and perhaps the fact that his father was a Marine was fuel for his critical view of members of the U.S. military. The death of Luqman Boyd occurred right around the time Boyd began taking his sons overseas in attempts to visit Israel. Further disillusionment with his local mosque might have pushed Boyd to the limit and caused him to feel an urgent need to actively engage in jihad by plotting an attack on the Quantico Marine Base in Virginia. While these traumatic events might be convincing as evidence towards why Boyd wanted to engage in violent behavior, there are certainly aspects of Boyd's social life that would lead one to believe he'd have a tendency to be more moderate than radical in his faith.

4. Goals

Audio recordings reveal Boyd's discussions of the importance of carrying out jihad as a Muslim duty. While many who knew Boyd insisted he was a kind man who they thought would be very unlikely to engage in terrorism, the U.S. government may be right to take a more cautious approach to cases like these. Soon after Boyd and others were arrested, the FBI and Department of Homeland Security sent a bulletin to law enforcement officials saying that the indictment was the sign of "a trend of would-be terrorists who go overseas for training...come back to the United States, and may spend years quietly waiting to put their skills to use."³³ This bulletin seems to evoke an exaggeratedly large

²⁹ U.S. v. Boyd (E.D.N.C), No. 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, In the Matter of the Search of 248 Adefield Lane, Holly Springs, North Carolina.

³⁰ U.S. v. Boyd (E.D.N.C.). No 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, FBI interview of Dylan Boyd, Filed August 25, 2009.

³¹ Declan Walsh and Daniel Nasaw, "American Jihad or FBI Blunder? The Riddle of the "North Carolina Taliban," *The Guardian*, September 3, 2009.

³² "Delay Sought In Terror Case," *Cary News*, November 24, 2010.

³³ "The Nicest Terrorist I Ever Met," CBS News, July 30, 2009.

number of terrorists, all of whom might follow relatively similar paths towards radicalism. Instead, the diverse backgrounds of the men indicted with Boyd are sufficient evidence that profiling potential terrorists would be very difficult if not impossible. Boyd's sons were positively involved in their high schools as members of clubs or musical groups, while Yaghi and Hassan on the other hand both had previous criminal histories.

5. Plans for violence

It appears that Boyd, his sons, and the other men were hoping to engage in violent jihad in Israel and elsewhere overseas. After they failed to do so, they returned to the US, and there is evidence that they continued to collect weapons and conduct military training, "In Boyd's truck and at his home in Willow Spring, agents found gas masks, 26 guns and 27,000 rounds of ammunition."³⁴ In addition, audio recordings were obtained that reveal Boyd repeatedly emphasizing the fact that one must engage in jihad in order to be a good Muslim. An FBI agent quoted Daniel Boyd saying "I'm going to make jihad right here in America," if he did not leave America soon.³⁵

After travelling to Kosovo in 2008, Sherifi returned to the US and "practiced military tactics and the use of weapons on private property in Caswell County, North Carolina." In June and July of that year, Boyd, Sherifi, and Boyd's son Zak, "practiced military tactics and the use of weapons on private property in Caswell County, North Carolina."³⁶

While there were several men indicted, Boyd was the ringleader and possibly the only individual who would have taken the steps to complete a terrorist attack in the United States if he had not been influenced by or able to influence any of the other men. In defense of his client, Omar Hassan, attorney Dan Boyce said that "there is a single...incident of my client firing a gun, and there's nothing to suggest it was illegal." After a two-day hearing, prosecutors said they had "a pile of evidence against the supposed ringleader, Daniel Boyd," but only "vague connections and travel plans that the defense attorneys say they can easily explain away."³⁷ It is hard to believe that Boyd's sons Zak and Dylan should share as much responsibility, seeing that they are both only a few years out of high school and grew up with a father who instilled increasingly radicalized Islamic views in their minds before they were likely old enough to develop their own world views. When considering all of these points, it is clear that the evidence used to charge at least some of the men may not be very strong.

The superseding indictment filed against Daniel Boyd and Hysen Sherifi notes activity occurring between June 12, 2009 and July 7, 2009 showing that the two were intending to carry out an attack on the U.S. Marine Base in Quantico. On June 12, Boyd "conducted reconnaissance at the base," and ten days later was

³⁴ Mandy Locke, Josh Shaffer, Sarah Ovaska, and Yonat Shimron, "Bulk of Terror Evidence Concerns Boyd," *News & Observer*, August 6, 2009.

³⁵ Declan Walsh and Daniel Nasaw, "Background: 'North Carolina Taliban'," *Guardian*, September 3, 2009.

³⁶ NEFA Foundation, "The NC Jihad Cell and the Quantico Marine Base Plot, Daniel Patrick Boyd: Training."

³⁷ Locke et al., "Bulk of Terror Evidence."

reviewing maps of the base, “to be used by members of the conspiracy to plan and coordinate an attack on Quantico.” On July 7, 2009 Boyd possessed a weapon with the intent to use it “for the base,” or the Marine Corps Base, Quantico. On that same day he also possessed ammunition, stating it was to be used, “to attack the Americans.”³⁸

6. Role of informants

An unnamed informant befriended Boyd and began “feigning enthusiasm for violent jihad.” He recorded many hours of conversations over the course of several years with devices on his body. Included is Boyd “talking about committing attacks both here and abroad,” according to prosecutors.³⁹ U.S. Magistrate Judge William Webb felt that the informant may not be credible after an FBI agent said “the word ‘beach’ was code for ‘violent jihad’ in conversations between the suspects.”

It is not clear that any entrapment ever took place unless the mysterious informant was able to fake such a high amount of enthusiasm for violent jihad that even Boyd began increasing his own enthusiasm in response.⁴⁰

7. Connections

When Boyd and his brother Charles were arrested in Pakistan for allegedly robbing a bank, they were thought to be carrying identification cards implying their membership in Hezb-e-Islami, an Afghan militant group.⁴¹ Also, Boyd claims he had participated in military training in some terrorist camps when he was in Pakistan. There is no specific mention of a connection with al-Qaeda. It seems that all of the members of Boyd’s group were largely self-motivated and simply became more motivated through their interaction. The term “terrorist network” is most applicable to the combined efforts of Boyd and Sherifi in the Marine Base plot, however the other men who were previously indicted are related more loosely and two of them broke ties with Boyd upon returning from attempts at overseas jihad.

8. Relation to the Muslim community

Many members of their community were shocked when Daniel Boyd, Hysen Sherifi, and the others were indicted with charges of conspiring to commit terrorist acts. On October 24, 2009, law enforcement officials attended a “town hall” meeting where they interacted with members of the Muslim community in

³⁸ U.S. v. Boyd (E.D.N.C.). No 5:09-CR-216-1-FL, Superseding indictment, Filed September 24, 2009.

³⁹ Locke et al., “Bulk of Terror Evidence.”

⁴⁰ CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, became involved in the investigation with regard to the informant. In July 2009, it “blasted law enforcement agencies for allegedly engaging in deception to gain entry into the North Carolina home of Muslim convert Daniel P. Boyd, who is fighting charges of supporting terrorism overseas and unlawfully selling firearms.” Carrie Johnson and Robin Shulman. “Probes Test Trust That Authorities Strove to Win From U.S. Muslims,” *Why Muhammad*, October 13, 2009.

⁴¹ “The Nicest Terrorist I Ever Met.”

an exercise “aimed at restoring trust between the two communities.”⁴² Daniel’s wife, Sabrina, and more than 100 other Muslims attended the event sponsored by the Muslim American Society. The guest speaker at this event encouraged Muslims to “engage the democratic system,” instead of living in fear due to being unfairly targeted and subjected to profiling because of their religion.

Daniel Boyd also maintained a relationship with the Muslim community through his Blackstone Market, which had its own designated worship area, and was a meeting area for young members of the community. Boyd’s decision to discontinue worship at a local mosque was seen by some as the point where his ideas began to radicalize noticeably.

The Boyds seem to have led relatively rich social lives as respected members of the Muslim community in North Carolina, and according to one student, Daniel “would always ask people, his friends, if he can do a service for you,”...”whether that be advice, whether you’re struggling with money...he was always very helpful.”⁴³

9. Depiction by the authorities

Soon after Boyd and others were arrested, the FBI and Department of Homeland Security sent a bulletin to law enforcement officials saying that the indictment was the sign of “a trend of would-be terrorists who go overseas for training...come back to the United States, and may spend years quietly waiting to put their skills to use.”⁴⁴ This statement reflects a fear that Boyd’s activities might be something occurring throughout America in difficult to detect locations. While it might seem slightly alarmist, authorities were able to prevent Boyd and Sherifi from attacking the Marine Base in Quantico, so it was most likely worthwhile to encourage extra caution.

Authorities also made attempts to engage with the Muslim community in a positive way as the hearings for Boyd and others proceed very slowly, effectively keeping families separated and causing some to feel that the Muslim community has been unfairly targeted. The “town hall” event in 2009 allowed time for speakers who represented authorities as well as the Muslim community, resulting in an opening of dialogue between the two groups.

10. Coverage by the media

Initially the media focused heavily on the shock endured by much of Boyd’s surrounding community when they found out about the charges. Boyd was seen by most ordinary people as a kind, hard-working, and very faithful member of the Muslim community. This portrayal of the plot was beneficial because it forced many people to realize that radical Islamic terrorists will not always fit a particular profile. Nevertheless, one local resident stated he worshiped with the suspects and was “not surprised they were arrested.”⁴⁵

⁴² “Muslims, Law Officials Meet in Apex,” *News & Observer*, November 4, 2009.

⁴³ “The Nicest Terrorist I Ever Met.”

⁴⁴ “The Nicest Terrorist I Ever Met.”

⁴⁵ Sheyenne Rodriguez, “Leaders Speak Out About Terror Arrests,” ABC Local News, August 2, 2009.

11. Policing costs

During raids and arrests on July 27, 2009, more than 100 law enforcement officers, four SWAT teams and an FBI Hostage Rescue Team were present. The informant has not been named and will remain anonymous, and there was no information on whether or how much the informant might have been paid by the FBI.

In the summer of 2010, a federal judge agreed to delay the trial until September 2011, giving lawyers more time to go over evidence including more than 750 hours of recordings and 30,000 pages of documents associated with the case. The indicted men are still in jail, and if convicted on all his charges, Boyd faces a lifetime in prison.⁴⁶

12. Relevance of the internet

The internet was only directly relevant to the connection between Boyd and Hysen Sherifi, whom Boyd contacted for the first time via an April 2008 e-mail.⁴⁷ However, since Sherifi was plotting along with Boyd to attack the Quantico Marine Base, this e-mail truly was significant because it brought the two men together.

13. Are we safer?

The general public is in fact safer as a result of the arrests. If Daniel Boyd and Hysen Sherifi had not been arrested, there is a good chance they might have successfully carried out an attack on the US Marine Corps Base in Virginia. While the other indicted men might not seem to pose as great a threat as Boyd and Sherifi, it is important to note that they were easily influenced by members of their communities and may very likely have been able to successfully engage in acts of domestic or overseas violent jihad.

14. Conclusions

This case demonstrates that citizens returning to the U.S. from overseas may have gained experience and military training that would make them dangerous and radicalizing influences on the communities into which they return.⁴⁸ Also, Daniel Boyd's sons represent an instance where sons adopt their father's jihadist belief systems quite easily. Finally, the case may suggest that homegrown terrorism is continuing to grow domestically and may occur in mountains or in rural areas.

⁴⁶ Declan Walsh and Daniel Nasaw, "Background: 'North Carolina Taliban'," *Guardian*, September 3, 2009.

⁴⁷ NEFA Foundation, "The NC Jihad Cell and the Quantico Marine Base Plot, Daniel Patrick Boyd: Hysen Sherifi."

⁴⁸ Carrie Johnson and Spencer S. Hsu, "From Suburban D.C. Childhood to Indictment on Terror Charges," *Washington Post*, July 29, 2009.