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**Author(s): Mark S. Hamm**

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*Crimes Committed by Terrorist Groups:  
Theory, Research, and Prevention*

Award #2003 DT CX 0002

Mark S. Hamm  
Criminology Department  
Indiana State University  
Terre Haute, IN 47809

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## ABSTRACT

Statement of Purpose: A decline in state-sponsored terrorism has caused many terrorist organizations to resort to criminal activity as an alternative means of support. This study examines terrorists' involvement in a variety of crimes ranging from motor vehicle violations, immigration fraud, and manufacturing illegal firearms to counterfeiting, armed bank robbery, and smuggling weapons of mass destruction. Special attention is given to transnational organized crime. Crimes are analyzed through the routine activity perspective and social learning theory. These theories draw our attention to the *opportunities* to commit crime and the *criminal skills* necessary to turn opportunity into criminality. Through these lenses, the research appraises the “successes” and “failures” of terrorists' engagement in crime. Because “failures” can result from law enforcement efforts to (1) interrupt criminal skill development, and/or (2) remove criminal opportunities via technologies and transportation systems, the research represents a best practices approach to the study and control of terrorism.

Methods: The study is organized into three parts:

I) A secondary analysis of the American Terrorism Study (ATS) database, comparing the criminality of international jihad groups with domestic right-wing groups. This comparison represents an original use of the ATS.

II) Six case studies of crimes committed by international jihad groups and domestic right-wing groups, selected from the ATS based on frequency distributions of criminal counts filed against the groups. Trial transcripts, official reports, previous scholarship, and interviews with law enforcement officials and former terrorists are used to explore opportunities and skills that

made crimes possible (“successes”); or events and lack of skill that the prevented crimes (“failures”). These crimes do not occur in a social vacuum, therefore the research includes brief biographies of the terrorists along with descriptions of their organizations, strategies, and terrorist plots. The actualities of daily criminality inside terrorist cells are also considered through an analysis of such factors as religion, charismatic leadership, intra-group conflict, terrorism’s cultural codes and mythologies, as well as the role of women in terrorist groups.

III) Content analysis of the pervasive themes presented in closing arguments of the transcripts used in Part II. Variables include crimes committed by terrorist groups, criminal opportunities, criminal skills, and controls. This method has also never before been used in terrorism research.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research systematically examines the major terrorism trials of our times. Those trials involve a number of terrorism cases both foreign and domestic in nature. In summarizing concisely both the varieties and the specific techniques of criminal activity within various terrorist organizations, the study shows that terrorist-oriented criminality does, indeed, have distinguishing features.

International jihad groups are statistically more likely than domestic right-wing groups to commit aircraft and motor vehicle-related crimes; violations of explosive materials; and firearms violations. Right-wing domestic groups are more likely to commit mail fraud; racketeering; robbery/burglary; and violations involving machine guns and destructive devices.

The main finding of the study is that the most successful method of both detecting and prosecuting cases of terrorism is through the pursuit of conventional criminal investigations. By analyzing past successful prosecutions and the evidence accumulated from studying them, the research strongly suggests that the best practices of investigators should be directed to crimes that facilitate the operation of complex organizations. A clear pattern of precursor activity across diverse terrorist organizations is discovered. The study shows that all terrorist organizations require money, material, transportation, identity documents, communication systems, and safe havens to accomplish their aims. Crimes that finance these operations should be the top priority for investigators.

These crimes reflect the natural history and culture of each organization. The study indicates that bank robbery, credit card theft, document counterfeiting, motor vehicle violations,



and money laundering are the types of crimes that those charged with combating terrorism should focus on. As such, this research reduces the problem of terrorism to its simple common denominators, thereby removing the mystery that shrouds these groups. Once the hype surrounding terrorism is removed, we are able to see the vulnerabilities of such organizations.

The case studies and content analysis indicate that the opportunities and skills associated with criminal successes and failures are contingent upon historical and cultural factors as well. Jihad groups rely on low-level operatives to perform menial criminal acts necessary for a terrorist attack. They are recruited less for their criminal skills than for their connections to local communities and attendant opportunities to exploit routine activities. Jihad leaders with specialized training are responsible for successes in the areas of surveillance, financing, communications, breaching airline security, smuggling explosives, and bomb-building.

Unlike the jihadists, domestic right-wing groups recruit individuals specifically for their criminal skills. Typically headed by charismatic leaders, domestic groups are most successful at acquiring false identity documents, manufacturing illegal firearms, armored truck and bank robbery, and murder. They are surveillance experts, often spending weeks taking into account every moment in the taken-for-granted order of daily routines in and around their targets.

Yet none of these terrorists are the “criminal masterminds” we have been led to believe they are. The greatest failures of jihad groups involve cultural conflicts that manifest themselves in such seemingly innocuous crimes as passport fraud, immigration infractions, and traffic violations. Yet their Achilles heel is an inability to cross international borders without attracting attention. Jihadists are inexperienced criminals who often fail to conceal incriminating evidence. Likewise, often they do not display the criminal skills necessary to transform opportunity into

terrorism, nor do they setup contingencies in the event that their terrorist plots go awry.

Domestic terrorists fail in different ways. They are failures when it comes to counterfeiting, theft, arson, constructing weapons of mass destruction, and maintaining internal security. Yet their greatest failure has been the showcasing of imagery and style. While jihad groups do not use appearances or panache to make ironic statements about their violence, domestic terrorists present themselves as entertainers, thereby turning terrorism into performance. And this is their Achilles heel.

Yet the research also demonstrates that there are some important similarities among these organizations. One of the most compelling findings of the research is the discovery of attempts made by domestic terrorists to forge alliances with international jihad groups. Similarly, both domestic and international terrorists have financed their operations through counterfeiting. Both domestic and international groups have stolen arms, explosives, and equipment from military installations. Both have exploited military training for terrorist purposes. And both have engaged in assassination.

If criminal activity is the lifeblood of terrorist groups, then choking off the blood supply begins with identifying these sorts of similarities and differences. This research does so by couching the distinguishing features of terrorist-oriented criminality in the social learning and routine activity perspectives. For in the end, history shows that the FBI's most successful terrorism investigations have recognized these criminological implications.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a marked decline in state-sponsored terrorism. This has led a number of terrorism scholars to conclude that terrorist organizations are increasingly turning to criminal activity as an alternative means of support. This development represents a *privatization* of terrorism that parallels the movement by many nations in the past decade to convert their state-supported industries to privately owned companies. Although the criminal methods used by terrorist groups range from the highly sophisticated to the most basic, they all serve a common purpose: the crimes provide *logistical* support for terrorism. That is, crimes are committed to supply terrorists with money, material, personnel, training, communication systems, safe havens, and travel. Far from being mere accouterments strapped onto the terrorist's agenda, these crimes are the lifeblood of terrorist organizations.

The NIJ Solicitation for this grant pointed out that terrorist groups have recently turned to counterfeiting, bank robbery, fraud, and identity theft. Yet according to government reports and research, this is only a partial listing of criminal activity engaged in by terrorists today. To the list we may add assassination and espionage; smuggling drugs, guns, military arms, biological weapons, illegal aliens, exotic jewelry, and cigarettes; tax evasion, money laundering, immigration violations, passport forgery, cell phone and credit card theft; extortion, kidnaping, armed robbery, arson, burglary, and prostitution. Consistent with the NIJ Solicitation, the goal of this research is to examine terrorists' involvement in these crimes, and describe law enforcement's opportunities to control terrorism by successfully preventing, detecting, and prosecuting the crimes.

This research is an outgrowth of NIJ's 2002 Violence Workshop—the purpose of which was to “examine how well existing socially based theories explain varying forms of violence, including...terrorism.” Using a wide range of data sources, the study examines how terrorist groups have engaged in crimes for logistical purposes. These crimes are then analyzed via two leading criminological theories: the routine activity perspective and social learning theory. The purpose of this theoretical application is to determine the extent to which terrorist-oriented criminality has distinguishing features.

The routine activity approach “shows how crime feeds off the larger system of daily activities...It focuses on crime events and situations, that is, specific acts rather than general offender propensities” (Felson, 2002). By examining thoroughly these crime events and situations, and by placing them in a wider system of daily activity, the routine activity perspective concentrates on how offenders create opportunities for crimes to occur.

Yet a founding father of criminology, Edwin Sutherland, would argue that opportunity alone is not enough to pull off a successful crime. Sutherland (1947) would contend that something else is needed. Something that precedes and even trumps the opportunity to commit crime, namely: criminal skill or trade craft. Social learning theory postulates that these skills are acquired through “deliberate tutelage, training, and socialization” of offenders (Akers and Silverman, 2002).

For example, my contribution to the Violence Workshop was to explore the criminality of an American terrorist cell known as the Aryan Republican Army (ARA). The ARA was a gang of white supremacists who zigzagged across the Midwest, hitting bank after bank for a period of two years (1994-95). In all, the ARA robbed twenty-two banks, netting some \$500,000. Those

proceeds were used to support a series of terrorist attacks that included armored truck heists, sabotaging public utilities, derailing trains, attempted assassinations, and bombings. The purpose of all this, as incredible as it may sound, was to overthrow the federal government (Hamm, 2002a).

From a criminological perspective, what may be most instructive about this crime spree is not the ARA's successful bank robberies, but those instances in which robberies were thwarted, averted, and otherwise prevented through the routine activities of what Felson calls "guardians"—bank security measures, police surveillance, and citizen involvement. While the ARA got away with twenty-two bank robberies, at least that many were prevented through routine activities. The goal of this research is to identify such routine activities and show how they benefit public safety and invariably serve as effective counter-terrorism measures.

The central emphasis of social learning theory is that criminal activity involves techniques of committing the crime. What specific skills are needed to accomplish bank robbery? How are these skills learned or transmitted from one person to the next? What can be done to influence these variations in association? The practical manifestation of routine activity theory is situational crime prevention. That consists of a series of methods for removing crime opportunities from immediate situations. How can bank robbery be made more difficult for terrorist groups? How can technology and transportation systems be used to accomplish this aim?

These are the sorts of questions to be addressed in this research. The study explores a wide range of crimes committed by terrorist groups and then applies the two theories in order to determine both criminal "successes" and "failures." In terms of the latter, the study therefore represents a best practices approach to the study and control of terrorism. Several well-publicized

cases do, indeed, speak to the practical significance of integrating the social learning perspective with a routine activity approach as a means to understanding our best practices in these dangerous times.

Consider the alert Pakistani immigration officials who, upon a routine security inspection at Karachi Airport in 1998, detained a Jordanian citizen (traveling under a Yemeni passport) named Mohamed Odeh. Upon questioning, Odeh not only admitted to his participation in the recent embassy bombing in Nairobi, but he admitted to being a member of al-Qaeda. This gave the FBI its first solid lead connecting Osama bin Laden to the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. A routine border inspection also led to the arrest of Ahmed Ressay, the bin Laden soldier convicted in the Los Angeles Millennium bomb plot. Both Ressay and Odeh were unskilled in international travel and crossing boundaries without gaining notice. As a result, the routine activities of guardians removed from these men the opportunity to kill more innocents.

Finally, consider the Minneapolis FBI agents who routinely responded to a call concerning the suspicious activities of Zacarias Moussaoui at a local flight training school. (The terrorists who piloted the planes on 9/11 all learned to fly in U.S. flight schools.) The decision to arrest Moussaoui on August 15, 2001, on an immigration violation, prevented him from receiving any more flight training. It is even within the realm of possibility that Moussaoui's arrest also prohibited him from becoming the 20<sup>th</sup> hijacker of September 11—thus allowing the heroic passengers of Flight 93 to overcome their terrorist hijackers and thus spare more lives on the ground. The hijackers' target was reportedly the White House.

### **Terrorism and Crime: The Literature**

Each terrorist group is unique and must be studied in the context of its own natural

culture and history (Crenshaw, 1983). For instance, some terrorist groups rely on traditional sources for funding; yet when those sources dry up, terrorists may resort to organized crime in order to make up the difference. Such a transition to organized crime was exemplified by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). During the early 1970s, U.S. law enforcement cracked down on IRA fund-raising efforts in America, thus causing the IRA to find new sources of revenue. Rather than turn to the Irish gangs, the IRA used its own members to commit crimes normally associated with ethnic mobs (White, 2002). These crimes included smuggling livestock, cars, and weapons; running protection and extortion rackets; managing underground brothels; orchestrating prison breaks; bank robbery, tax evasion and construction fraud (Dishman, 2001; Drake, 1991; Toolis, 1995). The IRA ran saloons and even bought its own fleet of taxi cabs, eventually forcing out its competitors to corner the Belfast transportation market (Adams, 1986).

Historically, terrorist groups have been reluctant to participate in the drug trade, fearing that their involvement would lead to a decline in support from state sponsors (Smith, 1993). Yet with the erosion of state-supported terrorism, this prohibition was lifted (Laqueur, 1999). The most instructive example is perhaps the Colombian leftist group, M-19. While the Colombian drug cartels had no vested interest in the group's terrorism, in the mid 1980s drug lord Pablo Escobar found the alliance with M-19 profitable. Escobar's syndicate produced cocaine in Colombia and prepared shipments for international distribution. M-19 supplied transportation out of the country and protection against government raids. M-19 was paid well for its services, and its ranks swelled along with its capacity for violence (White, 2002).

Yet there are many ways to participate in drug trafficking, and some terrorist groups have done so by producing, smuggling, and selling their own narcotics. Dishman (2001) identifies the



Burmese insurgents, United Way State Army, as one of the world's most formidable drug smuggling operations. The organization cultivates, refines, and traffics opium and heroin out of the Golden Triangle; it has recently moved into the burgeoning methamphetamine market. Other terrorist groups limit their involvement to what Lee (1999) calls the "upstream" phase of drug trafficking—the cultivation stage, where risks and profits are low. And still other groups have taxed opium and coca producers, provided safe havens for cultivators, and refined drugs.

No matter the method, in each case there is a clear transition into organized crime. In particular, drug smuggling is *by definition* an organized crime. During the Kosovo conflict, the Kosovo Liberation Front sold heroin in Europe to raise money for their cause. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) continues to draw revenues from the narcotics trade, as do terrorist organizations in Spain, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Lebanon (Lee, 1999). Ehrenfeld (2002) offers evidence indicating that Yasser Arafat was involved in the drug trade for nearly twenty years. And Dishman's (2001) evidence shows that Hezbollah receives money for protecting Middle Eastern labs involved in processing heroin. There is also evidence that the drug trade was, and continues to be, a source of revenue for al-Qaeda. By taxing growers, the Taliban received money from Afghanistan's position as supplier of nearly 80 percent of the world's opium. Bin Laden has been linked to distribution via the Pakistani intelligence service (Benjamin and Simon, 2002; Ehrenfeld, 2002; McMahon, 2002; see Gunaratna, 2002, for an opposing view).

It would be a mistake to assume, however, that all terrorist groups make the transition to organized crime. Organized crime—and especially transnational organized crime—requires a clandestine network of collaborators. White (2002) makes the point that small terrorist cells lack

these resources. As such, they are more likely to engage in such brazen acts of banditry as bank robbery. Not only does bank robbery fill the terrorist's war chest, it has the potential to create a "force multiplier"—the illusion of increased strength (Jenkins, 1985). For example, the six-member ARA carried out its bank robberies with hand held radios, pipe bombs, smoke bombs, grenades, and assault rifles. Once they even used a rocket launcher; when in reality, a pistol would have done. These force multipliers increased the striking potential of the gang without increasing its personnel. Jenkins maintains that small terrorist groups routinely seek these sorts of force multipliers.

This has been evident in such disparate terrorist groups as West Germany's Baader-Meinhof gang, the Chilean Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), Egypt's al-Jihad, and the Order here in the United States. Baader-Meinhof supported its operations through a series of small-cell bank robberies that were executed with military precision (Sterling, 1983). The MIR collaborated with French criminals in the biggest-ever bank robbery in France at St. Nazaire (Smith, 1993). Citing the Quran on the right to take spoils won in a war with infidels, in 1981 al-Jihad conducted a spree of armed robberies against Christian-owned jewelry stores in Cairo; the funds supporting a plan to assassinate President Anwar Sadat (U.S. Department of State, 1999). The Order raised money through counterfeiting, bank robbery, and a spectacular armored truck heist that netted the group \$3.6 million (Flynn and Gerhardt, 1989).

Small terrorist cells are often capable of great crimes. Illich Ramirez Sanchez—known as Carlos the Jackal—once singlehandedly so terrorized the French government that it not only released a Japanese terrorist from a prison cell in Paris, but it also payed Carlos a \$300,000 ransom. On another occasion, aided by six accomplices, he took the OPEC conference hostage at

gunpoint inside its Vienna headquarters. In exchange for releasing hostages, the governments of Saudi Arabia and Iran payed Carlos an astounding \$50 million ransom (Bellamy, 2002; Follain, 1998).

For policy makers and researchers, perhaps the most beguiling aspect of terrorism is weapons procurement. The greatest opportunity for buying weapons is in the former Soviet Union (Lee, 1999). After the collapse of communism, the Soviet military left weapons and equipment behind in the newly emerging states on the periphery of the Soviet Union. The Soviet military also left weapons and equipment behind in Afghanistan following its 1989 retreat. Not only have these materials been used to equip new nationalistic forces in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan (Smith, 1993), but they have also found their way into the hands of al-Qaeda (Gunaratna, 2002). Some items have been sold on the black market or through weapons merchants (Bergen, 2002), and al-Qaeda's leadership has attempted to acquire nuclear arms through these channels (Benjamin and Simon, 2002). Bin Laden's terrorist network is still a major threat: In 2002, al-Qaeda operatives used a left-over Russian anti-aircraft missile in a failed attempt to shoot down an Israeli commercial airliner over Kenya.

In other cases of arms procurement, the criminological implications are complicated. In 1993—the year his name cropped up in CIA reports as a financier of terror—bin Laden arranged to buy a used aircraft in the United States through a former Afghan jihadist then living in Texas. At the sprawling “boneyard” of Davis-Monthan Air Force base outside Tucson, bin Laden's associate paid cash for a T-39 jet (Benjamin and Simon, 2002). Was a crime committed here? If so, who was the perpetrator?

Such questions are irrelevant when terrorists steal weapons and equipment from military

installations and commercial establishments. In 1985, two members of the Red Army Faction (RAF, formerly the Baader-Meinhof gang), murdered a U.S. soldier near the American Air Base at Frankfurt, shooting him in the nape of the neck, in order to steal his ID card and gain access to the base (Horchem, 1991). Years earlier, an RAF operative was involved in a series of raids on Switzerland's loosely guarded military armories. The gunmen made off with more than two-hundred rifles, five-hundred revolvers, and four-hundred grenades (Sterling, 1983). RAF operatives also once broke into a stone quarry in Belgium and stole a cache of explosives (Horchem, 1991). The same tactic has been used by American terrorists. In November 1994, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols broke into a Kansas limestone quarry and stole dynamite, Tovex sausages, detonator cord, and blasting caps. These explosives were later used in the Oklahoma City bombing (Hamm, 1997).

Money laundering may be the most sophisticated crime engaged in by terrorist groups, especially when it is committed in the Arab world. Since 1998, entire operational divisions of the U.S. Departments of Defense and Justice have devoted massive resources to understanding the financial affairs of Osama bin Laden. Analysts generally agree that these attempts have been frustrated by one impenetrable reality: bin Laden's assets (estimates put the figure between \$35 million and \$300 million) are privately held in Muslim nations. These are closed societies, infused with a culture of secrecy and deeply suspicious of U.S. intentions in that part of the world. It will be years, then, before researchers have the information necessary to make informed decisions about money laundering in the bin Laden case.

That said, the definitive work on the connection between money laundering and terrorism is Emerson (2002). He argues that the most significant group operating in the United States today

is Hamas. The organization has tens of thousands of supporters and sympathizers throughout the world. Many supporters in America already hold U.S. passports. This allows them to travel to Israel where they are able to enter the Palestinian territories, sometimes bringing with them hundreds of thousands of dollars for Hamas military authorities. Such crimes leave nothing behind (no banking record, passport fraud, immigration violations, or terrorist watch list) connecting perpetrators to the terrorist organization.

Finally, research shows that the skills needed to commit terrorist-oriented crimes have often been learned in paramilitary training camps. Many of these camps were once endowed, equipped, and staffed by state-sponsors. Foremost among them was Libya. During the 1970s, Muammar el-Qaddafi poured millions of dollars into training camps situated in the Libyan desert. Carlos the Jackal trained there, along with Japanese Red Army soldiers, members of the Baader-Meinhoff gang, and the IRA. They learned techniques of explosives, false documentation, automatic weapons, and encryption (Bellamy, 2002; Kushner, 1998). As of 1999, Iran, Syria, and Sudan continued to offer terrorist training to Hezbollah and al-Jihad (U.S. Department of State, 1999).

But most of this training has now been privatized. Prior to the 1994 cease fire, the IRA regularly trained its members in weaponry, explosives, and information technology (Drake, 1991; White, 2002). Former soldiers, security and intelligence specialists lent their assistance (Smith, 1993). The IRA is also believed to have exchanged knowledge of explosives with other terrorist groups, in return for providing IRA members with safe housing and transportation (Drake, 1991).

Privately-owned paramilitary camps have offered logistical support to terrorists in America since the late 1970s (Coates, 1987). The Order trained at camps in Arkansas and Idaho

(Flynn and Gerhardt, 1989). More recently, the ARA engaged in a guerrilla training program run by a former German intelligence officer at Elohim City, a remote Christian Identity enclave located near the Arkansas-Oklahoma border. Members received training in automatic weaponry, grenades, and explosives. While the ARA drew its ideological inspiration from white power rock music, its trade craft came from *The Blaster's Handbook* and the *Homemade C-4* manual (Hamm, 2002b). Court records show that the Islamic terrorists who took part in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing underwent commando-style training at camps in New York and Connecticut.

Al-Qaeda's training camps have been the subject of worldwide media attention. Interviews with defectors indicate that these camps provided the most elaborate terrorism training the world has ever known. The following description, based on defector debriefings, is culled from the works of Benjamin and Simon (2002) and Gunaratna (2002).

Al-Qaeda recruits were first required to undergo basic training. Training was divided into three parts. First, recruits were instructed in the use of light weapons, ranging from pistols to automatic weapons. Then they moved on to explosives, including C-4, dynamite, grenades, detonators, and anti-personnel mines. In the final phase, they were instructed in the use of heavy weaponry, such as anti-aircraft missiles. The training was augmented with rigorous physical conditioning, religious indoctrination, and classroom instruction. The standard reference work was a multi-volume, 7,000-page manual called *Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad*. Most of the material in the *Encyclopedia* was adopted from U.S. and British military manuals; its purpose was to teach terrorism tactics in a wide range of environments—urban, non-urban, mountain, desert, or jungle. Subjects included security and intelligence; manufacturing arms; topography

and land surveys; booby trapping; bombing buildings, statues, and bridges; and shooting down aircraft.

From basic training men were sent to a second camp designed to fit their assigned mission. There were three areas: guerrilla warfare and *sharia* (Islamic law); advanced training on techniques of assassination and bombing; and specialized training. In specialized training, men were taught techniques of surveillance and counter-surveillance, suicide bombings, encrypted Internet communications, identity theft, credit card and cell phone theft, and passport fraud. Graduates of this program were known as “the travelers.” Among them was the Egyptian Mohammed Atta. His specialized training in Afghanistan—along with logistical support offered through al-Qaeda’s global infrastructure, and his U.S. flight training—allowed Atta to coordinate the attacks of September 11.

### **Methods**

In a landmark work entitled “Academic Research and Government Policy on Terrorism,” Israeli terrorism scholar Ariel Merari sets forth an academic standard for policy-oriented research on terrorism. Merari begins by acknowledging what every terrorism researcher knows, but seldom admits: That government officials have failed to utilize academic research. There are a variety of reasons for this, Merari argues, but it all boils down to one thing: the existing corpus of scientific knowledge about terrorism does not justify a more serious attitude on the part of policy makers. So, Merari advises: “Before we complain that the client does not appreciate our merchandise, we must be sure that the goods are good, that the client really needs them and that he does not already have a better product that he makes on his own ” (Merari,1991:99). How, then, do we assure that the “goods are good”?

We do so by first recognizing what is *not* good—that is, by identifying types of research that are unlikely to capture policy makers’ attention. Topping this list are works on terrorist personality based on content analysis of terrorist manifestos and communiqués. Next are studies based solely on other writers’ conclusions, impressions, and suggestions. Terrorism studies that lack empirical grounding are next, followed by studies that are either too theoretical or too statistical to have practical value. The more researchers rely on these methods, the farther they veer from accepted norms of social science research. The farther researchers veer from those norms, the more they distance themselves from reality. The result is research that “resembles hearsay rather than twentieth century science” (Merari, 1991:95).

But the alternative—employing methods that *are* likely to produce research that will matter to policy makers—is no cake walk. The frustrations are well known to terrorism scholars: compared to common criminality, data on terrorism are hardly accessible for the academic researcher; intelligence and law enforcement agencies are reluctant to share their information with outsiders; the clandestine nature of terrorist organizations and the ways by which intelligence is obtained rarely enables data collection that meets accepted academic standards; the conditions prevailing in those parts of the world where terrorism is often gestated (e.g., Pakistan) lack anything approaching a domestic scientific infrastructure to accommodate terrorism research; and finally, terrorism is a difficult subject for research because its heterogeneity makes generalizations questionable. “Moreover,” Merari concludes, “the customary tools of psychological and sociological research are almost always inapplicable for studying terrorist groups and their individual members” (1991:89).

Given these obstacles, what can be done to enhance the contribution of academic research



to policy decisions on the problem of terrorism? Merari identifies three criteria for determining what types of research should be promoted:

(1) Studies that have relevance for public policy decisions. To achieve a threshold of relevancy, “studies should at least deal specifically with the problem of terrorism on the basis of solid factual knowledge” (1991:100). Solid factual knowledge is based on official records, official reports, and interviews with investigators, intelligence analysts, and law enforcement personnel.

(2) Studies that capitalize on the relative advantage of academia over government in the particular type and area of research. Academic researchers are typically able to conduct more thorough research than government workers. In terms of theory and specialized research methods, academics’ knowledge frequently exceeds that of public servants charged with formulating responses to terrorism. These advantages should be exploited.

(3) In-depth studies of specific terrorist groups, describing ideology, motivations, structure, decision-making, processes, demographic characteristics, etc. Sociological and political science studies are not necessarily dependent on direct access to terrorists (like psychological studies are) and may, therefore, be conducted utilizing mostly publicly available information.

Following Merari’s lead, this research is organized into three sections.

### *Part I*

Although the research literature on terrorism has expanded dramatically over the past two decades, the number of studies based on systematic empirical analysis is limited. In fact, the research literature on terrorism features very little statistical analysis (Hamm, 1996). In the United States, empirical efforts to study terrorism have been hampered by a lack of national-level

data available for analysis. In those rare instances where researchers *have* conducted empirical studies, they have often done so by examining their own independently-created data sets.

Relative to crimes committed by terrorist groups, the most complete and continuous data set is the American Terrorism Study (ATS) compiled by Brent Smith and Kelly Damphousse (2003).

The ATS uses the FBI's definition of terrorism, thereby restricting its data to cases that occur as a result of an indictment stemming from a federal "domestic security/terrorism investigation" as specified in the *Attorney General Guidelines on General Crimes, Racketeering Enterprises, and Domestic Security/Terrorism Investigations*. This document sets forth "the prediction threshold for investigations of crimes...in support of terrorist objectives" (FBI, 1999:2). The ATS is comprised of indictments and court records gathered from the case files at the federal district courts where the cases were tried. The ATS contains information on 447 terrorists, and their organizational affiliations, tried in federal courts between 1978 and 2002. The sample represents approximately 80 percent of the population of persons indicted in federal court for "terrorism-related" offenses during this period.

The data in Part I of this study are derived from the ATS. I conduct a secondary analysis of the ATS data. The unit of analysis is the terrorist group. Terrorist groups are divided into two categories: Domestic-Right Wing ( $n=24$  different groups) and International-Jihad ( $n=5$  different groups).(See Table 1, at the end of the Introduction, for a listing of groups and criminal counts issued in the indictments.) Among the 24 Domestic-Right Wing groups, a total of 846 criminal counts were handed down in support of terrorist objectives. Among the five International-Jihad groups, a total of 704 counts were issued in support of terrorist objectives. The "terrorism related" counts cover a wide range of offenses: from racketeering, robbery, and conspiracy to

drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and mail fraud.

Descriptive statistics are applied to these data in order to create a baseline of knowledge that can be used to shed light on the central research question of this study: To what extent does terrorist-oriented criminality have distinguishing features? For example, are Domestic Right-Wing groups more, or less, likely than International-Jihad groups to engage in racketeering? What specific racketeering crimes do Domestic Right-Wingers and International-Jihadists commit? Moreover, Part I represents an original use of the ATS data base.

## *Part II*

Here, further knowledge about terrorist-oriented criminality is developed through case studies. Six cases are examined. The cases are not randomly selected; rather, they are selected from the ATS using purposive sampling geared to reflect the frequency distributions of criminal counts found in Part I. The unit of analysis is the case of criminal activity engaged in by terrorist groups. (As an example, for the ARA the case of criminal activity would be the bank robberies.) Consistent with Part I, the cases focus on crimes committed by domestic right-wing and international jihad groups. The qualitative case study data allow for a more detailed, varied, and extensive comparison of crimes committed in support of terrorist objectives. By putting the meat on the bone of criminality, the cases are examined for the opportunities and skills that made crimes possible (criminal “successes”); or conversely, the events and lack of skill that prevented crimes from taking place (“failures”).

The primary source material for the case studies is trial transcripts and related court documents. This material is then enriched with interview data gathered from FBI agents who worked the various cases, several terrorists indicted in the cases, as well as government reports,

investigative reports, previous research, and related scholarship. Crime does not occur in a social vacuum, therefore the case study narratives also include brief biographies of the terrorists along with descriptions of their organizations, strategies, and terrorist plots. I also consider the actualities of daily criminality inside terrorist cells by paying attention to such factors as technology, religion, charismatic leadership, intra-group conflict, terrorism's cultural codes and mythologies, as well as the role of women in terrorist groups. To enhance the narrative flow of the case studies, I make a minor stylistic shift in Part II by grouping references in the Notes section at the end of the study.

### *Part III*

As noted, the *text* of various terrorism trials are the primary source for the case studies. In Part III, I evaluate the closing arguments of these transcripts using content analysis. My goal here is to discover the pervasive themes in these summations, thereby assessing the relative importance of opportunities (routine activity theory) and criminal skills (social learning theory) in the legal processing of terrorists. The unit of analysis is the theme. The results of the content analysis are used to triangulate findings made in the other two parts of the study.

### **What Can Policy Makers Learn From This Research?**

The primary source material for this research is the transcripts of terrorism trials, including some of the major terrorism trials of the past ten years. In their masterful book on Islamic terrorism, *The Sacred Age of Terror*, former National Security Council directors Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon describe these transcripts as “a treasure trove. Reading through nearly fifty thousand pages of testimony, we learned more about the rise of the new terrorism than we ever could have expected. In many instance, we discovered information so crucial that

we were amazed that the relevant agencies did not inform us of it while we were at the NSC” (2002:xii-xiii). The same can be said for crimes committed by terrorist groups. The transcripts contain a treasure trove of information on the criminality of these groups—far more than I expected. Some policy makers, especially veteran counter-terrorism officials, may already be familiar with the crimes mentioned in these transcripts, yet they may not have analyzed the documents in great detail.

In this research, policy makers are offered the results of a study that systematically evaluates the entire content of the essential terrorism trials of our times. The results summarize concisely the relative role of criminal activity within various terrorist groups. From a legal perspective, this is important because federal prosecutors usually indict terrorists, not on terrorism charges, but on criminal charges.

This study also provides policy makers with details on the *varieties* of crime committed by terrorists. These crimes reflect the natural history and culture of each organization. Part I compares crimes committed by international jihad groups with those committed by domestic right-wing groups, and shows that there are, indeed, significant statistical differences in the types of crimes committed. Part II explores the opportunities and skills associated with committing the crimes. Among the findings, it shows that international jihad groups are particularly good at exploiting the routine activities of local communities, yet the jihadists often lack the skills necessary to effectively transform opportunity into crime. Domestic groups, on the other hand, are also proficient at exploiting routine activities, their criminal skills are often adequate, yet they nearly always fail to cover their tracks. In short, rarely are jihadist and domestic right-wingers the “criminal masterminds” we have been led to believe they are. “They may be good terrorists,” said

one FBI agent interviewed here, “but they’re bad criminals. That’s why we always get ‘em.” Part III confirms this observation by taking into account major differences in the ways that terrorist groups are compromised by poor criminal skills and an inability to fully exploit routine activities associated with counter-terrorism measures. If criminal activity is the lifeblood of terrorist groups, then choking off the blood supply begins with identifying these differences.

Another set of policy implications involves specific legal strategies for controlling terrorism. For instance, because terrorism usually involves complex criminal conspiracies, federal prosecutors are always interested in knowing if a defendant has information on these conspiracies. Part II explains how previous conspiracies were forged. It also explains how the conspiracies ultimately broke down under the weight of their own obsessions. Nearly every terrorist conspiracy has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Appreciating the various ways in which terrorists have created both the opportunities to assemble their conspiracies, and the organizational conditions that led to their collapse, may prove beneficial to prosecutors.

Finally, different crimes require different skills and opportunities; and identifying these differences may take law enforcement a step closer to prevention. Recent events certainly suggest as much: Increased airline security along with heightened awareness of passport fraud, identity theft, and immigration violations have all made criminal opportunities tougher for terrorists to create. There is no doubt that closing down training camps in Afghanistan and Arkansas has reduced criminal skill development among potential terrorists. Those advances continue. In 2003, the FBI’s fifty-six field offices began developing demographic profiles of their localities in order to root out undetected sleeper cells. Those profiles feature variables on opportunity and skill development. Indicators of “vulnerable assets” include the presence of flight schools in the area,

the existence of Islamic charities and “criminal” mosques, as well as the number of bridges, dams, and nuclear plants (Isikoff, 2003).

This research compliments those security advances. The government documents, original interviews, investigative reports, and previous research nuance the information contained in more than one-hundred thousand pages of court records, thereby offering policy makers detailed accounts of the specific techniques involved in terrorism-related criminality. Yet identifying and understanding these crimes is like shooting at a moving target. Not only do terrorists groups change over time, but so does their criminality. After years of idleness, the IRA has renewed its criminal activity through a series of bank robberies and warehouse heists. The Moroccan immigrants who coordinated the March 11, 2004, terrorist attacks in Madrid raised money by peddling hashish and Ecstasy. Terrorist cells in France are turning to the lucrative trade in counterfeiting goods, forgery, and credit card fraud to finance their operations. Italian mobsters and Islamic terrorists have forged links in arms and drug trafficking. And al-Qaeda’s criminal portfolio now includes insurance fraud and heroin smuggling operations assisted by criminal gangs in the central and south Asian heartlands. In fact, U.S. investigators have found that some of the most useful intelligence on al-Qaeda has been collected from informers or infiltrators of these criminal gangs, leading a group of analysts to conclude that al-Qaeda’s “criminal connections may prove to be the Achilles’ heel of the organization” (Center for International Strategic Studies, 2004:3). If that is so, we may gain important insights into this process by understanding the origins and meaning of crime inside these criminal events.

**Part I:**  
**Empirical Baseline**



## DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF TERRORIST-ORIENTED CRIMINALITY

Part I involves a secondary analysis of the American Terrorism Study (ATS) data, comparing the criminality of domestic right-wing terrorist groups with international groups. The ATS lists a total of 38 crimes/general provisions of the various USC chapter categories. These data were cross-tabulated by the frequency of criminal counts set forth in the indictments against right-wing and international terrorist groups between 1980 and 2002. This yielded a total of 5,797 counts brought against 59 different terrorist organizations.

Over all, significant differences were found. (The Pearson Chi-Square value was 2956.20, with 40 degrees of freedom, and a probability of .000.) That is, there is strong empirical support for the notion that terrorist-oriented criminality has distinguishing features. The *specific* significant differences are displayed below in Table 2.

Table 2. Distinguishing Features of Terrorist-Oriented Criminality

<u>Crimes</u>	<u>Counts</u>	
	<u>Right-Wing</u>	<u>International</u>
Aircraft & Motor Vehicle	1	48
Explosive Materials	75	197
Firearms	102	3,057
Mail Fraud	77	19
RICO Violations	57	21
Robbery & Burglary	18	0
Machine Guns, Destructive Devices	224	33

$X^2=2,167, df=6, p<.001$

Table 2 shows that international groups are more likely than domestic groups to commit

aircraft and motor vehicle-related crimes; violations of explosive materials; and firearms violations. Conversely, right-wing domestic groups are more likely than international groups to engage in mail fraud; RICO violations; robbery/burglary; and violations related to machine guns and destructive devices.

We learn more about these differences in Tables 3-9. Table 3 shows that, among international groups, the majority of aircraft and motor vehicle crimes (54.2 percent) were committed by the terrorists responsible for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

Table 3. Aircraft & Motor Vehicle Crimes

<u>Terrorist Groups</u>	<u>Number of Counts</u>	<u>%</u>
Provisional IRA	14	29.2
Omega 7	1	2.1
Palestinian/Syrian	3	6.3
World Trade Center bombing (WTC)/Jihad Organization	26	54.2
Lockerbie Scotland bombing/Libyans	4	8.3
Total	48	100.0

Table 4, on the next page, shows that the majority of criminal counts for explosive materials (32.5 percent) were attributed to al-Qaeda. All of these counts involved al-Qaeda's 1998 attacks against the United States embassies in East Africa.

Table 4. Explosive Materials

<u>Terrorist Group</u>	<u>Number of Counts</u>	<u>%</u>
Provisional IRA	49	24.9
Japanese Red Army	2	1.0
Omega 7	10	5.1
Palestinian/Syrian	3	1.5
World Trade Center bombing (WTC)/Jihad Organization	58	29.4
Lockerbie Scotland bombing/Libyans	4	2.0
Cuban National Movement	7	3.6
Al-Qaeda	64	32.5
Total	197	100.0

Table 5 shows that al-Qaeda was also responsible for the overwhelming majority (97.4 percent) of firearm crimes committed by international groups. And, again, all of these counts involve the attacks against the U.S. embassies in East Africa.

Table 5. Firearms

<u>Terrorist Group</u>	<u>Number of Counts</u>	<u>%</u>
Provisional IRA	17	0.6
Japanese Red Army	1	0.0
World Trade Center bombing (WTC)/Jihad Organization	49	1.6
FUQRA	4	0.1
CNP2	3	0.1
El Salvador	2	0.1
Al-Qaeda	2,976	97.4
Total	3,052	99.8

Turning to the domestic groups, Table 6 shows that the Montana Freemen were responsible for most of the mail fraud crimes committed by these organizations (85.7 percent).

Table 6. Mail Fraud

<u>Terrorist Group</u>	<u>Number of Counts</u>	<u>%</u>
Order	1	1.3
Montana Freemen	66	85.7
1 <sup>st</sup> Mechanical Kansas Militia	10	13.0
Total	77	100.0

Table 7 indicates that the Order committed most of the RICO violations by domestic groups (78.9 percent).

Table 7. RICO Violations

<u>Terrorist Group</u>	<u>Number of Counts</u>	<u>%</u>
Covenant, Sword, and Arm of the Lord (CSA)	2	3.5
Order	45	78.9
Order II	10	17.5
Total	57	100.0

Table 8 shows that the Aryan Republican Army committed the greatest percentage of robbery/burglary crimes (38.9 percent) among domestic groups.

Table 8. Robbery & Burglary

<u>Terrorist Group</u>	<u>Number of Counts</u>	<u>%</u>
Order II	3	16.7
Phineas Priests	6	33.3
Aryan Republican Army	7	38.9
61	2	11.1
Total	18	100.0

And, finally, Table 9 indicates that among domestic groups the greatest percentage of crimes related to machine guns and destructive devices (26.3 percent) were committed by the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord.

Table 9. Machine Guns, Destructive Devices

<u>Terrorist Group</u>	<u>Number of Counts</u>	<u>%</u>
Aryan Nations	3	1.3
Arizona Patriots	31	13.8
Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord	59	26.3
Order	7	3.1
Sheriff's Posse Comitatus	11	4.9
KKK	3	1.3
Order II	11	4.9
White Patriot Party	15	6.1
American Front	2	0.9
Washington State Militia	15	6.7
Phineas Priests	3	1.3
Ohio Unorganized Militia	12	5.4
Freemen (Washington)	10	4.5
1 <sup>st</sup> Mechanical Kansas Militia	25	11.2
New Order	7	3.1
Colorado 1 <sup>st</sup> Light Infantry	6	2.7
61	2	0.9
Total	224	100

These findings therefore provide the empirical baseline for Part II of the research, the qualitative study of six cases. (Seven case studies were originally proposed, yet as noted in my June 28, 2004 Progress Report, the mail fraud case was dropped due to the excessive cost of court transcripts). Consistent the findings presented above, the six cases are as follows:

- (1) Aircraft and motor vehicle crimes. World Trade Center bombing, Jihad Organization.

CR-93-180-KTD, tried Southern District of New York, 1993.

(2) Explosive materials. East African embassy bombings, al-Qaeda. CR98-1023, tried Southern District of New York, 1998.

(3) Firearms. East African embassy bombings, al-Qaeda (same trial information as #2).

(4) RICO violations. The Order, 85-CR-001M, tried Western District of Washington, 1985.

(5) Robbery and burglary. Aryan Republican Army, CR9751-RLB, tried Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1997.

(6) Machine guns, destructive devices. Covenant, Sword, and Arm of the Lord (CSA), tried Eastern District of Arkansas, 1985.

**Part II:**  
**Case Studies**



## **CASE ONE:**

### **AIRCRAFT AND MOTOR VEHICLE VIOLATIONS**

Scholars have traditionally explained terrorism by placing it within an historical context. Efforts have also been made to describe terrorism through the contexts of changing global politics, ethnic and nationalistic conflicts, and religious movements. Other writers have concentrated on the personal pathologies of terrorists as well as the social pulls and pressures that influence the dynamics of terrorist groups. And still others have focused on the conceptualization of terrorism as a form of communication. Once one appreciates the enormous variety of social, political, cultural, and individual features of terrorism, we can understand why it is such an overwhelming subject of study. Yet often overlooked in previous research is an underlying assumption about terrorism that, if rigorously examined, may help to both clarify the meaning of terrorism and identify potential methods of prevention.

That underlying assumption is simply this: All terrorism involves criminal activity. “Terrorists are criminals,” said an FBI counter-terrorism official, “and we use criminal investigations to go after them.” These criminal activities can range from such highly sophisticated affairs as building bombs and coordinating terrorist cells, to such common events as walking through airport security and driving motor vehicles. And like all criminality, some perpetrators will be extremely competent in carrying out their activities; some will be minimally competent; and some will be utterly inept.

The terrorists who perpetrated the attacks of September 11 were no exception to this fundamental principle of criminology. Far from an academic chimera, this criminological principle has been recognized as the cornerstone of modern counter-terrorism policy. In a speech

delivered at the University of California, Los Angeles, in February 2004, Presidential candidate John Kerry pointed out that the 9/11 attacks could have been prevented had U.S. law enforcement and intelligence communities coordinated information on the hijackers' driving records. "In the months leading up to September 11," said Kerry, "two of the hijackers were arrested for drunk driving—and another was stopped for speeding and then let go, although he was already the subject of an arrest warrant in a neighboring county and was on a federal terrorist watch list." Although drunk driving and speeding may seem like extremely careless actions for terrorists to commit, such infractions are not uncommon.

Less than ninety minutes after detonating a massive truck bomb in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh was arrested for driving without a license plate. What kind of criminal bombs a federal building, killing 169 and injuring more than a thousand, and then drives off in a car that does not have a license plate?

As incredible as they are, these cases pale in comparison to the criminal ineptitude displayed in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

### **Background**

Around noon on Friday, February 26, 1993, a group of Islamic extremists drove a bomb-laden van into the underground parking lot of New York's World Trade Center Complex and, using a timer, set the bomb to detonate. At 12:18 p.m., the bomb exploded, killing six and wounding over a thousand others. Six days later, the FBI made its first arrest in the case. This arrest was based on what prosecutors would later call a "ludicrous mistake" made by one of the conspirators.

## *The Poor Immigrant*

Mohammad Salameh was born in the town of Bidya, on what was then the Jordanian-controlled West Bank, on September 1, 1967—shortly after the “Six-Day War” between Israel and her Arab neighbors. Six months later, the Salameh family relocated to Zarqa, Jordan, where Mohammad’s father, a Jordanian soldier and Palestinian, was stationed. Mohammad grew up there in a bleak lower-class neighborhood, along with his parents and ten brothers and sisters. From an early age, humiliation became part of his emotional landscape. There were a number of reasons for this.

First was the Black September massacre of 1970—an event initiated by Jordan’s King Hussein after he ordered a campaign to relocate Palestinians to refugee camps. During the relocation, three-year-old Mohammad Salameh was shot by a Jordanian soldier and hospitalized under inadequate medical conditions. Several years later, Mohammad’s father retired from the military and took on odd jobs; yet he was unable to make ends meet and the family slipped into abject poverty. Then another problem arose. Mohammad was the oldest of the eleven Salameh children, and he would prove to be the least accomplished. He functioned at a below-average level of intelligence, had few interests, and little ambition. Even within his own family, Mohammad became an outcast.

After graduating from high school, Salameh took entry exams to become a student at the University of Jordan, where he planned to study law or medicine. Failing those exams, he ended up majoring in Islamic studies. There is no evidence of his participation in fundamentalist movements, though, and upon graduating he entered Jordan’s austere job market. Unable to find work apropos his degree in Islamic studies, Salameh was reduced to selling candy on the streets.

Sensing that employment opportunities would be better in America, and seeking to avoid Jordan's mandatory military service, he applied for, and was granted, a five-year visa to the United States. Borrowing money from his family, Salameh bought a one-way ticket to New York City.

He arrived in early 1988. Barely able to speak English and with no job skills, employment opportunities for Salameh proved to be no better than those he had left behind. Often destitute, he bounced from one menial job to the next until he ended up in a refugee center in Jersey City, New Jersey. There he began attending the Masjid al-Salaam mosque. Salameh still held moderate religious views, but that was about to change.

### *The Assassin*

The Jersey City mosque was led by a radical Palestinian immigrant named Sultan el-Gawli, who by 1988 had attracted a following of struggling young Middle Eastern emigres. Among them was a round-faced 32-year-old Egyptian refugee who was a walking testament to the theory that terrorism is caused by individual pathology.

El Sayyid Nosair was born in 1955 near Port Said, Egypt, to a family that was also displaced following the Six-Day War in 1967. Nosair was raised in Cairo and went on to study industrial design and engineering at Helwan University. He graduated in 1978 and apparently spent some time in the training camps of the Arab terrorist Abu Nidal. Nosair immigrated to America in the early 1980s and settled with family friends in Pittsburgh. Nosair found work as a diamond cutter in a jewelry store and married a despondent, overweight Irish-American woman who had recently converted to Islam.

Nosair's life began to unravel shortly after that. He was fired from his diamond cutting

job in 1983, in part because he had begun proselytizing co-workers in the name of Islam. In 1985, a woman from the Pittsburgh mosque filed battery charges against Nosair, and later another person accused him of assault. Eventually cleared of both charges, Nosair was nevertheless ostracized from the local Muslim community. Unemployed with three children and a wife to support, Nosair relocated to Jersey City where he found work in a power plant. But in 1986, Nosair was electrocuted on the job. The accident left him impotent, disabled, depressed, and unemployed. So he began taking the anti-depressant medication Prozac. In mid-1987, Nosair went to work as a heating and air conditioning repairman in the Criminal Courts Building in Manhattan.

By this time, Nosair had become a fixture at the Jersey City mosque where his rabid hatred of the United States for its pro-Israel policies went into overdrive. Nosair's fanaticism eventually so alienated his brethren at the mosque that he began praying at home with a small circle of other disenfranchised worshipers, including Mohammad Salameh. And soon the impressionable Salameh became Nosair's disciple.

In 1989, Nosair and Salameh became involved with the al-Kifah Refugee Service Center located in the al-Farooq mosque on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn. The Service Center was founded by a charismatic Islamic scholar named Abdullah Azzam, whose influence among volunteer mujahideen soldiers fighting the Soviet army in Afghanistan was legendary. Among his devotees was the young Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden. Under Azzam's leadership, the al-Kifah Service Center functioned as a recruiting and propaganda arm for the Afghan mujahideen. Clandestinely, the Service Center also engaged in counterfeiting and producing phony passports to enable Muslim volunteers to travel to America.

Through their involvement with the Service Center, Nosair and Salameh met three other refugees who would become part of an unfolding criminal conspiracy. But unlike Nosair and Salameh, all three would enter the conspiracy with considerable talent. The first was a giant 30-year-old Egyptian-born New York City cab driver named Mahmud Abouhalima—known as “Mahmud the Red” because of his hair. The Red was a hardened combat veteran who had survived two tours of duty in Afghanistan where he developed a reputation for fearlessness, often volunteering for mine-sweeping missions. The second was a 27-year-old Palestinian named Bilal Alkaisi, also a veteran of the Soviet-Afghan war. And the third was 25-year-old Nidal Ayyad, a naturalized American citizen, born in Kuwait to Palestinian parents, who had recently graduated with a degree in chemical engineering from Rutgers University. These five men—Nosair, Salameh, Abouhalima, Alkaisi, and Ayyad—formed the nucleus of the first Islamic terrorist cell in the United States.

In the spring of 1989, Nosair’s cell began conducting paramilitary training exercises at the Calverton Gun Range on eastern Long Island. There, they participated in basic firearms training taught by a black Muslim from Brooklyn named Richard Smith. (Smith also sold Nosair’s crew an assortment of rifles, shotguns, assault weapons, and grenades.) That summer, the training was expanded to include survival and surveillance courses taught by a U.S. Army Special Forces instructor, Ali Mohamed, at Nosair’s apartment in Jersey City. Because he was a former explosives trainer in bin Laden’s camps, Alkaisi added a course on rudimentary bomb building.

As the training progressed, Nosair sought the approval of Azzam and other spiritual leaders, including the blind Egyptian cleric Omar Abdel-Rahman, considered one of the most

accomplished religious scholars in all of Islam. By the summer of 1989, Nosair was in regular contact with Abdel-Rahman, who was then being held under house arrest by the Egyptian government. At length, Nosair and Abouhalima launched a campaign to bring the blind Sheik to New York. In one audio cassette to Abdel-Rahman, Nosair boasted, “We have organized an encampment. We are concentrating here.” Indeed they were, and this led to the cell’s first of many motor vehicle violations.

By now, Nosair had moved the firearms training to the High Rock Shooting Range in Naugatuck, Connecticut. On August 29, 1989, a state trooper stopped a suspicious-looking car carrying six Middle Eastern men near the range. Upon searching the vehicle, the officer found a small arsenal of semi-automatic weapons and several out-of-state license plates. The guns were legally purchased and licensed to the driver, a local gun dealer of Albanian descent. A computer search showed that the extra license plates were registered to one El Sayyid Nosair.

Soon thereafter, Nosair planned his first terrorist strike in the United States. This involved a plot to set off bombs in the Atlantic City casinos, yet the scheme never came to fruition. Nosair came a step closer to implementing a plan later that year. On December 8, Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev was on a state visit to New York. As his motorcade passed through Manhattan, Nosair threw a homemade grenade at Gorbachev’s limousine, but the device failed to detonate. Yet Nosair was relentless. In April 1990, he set off a crude pipe bomb at a gay bar in Greenwich Village, injuring three people.

A month later, Nosair’s spiritual mentor, Sheik Abdel-Rahman, arrived in New York after absconding from house arrest in Egypt. Abdel-Rahman began preaching at the al-Farooq mosque in Brooklyn, and then at the Jersey City mosque. Sometime that summer, the blind Sheik

issued a fatwah, calling on his Muslim brothers to rob American banks and kill Jews anywhere they were found. Ten years earlier, Abdel-Rahman's fiery oratory had inspired the creation of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad—the organization responsible for the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. Now Abdel-Rahman would inspire Nosair and his confederates to carry out another assassination, this time on American soil.

In the fall of 1990, Nosair began stalking Rabbi Meir Kahane, the outspoken 58-year-old founder of the Jewish Defense League. On the evening of November 5, Kahane gave a speech on the expulsion of Palestinians from Israel at the Marriott Hotel in Manhattan. In the crowd stood Nosair, wearing a yarmulke to disguise himself as a dark-skinned Sephardic Jew, along with Bilal Alkaisi. Mahmud the Red was in his cab outside the hotel and Mohammad Salameh sat behind the wheel of a green sedan a block away. As Kahane left the crowded ballroom, Nosair approached him with a coat draped over his arm.

Suddenly, Nosair pulled a .357 revolver and fired two shots into Kahane's jugular vein, killing him. As the crowd erupted in chaos, Nosair ran from the room, shouting "It's Allah's will!" At the door, an elderly man grabbed Nosair around the neck, and Nosair shot him in the leg and fled.

Once they reached the street, Alkaisi ran toward the green sedan as Nosair jumped into a cab. Three blocks away, Nosair realized that he was in the wrong cab (security had shoed the Red away from the hotel) and told the driver to stop. As Nosair sprinted toward the sedan, he was confronted by a U.S. postal police officer who told him to halt. Nosair fired one shot at the officer, hitting him in his bullet-proof vest. The officer fired back, hitting Nosair in the chin and bringing him to his knees.



When Alkaisi reached the sedan, he shouldered Salameh over to the passenger's seat and took the wheel. Alkaisi hit the accelerator and fled the scene, leaving Nosair bleeding on the sidewalk. A police report later stated that witnesses saw "two bug-eyed Middle Eastern men in the front seat of a green sedan careening the wrong way down Park Avenue."

### **The Plot**

When police searched Nosair's apartment they discovered training manuals from the Army Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and copies of teletypes related to the war in Afghanistan that had been routed to the Secretary of the Army and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There were bomb-making manuals in the apartment, as well as maps of landmark New York locations, including the Statue of Liberty, Times Square, the Holland Tunnel...and the World Trade Center. Detectives also found a notebook in which Nosair had written about the destruction of the enemies of Allah "by means of exploding the structure of their civilized pillars." It would be years, however, before investigators would understand the significance of these documents.

Abouhalima and Salameh were found staying at Nosair's former residence after the assassination, so they were taken into custody by New York City police. A background check showed that in 1990 Salameh had lied on an immigration document, falsely claiming that he had been in the United States since 1982, and that he had left briefly in 1987. Both men denied their involvement in the Kahane murder and, lacking evidence to the contrary and ignoring Salameh's immigration violation, police released them without filing charges.

Nosair was locked up in the Manhattan house of detention and charged with first-degree murder. Over the next several months, though, he received numerous visitors, including the Red

and representatives of the blind Sheik. To cover his legal costs, supporters created the El Sayyid Nosair Defense Fund, to which Osama bin Laden made a \$20 thousand contribution.

Nosair's trial began in late 1991. His defense—led by famed civil rights attorney William Kunstler—claimed that Nosair had not fired the gun that killed Meir Kahane, and that Kahane had actually been shot by one of his own followers. In a surprise decision, on December 21 the jury acquitted Nosair of Kahane's murder. Outside the Manhattan courthouse, Nosair's supporters cheered the verdict as the Red hoisted Kunstler onto his shoulders. News photographers captured the moment, and the next morning's *New York Times* featured a front-page photograph of the impoverished Palestinian immigrant Mohammad Salameh.

Nosair was convicted of shooting the two men who tried to prevent his escape from the Marriott, however, and received a 7-25-year sentence in the state prison at Attica. Nosair stayed in touch with his supporters, and in the summer of 1991 he began talking about “underground people” who were planning to construct a series of bombs to be detonated by remote control. Although details of the plot were sketchy, the alleged targets of the attack were twelve “Jewish locations” in New York.

The conspiracy was also taking shape on another front.

### *The Decoy*

With Nosair in stir, the rest of the cell began to quarrel over who would become their new emir (leader). To settle the matter, they drew straws. Salameh won, causing Alkaisy to eventually leave the group. But this created another problem because Alkaisy was the cell's only bomb builder.

The story of how Ramzi Yousef came to fill this void is shrouded in mystery. One theory

is that Abdel-Rahman recruited him into the cell. Another theory holds that Mahmud the Red recruited him—the two having met in Afghanistan around 1991. Another theory is that Osama bin Laden enlisted Yousef into the plot though Yousef’s older cousin, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad (who would go on to become the principle architect of the 9/11 attacks). Yet another theory is that Yousef was an Iraqi intelligence agent sent to New York by Saddam Hussein to avenge Iraq’s defeat in the Persian Gulf War. And still another theory is that no one recruited him. Yousef would later say that his initial plan was to visit New York, acquire a U.S. passport, identify potential targets, and then return to Pakistan to raise funds for his operation. But once in New York, he decided to raise his own money and proceed with the plan. What is known for certain is that Yousef entered the conspiracy by dint of a complex scheme to breach U.S. airline security. For our purposes, *who* sent him is incidental to this exploitation of a routine activity within the transportation industry.

The ploy centered around a young pizza deliveryman from Houston, Texas, named Ahmad Ajaj. Like Mohammad Salameh, Ajaj was a Palestinian refugee who had been brutalized as a child by soldiers in the conflict over occupied territories. On April 24, 1992, Ajaj flew from New York to Peshwar, Pakistan, using the alias “Ibrahim Salameh,” and from there he made his way to a terrorist training camp along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border known as Camp Khaldan. Apparently lacking necessary credentials, Ajaj was sent to Saudi Arabia to obtain a letter of recommendation. On May 16, he flew to Saudi Arabia, via the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where Aja procured a letter of introduction requesting that the leader of Camp Khaldan provide the bearer with training in the use of weapons and explosives. Ajaj returned to Pakistan, again via the UAE, arriving on June 14. Shortly thereafter, he began taking a course on bomb building at

Camp Khaldan taught by Ramzi Yousef. Yousef specialized in building bombs to destroy large buildings, such as American embassies. With this instruction, the plot to bomb the World Trade Center was set in motion.

On September 1, Yousef and Ajaj left Karachi for New York on Pakistani International Airlines, flying first-class. Details of their passage through U.S. Customs speaks volumes about how institutionally ill-prepared American law enforcement was to combat terrorism prior to 9/11.

On the evening of September 1, Yousef and Ajaj exited the plane separately and approached the arrival lanes at JKF International Airport. Yousef had only one small carry-on bag, and he was an amazing sight to behold. The twenty-five-year-old Yousef was a slender 6' 2" with a brown beard and a pock-marked face. He was dressed in what has been called a "harem suit"—Ali-Baba type pants, a shirt with balloon sleeves, and a brightly-colored silk jacket and vest. His startling appearance was only the beginning of some highly unusual events.

Yousef presented himself to Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) officer Martha Morales by handing over his boarding pass, issued in the name of "Mohammad Azan." Then Yousef handed over an ID card from an organization called the Al-Bunyan Islamic Center. Another name appeared on that card—"Khurram Khan"—but on the back was a signature for Ramzi Ahmed Yousef. After showing Morales his Iraqi passport, which appeared to be authentic but lacked a visa to enter the United States, Yousef claimed that he was fleeing the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein and needed asylum.

Ajaj stood nearby at a second desk. Traveling under the alias "Khurram Khan" (the same name that appeared on Yousef's ID card), Ajaj handed his International Student Identification card and Swedish passport to INS inspector Robert Malafrente. Noticing that the laminate

covering the passport photo was too thick, Malafronte peeled back the photo's corner from the edge of the page, revealing the picture of another man. In addition to these problems, Ajaj's passport did not contain a visa. Realizing that he was in trouble, Ajaj shouted to the inspector: "My mother was Swedish! If you don't believe me check your computer." Malafronte then took Ajaj into an office for further questioning.

As this was going on, Morales escorted Yousef to an interview room for questioning as well. Speaking excellent English with a British accent, the immigrant stated that he was traveling alone and admitted that his real name was Ramzi Yousef. Yousef said that he was born in the UAE in 1967, though he was now a citizen of Pakistan. He explained the discrepancies in his identification documents by saying that he had obtained the "Mohamad Azan" boarding pass from a Pakistani government official by paying him a \$2,700 (US) bribe. As for the asylum request, Yousef claimed that he had recently been beaten by Iraqi soldiers when he was in Kuwait because they thought he was a member of a Kuwaiti guerilla organization.

Morales then searched Yousef's belongings. Among his possessions was an identity card from an Islamic organization in Arizona, along with checks from Lloyd's Bank of London and an address book listing what Morales would later call "unusual places [in America] for someone to visit whom had just come from halfway around the world."

All of this sufficiently raised Morales' suspicions and she informed Yousef that he had broken the law by attempting to make in illegal entry into the United States. Morales fingerprinted and photographed Yousef and confiscated his passport. She then recommended to her supervisor, Mark Cozine, that Yousef be detained. "I felt he might pose a danger to the United States," said Morales. Yet Morales was over-ruled by Cozine on the grounds that the INS

Detention Center was full. So Yosef was released on his own recognizance and told to appear before an immigration judge at a later date to determine his asylum claim. This happened despite the facts that Yousef had not only committed several acts of immigration fraud (traveling under three different identities and lying to an INS official), but he had also given inspectors evidence linking him to Ahmad Ajaj.

And the questioning of Ajaj had led to a startling discovery. Upon searching his possessions, Malafronte and Cozine found a “terrorist kit.” In his briefcase, Ajaj carried fake passports from Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Britain, all issued in different names. In one of Ajaj’s bags, the inspectors found several handwritten journals, a couple of magazines—one of which featured a picture of Saddam Hussein on the cover—along with some manuals containing detailed instruction on the assembly of pipe bombs and large improvised bombs. There were also military guides on carrying out successful terrorist operations, complete with aerial photographs, assembly instructions for rocket launchers, and ingredients for bomb building. Four videos were discovered—one featured a suicide bombing of an American embassy, another gave a chemistry lesson on manufacturing explosives—along with a document entitled “Facing the enemies of God terrorism is a religious duty and force is necessary.” Finally, a booklet entitled, “Rapid Destruction and Demolition,” gave instruction on complicated chemical formulas needed for making bombs capable of destroying large buildings. Those chemicals included urea nitrate, aluminum powder, nitroglycerine, and lead azide.

A closer look at Ajaj’s passport revealed that his June 14, 1992, Pakistani entry stamp was counterfeit. Adding to what was now a litany of immigration infractions, Malafronte and Cozine also discovered evidence connecting Ajaj to Ramzi Yousef. In Ajaj’s bag they found an

airline ticket issued to “Mohamad Azan”—the name that Yousef had just admitted to his INS inspector was an alias.

Some commentators have argued that Ajaj was a “mule” for Yousef’s bomb-building manuals. A more likely scenario is that Ajaj had previously agreed with Yousef that he would carry the terrorist kit in his own bags to distract inspectors, thereby maximizing Yousef’s chances of getting through Customs. In this scenario, the terrorist kit, the counterfeit entry stamp, and Ajaj’s outburst were all decoys intended to deflect the INS’s attention away from Yousef and facilitate his processing. This was a premeditated plan intended to exploit the routine activities of busy INS inspectors.

Shortly after 5:00 a.m., September 2, after more than eight hours of questioning, INS charged Ajaj with passport fraud and handed him over to the Wackenhut Correctional Corporation, a private contractor, for incarceration in a converted warehouse in Queens. The evidence linking Yousef to Ajaj would be ignored.

### *Organization*

Yousef told officer Morales that he would be traveling on to Houston, Texas, but that turned out to be another lie. Wasting no time, he took a cab from JFK to the al-Farooq mosque where he met up with Abouhalima. The next day, Abouhalima introduced Yousef to Abdel-Rahman; then the Red helped Yousef obtain a truck driver’s license so that he would have a legitimate identification card. The following day, Yousef moved into an apartment with Mohammad Salameh at 34 Kensington Avenue in Jersey City—a residence that Salameh shared with five other Middle Eastern men. By this time, Salameh’s immigration jacket had become riddled with problems. In addition to his 1990 violation, and his being questioned as a suspect in

the Kahane assassination, in August 1992 INS had called Salameh into their offices to fill out an affidavit to reactivate a lapsed immigration application.

Seeking more privacy, in early October Salameh and Yousef relocated to a two-room apartment at 251 Virginia Avenue, less than a mile from Kensington Avenue, that they shared with a quiet young Egyptian student named Ashref Moneeb. Yousef then began making dozens of overseas phone calls, often talking loudly for hours with contacts in Pakistan, Jordan, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and even Yugoslavia. Among them were numerous calls to his cousin, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad. Yousef and Salameh also began holding meetings with other conspirators, including Abouhalima, Nidal Ayyad, and a mysterious Iraqi named Abdul Yasin—who began living at 251 Virginia Avenue almost simultaneously with Salameh and Yousef. They also acquired finances for their operation. Money would be needed for rent, phone calls, vehicles, storage fees, and eventually bomb-building components.

After settling in to the apartment, Salameh and Ayyad opened several bank accounts using the Jersey City Islamic Center as their mailing address. These accounts have become the subject of extensive speculation. According to interviews with law enforcement and State Department officials published in the *New York Times* (April 25, 1993), over the next four months more than \$100,000 was allegedly funneled to the conspirators through the accounts. Possible sources for this revenue were the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, along with unknown parties in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Yet this allegedly was only a drop in the bucket. Research conducted by the Federal Library of Congress concludes that, at the time, Mahmud Abouhalima was involved in a phony coupon-redemption scam that generated as much as \$200 million for Middle Eastern terrorist activities. Although no mention of these finances appear in



court documents, the post-9/11 investigative committees provide evidence showing that on November 3, 1992, Salameh received a \$660 wire transfer from Khalid Sheikh Mohammad in Qatar.

One of the first things Salameh did with this money was to call Jordan and ask his father to buy a Palestinian woman who would be willing to marry him. (It never happened.) Then he moved on to more practical matters. On November 18, Salameh payed \$533 for a dark green 1978 Chevy Nova to be used in transporting equipment and materials needed to make a bomb. (This casts doubt on the claim that the conspirators had significant sums at their disposal. If so, why would Salameh settle for a cheap used car?) Then he went looking for a place to stockpile explosives. He found it at the Space Station, a Jersey City rental facility on Mallory Avenue. On November 30, Salameh (using the alias “Kamal Ibrahim”) withdrew \$3,400 from an account he shared with Ayyad, and used a portion of that money to rent a 10foot-by-10foot storage shed for \$90 a month.

The same day, Yousef (also using the alias “Kamal Ibrahim”) placed an order for chemicals at a local firm called City Chemicals. These chemicals included one-thousand pounds of urea nitrate, more than a hundred pounds of nitric acid, and sixty gallons of sulphuric acid. Yousef paid \$3,615 in cash and arranged for the chemicals to be delivered to Salameh at the Space Station. Ayyad attempted to supplement these bomb-building ingredients by using his job as a chemical engineer at Allied Signal, a large New Jersey chemical business, to locate a firm willing to sell him tanks of compressed hydrogen. And finally, through Mahmud the Red, Salameh obtained a quantity of “smokeless powder” that he stored at the Space Station as well.

In mid-December, the quiet Egyptian student, Ashraf Moneeb, told Salameh that he and

Yousef had to leave the apartment because they were making too much noise with their incessant overseas telephone calls. On New Year's Day 1993, Yousef moved to an apartment at 40 Pamrapo Avenue in Jersey City. Though Salameh would never live at the apartment himself, he was the occupant of record. Using the alias "Alaa Mahrous," Salameh paid \$1,100 in cash for one month's rent and deposit, and told the landlord that he would need the apartment for one year. This apartment would become known as the bomb factory.

### *Strategy*

By now the plot to bomb twelve "Jewish locations" had been abandoned. That plan was based on a classic terrorist strategy: a series of small bombings whose primary objective was to terrify local populations, but not kill or maim on a mass scale. Ramzi Yousef had in mind something more awesome. As Mahmud the Red later confirmed to a cell-mate: "Yousef showed up on the scene and escalated the plot."

Yousef subsequently told interrogators that his desire was to kill 250,000 Americans. That figure was not selected at random: It was the number of victims Yousef thought were killed by the American atomic bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. It is commonly reported that Yousef targeted the World Trade Center for its symbolic value. According to his confession, though, Yousef believed that if he could build a bomb powerful enough to topple the Twin Towers, one into the other, he could murder on a scale that would teach the United States that its "terrorism" in Japan, Vietnam, and the Israeli-occupied territories of Palestine justified an equal response. "Terror for terror," as Yousef once said. The same logic would, of course, be employed to devastating effects by bin Laden in 2001.

Yousef's biography reveals that he possessed the skill and ideology necessary to carry out

his mission. Born in Kuwait on April 27, 1968, Yousef (whose real name is Abdul Karim) was the son of a Pakistani engineer who worked for Kuwaiti Airlines. Yousef was raised in a rural Palestinian community in Kuwait where he excelled at school, especially in math and science. Yet within Kuwaiti society, Palestinians were treated as second-class citizens—a factor that formed the central grievance underlying his later terrorism. Yousef spoke four languages (Arabic, Baluch, Urdu, and English) and in 1989 he graduated with a degree in engineering from the West Glamorgan Institute in Swansea, Wales. Here, investigators believe, Yousef began to hone his skills in electronics and explosives.

Following graduation, Yousef returned to Kuwait and found work as a communications engineer in the National Computer Center of the Ministry of Planning. Although he had joined a chapter of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in college, there is little to suggest that Yousef was a devout Islamic warrior. During these years Yousef fashioned himself as something of an international playboy. He was also known to beat his young wives, and he refused to fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. More than anything, Yousef was a self-proclaimed “freedom fighter” for the liberation of Palestinians. After Saddam Hussein’s army invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, some members of Yousef’s family fled to Quetta, others to Iran.

In late 1990, Yousef went to Afghanistan for training at Camp Khalden, where he learned basic bomb building. But Yousef’s political beliefs, combined with his broad knowledge of electronics and explosives, destined him for greater things. In the summer of 1991, Yousef traveled to the Philippines where he conducted explosives training for the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf. In 1992, he returned to Camp Khaldan and began teaching a course in explosives. And it was here that he met Ahmed Ajaj and planned his daring entrance into the United States.

Yousef's entrance had all the earmarks of an operation designed by Palestinian terrorists. Twenty years earlier, for example, an advance team for the Black September terrorists—responsible for the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre—also used a decoy to breach airport Customs. Nearly two weeks before the attack, three Black September operatives, two men and a woman, landed at Frankfurt airport carrying suitcases containing firearms. A Customs officer singled out one of the suitcases and demanded that it be inspected. Upon opening the suitcase, though, a male inspector found that it was bursting with lingerie and women's clothing. When the frilly underwear were laid out on a table, the female terrorist, posing as the wife of one of the men, looked on indignantly. Embarrassed by the display of women's undergarments, the Customs inspector waved the Palestinians through, free to transport their weapons on to Munich.

### *The Bomb Factory*

The Pamrapo Avenue apartment fit the specifications in Ajaj's manuals as an ideal base for waging an urban terrorist attack. It was actually an old garage that had been converted to an apartment with two bedrooms, a kitchen, a bath, and a living room. The apartment was hidden from the street on the ground floor in a quiet residential neighborhood, thus permitting a quick escape in the event of a police raid or emergency. The only thing missing was a refrigerator, but this was resolved by Abouhalima who purchased one from a local appliance store.

The bomb building began in early January. Twice a week, the Red and Abdul Yasin brought sealed buckets of chemicals from the Space Station to the bomb factory. In the living room, Yousef and Salameh worked late into the night transforming the urea nitrate and nitric acid into an explosive by soaking the chemicals in water inside a blue trash can. "The preparation took commitment," writes Simon Reeve, "the chemical fumes from the mixture were horrendous,

choking Yousef's lungs when he removed his respirator, staining the walls with a bluish tint and rusting the inside doorknob and the hinges of the back bedroom door." (The Government would later contend, however, that most of the chemicals were mixed at another unidentified location.) Each day, when the newest batch of explosives had dried into a mash on spread-out newspapers, the conspirators loaded it into five-gallon buckets and drove them to the storage shed. Meanwhile, Nidal Ayyad assumed responsibility for constructing a remote control timing device at his home in Maplewood, New Jersey.

The explosives would serve as the main charge for the bomb. Placed beneath it would be three large metal tanks of compressed hydrogen gas. Nitroglycerine, mixed with lead azide and then frozen in the refrigerator, would act as the initiator. Once attached to a fusing system consisting of two 20-minute lengths of non-electrical "smokeless powder" fuses, the initiator would explode, triggering the main charge. The bomb would weigh roughly 2,000 pounds. The plan was to load the device into a rental van and drive it to the World Trade Center parking basement where it would be detonated by the remote control timing device.

Throughout this period, Yousef continued his trans-Atlantic telephone calls. He also used the phone to stay in touch with Ahmad Ajaj, still in INS custody for passport fraud, in a failed attempt to get his hands on Ajaj's bomb building manuals. Yousef needed those manuals in order to follow the bomb-building formulae to a tee. This search for perfection was Yousef's trademark, manifested in various practice bombings that he made in the weeks preceding the World Trade Center attack. On several occasions, Yousef left the Pamrapo Avenue apartment to test small-scale versions of the bomb in the New Jersey countryside. Ironically, this search for perfection nearly got him killed. More precisely, Mohammad Salameh's poor driving skills

almost derailed the entire operation.

On the night of January 23, Salameh and Yousef left a meeting at the Red's apartment in suburban New Jersey and drove toward the country in the Chevy Nova. In the trunk were chemicals for a small bomb. Just after 1:00 a.m., January 24, as they passed through the small town of Avenel, Salameh lost control of the Nova. The car skidded off the blacktop, hit a curb, and came to a stop in the front yard of an apartment complex. Salameh was thrown from the vehicle and ended up flat on his back on the frozen ground. Yousef was slumped over in the passenger seat with some lacerations and a severe back injury. The Nova was a total wreck.

When the police arrived, Salameh was walking around in a daze. The officers became suspicious. The roads were clear. There was no ice or snow. The area was well lit and the accident occurred on a simple curve. So, because the Nova had hit the curb with such extreme force, the officers assumed that Salameh must have been drunk.

But he was not drunk. Salameh was simply a horrible driver; or, as his attorney would later argue: "Salameh is one of the world's worst drivers"—which is precisely why Alkaiji had shouldered him out of the driver's seat after the Kahane assassination. Salameh had received his driver's license only five months before the accident—after failing four driver's tests since 1992. Salameh had even failed the vision test—twice. Nevertheless, he would remain the cell's driver.

Salameh's injuries were minor, but Yousef spent the next five days recuperating at the hospital in Rahway, New Jersey. Yet he continued to show a single-minded determination. Using the phone in his hospital room, he first called Abouhalima and told him to check on the chemicals that had been stored in the Nova's trunk. The Red visited the garage where the car was impounded and cleaned out the suspicious material. Next, Yousef placed calls to several

chemical companies and arranged for deliveries of aluminum, magnesium, ferric oxide and more nitric acid to the Space Station. While this was going on, Ayyad continued his efforts to locate a chemical firm that would sell him compressed hydrogen.

With the Nova gone, Ayyad used his corporate account at Allied Signal to rent a red Oldsmobile for Salameh. (Thus casting more doubt on the theory that the cell had access to large sums of money. If so, why would Ayyad use his corporate account, thereby leaving a paper trail?) While Yousef was in the hospital, Salameh and the Red loaded a small bomb into the Olds and drove deep into the Pennsylvania woods where they exploded it. When Yousef returned to the bomb factory on January 29, the conspiracy entered its final phase.

### **Countdown**

On February 12, Yousef (using the alias “Abdul Basit”) paid cash for a first-class airline ticket to Amman, Jordan. The flight was scheduled to leave on Friday, February 26—the day of the bombing. Two days later, Salameh made the eight-hour drive from Jersey City to Attica prison in upstate New York where he visited his hero, Nosair, for the last time. On February 16, Ayyad called in sick to Allied Signal and joined Salameh in a reconnaissance of the World Trade Center. With Salameh at the wheel, they drove into the underground garage. Ayyad got out and drew a rough map of the garage floor plan that would later be analyzed by Yousef. On their way back to Jersey City, another driver slammed into the rented Olds. Hampered again by Salameh’s driving, the two men spent the rest of the afternoon filing an accident report at a Jersey City police precinct.

A week later—Tuesday, February 23—Ayyad rented another car, again using his corporate account, this time a red Chevy Corsica. Ayyad then drove Salameh to the DIB Leasing Agency

on Kennedy Boulevard in Jersey City. The franchise was also the local Ryder truck agency. Salameh approached an agent and asked: “How do I go about renting a Ryder truck?” The agent presented Salameh with three rental options. After making a phone call (presumably to Yousef), Salameh said that he needed a panel van and that he needed it at least until Sunday. Salameh presented his New York driver’s license, listed his address as the Jersey City Islamic Center, and gave a telephone number for the apartment at 34 Kensington Avenue—also the residence of Abdul Yasin.

After forking over a \$400 cash deposit and signing a one-week rental agreement in his own name, Salameh was handed a white plastic key chain. In a move that would later have drastic repercussions for law enforcement—and would forego the prevention of the bombing through a simple routine activity—the leasing agent had mistakenly written down an incorrect license plate number on the key chain. Nevertheless, Salameh then drove off in a yellow one-ton Ford Econoline van bearing an Alabama license plate, and somehow made it back to the bomb factory without having an accident.

The next day—Wednesday, February 24—Salameh and Ayyad took the Corsica to the Trade Center parking garage on a final scouting mission. They returned to Jersey City where Yasin took Salameh on a practice drive with the Ryder van. Meanwhile, Nidal Ayyad, now back at his desk at Allied Signal, finally reached a firm that would sell him compressed hydrogen. That afternoon, AGL Welding Supply of Clifton, New Jersey, delivered three large tanks of the compressed gas to Yousef and Salameh at the Space Station. When another conspirator arrived in the Ryder van, followed by Abouhalima in a dark blue Lincoln (a car he used for his new job as a chauffeur), the manager told Salameh to remove the tanks from the premises because it was too dangerous to



store them in the shed. So Salameh, the Red, Yousef, and perhaps Yasin (the manager recalled seeing four “Arab looking” men) hoisted the tanks and the other bomb-making components into the van.

That night, the van was pulled up to the back door of the Pamrapo Avenue apartment where Yousef supervised the bomb’s construction inside the cargo hold. During this time frame, someone dropped Salameh off at the Shop-Rite grocery store on Kennedy Boulevard. Around 9:00 p.m., he entered the store and bought several bags of groceries. And then, to establish an alibi for the following day, Salameh called the Jersey City police and reported the Ryder van stolen. Two officers came to the parking lot at about 10:00 p.m. Salameh jumped in the backseat of the cruiser and was taken to the West District police station. It is unknown whether the officers looked into the status of Salameh’s visa. If they had, the officers would have found that Salameh was now an illegal immigrant.

On the way, Salameh gave the key chain to one of the officers who punched into his computer the license number that appeared on the chain. Because the number was incorrect, the officer drew a negative ID on the vehicle. Once at the station, Salameh filled out a report indicating that he had gone into the grocery store, and when he came out the van was gone. To back up his story, Salameh produced the time-stamped grocery receipt. Yet another part of his story—that he had rented the van for an *entire week* to help a friend move some furniture—was met with derision. One officer told Salameh that his story amounted to “bullshit.” In any event, the police report could not be filled out until the correct license plate number was known. Salameh was told to go back to the Ryder dealer the next day, get that number, and then return to the West District station to complete the paperwork. Salameh left the station around midnight with plans

to do just that.

### **The Attack**

Around 3:30 a.m., Friday, February 26, Salameh pulled the Ryder van away from the bomb factory with Yousef at his side. Moments later, he turned into an all-night Shell gas station on Kennedy Boulevard, followed by Mahmud the Red in his Lincoln and Ayyad in the red Corsica. Even though the van now held a two-thousand pound bomb, Salameh had waited until the last minute to gas up the vehicle.

The attendant, a man named Willie Moosh, walked toward the customers and asked what they wanted. From the van's passenger seat, Yousef said, "Fill it up." As Moosh filled the gas tanks on the Ryder and the Lincoln, Yousef slid out of his seat and began circling the van, giving Moosh a clear look at the man he would later describe as "a horse face surrounded by a beard." When the filling was complete, Abouhalma payed Moosh twenty-one dollars. Yousef got back into the van, and all three drivers started their engines.

As they were leaving, Salameh saw a white Jersey City police car coming down Kennedy Boulevard. Salameh stopped and Yousef jumped from the van, threw open the hood, and called to Moosh to bring him a can of water. By the time Moosh got there, Salameh had exited the van as well. At this point, the police car passed by. There stood the two Middle Eastern men in front of the Ryder van that was reported stolen the night before. Yet because the Ryder agent had written down the wrong license plate number on the key chain, the passing officers were not on the lookout for a Ryder van bearing Alabama plates.

Once the cruiser passed, Ayyad motioned to the others, pointing toward Route 440. Yousef slammed the hood down, without using the water, and got back in the cab. What

happened next is almost beyond belief.

Mohammad Salameh, the accident-prone motorist, slipped back behind the van's driving wheel. His visa had expired a month earlier, marking his third immigration hassle in as many years. Since then, he had been in the clutches of local law enforcement no less than three times, the most recent only hours before when he gave Jersey City police information that did not check out. He had also visited the nation's most notorious Islamic terrorist behind the walls of Attica. Still, the illegal immigrant with poor eyesight who had flunked his driving test four times, steered the truck bomb seven miles through the Holland Tunnel, negotiated the congested traffic of lower Manhattan, and ignited a clash of civilizations.

Details of the attack are incomplete. Witnesses recall seeing a tall, muscular, redheaded Egyptian browsing through CDs at the J&R Music store next to the World Trade Center at about noon. Some fifteen minutes later, other witnesses spotted a Yellow Ryder Ford Econoline van idling next to a Dodge Ram on the ramp of the B-2 level of the Trade Center's underground garage, near the south wall of the north tower. A yellow Port Authority van was in a nearby parking space. When the Port Authority van pulled away, the Ryder took its place. Two Middle Eastern men got out of the van and entered a red car that trailed them. Then the red car pulled away.

At 12:18 p.m., an enormous wind ripped through the underground garage, tearing through cars and concrete walls and collapsing much of the B-2 level. The payload bounced off the underside of the north tower, and gouged a huge crater where the van had been parked. In one imperceptible instant, nearly seven-thousand tons of concrete, steel, and other material were displaced by the blast. Sewage lines and water mains ruptured, threatening the stability of the

container wall holding back the Hudson River. And, of course, there was the human toll: Six people were murdered and more than a thousand were injured.

### **Aftermath**

Some three hours later, Salameh returned to the Ryder agency in Jersey City. Appearing excited and confused, he stated to an employee that the van had been stolen from a grocery store parking lot the night before, and then presented the key chain. "I want refund," said Salameh, referring to the \$400 cash deposit he had left for the van. The employee told Salameh that he had to report the theft to the police and produce a copy of the police report before he could get the deposit back. Later that evening, Salameh went to the West District police station and spoke with a desk officer. He related his story about the stolen van, and requested a copy of the police report that had been filed the previous evening. The officer, in turn, told Salameh that they couldn't complete the report without a correct license plate number—the same information Salameh had been given the previous evening.

Salameh was now back at square one. He began going back and forth between the Ryder agency and the police station, trying to resolve the license plate issue. By now, Yousef had landed in Jordan and the other conspirators were planning to flee the country as well. Salameh had a plan of his own, more or less. On Monday, March 1, he used his last sixty-nine dollars to purchase a child's plane ticket (thus nailing the coffin shut on the theory that the World Trade Center bombers had significant resources) to Amman, Jordan, via Amsterdam, scheduled for March 5. Salameh took the ticket to customs and obtained a Dutch visa, but he needed the \$400 from the van deposit to upgrade his ticket to an adult fare. Nidal Ayyad, on the other hand, was staying put. He continued working at Allied Signal as if nothing had happened. But that wouldn't

last long.

Early Sunday morning, February 28, bomb technicians working near the crater found a three-hundred pound fragment from a vehicle frame which displayed inordinate explosive damage. The next day, March 1, they found a dot matrix vehicle identification number (VIN) displayed on the fragment. The VIN was traced to a 1990 Ford Econoline van owned by the Ryder agency in Jersey City. One phone call later, FBI agents determined that the van had been rented by one Mohammad Salameh who claimed that the van had been stolen the day before the bombing.

On Tuesday morning, March 2, an anonymous letter was received by the *New York Times* taking credit for the bombing on behalf of the “fifth battalion of the Liberation Army.” The letter explained that the World Trade Center attack was undertaken in retaliation for America’s support of Israel, adding that future attacks would be imminent unless all U.S. aid to Israel was suspended. Later that day, FBI agents arrived at the Ryder agency in Jersey City to learn more about Salameh. Following the interview, agents enlisted the manager’s help in nabbing him.

Salameh finally got the police report on the morning of March 4. He phoned the Ryder agency with the news, and was told to come over and settle his business. He walked into the agency shortly after 10 a.m. The “loss prevention agent” who greeted Salameh was an undercover FBI agent. Outside, dozens of agents were fanned out on rooftops, in vans, and even in the trees. The media had caught wind of the operation, so two television trucks and several reporters were in the area as well. Salameh, of course, was well known to the Jersey City police because of his motor vehicle problems. He was also known to the New York office of the FBI due to his appearances outside the Manhattan courthouse during the trial of El Sayyed Nosair.

The undercover agent launched into a series of questions concerning the van, often doubling back and asking the same thing several times, all in an attempt to flummox Salameh who eventually threw up his hands and exclaimed: "I want justice! This is not justice!" Finally, at 10:28 a.m. the agent came to terms with Salameh and agreed to refund \$200 of the deposit. Salameh thanked him profusely and then stepped out the door. He took several steps into the parking lot and was surrounded by a team of agents in FBI wind breakers.

### **Criminal Stupidity and the Age of Sacred Terror**

Salameh said that he was living at 34 Kensington Avenue in Jersey City and within an hour agents were combing the place for evidence; eventually discovering a link between Salameh and the Space Station storage shed. They also found Abdul Yasin at the apartment and his interrogation yielded a wealth of information about the other conspirators. (Yasin was released by the FBI and returned to Iraq the next day). Ahmad Ajaj, who had recently completed his sentence for passport fraud, was arrested on March 9. On March 10, agents arrested Nidal Ayyad at his home. Phone records showing calls to the Space Station, joint bank accounts with Salameh, and inquiries into buying explosives would have been enough to implicate him in the attack. But when agents searched his computer at Allied Signal, not only did they find a draft of the letter to the *Times* taking responsibility for the bombing, but they also found a deleted sentence to that letter reading in part: "Unfortunately, our calculations were not very accurate this time." Mahmud the Red was captured in Egypt and tortured before being handed over to the FBI on March 25. On the same day, Bilal Alkaisi turned himself in, even though he had nothing to do with the bombing. The interrogation of these men led to a windfall that surprised even the FBI. Several months later, agents linked Salameh to a plot involving the blind Sheik and eight other

Islamic extremists to blow up the United Nations, the Lincoln and Holland tunnels, and the George Washington Bridge.

Salameh's desperate attempt to retrieve his \$400 cash deposit on the Ryder van was the thread that unraveled the entire conspiracy. It was also the event that created a dangerous mind-set for American law enforcement. Once they tied him to the van, the FBI did not consider Salameh to be smart enough, or aggressive enough, to be a key figure in the World Trade Center attack. The FBI had good reason to believe as much. Referring to Salameh, a fellow mosque member later told investigators: "He is stupid. This man doesn't have the courage to kill an animal." After his arrest in Islamabad by Pakistani authorities on February 7, 1995, Ramzi Yousef characterized Salameh's decision to retrieve the \$400 deposit as "Stupid." Even *The 9/11 Commission Report* agreed with this assessment of the bombing. "[T]he public image that persisted was not of clever Yousef," says the *Report*, "but of stupid Salameh going back again and again to reclaim his \$400 truck rental deposit." The image of Salameh returning to collect the deposit therefore left a lasting impression on law enforcement: No group that relied on someone that stupid could possibly pose a serious threat to the United States. Yet armed with 20/20 hindsight, a different picture emerges.

Yousef resurfaced in Bangkok, Thailand during the winter of 1994—by now the world's most wanted terrorist. There he constructed a one-ton bomb similar to the one used in the World Trade Center attack. On March 11, Yousef and his gang loaded the bomb into a truck and set out for the Israeli embassy. The driver in Bangkok was even worse than Salameh; Yousef deliberately chose simple-minded men with poor driving skills as his comrades. En route to the embassy, the driver crashed the truck bomb into a taxi-motorcyclist and then careened into a car

at one of the city's busiest intersections. The aborted attack was considered a farce, yet that minimizes a defining characteristic of jihadist criminality. Mohammad Salameh, Ahmed Ajaj, the Black September woman with her frilly undergarments, and the incompetent driver in Bangkok—all human decoys used by their leaders to circumvent counter-terrorism routines of the state. All of them were manipulated by jihadists with exceptional criminal skills.

Many within the U.S. counter-terrorism community considered the World Trade Center bombing a farce as well. In addition to Salameh's criminal stupidity, the bomb was deemed a technical failure inasmuch as it failed to topple the 107-story north tower into its twin a few yards away. Yet this view overshadowed a deeper problem; namely, it had the unintended consequence of obscuring the need to analyze the nature and extent of the threat of Islamic terrorism to the United States. *The 9/11 Commission Report* concludes that the investigative processes used to solve the World Trade Center case did not “allow for aggravating and analyzing facts to see if they could provide clues to terrorist tactics more generally—methods of entry and finance, and mode of operation inside the United States.”

Following Yousef's capture, agents discovered an underlying plot that was anything but farcical. The urea nitrate-based bomb was actually a backup plan for Yousef. According to U.S. intelligence, in the months preceding February 1993 Yousef tried to obtain radioactive material for a nuclear bomb big enough to wipe out the population of southern Manhattan. The alleged source of that material was Osama bin Laden.

Eventually, however, indications of a connection between Yousef and bin Laden were recognized. The U.S. Attorney in New York filed a sealed indictment against bin Laden in June 1998, two months before al-Qaeda's attacks against the American embassies in East Africa.



**CASES TWO AND THREE:  
EXPLOSIVES AND FIREARMS**

In August 1998, al-Qaeda orchestrated two simultaneous bombings against the United States embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The Nairobi bombing killed 213 people and injured 4,500. The Dar es Salaam explosion killed eleven and wounded 85. The FBI investigation—which came to light in four terrorism trials held in New York City between 1998 and 2001—offers a wealth of information on the routine activities exploited by al-Qaeda in these attacks, and the criminal skills used to do so.

**Background**

The East African bombing case became the FBI's largest overseas investigation up to that point in history. It involved 375 FBI agents, a myriad of cultural and technological obstacles, as well as a widespread terrorist conspiracy spanning four continents. The Bureau's major breakthrough came with the arrest and interrogation of two key conspirators.

*The War Hero*

The first was a 22-year-old Saudi Arabian named Mohammed Rashid Daoud al-Owhali. Like Osama bin Laden, al-Owhali came from a wealthy and devout Saudi family. Al-Owhali was born in Liverpool, England in 1977, while his father was pursuing graduate work there. The family returned to Saudi Arabia a year later. Al-Owhali's road to Islamic extremism began in his early teenaged years when he was introduced to such tracts as *The Love and Hour of the Martyrs* and *Jihad*, a magazine published by bin Laden's network of Afghan mujahideen. Al-Owhali was captivated by the protagonists of these works—men who died fighting in the jihad and were rewarded with eternal life in Paradise. After high school, Al-Owhali enrolled in the Mohamed

bin Saud religious university in Riyadh, but dropped out after the second year to pursue his dream of fighting for the Muslim cause in Bosnia or Chechnya. Accordingly, in 1996 he moved to Afghanistan and underwent basic training at Camp Khaladan.

Al-Owhali was instructed in the use of light weaponry, explosives, and communications. He proved to be an excellent trainee and was granted an audience with Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden spoke softly of the jihad against America—the campaign to drive U.S. military forces from the Arabian peninsula—and encouraged al-Owhali to pursue additional training. Al-Owhali did just that. In 1997, he received advanced military training in three different Qaeda camps. This included instruction in intelligence and counter-intelligence, hijacking, kidnaping, and seizing buildings, with priority given to planning attacks against U.S. military bases and embassies. Following the training, al-Owhali met with bin Laden again, and pled with the Qaeda leader to send him on a jihad mission. Bin Laden advised al-Owhali to be patient, that his mission would come in time.

Al-Owhali then took a military assignment to fight alongside the Taliban against the government of Afghanistan. Al-Owhali joined the Taliban forces near Kabul, yet he soon fell ill with tuberculosis. One of the men who treated him was an al-Qaeda fighter from Saudi Arabia known as “Azzam” (aka, Jihad Mohammed Ali). As a result of this medical attention, al-Owhali would come to revere Azzam. And Azzam, in turn, would have a significant influence on the life of Mohammed al-Owhali. Azzam encouraged his protege to think beyond the conflict in Afghanistan, to concentrate on a “bigger mission, a better mission that we could be doing.”

Once al-Owhali recovered from his illness, he participated in a major hostility that resulted in the Taliban’s defeat in Kabul. Many fighters were killed in this battle, yet al-Owhali

distinguished himself by maintaining a Taliban stronghold. Al-Owhali was greeted as a war hero upon his return to the camps; symbolic of his bravery, he was granted the privilege of carrying his rifle anywhere he went. And in time, the young Saudi was singled out for a jihad mission. Each step of the way, he would be handled by Azzam. The mission would require even more skill development, so al-Owhali was sent to a camp near Kabul where he received specialized training in the operation and management of a terrorist cell, including instruction on conducting “target surveys” using still photographs and videos.

### *The Explosives Expert*

The second conspirator was 34-year-old Mohamed Saddiq Odeh. Odeh was born in Saudi Arabia in 1965 and raised in Jordan. In 1986, he became an engineering student at the Far Eastern University in Manila, Philippines. During his studies, Odeh became active in Islamic societies. He underwent a life-changing experience after being introduced to tape recorded and video lectures by Abdullah Azzam—the chief ideologue of non-Afghan volunteers drawn to fight alongside the mujahideen against the Soviets in Afghanistan. An early spiritual mentor of bin Laden, Abdullah Azzam is believed to have coined the term “al-Qaeda,” or the base.

During his final year at the University, Odeh decided to quit school and make his way to Afghanistan to join the mujahideen. Odeh arrived at the Farouq camp in October 1990 where he underwent basic training in light weaponry. From there, Odeh moved to a second level of training where he was taught topography, map reading, and explosives. And from there, he moved to advanced training involving rocket launchers, mortars, and surface-to-air missiles. Along the way, Odeh became a combat medic.

In 1991, Odeh was sent to Jalalabad, Afghanistan where he cared for wounded

mujahideen behind enemy lines. Odeh was subsequently injured in an air raid and was sent to Pakistan where he received treatment for a head wound. Upon his recovery, Odeh went back to Afghanistan where he received more advanced training—this time on tactics of seizing military bases and embassies. In March 1992, Odeh took a religious *bayat*, meaning that he pledged his allegiance to Osama bin Laden.

Odeh was then sent to the Sadeek camp where he received advanced explosives training under the direction of al-Qaeda’s leading bomb technician, the Egyptian Abdel Rahman (also referred to as Abdel Rahman Yasin.) This included sophisticated instruction on bomb building, including the computation of mathematical formulae for configuring detonator cord and blasting caps; the melting of TNT into “shape charges” that can be aimed at a target; and the mounting of bombs with electrical, mechanical, and fuse detonators.

In late 1992, with the war against the Soviets now over, Odeh met a former Egyptian special forces military officer-turned al-Qaeda operative (Saif al-Adel) who persuaded him to volunteer for service in Somalia. Al-Qaeda’s mission in Somalia was to aid Muslims engaged in widespread inter-clan fighting, and to oppose United Nations peace-keeping forces in the country. In 1993, Odeh traveled to Somalia via Kenya, where he trained Islamic fighters of the Um Rehan tribe in small arms and battlefield medicine. Odeh remained in Somalia aiding clan leader Mohammed Farah Aideed for seven months.

In 1994, Odeh left Somalia and moved to Mombasa, Kenya, along with two other Qaeda veterans of the Somalian conflict: an Egyptian named Mustafa Mohamed Fadhil and a Kenyan named Fahid Mohammed Ally Msalar (referred to in court documents by his first name, Fahid, or sometimes as “Fahad”). At the time, both of these men worked for an export business based in

Dar el Salaam, Tanzania. Odeh later married a Kenyan woman he met through Fadhil. Odeh's wedding was attended by Fadhil, Fahid and another al-Qaeda member known as "Harun." (Weddings appear to be important to al-Qaeda. In 1999, Mohammed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi attended the wedding of a fellow Muslim at a radical mosque in Hamburg, Germany—an event considered by many to have been an important gathering for the core members of the 9/11 plot.) These four men—Fadhil and Fahid in Dar es Salaam, Odeh and Harun in Nairobi—would ultimately comprise the core membership of the Qaeda teams that would bomb the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

In late 1994, Odeh was visited in Mombasa by al-Qaeda's top military commander, Mohammad Atef. Shortly thereafter, al-Qaeda provided Odeh with the financial backing to purchase a seven-ton aluminum fishing boat. Odeh then used this boat to sell other crews' catches at ports up and down the west coast of the Indian Ocean. Yet the boat served another purpose. Using the fishing boat as cover, Odeh and his confederates began to arm themselves with bomb-building components commonly used in Qaeda training camps, including TNT and detonator cord (known by the code word "tools"). These explosives were smuggled by Fahid from a source in Tanzania, along with hand grenades ("potatoes") and fake travel documents ("goods").

In March 1997, Mohamed Odeh and Mustafa Fadhil were sent back to Somalia on a special mission for bin Laden. Their objective was to provide bin Laden with a military assessment of the Islamic struggle in the war-torn country. Seven months later—after having successfully completed his mission—Odeh returned to Kenya and moved to the tiny village of Witu, near the Somalia border, where he set up a furniture business with his brother-in-law,

Omar, who lived in Mombasa. In Witu, Odeh lived piously with his wife and child in a mud hut. He had no telephone, no electricity, and no running water. He read only the Koran and hated all things Western.

*The Fatwas: Afghanistan, Winter 1998*

On February 22, 1998, bin Laden issued a fatwah stating that it was the duty of all Muslims to kill Americans. The fatwah read: "In compliance with God's order, we issue the following fatwah to all Muslims: the ruling to kill the Americans and their allies, including civilians and military, is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it." The same month, bin Laden and his top lieutenant and leader of the Egyptian al-Jihad (EIJ), Ayman al-Zawahiri, endorsed a fatwah under the heading, "International Islamic Front for Jihad on the Jews and Crusaders." This fatwah also stated that Muslims should kill Americans, including civilians, anywhere in the world. This marked the merger of al-Qaeda and the EIJ as an international terrorist threat.

In March 1998, Mohammed Odeh traveled to Mombasa where he attended a meeting of al-Qaeda operatives. Bin Laden had dispatched a personal emissary to the meeting, carrying a message: It was now time for the operatives to begin preparations for leaving Kenya and Tanzania. Odeh and the others were told to get their personal affairs in order, to gather travel documents and money for their departure from the region. Bin Laden's missive concluded that their departure would "come soon." This signaled the activation of al-Qaeda cells in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

Around the same time, Azzam sent Mohammed al-Owhali to Yemen to obtain a passport. From there, al-Owhali was ordered to Pakistan where Azzam introduced him to Khalid

Sheikh Mohammed (later to become the coordinator of the 9/11 attacks). It was Mohammed who finally gave al-Owhali his jihad mission: He would join Azzam in an anti-American operation in East Africa.

Mohammed told al-Owhali that he would be assisting Azzam in the driving of a truck filled with explosives. In no uncertain terms, al-Owhali was told that the mission would involve his death, as well as Azzam's. Mohammed then produced a video recorder and told Azzam and al-Owhali to make videotapes celebrating their anticipated martyrdoms, claiming credit in the name of a fictitious organization dubbed the "Army for the Liberation of Islamic Holy Places."

On May 28, Azzam and al-Owhali stood in the background as bin Laden gave an interview to ABC News correspondent John Miller in Khost, Afghanistan. Dressed in a camouflage jacket, sitting on the floor and cradling a Soviet-made AK-47 assault rifle across his knees, bin Laden railed against the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia. He predicted a "black day for America," adding: "Our forthcoming victory in Hijaz and Nejd [parts of old Arabia] will make America forget the horrors of Vietnam, Beirut and other places." Over bin Laden's shoulder hung a map of Africa, with Kenya and Tanzania in clear view.

Following the press conference, al-Owhali met with bin Laden for the last time. Then on July 31, al-Owhali left Lahore, Pakistan on a plane bound for Nairobi.

### **The Embassy Bombing Plot: East Africa, Summer 1998**

The plans for bombing the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were known respectively as Operation Kaaba, after a structure located in the Grand Mosque in Mecca that is the holiest site in the Muslim world; and Operation al-Aqsa, after the mosque in Jerusalem that is Islam's third holiest site. These operations had actually been in the works since late 1993.

It was then that bin Laden—based in Khartoum, Sudan at the time—sent a controversial figure named Ali Mohamed to Nairobi to conduct surveillance on the U.S. embassy and other American interests in the city. An Egyptian with American citizenship, Ali Mohamed had by this time become an all-purpose security expert for bin Laden. After completing his military duty in Egypt, Mohamed served for three years at the U.S. Army’s Special Forces base in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. After his honorable discharge in 1989, Mohamed conducted training sessions in New Jersey for the World Trade Center bombers. Following that attack, Mohamed began training al-Qaeda operatives in surveillance techniques, including trial runs in Peshawar, Pakistan focusing on bridges, stadiums, and police stations. Mohamed then moved the operation to Nairobi where he cased a variety of targets: the American embassy, the United States agricultural office, as well as the French embassy and cultural center. In late 1993, Mohamed visited bin Laden in Khartoum and presented the Qaeda leader with video clips and still photographs of the surveillance. On a photo of the U.S. embassy, bin Laden used a blue pen to mark an area at the rear of the building, indicating “where a truck could go as a suicide bomber.”

### *Organization*

The East African operation emerged as a result of Ali Mohamed’s report. Over the next five years, operatives linked to the plot would go through numerous personnel changes, with operatives using a dizzying array of code names and aliases. (Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, for example, used thirty different aliases.) By the summer of 1998 al-Qaeda had established a formidable terrorist enterprise in the region, consisting of military and computer experts, bomb-builders, truck drivers, and weapons specialists. In all, the operation included at least twenty-one men.



The teams assembled in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were classic al-Qaeda sleeper cells. They were comprised of four divisions: (1) the intelligence section; (2) the administrative section; (3) the planning and preparation section; and (4) the execution section. This was a tiered system, in which the chief of intelligence served as the operation's overall commander. His job was to conduct target surveillance; identify points of bomb detonation; assign section deputies to conduct other cell functions; to monitor those functions; and communicate coded messages to al-Qaeda planners in Afghanistan. The cells operated on a strategy known in the West as leaderless resistance. Cell members shared information on a need-to-know basis, including information about one another's identity. Al-Qaeda's cell structure therefore limited the potential damage of betrayal from within, and safeguarded against potential infiltration from without.

In 1998, the cells in Kenya and Tanzania were led by an Egyptian known as "Ali Saleh." His true name was Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah and it is probably safe to say that the United States has never faced a more ruthless enemy. Born in Egypt in 1963, Saleh (Abdullah) went on to achieve fame as one of Egypt's most talented soccer players. His association with bin Laden began in the early 1980s when Saleh was involved with al-Zawahiri's EIJ—which was then dedicated to the violent overthrow of the Egyptian government and to violent opposition against United States interests in the Middle East. Saleh later received training in the Qaeda camps, and in 1993 he joined the fighting in Somalia. A year later, Saleh played a role in setting up the original Mombasa cell. By 1998, Saleh was not only commanding the East African operation, but he was one of bin Laden's most trusted associates and a member of al-Qaeda's elite leadership group known as the *shura* council. Today, Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah is atop the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists list with a \$25 million bounty on his head.

In Nairobi, Saleh appointed as his administrative section chief a native Kenyan from the Comoros Islands named Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (aka, Abdullah Mohammed Fazil), code name “Harun”—the same man who had attended Mohamed Odeh’s 1994 wedding. A former university honors student, Harun was a computer expert who spoke four languages. And like Saleh and Odeh, Harun was a veteran of the training camps in Afghanistan and the war in Somalia.

Odeh served in the planning and preparation section of the Nairobi cell. Not only was he an explosives expert, but Odeh was also familiar with Nairobi’s bustling inner city. Over the years, Odeh had traveled regularly to Nairobi on business with Mustafa Fadhil, selling their fish to restaurants and hotels. In this way, the two men were able to familiarize themselves with the city, including the area around the American embassy.

The Tanzania cell developed in similar fashion. Central to this development was Khalfan Khamis Mohamed (known as KK Mohamed). Mohamed was born in 1973 on the East African island of Pemba and raised in the village of Kidimni on Zanzibar Island. In contrast to the privileged backgrounds of bin Laden and al-Owhali, KK Mohamed came from humble beginnings. KK’s father died when the boy was young, leaving the family destitute. Yet this was a decent family and KK developed the human qualities of kindness and generosity. As a teenager, he moved to Dar es Salaam to live with an older brother. After dropping out of high school, he began working in his brother’s dry-goods store and attending a local mosque. At the mosque, KK became consumed with the idea that he was part of the worldwide Islamic community and had obligations to fellow Muslims who were suffering in war zones like Bosnia. He would find a means to resolve that obligation in al-Qaeda.

In early 1994, Mohamed befriended a mosque member who worked on a fishing boat out of Mombasa, owned by a man known as “Mohamed the fisherman.” This was Mohamed Odeh, and thus began KK Mohamed’s affiliation with bin Laden’s terrorist network. Later that year, Mohamed used his own money to travel to Afghanistan where he trained in light weapons, rocket launchers, and surface-to-air missiles at a camp in Manakando. He had hoped to become a warrior for God on a battlefield in the Balkans or Chechnya, but failed to find a way there. Discouraged, Mohamed returned to Dar es Salaam. Then in 1997 he made the first of two trips to Somalia where he served as a weapons trainer for Aideed’s militias. Mohamed traveled to Somalia via Mombasa on his second trip, and there he met Odeh’s friend, Mustafa Fadhil. In March 1998—a month after the fatwahs were issued by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri—Fadhil asked if Mohamed wanted to help with “a jihad job.” Though he had never met an American, Mohamed signed on to kill as many of them as possible.

Soon thereafter, Saleh established lines of authority for the Dar es Salaam cell. He appointed Mustafa Fadhil (hereafter referred to by his code name “Hussein”) as his administrative section chief. Now an al-Qaeda veteran, Hussein was known for his compelling personality and excellent leadership qualities. Because Swahili was his primary language, and because Dar es Salaam was his adopted hometown, KK Mohamed was assigned to the planning and preparation section, along with Fahid and two others: a Tanzanian named Ahmad Ghailani, and Sheikh Sewedan, a Kenyan. The execution division was led by an Arab known as “Ahmed the German.”

### *Strategy*

By the summer of 1998, then, al-Qaeda operatives had woven themselves into the fabric

of eastern Africa's Islamic society. Experts claim that hundreds of al-Qaeda members were living normal lives in Kenya and Tanzania, where they had developed support structures for Islamic terrorists headed to the West. In the tiny fishing village of Siyu, Kenya, for instance, al-Qaeda even sponsored its own soccer club. As operatives arrived from Zanzibar, Egypt, Somalia, and Afghanistan, cell administrators in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam helped these men settle into local communities. Some paid cash to local families for the right to marry their women. In this way, the operatives established a bloodline and a financial obligation that would serve as guarantees of safe haven.

With the aid of al-Qaeda's international support cells (groups of four or five scattered throughout the world to provide logistical support for the bombing plot), the conspirators possessed a variety of fake passports, as well as cell and satellite phones, laptop computers with Internet and e-mail access, and files containing military documents. Consistent with the information control of leaderless resistance, however, al-Qaeda exercised great caution in the use of this technology.

According to U.S. Justice Department documents, American intelligence had successfully tapped five telephone numbers belonging to bin Laden's men in Kenya during 1996 and 1997. But that intelligence came to little avail. Information about the embassy plot was passed by couriers and shared only in face-to-face discussions. By the same token, al-Qaeda operatives were technologically sophisticated enough to embed coded messages in innocuous web sites, and to use encryption software for e-mail communications.

All sensitive information was routed through headquarters in Afghanistan, of course, where bin Laden's experts designed strategy, approved men for the operations, and continued to

develop support structures. This included the establishment of additional cells in Baku, Azerbaijan and London to conduct communications and publicity for the forthcoming strikes. Yet details of the operations were left to Saleh and his division chiefs.

At the top of the list was the renting of safe houses to build the bombs, and buying vehicles to deliver them. Because these bombs would be weapons of mass destruction, there were two main criterion for the safe houses. First, they had to be large enough to accommodate the bomb building, yet secluded enough to conceal the work from public view. And second, they had to be within close proximity of the embassies in order to minimize the risk of accidental explosions en route.

In May 1998, Harun payed cash for a six-month lease on a steel-gated villa in an exclusive section of Nairobi. This villa, at 43 Runda Estates, was surrounded by a high wall and hedges. The main residence had four bedrooms, three baths, and a garage suited for bomb-building. Harun moved his wife and two small children into the villa, and purchased a beige-colored Toyota Dyna cargo truck to be used as the bomb vehicle. Using a smaller pickup, Harun then began hauling bomb-making material into the garage.

In June 1998, Hussein instructed KK Mohamed to rent House 213 in the Illala district of Dar es Salaam. Situated in a sprawling low-income neighborhood about four miles from the U.S. embassy, the house was a single-family dwelling with a compound, gate, and high wall so that neighbors could not see inside. It also had a garage large enough to hold a truck. After signing the rental agreement in his own name, Mohamed moved into the house with Hussein and his family. Mohamed and Fahid then purchased a white Suzuki Samurai which they used to haul bomb components (hidden in rice sacks) to House 213. Ghailani and Swedan purchased a 1987

Nissan Atlas refrigeration truck, which would serve as the bomb delivery vehicle. To better accommodate the bomb, KK Mohamed employed a welder to build a seat for batteries and install six metal bars in the bed of the refrigeration truck.

Bomb-building began sometime in early July, about a month before the attacks. In both Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Mohammed Odeh supervised construction of two massive, two-thousand pound destructive devices made of 400 to 500 cylinders of TNT (about the size of soda cans), aluminum nitrate, aluminum powder, and detonator cord. Odeh had acquired these explosives from an unidentified source in Luanda. The explosives were shipped from Luanda to Pakistan; from Pakistan to Dar es Salaam and Mombasa (possibly concealed in boxes of lobsters); and from there driven to the bomb factories.

The explosives were packed into some twenty specially designed wooden crates that were sealed and then placed in the bed of the trucks. Once the bombs were built—with the assistance of others, including KK Mohamed who helped grind the TNT—Odeh's former explosives instructor, Abdel Rahman, was brought in to do the electrical work. In both cases, Rahman ran a wire from the bomb to a set of batteries in the back of the truck cab, and then to a detonator switch beneath the dashboard. Perhaps as a ruse, Odeh used a slightly different configuration in the Dar es Salaam bomb: He attached the TNT to fifteen oxygen tanks and gas canisters—a practice commonly used by Middle Eastern terrorists under the mistaken assumption that they enhance an explosion—and surrounded the weapon with four bags of fertilizer and some sandbags to fill in the gaps.

The operation now moved into the final stages of preparation and planning. The attacks were scheduled to take place on August 7, 1998—the eighth anniversary of the arrival of U.S.

troops in Saudi Arabia in 1990—though only Saleh and al-Qaeda planners in Afghanistan were aware of the target date. That being the nature of leaderless resistance.

### *The Targets*

The embassy in Nairobi was chosen not only because there was a large American presence in the building, but the U.S. ambassador—Prudence Bushnell—was a woman and killing a woman would create publicity for the attack. (Bin Laden’s communications experts in London were well aware of the fact that Nairobi is a regional hub for the international media.) The fact that there were Christian missionaries at the embassy would only add to the publicity. There were also embassy personnel in Nairobi who were responsible for work done in Sudan that bin Laden opposed. Finally, the Nairobi embassy was an easy target.

The embassy was constructed by the U.S. State Department in the early 1980s. The building was a seven-story concrete structure, with five floors above ground and two below. It was situated at the intersection of two of the busiest streets in Nairobi, near two mass transit centers. Consistent with low-level security concerns of the early eighties, the building lacked sufficient a “setback” from the busy streets and adjacent buildings. To partly compensate for this in the terrorist-prone 1990s, a four-foot high steel bar fence had been constructed around the embassy. Beyond the fence, a line of steel posts had also been added.

Still, the building remained vulnerable to a vehicular assault. (Ambassador Bushnell had made repeated requests to upgrade embassy security since her appointment by President Clinton in 1996, only to be told that terrorist threats had dissipated.) This was especially so in the rear parking lot off Haile Selassie Avenue. This parking lot, which was sandwiched between the sixty-story Co-op Bank Building and the smaller Ufundi Building, was also the entrance to an

underground garage for the embassy. A guard shack sat at the front of the parking lot, manned by a local Kenyan security company whose guards *did not carry firearms*, and it was attached to a “drop bar” (a manually operated gate constructed of a tubular steel framework) that ran parallel to the steel posts.

Security at the embassy in Dar es Salaam was another matter. Originally built by the security-conscious Israelis in the early 1970s, the embassy was a three-story concrete building situated on a large lot in a residential suburban area of the city. The building sat at the rear of the lot and the ambassador’s residence was approximately one-thousand yards away. In front of the embassy building was a four-story concrete annex (added by the Americans when they acquired the embassy following the 1973 Israel-Arab war, at which time the Israelis were asked to leave Tanzania.) The embassy, the ambassador’s residence, and the annex were surrounded by a concrete-enforced metal picket perimeter wall, which provided a twelve-foot setback between the embassy grounds and adjacent streets and properties. The main embassy building was setback twenty-five feet from the roadway.

Hardened guard booths were located at the two vehicular entryways to the compound; both manned by a local security outfit. For years, vehicles had been allowed to enter these gated entryways for security searches. But on July 22, 1998 (as the bombs were being built in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam), the embassy revised its security procedures to insure that vehicles were screened outside the compound before being allowed to enter. Moreover, security in Dar es Salaam presented Commander Saleh with challenges that he would not face in Nairobi.

After five years of planning, then, al-Qaeda had the on-site intelligence, organization, equipment, technology, and patience necessary to execute a major terrorist attack against the



United States. Al-Qaeda certainly had the resources. Bin Laden's network financed the entire East African operation—including money, material, equipment, personnel, communication systems, safe house, and travel—at an estimated cost of \$100,000. These funds were allegedly maintained in accounts at a Saudi-backed bank in Dar es Salaam and through Islamic charities in Nairobi. But more to the point of this study, al-Qaeda had acquired the criminal trade craft necessary to turn opportunity into terrorism—or, as bin Laden's fatwah read, to strike Americans “in any country in which it is possible.”

Yet these skills were not honed to perfection. Although al-Qaeda had the criminal expertise to build weapons of mass destruction, its ability to both deliver the weapons and exploit the routine activities of local communities would fall short of expectations. As al-Owhali later told an FBI agent, “The mission didn't go exactly point for point and time to time the way it was supposed to.” That, as we shall see, is an understatement.

### **Countdown**

#### *August 1*

On the morning of Saturday, August 1, Mohamed Odeh was in Mombasa on business—staying with his brother-in-law, Omar—when he received an urgent message from Fahid to contact Saleh, who was also in Mombasa. Earlier that day, Odeh had left an umbrella at the mosque and when he went to retrieve it, Odeh ran into Saleh and Fahid on the street. Saleh began yelling at Odeh, clamoring that it was time “[for you] to get out of here!” Saleh told Odeh that all operatives had to leave Kenya by Thursday, August 6. Odeh had known this for some time.

Four months earlier, Saleh—acting on behalf of bin Laden—had ordered Odeh to get his affairs in order for the flight from Kenya. But Odeh had failed to accomplish the simplest of

tasks. Odeh told Saleh that he was still waiting for his Jordanian passport to be renewed and mailed to his Witu address. Furthermore, he had not yet purchased his plane ticket and lacked money to do so.

Money had been an ongoing problem for Odeh. Like the other major operatives in the East African plot, Mohamed Odeh received a yearly salary from al-Qaeda. On top of that, he drew revenue from his furniture business with Omar. Yet Odeh still could not make ends meet, even though he lived in a mud hut and apparently had few expenses. Back on July 14, Odeh had complained to Saleh that he didn't have the funds to travel. At the time, Saleh gave Odeh the cold shoulder, and told him to fend for himself. Odeh borrowed some cash from a business associate in Mombasa, yet that money was gone, too.

Exasperated with Odeh's poor money-management skills, Saleh gave him some cash to cover his travel expenses and told Odeh that he (Saleh) would get a passport for him, and would deliver it to Omar's house that evening.

That night, Saleh and Fahid came to Omar's and gave Odeh a stolen Yemeni passport. It had serious flaws. Not only did the passport have someone else's picture on it, but it had expired as well. Saleh told Odeh to remedy these problems by going to the immigration bureau in Mombasa the next day with an appropriate photograph. Odeh would later tell his FBI interrogators that in his six years as a member of al-Qaeda, he had never experienced the kind of pressure that Saleh was now laying on him.

#### *August 2*

Mohammed al-Owhali arrived in Nairobi during the early morning hours of Sunday, August 2—a day late because he had missed a connecting flight between Muscat and Abu Dhabi.

Al-Owhali took a taxi to the Ramada Inn in the Iftin district and checked into Room 24. He then called Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in Pakistan from a phone service near the hotel and advised him of his arrival. Mohammed told al-Owhali that Saleh would arrange to have someone pick him up. Around sundown, Harun arrived at the hotel, collected al-Owhali and paid the hotel bill, even though the Saudi had not stayed the night. Then they went to the villa at 43 Runda Estates.

Meanwhile, Odeh was making little headway. There was no way that he could meet Saleh's demand to get his passport together because the Mombasa immigration office was closed on Sunday, August 2. The fact of the matter was that Odeh was in no hurry to leave Kenya. He had family there, and had come to respect the Kenyan people in general. As such, he did not support their random killing at the hands of al-Qaeda.

Odeh then decided to go visit his wife's aunt in the town of Malinda, where he hoped to settle some affairs related to his furniture business. In Malinda, Odeh received what he would later describe as "an angry, a real angry phone call" from Fahid, saying, "Where are you? What are you doing?" Saleh wanted to see Odeh immediately. So Odeh took a bus from Malinda back to Mombasa, where he planned to meet Saleh at the bus station. The bus was late getting to the station, however, and Saleh had already left by the time Odeh arrived, so Odeh returned to Omar's and went to bed.

### *August 3*

Around 7:30 a.m.—Monday, August 3—Fahid picked Odeh up and drove to the immigration office to get Odeh's passport (using Odeh's alias, "Muhammad Sadiq Howaida"), yet when they got there Odeh was reluctant to take care of business. Even though he had a personal photograph with him, Odeh complained to Fahid that he had not yet made living

arrangements for his pregnant wife and child while he would be gone. Odeh went back to Omar's house to discuss arrangements for his family, while Fahid stayed at the immigration office and took care of Odeh's passport for him. Later that day, Fahid met Odeh and together they went to a travel agency to buy their airline tickets. Yet once again, Odeh was having money problems; so Fahid paid cash for both of them. As the two men parted company, Fahid told Odeh that Saleh wanted him to leave Mombasa that night on a bus for Nairobi. Saleh expected to see Odeh at Nairobi's Hilltop Hotel within twenty-four hours.

Saleh was already in Nairobi. That morning, he went to the villa to meet with al-Owhali. At his side was al-Owhali's companion from Afghanistan, Azzam, who had been in Nairobi for about a week. Saleh then laid out the operation's details.

Saleh explained that there were going to be two bombings: one in Nairobi, and one 450 miles away in Dar es Salaam. Both were going to occur on the same day, Friday, August 7, between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m. This time frame had been selected, said Saleh, because devout Muslims (who make up approximately one-third of the Kenyan population) would be praying in the shelter of their mosques at that hour. The intention was to kill Americans, not Muslims. Saleh showed al-Owhali some photographs and drawings of the Nairobi embassy and explained that al-Owhali's job was to help Azzam get the bomb truck into the embassy compound. Azzam would drive the truck and al-Owhali would be the passenger.

Upon arriving at the embassy parking lot, al-Owhali was to exit the truck, brandishing a pistol, and force the guard to raise the drop bar so that Azzam could drive the truck as close to the embassy as possible. Al-Owhali would also be armed with some homemade stun grenades made out of TNT and aluminum powder wrapped in black tape. Once Azzam had arrived at the

embassy building, al-Owhali was to fire his gun in the air and throw several of the stun grenades on the ground to frighten Kenyans out of the area. Finally, al-Owhali was to provide backup in case the bomb failed to explode when Azzam pressed the detonator switch. If that happened, al-Owhali was to go to the back of the truck, unlock it, and throw a stun grenade inside, causing the bomb to manually detonate.

Azzam and al-Owhali were then taken into the garage and shown the truck bomb. Saleh bragged that it had been built two weeks ago, as had the bomb for the Dar es Salaam operation. Saleh explained a crucial difference between the two attacks: In Nairobi, two people would be in the truck and both of them (Azzam and al-Owhali) would die in the explosion. In Dar es Salaam, only one person would occupy the vehicle; there would be no gun, no grenades, and no attempt to frighten bystanders. The driver of that truck—also expected to die—would be the Egyptian Ahmed Abdallah, known as “Ahmed the German” because of his blue eyes and fair complexion. (Al-Owhali knew Abdallah from the camps in Afghanistan.) Saleh and Ahmed the German were in regular contact, said Saleh, via cell phones.

#### *August 4*

When Odeh arrived in Nairobi at 7:30 a.m.—Tuesday, August 4—he was exhausted from the all-night bus trip. He went to the Hilltop Hotel, a \$10-a-night dive in downtown Nairobi frequented by Middle Eastern youth, and registered using the fake Yemeni passport. After checking into Room 102b, Odeh went to sleep.

By this time, at least six—and maybe as many as ten—members of the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam cells were staying at the Hilltop, including Saleh, Harun, Hussein, and Fahid. They all had forged passports and travel documents and were planning to leave Nairobi over the next two

days on different flights to Pakistan. From there, they planned to travel to Afghanistan where they would be greeted and congratulated by bin Laden.

Waking around noon, Odeh left the room and stumbled into Saleh and Harun, who were just leaving the Hilltop. Saleh noticed that Odeh was *still* unprepared for traveling. How could this be?

During his training in Afghanistan, Odeh had been taught how to travel without attracting attention, as had all of the operatives in the East African operation. Odeh had, in fact, received extensive instruction on avoiding capture and countering interrogation. This training included specific instructions on wearing Western clothing (scented with cologne to prove that the travelers were “interested in women”), and carrying modest amounts of cash and cigarettes—all intended to make travelers blend in to large crowds at airports, bus stations, and hotels. Odeh had violated three important tenets of this training: (1) By now he was highly anxious about traveling; (2) he was still dressed as a religious zealot; and (3) he was still wearing a beard.

So Saleh gave Odeh some socks, a shirt, a pair of pants, and a razor. He told Odeh to shave off his beard—so as to avoid the suspicions of Customs officials and others—and to use Saleh’s room to do it. Odeh then went to Saleh’s room, 107a, where he found Abdel Rahman, who had been staying at the Hilltop for the past two months while the bombs were being constructed. Instead of shaving off his beard, though, Odeh sat down and began talking with his former explosives trainer.

Meanwhile, Saleh had driven al-Owhali and Azzam to the U.S. embassy, and was now pointing out exactly where he wanted the truck bomb to be placed when it exploded—in the parking

lot at the rear of the embassy, inside the gate, as close to the building as possible. Al-Owhali suggested that they detonate the bomb in the parking garage directly beneath the embassy, thereby increasing the bomb's lethality. But Saleh was unimpressed and the plan would remain unchanged. After the reconnaissance, Saleh dropped Azzam and al-Owhali off at the villa. They would never see Saleh again.

Saleh returned to the Room 107a at the Hilltop around 4 p.m. Rahman and Odeh were still there talking. Odeh would later recall that the Egyptian commander displayed a severe demeanor and was "extremely worried," adding that Saleh began saying prayers to calm his nerves. Saleh's apprehension was palpable, as a dark mood descended upon everyone inside the room. Throughout the night, "nobody talked about anything," said Odeh. "Even though the climate was urgent, nobody discussed anything."

#### *August 5 and 6*

On Wednesday morning, August 5, a fax arrived at the Cairo office of the *Al-Hayat* newspaper from al-Zawahiri's EIJ, indicating that American interests would soon be attacked because the United States had supported the extradition of a key EIJ member from Albania to Egypt, where he was likely to be tortured.

Azzam and al-Owhali spent that day and the next—August 5 and 6—at the villa, preparing themselves for martyrdom. Al-Owhali made a series of collect calls to a friend in Yemen named Ahmed al-Hazza, a Qaeda soldier he had fought beside in Kabul. Azzam made a number of collect calls to his family in Saudi Arabia. During this time, Abdel Rahman came to the villa and made the final electrical connections on the bomb, a procedure that he would repeat at the bomb factory in Dar es Salaam. Finally, Harun brought word from Saleh indicating that everyone

associated with the Nairobi bombing—save Azzam, al-Owhali, and Harun—had been instructed to leave Kenya by August 6.

The plot was also progressing in Tanzania. KK Mohamed was informed of the operation's target by Hussein back on August 2, before Hussein left for the Hilltop in Nairobi. Hussein said that Ahmed the German would drive the truck and that Mohamed would assist him. Both were fluent in Arabic, so there would be no language barrier. Since Mohamed was a native Tanzanian and knew both the local language and city's layout, he would direct Ahmed to the embassy. However, Mohamed was instructed to stay in the truck for only part of the drive. Once Ahmed was clearly on his way, Mohamed was to exit the truck, run back to House 213, and clean up any remaining evidence. In preparation for his flight from Tanzania, Mohamed had bought a fake passport from a friend and arranged for transportation to Cape Town, South Africa. Before parting company, Hussein gave Mohamed \$1000 (US) in travel money and three emergency al-Qaeda phone numbers (written backwards), including the Yemen number 415-9123, for Osama bin Laden's satellite phone. Ahmed the German would not be leaving Dar es Salaam. In preparation for his martyrdom, Ahmed gave Ahmed Ghailani a package and asked him to mail it to his family in Egypt after the attack.

KK Mohamed and Ahmed the German ran into some last-minute trouble on August 5 when they moved the truck to the rear of the house (in an apparent dry run). The truck, loaded to the springs with two-thousand pounds of explosives, got stuck in the sand. After Mohamed and Ahmed dug it out, Mohamed went out and purchased a back up truck in case the same thing happened on the morning of the attack.

By Wednesday evening, nearly all of the leadership and supporting personnel had left



Kenya and Tanzania. Odeh was one of the last ones out. Before Saleh left, he gave Odeh \$500 and instructed him to use the money to bribe Customs officials, if a problem presented itself at the airport in Karachi. As an harbinger of things to come, the Witu peasant was *still* unprepared for the challenges of international travel. Odeh spent his last few hours in Nairobi shopping for clothing and getting his shoes shined along Moi Avenue, in anticipation of his 10:00 p.m. flight on Pakistan International Airlines on the night of August 6. Odeh had, however, finally shaved off his beard.

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan bin Laden and his advisors left their main outpost in Kandahar for the mountains. They anticipated a U.S. retaliation for the events that were about to occur.

### **The Attacks**

In the early morning hours of August 7, faxes were sent to al-Qaeda operatives in London claiming responsibility for the embassy bombings in the name of the “Islamic Army for the Liberation of Holy Places.” These faxes claimed that the Nairobi bombing was carried out by two Saudi nationals and that the Dar es Salaam attack was committed by an Egyptian national. Within minutes, the faxes were distributed to news organizations in Paris; Doha, Qatar; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Al-Owhali awoke that morning and dressed in black shoes, blue jeans, a white short-sleeved shirt, and a blue cotton jacket (the August temperature in Nairobi is cool). At 9:20, he phoned his friend Ahmed al-Hazza in Yemen. Then al-Owhali shoved a 9mm Beretta pistol into his jacket pocket and wedged four of the stun grenades into his belt. Twenty-five minutes later, Azzam and al-Owhali boarded the bomb truck and pulled away from the villa. Because they were

unfamiliar with the route to the embassy, Harun drove ahead of them, leading the way in a white Datsun pickup. Complications began almost immediately.

From behind the wheel, Azzam noticed that al-Owhali's jacket was tightly covering the stun grenades in his belt. So Azzam told al-Owhali to take the jacket off because it could create problems when he reached for the grenades. Al-Owhali took the jacket off and placed it on the seat next to him. As they continued toward the embassy, Azzam and al-Owhali listened to an audio cassette of Islamic poems in order to psych themselves up for the violence ahead. Once they reached a traffic circle near the embassy, Harun pulled off to the side and waved Azzam on. Azzam pulled into the traffic flow along Haile Selassie Avenue, headed toward the embassy, chanting poems with al-Owhali.

The streets and sidewalks around the embassy were bustling with cars and people when the terrorists arrived shortly before 10:30. Azzam drove to the rear parking lot and approached the drop bar. A mail van was leaving the lot, so Azzam pulled to a stop and waited for it to pass. Once the path was clear, Azzam pulled up to the drop bar, as al-Owhali sprang from the passenger seat and started walking toward a lone guard standing next to the shack.

Suddenly al-Owhali realized that his 9mm Beretta—which he was supposed to use to confront the unarmed guard—was still in his jacket on the seat of the truck. Al-Owhali froze for a moment, trying to decide whether to go back to the truck and retrieve the gun, or to improvise. Thinking that the first option would take too long, al-Owhali pulled a stun grenade from his belt and began yelling at the guard in English, demanding that he raise the drop bar. But the guard refused. So al-Owhali pulled the pin on the grenade and threw it at him, causing a loud explosion. The guard ducked the grenade and ran away, yelling “terrorism! terrorism.” This left

the drop bar down, denying Azzam access to the target area.

As pedestrians fled the area, people inside the embassy came to the windows to see what was going on—thus exposing themselves to glass and steel encasing the offices. Azzam moved the truck in a position parallel to the embassy—still outside the drop bar zone, but close enough to accomplish the mission. Azzam then drew the Beretta from al-Owhali's jacket and started firing at the embassy's windows. Now even more people scattered from the area, leaving both the truck where it should not have been, and al-Owhali standing alone at the drop bar with nothing to do.

Al-Owhali started running, following the others to safety. A moment later, Azzam pressed the detonator switch.

With a deafening roar, a red-orange fireball lit the sky as the payload tore upward at 21,000 miles an hour, ripping a huge crater from the ground to the roof of the building. The blast hurled people through the air, crushing them under falling walls and ceilings as the gouged rear face came down in a cascade of concrete, steel, and shattered glass.

#### *And in Dar es Salaam*

KK Mohamed did just as he was told. At about 10:00 a.m., he left House 213 with Ahmed the German. When the Nissan Atlas stopped at Uhuru Street, Mohamed got out and began running back to the safe house to pray, as Ahmed continued on his own.

Around 10:30, Ahmed pulled up to one of the vehicular gates at the embassy. In front of him was a huge water tanker driven by an African named Yusufu Ndange, husband and father of six children. Ndange was making his weekly stop at the compound to replenish the embassy's water supply (a routine activity that was obviously overlooked by Saleh's operatives in their surveillance runs.) One guard was standing behind the water tanker. Two guards were standing

inside the nearby guard booth, and two more were in the pedestrian entrance screening area near the annex. Inside the screening area was a small crowd of young Tanzanians waiting to be admitted to the annex to process their student visas for the upcoming fall semester at U.S. colleges and universities.

No one really knows what happened next, but a leading theory is this: Because of the recent change in security procedures at the embassy, Ahmed was forced to stay outside the perimeter (again, this routine activity was overlooked by Saleh's planners) where he was next in line to be searched after the guard had finished searching the water tanker. Unable to penetrate the embassy's outer security, and with time running out on the plan to simultaneously attack the embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Ahmed went ahead and pressed the detonator switch from where he sat—some thirty-five feet from the outer wall of the embassy building.

The force of the blast propelled the water tanker over three stories into the air. By the time it came crashing down against the embassy building, all five guards were dead along with Yusufu Ndange and five students near the annex. In all, the explosion killed eleven people, all Africans, and injured eighty-five others. Ahmed the German was eviscerated with the bomb truck.

### **Aftermath**

Al-Owhali was laying face-down on the pavement, bleeding from the head. The bomb's concussion had knocked him down a short distance from the embassy. Haile Selassie Avenue was strewn with hunks of concrete, twisted steel, and broken glass. Several buses lay burning with corpses hanging from the windows. The Co-op Bank Building had collapsed into the embassy's emergency generator, spilling thousands of gallons of diesel fuel into the embassy

basement. The diesel fuel ignited and huge plumes of black smoke and fire were now billowing from the gutted building. Burning bodies were spread all over, others were buried under a mountain of debris. The vast majority were Kenyans.

As sirens shrieked by, al-Owhali picked himself up and walked to a nearby clinic, which was just beginning to receive its first wave of victims. As he waited for treatment, al-Owhali realized that he still had a stun grenade tucked into his belt, so he removed the device and threw it into a trash can.

Al-Owhali received some first aid and was taken by ambulance to the MP Sha Hospital. After registering in the name of “Khalid Saleh,” he received stitches to his forehead, right hand, and wrist. Upon being discharged, al-Owhali walked to the street and weighed his options.

They were few. Since he had failed to complete his martyrdom mission, al-Owhali was stuck without a plan. He was in a foreign city with no money, no plane ticket, no passport, and no official identity documents. He knew no one in Nairobi, nor did he speak Swahili. He had only the blood-stained clothes on his back; and in his pockets, three bullets and a key to the padlock on the back of the now-destroyed truck bomb. Since these items could incriminate him in the attack, al-Owhali went back inside the hospital and entered the men’s room where he washed the keys and bullets in the sink to remove his fingerprints. Then he tried to flush them down the toilet; but that failed, so al-Owhali retrieved the items and hid them on a window ledge inside the men’s room. Then he left the hospital on foot.

Al-Owhali walked the streets trying to find his way back to the villa, where he had left his passport and cash. But he had not taken the time to familiarize himself with the city, so he couldn’t find Runda Estates. The only other place he knew was the Ramada Inn where he had

briefly stayed upon arriving in Nairobi on August 2. So al-Owhali hailed a cab and took it to the Ramada where he asked the driver to wait for his fare. Al-Owhali went inside and spoke to the clerk who had checked him in days earlier, explaining that he had been injured in the embassy blast and had lost all of his money and travel documents as well. The clerk took sympathy on al-Owhali and agreed to advance him cab fare and a room for the night, with the understanding that al-Owhali would pay him back once he could contact “people from Yemen” who would assist him. Al-Owhali then checked into Room 7.

The clerk left the hotel and went to the home of someone he knew from Yemen, seeking help for the man who had been injured in the bombing. Awhile later, the clerk returned to Room 7 with a change of clothes. Al-Owhali showered, put on the new clothes, and threw the old ones in a drawer. These items would later be found by police, but by this time law enforcement had already made a major break in the case by taking advantage of a simple routine activity and an amazing display of criminal incompetence.

### *Meltdown in Karachi*

Mohamed Odeh checked through the immigration section at Karachi airport on the morning of August 7, shortly after the attacks. The first immigration officer who looked at his passport saw no problems and waved Odeh through. But then a supervisor took a second look at the passport and noticed that something wasn't right. Although Odeh's Yemeni passport appeared to be legitimate, the photo did not match. It showed a man with a beard, when Odeh had already shaved his off—on Saleh's orders—so that he wouldn't stand out as a religious zealot. Saleh had made yet another crucial mistake.

Odeh tried to bribe the immigration officers, but there were no takers. So the officers took

Odeh aside and put him in a room where they planned to conduct further questioning when time allowed. Over the next several hours, the officers heard news of the bombings on the BBC. Approaching Odeh, an officer asked: “Are you a terrorist?” Odeh did not reply. When the officer specifically asked whether he had been involved in the Nairobi bombing, Odeh attempted to persuade him that the attack was justified. In the name of Islam, it was the right thing to do. This captured the officer’s attention, at which point Odeh was turned over to Pakistani intelligence. Over the next three days, Odeh made a full confession.

Odeh admitted his participation in the Nairobi plot, boasting of his expertise in explosives and intelligence gathering. He went on to describe the meeting at the Hilltop Hotel in Nairobi, telling interrogators that six other conspirators had left Kenya before the explosion and had arrived at the Karachi airport on different flights between August 5 and August 7. Odeh admitted that even he, a senior operative, did not know about the involvement of certain individuals in the bombing when they met on the same flight from Nairobi to Karachi. He told interrogators that the bomb had been built at 43 Runda Estates, and identified the names of others, including Saleh and Abdel Rahman, who had participated in the Dar es Salaam attack. (Later, upon searching Odeh’s hut in Witu, investigators would find a drawing of the entryway to the Nairobi embassy and a configuration of the planned bomb blast.) But most importantly, Odeh confessed to being a member of al-Qaeda, under the leadership of Osama bin Laden.

This information was immediately passed on to the FBI, thereby giving the Bureau its first solid lead connecting bin Laden to the East African embassy bombings.

### *Loose Ends*

Successful terrorism conspiracies are characterized by criminal competencies and

organizational contingencies. After August 7, al-Qaeda had neither. Al-Owhali was stuck in Room 7 at the Ramada Inn with no money and no plan to get out of Nairobi. What's more, he had no support system. Beginning on the morning of August 8, al-Owhali began making a series of desperate collect calls to al-Hazza in Yemen, seeking money transfers and false travel documents. He also asked his friend to contact Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and relay the message that al-Owhali "did not travel"—a code meaning that he did not die in the bombing. (Later intelligence would suggest that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed flew into Nairobi before the attack.)

Al-Hazza eventually wired a \$1,000 (US) transfer to al-Owhali, which he picked up at a jewelry store near the Ramada on or about August 11. Yet there was no word from Khalid Sheikh Mohammed; essentially, al-Owhali had been hung out to dry. After reimbursing the Ramada clerk for money owed him, al-Owhali relocated to the Iftin Lodge in the Eastleigh district. With still no identity documents in his possession, al-Owhali used the hospital form he had acquired on August 7 and registered at the lodge as "Khalid Saleh."

By now, the FBI and Kenyan law enforcement were deeply involved in the bombing investigation. On August 12, the Nairobi police received a tip that one of the bombers might be among the injured. The police tracked the information to the MP Sha Hospital and discovered the record of "Khalid Saleh" who had been treated and released hours after the explosion. The Kenyan Criminal Investigation Division (CID) then tracked "Saleh" to the Iftin Lodge. Because he could produce no official identification, the CID agents took him into custody.

For two solid weeks, al-Owhali maintained his front. He told investigators that his name was Khalid Saleh. He said that he was a Yemeni in Nairobi to visit his uncle and that he was simply walking by the embassy when the bomb exploded. Later, after being turned over to the



FBI, al-Owhali broke down and confessed his role in the affair. In explaining his ties to al-Qaeda, al-Owhali gave up the names of the other members of his cell, along with their physical descriptions and an account of their activities.

### **Criminal Skills, Al-Qaeda, and U.S. Counter-Terrorism**

Viewed from a criminological perspective, these cases provide several insights into al-Qaeda's terrorist-oriented criminality. First, like the World Trade Center bombers, al-Qaeda demonstrated variable competencies ranging from highly sophisticated methods of surveillance, financing, communications, and bomb-building to highly unsophisticated techniques of seizing buildings, coordinating points of bomb detonation, and executing effective getaways. Much like the World Trade Center attack, the embassy bombings were technical failures inasmuch as they did not accomplish their primary goal: To kill Americans on a vast scale. Because of al-Qaeda's inability to capitalize on routine activities surrounding embassy security, neither truck bomb ended up where it was supposed to be.

Second, training matters. Every one of the East African operatives attended al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan where they honed skills that made the terrorist attacks possible. Some of these men were, however, vastly overtrained relative to their assignments and others were either undertrained or they exhibited a singular stupidity in criminal affairs. Mohammed al-Owhali attended no less than five different al-Qaeda camps where he was trained in tactics ranging from light weaponry, explosives, and communications to hijacking, seizing buildings, kidnaping, and cell management. Yet his assignment in Kenya involved little more than using a pistol to subdue an unarmed guard. And at that, he failed miserably. Not only was KK Mohamed trained by al-Qaeda in the use of weapons, rocket launchers, and surface-to-air missiles, but he did two tours

of duty as a weapons trainer in Somalia. Yet Mohamed was little more than a low-level “gofer” in the Tanzania operation—he rented a house, bought a truck, crushed some TNT, and rode part way to the target site. Despite his vaulted status as one of bin Laden’s most accomplished military commanders, Seleh failed to detect some easily-observable security changes at the embassy in Dar es Salaam. He also defaulted on his responsibility to manage the operation’s most audacious loose canon, Mohamed Odeh. And while Odeh may have effectively applied his explosives training to constructing the bombs, when it came to acquiring a travel documents, managing money, concealing incriminating evidence, and crossing international borders, his performance was outrageously bad.

The United States implemented an array of responses to the embassy bombings. The most successful responses drew on these criminological implications. That included the vast international law enforcement manhunts that led to the arrests of KK Mohamed and Ahmed Ghailani. Like all operatives in the embassy plot, Mohamed had been instructed to never leave behind anything connecting him to the attacks. Odeh’s confession had led agents to the Dar es Salaam bomb factory, however, and that investigation led them to Mohamed’s family home in Kidimni on Zanibar Island where they discovered a TNT grinder. Interrogations of Mohamed’s family led agents to Cape Town, South Africa, where they arrested Mohamed in October 1999 while he was working at a Burger World restaurant. Several years later, Ahmed Ghailani was taken into custody following a dramatic gun battle with police in the eastern Pakistan city of Gujrat. Ghailani had come to the city to obtain false travel documents as part of a plan to flee the country. Gujrat was chosen because it is a notorious hub of illegal human trafficking.

Actions taken by the United States that disregarded these sorts of routine activities and

criminal skills would lead, however, to even deadlier forms of terrorism in the future.

The primary purpose of U.S. policy toward al-Qaeda after August 1998 was to kill Osama bin Laden and his top lieutenants. The secondary purpose was to interrupt al-Qaeda's ability to wage another attack. The day after the bombings, the CIA determined that bin Laden and several hundred al-Qaeda members were expected to gather at three training camps near Khowst, to plan future strikes. Nearly two weeks later, on August 20, Navy ships in the Arabian Sea fired eighty Tomahawk cruise missiles at the camps. Neither bin Laden or any other terrorist was there, however, and the missiles killed twenty-six Afghan-Arabs. On the same day, the United States bombed the al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, Sudan, which intelligence reports said was producing a precursor ingredient for VX nerve gas with bin Laden's financial backing. Yet subsequent analysis found no trace of the VX precursor, EMPTA, and the attack set off a firestorm of criticism in the international press.

These unsuccessful interventions also set off a policy debate about the efficacy of U.S. intelligence. That uncertainty would ultimately extend to the matter of bin Laden's terrorist training camps in Afghanistan. *The 9/11 Commission Report* makes this point abundantly clear (pg. 120):

Defense Secretary William Cohen told us Bin Ladin's [sic] training camps were primitive, built with 'rope ladders'; General [Hugh] Sheldon called them 'jungle gym' camps. Neither thought them worthwhile targets for very expensive missiles. President Clinton and [White House Chief of Staff Sandy] Berger also worried...that attacks that missed Bin Ladin could enhance his stature and win him new recruits...[Moreover,] attacks in Afghanistan offered 'little benefit, lots of blowback against [a] bomb-happy

U.S.’

Hence, bin Laden’s terrorist training camps would remain unmolested.

If the period after the embassy bombings was critical in shaping U.S. policy toward bin Laden, then it was a watershed in the evolution of al-Qaeda. According to the *Report*, upon his capture in 2003 Khalid Sheikh Mohammed told interrogators that the 1998 embassy bombings convinced him that bin Laden was “truly committed to attacking the United States.” And in early 1999, bin Laden gave Mohammed the green light for organizing the 9/11 attacks. Later that year, the highjacking teams began training at the al Faruq camp near Kandahar.

**CASE FOUR:**  
**MACHINE GUNS AND DESTRUCTIVE DEVICES**

Historically, terrorism in the United States has taken two forms: Vigilante terrorism and insurgent terrorism. Vigilante groups have attempted to defend the status quo by using terrorist tactics on a local level. The Ku Klux Klan's reign of terror following the Civil War is a prime example. Insurgent groups, on the other hand, have attempted to change public policies by taking direct action against the state. Groups like the Black Panthers and the Weathermen of the late 1960s were the antithesis of vigilantism because they aimed to destroy the status quo.

This trend began to shift in the early 1980s due to the criminal activities of a secret collective of paramilitary survivalists, tax protestors, bankrupt farmers, skinheads, and ex-convicts motivated by an extreme right-wing political ideology. Rather than maintaining the status quo or influencing government policies, their sole objective was mass murder. They would assassinate federal officials, politicians, police officers, and Jews. They would sabotage gas pipelines, blow up electrical power grids, and derail passenger trains. They would rob banks, armored trucks, and military installations. They would burn churches and synagogues. They would attempt to poison municipal water supplies with chemical agents. And they would bomb federal buildings, including the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Their story begins with a racist terrorist organization called the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA).

**Background**

On April 19, 1985, the FBI attempted to serve a warrant on the CSA at its fortified

compound in rural Arkansas. After a four-day standoff between two-hundred law-enforcement officers and the CSA's "Home Guard," agents entered the encampment and discovered a stockpile of illegal weapons and ammunition, including thirty-five machine guns, fifteen automatic rifles, silencers and hand grenades, three anti-aircraft rockets, fifty pounds of military plastic explosives, three-hundred blasting caps, a thousand rounds of ammunition, and two-thousand feet of detonator cord. Agents also found thirty gallons of cyanide which the CSA planned to unload into the water supply of Washington, D.C. Although the CSA was part of a larger conspiracy involving dozens of extremists, three men were primarily responsible for its criminality.

### *The Preacher*

The first was CSA founder James D. Ellison. Ellison was born in 1940, somewhere in Illinois, to parents of Caucasian and Cherokee Indian heritage. When he was fourteen years old, Ellison's father was killed in a traffic accident, leaving the teenager to care for his mother and younger siblings. His father's untimely death also coincided with Ellison's conversion to fundamentalist Christianity. Ellison matured quickly and avoided the temptations of alcohol and drugs. After graduating from high school, he married a woman named Cheryl and enrolled in Lincoln Bible College, a seminary affiliated with the Church of Christ in Lincoln, Illinois. But Ellison was expelled prior to graduation for questioning church doctrine. Nevertheless, in 1962 Ellison moved to San Antonio, Texas, where he somehow became an ordained minister in the Church of Christ.

Evangelists often claim that they have been "slain in spirit"—possessed so completely by Jesus's love that they've died themselves—but Ellison *did* nearly die during a religious awakening

in 1970. In later sermons, Ellison claimed that he experienced an epiphany in April of that year following a construction accident. While working on a building as an iron worker, Ellison fell to the ground and was struck by a steel beam. The young minister broke his back and both legs, as well as all of his ribs and left ankle.

Doctors did not expect Ellison to live. Two weeks later, however, he was back on the pulpit declaring that God had spared him for a reason. For the next nine months Ellison preached feverishly about the accident in the context of God's judgements in the Book of Revelation. One by one, Ellison began to draw a following; and in 1971 the Ellisons and seven other families moved to a farm in Elijah, Missouri, where they established a Christian commune. "While I was praying," Ellison later explained to an Oklahoma grand jury, "God directed me to come to this part of the country, and acquire land, and establish a place of refuge for people that needed a place to live." Over the next few years, though, one by one Ellison lost his following. Cheryl also abandoned him after years of physical abuse at the hands of Ellison, leaving the preacher to raise five children by himself.

In 1972, Ellison met Ollie Stewart, an attractive twenty-two-year-old bank employee from Lewis Springs, Missouri. The daughter of a Church of Christ minister, Ollie was on the mend from an abusive relationship with her former husband, who had left her with a mountain of debt and sole custody of their mentally retarded two-year-old daughter. "She enjoyed spending time with men," said Ellison's confidant, Kerry Noble. "Ollie found strength in Ellison. He was a handsome and charismatic pastor. He gave her safety."

In 1976, Ellison bought a 224-acre plot of land from the Fellowship of Christian Athletes on the shore of Bull Shoals Lake in the Ozark Mountains of northern Arkansas, just south of the

Missouri line. Soon Ellison began to attract fundamentalists unhappy with mainstream churches who were looking for a more authentic Christian experience. Though mostly poor and rootless young couples in their early thirties, Ellison's flock also included a smattering of ex-convicts and ultimately some four-hundred recovering drug addicts, primarily young and destitute.

The layout of the land provided a natural parceling into three settlements. On the "main compound," Ellison and his followers constructed primitive housing, barns, sheds, a machine shop, and a large stone building—called the Sanctuary—which served as a combination church-school. Also on the main compound was a saw mill and a salvage business that generated modest revenues for the community. Adjacent to the lake was the "plateau compound" and further inland was the "valley compound." In these areas, the commune's men, women, and children worked a large garden providing an abundance of fresh vegetables. Cows, goats, hogs, sheep, chickens, and horses grazed nearby. Ellison christened his idyllic setting Zarepath-Horeb. In the Old Testament, Zarepath was a Phoenician seaside village; Horeb was the Old Testament name for Mount Sinai, where God appeared in the burning bush to Moses. Ellison's group had little interest in politics, left or right, and discussions about race and anti-Semitism were virtually non-existent. "Our objective," Ellison said at the time, "is to simply be free to exercise our rights the way we want to."

Daily life inside Zarepath-Horeb was highly regimented by Ellison and six elders. Smoking, drinking, and swearing were strictly prohibited. Work was mandatory and all material property (wedding rings, family heirlooms, vehicles and the like) were turned over to the "Body"—or the organization as a whole. In prayer services, Ellison used the scriptures to warn his flock about America's imminent social and economic decline. Because of this, Ellison asserted



that Christians must develop the capacity to survive.

Then, in early 1978, Ellison claimed to have a vision of a coming apocalypse. In sermons he began to prophesy that the end of the world would come on August 12, 1978—the ninth of Ab on the Jewish calendar, when Jews celebrate the destruction of both the First and Second Temples. Following the Tribulation—fires, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes—criminal gangs would spill out of American cities into the countryside like a swarm of locusts, plundering, raping, and killing. “It will get so bad,” Ellison warned, “that parents will eat their children...Maggot infested bodies will lie everywhere.” Christians would be unable to defend themselves against this cataclysm and millions would die. To defend themselves against the catastrophe, the residents of Zarepath-Horeb were required to study paramilitary tactics.

Accordingly, during 1978 and 1979 Ellison and his followers spent an estimated \$52,000 on weapons, ammunition, and military equipment. Most of the firearms were purchased without paperwork at gun shows in Arkansas and Missouri, using money generated from the commune’s businesses. They included an array of 9 mm and .38 and .45-caliber pistols, assault rifles, and 12-gauge shotguns. To train his congregation in the use of these weapons, Ellison appointed as his “defense minister” a young man named Randall Rader.

### *The Rock Star*

Rader would play a crucial role in taking Zarepath-Horeb from a peaceful commune of pious Christians to a violent paramilitary sect. Yet he was an unlikely candidate for that calling. Randall Rader was born in the farming community of West Plains, Missouri, in 1951. Upon graduating from high school in 1969, Rader moved to Los Angeles where he became a guitar player in several fledgling rock bands. Catching the final flames of California flower power,

Rader became a regular user of LSD, marijuana, speed, and downers. After four years of this, Rader experienced an epiphany of his own.

In 1974, on a visit back home to West Plains, Rader attended a fundamentalist religious revival. Something in the preacher's message moved him deeply. Repentant for his decadent lifestyle, Rader proclaimed his sorrow and accepted Jesus as his personal savior. It was a miraculous conversion. Rader became a devout Christian and began to envision the destruction of Western civilization and the epic role he may play in preventing it. At a 1975 meeting at the Methodist Church in West Plains, Rader met Pastor Ellison.

In 1976, Rader married a woman from Chicago named Kathy James. The couple settled into a dwelling on the main compound and in the fall of 1977 Rader became a church elder. He began his work as Ellison's defense minister a year later. Little in the once-aspiring rock star's background prepared him for commando training. While he had hunted with his father as a boy, Rader had no formal military training. Yet as he had done first with his music career and then with his religious conversion, Rader threw himself into his new assignment, presiding over weekly military meetings and compiling a library of books on military tactics and firearms. He even learned to decipher gun manuals written in Chinese and German.

To supplement income from the logging and salvage businesses, in the summer of 1979 Ellison moved to Missouri where he took a job building Minuteman missile silos for the military—then the biggest weapons in America's nuclear arsenal. By now, with the summer of 1978 come and gone, some of the residents had become disappointed with Ellison's prophecies. Rader was one of them. In Ellison's absence, Rader tried to take over the group and steer it into a more forceful direction. This began when he brought a double-edged sword to the Sanctuary

services one night. Taking the platform, Rader struck a post with his weapon and threatened to do the same to another member's head. In his memoir, *Tabernacle of Hate*, fellow CSA elder Kerry Noble recalls that "Randall turned into a dictator, wanting to rule by fear and intimidation...Suddenly he was wearing a Nazi-like uniform, often carrying a German bullwhip and even wearing a monocle." Angry with Ellison's failed prophecy about the apocalypse, Rader took matters into his own hands. His first step was to convert the group's legal semi-automatic weapons into illegal automatics—essentially machine guns.

When Ellison returned at the end of the summer, he brought something with him that only fueled Rader's extremism. While in Missouri, Ellison met Dan Gayman, pastor of the Church of Israel near Schell City. Gayman had introduced Ellison to the odd religion known as Christian Identity, a theology that gives the blessing of God to the racist cause. (Also attending Gayman's church during this period was the young Eric Rudolph who would later use his Identity teachings as justification for a series of bombings throughout the South, including the 1996 Centennial Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta.) The Identity creed proceeds from the notion that Jews are the children of Satan, while white "Aryans" are the descendants of the biblical tribes of ancient Israel and thus are God's chosen people. Identity further holds that the world is on the verge of a final, apocalyptic struggle between good and evil, and that Aryans must do battle with the Jewish conspiracy and its allies so that the world can be saved.

After hearing a tape of Gayman's preaching combined with patriotic music, Ellison's congregation began a gradual transformation toward the religion. Although Ellison took the reins away from Rader and berated him for converting the firearms to machine guns, Ellison nevertheless adopted his defense minister's reasoning for doing so; namely, that sophisticated

weaponry would be needed for protection against rioting hordes once the federal government collapsed under the weight of its own Jewish-inspired deceptions. The machine guns stayed and the commune became a criminal enterprise.

Over the next six months, the residents of Zarepath-Horeb engaged in intense study of Christian Identity. They prayed about it with passion. And, ultimately, they embraced the doctrine without reservation. And this contributed to the group's criminality. Most notably, Ellison used the Identity philosophy to rename his commune the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord. Ellison designed an emblem for the CSA featuring a rainbow for the *covenant*, pierced by a flaming *sword*. Devotees were the *arm of the Lord*. Ellison insisted that every commune member sign a "Declaration of Non-Surrender," in which they vowed to fight to the death for Jesus Christ. He also insisted that they donate their individual salaries for the logging and salvage work to the Body, and burn any remaining vestiges of their pre-Identity lives, including keepsakes and high school yearbooks. They destroyed their radios, televisions, and any other reminders of the outside world. Yet the greatest change came in the build up of paramilitary forces.

Ellison instructed the men to shave their beards and cut their hair short. They were issued camouflage uniforms with the CSA logo on shoulder patches, along with red berets and combat boots. Every man was given a pistol and rifle. Concrete-enforced bunkers, hedgehogs, pillboxes, razor wire fences, a communications center, and a military storage unit were added to the main compound. Tunnels were dug between the houses and the bunkers. Shooting portals were built into the Sanctuary. A sixty-five foot radio tower went up. Next to the creek across from the valley compound, Rader constructed a firing range. Lookouts and foot patrols were posted

throughout the area. Klansmen appeared at the commune and the CSA began a mail-order service for such hard-to-find neo-Nazi hate literature as the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, *The Negro and the World Crisis*, and *The Holy Book of Adolf Hitler*.

And Ellison's sermons became absolutely electrifying. In a late 1979 service, he stood before his armed warriors and proclaimed:

The Jews have declared war on our race, promoting race-mixing and thereby polluting the pure seed of God. This ZOG, this Zionist Occupied Government, is killing our white babies through abortion! It is destroying white minds with its humanistic teaching of evolution! I tell you this—niggers may be descended from apes, but my ancestors never swung from trees by their tails. In order to preserve our Christian heritage and race, it is our right, our patriotic duty, to overthrow the Anti-Christ government....Prepare for war, O Israel! Wake up the mighty men! Let the men of war come near. Beat your plowshares into spears and your pruning hooks into swords. Let the weak say, 'I am strong'!

In the spring of 1980, the CSA sold their hogs, believing them to be unclean. They celebrated their first Passover complete with a slaughtered lamb and blood sprinkled on the door posts of Ellison's house. Ellison's men of war were now the true children of Israel. "Now we were no longer Christian survivalists," wrote Noble, "but we were white supremacists!" Around this time, Ellison replaced his failed prophecy with a new forecast: God had warned him that a war against the forces of ZOG was imminent. To further prepare for the struggle ahead, the CSA would need to fortify its resources.

The CSA's first felony took place on April 18, 1980, when Ellison directed Rader to help Ellison's sister, Jean Troxell, with an insurance scam by burning down her house located near the

CSA property. With several others, including Ellison's teenaged son, Rader assisted in the arson which resulted in an \$11,000 settlement.

Rader's criminal skills were also developing in the area of gun smithing. Working out of the machine shop, Rader turned his attention to converting Chinese AK 47 and German Heckler & Koch assault rifles into fully automatic weapons. He did so by modifying the bolt carriers, trigger packs, and trigger housings—a process that allows the trigger hammer to follow the bolt carrier forward when the rifle is fired. (The hammer-follow-down results in automatic fire.) The modification was completed by adding flash suppressors to the firearms, or devices that swallow flames spit out by a gun's firepower. Kent Yates, a Vietnam veteran and former Green Beret who had been trained as a demolitions expert during the war, assisted Rader by manufacturing silencers—made from aluminum tubing, rubber, and Allan bolts—as well as land mines and hand grenades made from C-4 explosives and dynamite.

Rader also began to fashion exotic weaponry. This included a firearm that eventually become legendary among right-wing activists of the era. Back in 1979, on a visit to a gun shop in nearby Mountain Home, Arkansas, Rader had purchased an Ingram MAC-10 machine pistol. As manufactured by Military Armament Corporation (MAC), the gun was a legal semi-automatic. Once converted to a machine gun, the MAC 10 was one of the most gruesome weapons ever made. The gun resembled a small metal box mounted lengthwise on its side, a trigger on the underside, with a slot for the ammunition clip serving as the grip. It had a short barrel which Yates threaded for a silencer. Rader then added a takedown pin, enlarged the bolt handle, and wrapped the pistol grip with camouflage tape. The result was a weapon that was worthless from a distance, but at close range it was a meat grinder. Rader's MAC-10 could fire more than nine-

hundred rounds per minute, fifteen bullets a second. It had only one purpose: to kill another human being with extreme prejudice.

But Rader's pride and joy was a paramilitary training school he built next to the firing range called Silhouette City. Modeled after the FBI's shooting range at Quantico, Virginia, Silhouette City was designed to resemble an urban intersection, complete with buildings arranged along four streets, abandoned automobiles, and silhouettes of a state trooper wearing a Star of David and the Israeli leaders Menachem Begin and Golda Meir. Trainees were drilled in "Christian martial arts," rifle and pistol marksmanship, and wilderness survival. Specialized instruction involved capturing buildings, repelling facades, and planting bombs, all of which was spelled out in Rader's *Christian Army Basic Training Manual* (which remains to this day the most comprehensive guide to guerilla operations ever printed in the United States). The school charged a \$500 tuition and it was a resounding success. By early 1982, Silhouette City was known throughout the racist right, as applications poured in from white activists across the nation.

By now, Rader had matured into a supremely competent leader who commanded some forty men. "Randall Rader was not someone you would call 'Randy,'" said Noble. "He was 6 foot-two, muscular, with brown hair cut short, and good looking." But he was also as cold and ruthless as a man could be. Noble recalls times when Rader would use his bullwhip to strike men under his command for not working hard enough. He took survivalism to its limits. Once Rader killed and skinned his own dog and then ate its raw meat to demonstrate his commitment to the cause. In their authoritative book on the radical right, *The Silent Brotherhood*, Kevin Flynn and Gary Gerhardt write that "It was Rader who was most responsible for the CSA's enjoying the

reputation it had throughout the right wing for militant survival training.” As a result of his reputation, Rader ultimately attracted one of the most violent men the right has ever known.

### *The Predator*

To advertise the group’s elite training and spread the news about its Identity ministry, in 1980 Ellison began publishing a monthly newsletter called the *C.S.A. Journal*. Along with hundreds, maybe thousands, of Americans, Richard Snell became a subscriber. And after meeting Ellison and Rader at a 1981 Christian-Patriot Defense League meeting, Snell and his wife, Mary, became regular visitors at the CSA compound.

Born in 1931, Richard Wayne Snell spent his entire adult life in southern Oklahoma. Snell was a burly, white-bearded racist who worked as an international importer when he came to the CSA. He was also a man with profound personal problems. A court-appointed psychiatrist would later diagnose Snell as suffering from a “paranoid personality disorder” that manifested itself in a conspiratorial view of history. Specifically, Snell believed that the U.S. government had fallen prey to a shadowy group of conspirators known as ZOG—Zionist Occupied Government—and that members of this cabal had persecuted him personally. This persecution was first displayed in Snell’s loss of his photography business in the 1960s, with Snell believing that he had been driven from the business by agents of ZOG. Snell’s paranoia was exacerbated by the December 1978 suicide of his son, Ken, due to a self-inflicted gunshot wound while in the throws of drug addiction. Again, Snell saw his son’s suicide as the fault of ZOG—the government entity ultimately responsible for the proliferation of drugs in America.

Snell’s affiliation with the CSA occurred on the heels of yet another devastating personal loss. By 1982, after years of financial setbacks, Snell had become impoverished. Unable to pay



back taxes he owed to the Internal Revenue Service, Snell was served an arrest warrant and the IRS hauled Snell into court, where they obtained an order to seize all of his personal property. A combined IRS and FBI task force raided Snell's property, impounding his home, land, and vehicles. This was the event that pushed Snell over the edge. Snell would never forget the agents who had humiliated him. Nor would he forget where they worked—at the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

### **The Plot**

The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord did not emerge in a social vacuum. By the early 1980s, mainstream American culture had become anchored in conservatism, patriotism, and traditional family values that were at the heart of a growing religious revival waged by the fundamentalist Christian right. These were the days of the Reverend Jerry Falwell's "moral majority," a 6.5-million member political action group, which was waging a well-heeled campaign for the acceptance of Christian education in public schools and legal sanctions against abortion, pornography, homosexuality, and other forms of "immorality." Of the 80 million television sets studied by the Nielsen rating service during this period, 68 million were tuned at least once a month to such fundamentalist programs as Pat Robertson's *The 700 Club*, *The Jimmy Swaggart Ministry*, *The Oral Roberts Ministry*, and Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker's *PTL Club*.

Terrorism scholar Jeffrey Kaplan argues that "Ellison's compound...[exhibited a] complete alienation from the surrounding culture." That is true, but only up to a point. The CSA was certainly isolated physically from the surrounding culture. There were no telephones, radios, or TVs at the compound. The nearest town was forty miles away and the nearest paved highway

was nine miles away. Yet despite these obstacles, the CSA managed to stay connected with the local culture by marching in lockstep with the Reagan-era Zeitgeist.

“We *were* isolated, but in ‘80 we started going public with our beliefs,” said Noble.

Himself a former counselor for *The 700 Club* and a father of six children, Noble recalls that the CSA was the focus of extensive media coverage in the early 1980s. The *Los Angeles Times*, the *Arizona Republic*, the *Dallas Morning News*, *ABC News*, the British Broadcasting Corporation, along with television reporters from St. Louis and Chicago—all visited Bull Shoals Lake and filed favorable reports about the one-hundred men, women, and children who lived there. “Although our doctrine was extreme,” writes Nobel, “we were considered hard workers by neighbors [and] we didn’t cause problems....We had our own private school, with children unaffected by drugs, violence, abusive parents, child molesters, or kidnapers.”

The CSA operated not as a cult, therefore, but as an open religious community with strong conservative values that resonated deeply with the mainstream political establishment. Ellison’s flock did not conceal their contempt for the federal government—or, for what President Reagan derisively called “big government”—instead they disseminated their views widely in the *C.S.A. Journal*. Along with its editorials, the *Journal* regularly carried instructions for the use of fully automatic weapons, as well as detailed guides for hand-to-hand combat (one article describes how to slit the throat of an enemy with a buck knife). For awhile, the CSA ran a health food store in Mountain Home, and Noble wrote letters to the editor of the town’s *Baxter Bulletin*, urging Christians to follow Biblical teachings rather than obey secular laws. Ellison held an annual convention at the CSA. His advertisements for these gatherings were carried in such publications as the *Eagle*, a nationally-distributed survivalist magazine, and they included

opportunities to participate in guerrilla training at Silhouette City. Randall Rader felt comfortable enough in the local community to once contemplate a run for the elected office of county constable. Ellison remained on good terms with the Marion county sheriff, Roger Edmondson. Their relationship was so agreeable, in fact, that at Ellison's request Edmondson periodically ran background checks on individuals seeking refuge at the commune.

Spurred by the positive media attention and the favorable relationships CSA enjoyed with the locals, Ellison continued his pattern of re-forecasting doomsday prophecies. In his most recent vision, Ellison received word that he was sinless and invincible. He was nothing less than the reincarnation of the biblical King David. This led Ellison to proclaim in 1982 that he was "King James of the Ozarks." Ellison was so-coronated in a Christian Identity ceremony presided over by Pastor Robert Millar, who headed the four hundred-acre Identity commune near Muldrow, Oklahoma, called Elohim City (*Elohim* is the Hebrew word for God). Ellison said that God had warned him that war was still approaching, and that he must prepare to defend his congregation against the onslaught of urban infidels. In order finance the resources necessary to defend against that invasion, Ellison preached that it was proper to steal from non-Identity believers, a concept he termed "plundering the Egyptians."

Ellison's proclamation was met with disapproval by the commune's more law-abiding members. Yet this was coupled by an even more unpopular decision made by Ellison in 1982: Because he was above sin, God had told him to take a second wife.

Women play an important role in the racist right. More than anything, racist groups emphasize women's familial roles. At the CSA, according to terrorism scholar Jessica Stern's interview with Kerry Noble's wife, Kay, this was taken to an extreme. "Women called their

husbands 'lord' as a sign of respect," she said, "in imitation of the way the biblical Sarah referred to her husband, Abraham." First and foremost, CSA women were expected to fulfill their obligations to their husbands—and to the movement—by bearing Aryan babies. The women were also expected to act as social facilitators by "going along with the program" as it were. According to sociologist Kathleen Blee, when social ties are strengthened individual racists come to view themselves as part of a larger social movement, thereby giving them a collective identity. In this way, women help create what Blee calls "the 'oppositional subculture' by which organized racism is sustained over time."

Ollie Ellison had done much to fulfill these obligations. By 1982, she had provided her husband with hearth and home by bearing him six children. But Ollie could not go along with the program inspired by Ellison's prophesy on polygamy. Instead, she became despondent over Ellison's decision to take a twenty-nine-year-old minister's daughter from Minnesota, named Annie, as his second wife.

Shortly after this, Ollie started wandering the woods at night, praying to be saved from the Identity philosophy that had influenced her life so deeply. "Ollie was a great woman," said Noble. "But Ellison brought her shame and guilt when he took another wife. She also hated Identity and the paramilitary [training] was a problem for her. It was all over male dominance. She was not a hateful person." Ollie was not alone.

Unwilling to commit crimes for Ellison, and unhappier still with his edict allowing polygamy, dozens of families fled the CSA settlement between 1982 and 1983. This left only the hard-core extremists, as evidenced by Noble's description of life inside the compound:

Ellison had begun letting people move to CSA that we wouldn't have let in years earlier.

Where cigarette smoking had once never been allowed, butts littered the grounds. Where beer drinking had previously not been tolerated, bottles cluttered the trash cans. Where years before a single cuss word was never uttered, foul language flowed steadily. Where once praise meetings were frequent and all were anxious to attend, we seldom had meetings. Ellison was no longer looking for spiritual leaders. Now, he just wanted to build an army.

That suited Rader just fine. In early 1982, he made plans to bomb a dam that controlled the water supply for a three-county area of northern Arkansas. Around the same time, while attending a survivalist seminar in Detroit, Rader and Ellison took possession of a thirty-gallon barrel of cyanide from Pastor Robert Miles, a Michigan Klan leader. “The purpose of the cyanide,” Nobel confessed, “was so that in the future, when the judgement time had arrived, we could dump the cyanide into the water supply systems of major cities, condemning hundreds of thousands of people to death for their sins.”

### *Organization*

In July 1983, Ellison was invited to give the closing address before the Aryan World Congress. The event, scurrilously billed as the “Annual Summer Conference and Nigger Shoot,” was hosted by American neo-Nazi Identity preacher Richard Butler at his rural compound near Hayden Lake, Idaho. In his speech, Ellison announced that the FBI’s recent killing in southern Arkansas of tax protestor Gordon Kahl was a call to arms. Kahl was a member of yet another paramilitary group—the Posse Comitatus—with a sense of living in apocalyptic time. “Kahl was the catalyst,” Ellison said later, “that made everyone come forth and change the [various neo-Nazi] organizations from thinkers to doers.”

That process began with a series of late-night meetings in which Ellison, Butler, Miles, Louis Beam (“ambassador-at-large” for the Aryan Nations), and other Identity leaders discussed how to overthrow the United States Government and create a separate Aryan homeland in the Northwest. These discussions centered on William Pierce’s *The Turner Diaries*, an extremist novel that envisions the Government’s overthrow by a white-supremacist guerrilla force known as The Order. In the book, the group systematically kills Jews and blacks, and then wages war against the U.S. Government through the bombing of FBI headquarters in Washington. From these discussions emerged a sort of specialization within the radical right.

Because Butler’s organization served as the annual Mecca for movement gatherings, Aryan Nations would become the public face of the campaign. The organization would issue press releases, recruit new members, and establish communications systems, including a computer bulletin board. The CSA would serve as the movement’s armorer and training center. Finally, an elite cadre of “Silent Warriors” would mount attacks against the government and its agents, including armed robberies to finance the revolution. This group would be composed of select CSA members, along with a new contingent of activists called the Order.

### **The Attacks**

Ellison returned from the Aryan Congress with more enthusiasm than he’d had in years. He called his elders together and told them that it was finally time to make war. “If the left wing could do it in the sixties,” he said, “the right wing can do it in the eighties.” Emblematic of this new campaign, Ellison delivered his sermons wearing camouflage gear and carrying a gun. He also placed a swastika over the cross in the Sanctuary and ended his prayers with the straight-arm salute. The war, as Noble recalls Ellison’s telling of it, involved “Dumping cyanide into the

reservoirs of major cities, killing federal agents, blowing up an [Anti-Defamation League] building or overpass in major cities; maybe even blowing up a federal building.”

In early August 1983, at Ellison’s command CSA member James Morris stole a load of helmets, uniforms, and other military equipment upon his discharge from the Marines. While this was just the beginning of Ellison’s war on ZOG, in many ways it would be the CSA’s most successful crime. Though long on ideology, the group was short on criminal skill. “The CSA was not very successful,” said Danny Coulson, then head of the FBI’s counter-terrorism unit, “but they were very dangerous.”

On August 9, 1983, Ellison drove CSA elder Bill Thomas to Springfield, Missouri. As Ellison waited in the car under the cover of night, Thomas approached the Metropolitan Community Church, which openly supported gay rights, carrying a gallon of gasoline. Thomas shoved the gas can into the mail slot of the front door and lighted it. Yet the attack was an abject failure: Beyond charring the door, no major damage was done.

Six days later, Ellison and Thomas drove to Bloomington, Indiana, where they cased banks for a robbery. Unable to locate a suitable target, they firebombed the Beth Shalom synagogue. The small explosion destroyed an old Torah and burned a curtain. Beyond that, there was no major damage.

Richard Snell made his debut as an Aryan warrior on November 2 when he, Thomas, and CSA member Steve Scott strapped twenty-three sticks of dynamite to a natural gas pipeline where it crossed the Red River between Mena and Texarkana, Arkansas. Snell and his confederates believed that the pipeline was the major feeder from the gas fields in the Gulf of Mexico to the metropolitan arteries of Chicago, with its vast African American and Latino

populations. “It was winter [sic],” Noble remembered. “We thought people would freeze, that they might start riots.” The dynamite dented the pipe but failed to rupture it. Once more, the CSA had failed to kick off its holy war.

By this time, with most of the hard-working timber and salvage workers gone from the CSA, money had become a serious problem for Ellison. So he ordered his men to step up their efforts to plunder the Egyptians. Small groups were dispatched to nearby towns on shoplifting sprees, concentrating on CB radios, car stereos, portable TVs, and jewelry. (Several vehicles were also stolen and driven to the CSA.) Members would later return this stolen merchandise for cash. Ellison himself participated in the crime spree, but he was not much of a criminal. On one trip to Forth Smith, Arkansas, Ellison was caught shoplifting at a grocery store; the manager simply threw Ellison out without calling the police. Some CSA members planned to rob a pawnshop in Springfield, Missouri, but the robbery never took place. Others planned a jewelry heist in Las Vegas, but it was canceled, too.

The only successful CSA robbery was committed with a ruthlessness that far exceeded its benefit. On November 11, Snell and Thomas robbed a pawnshop in Texarkana. During the holdup, Snell put a Ruger .22-caliber semi-automatic pistol to the head of the proprietor, William Strumpp, assuming him to be Jewish (he was not), and fired three times, killing him. After stealing guns, jewelry, and several thousand dollars in cash, Snell reported back to Ellison and proclaimed that Strumpp was “an evil man, he was a Jew, and he just needed to die.” Later that evening, overcome with guilt, Bill Thomas fled the CSA commune.

By this time—the fall of 1983—Richard and Mary Snell had purchased a small plot of land in Muse, Oklahoma (population 306), where they lived in a house trailer. Snell’s daughter had



recently moved to Robert Millar's Identity enclave up at Elohim City, so there was just the two of them. Outback, Snell and Steve Scott had built a crude survival training camp, and the two had begun to attract a small following. They recruited their men through the usual methods: gun shows, Klan breakfasts, and the like. I spoke with a newspaper editor in the area who once interviewed a Broken Bow (Okla.) gun store owner (now deceased) who knew Snell. One day, according to this source, Snell and Scott were in the store but they weren't interested in buying anything. Instead, they had come to recruit the man into their paramilitary brigade, thinking that a gun store owner could help them. When the owner declined, Snell looked at him with what was described to me as the "coldest, deadest eyes of any human being you ever saw."

Around this time, Snell took a step toward avenging his personal hatred of the federal government. Consistent with *The Turner Diaries*, this plot called for mass murder. According to court documents, in October 1983, Snell came to Ellison and asked him if "in his opinion would it be practical to blow up a federal building in Oklahoma City, or possibly a federal building in Dallas or Fort Worth, Texas." This discussion evolved into a plan to park a vehicle in front of the Oklahoma City Federal Building, and blow it up with rockets detonated by a timer. Snell, Ellison, and Scott subsequently traveled to Oklahoma City where, posing as maintenance workers in brown uniforms, they entered the Murrah Federal Building and assessed what it would take to destroy it. Ellison carried a notepad on which he made sketches showing where the building was most vulnerable to collapse from the explosion of rocket launchers that were to be placed in a van. Ellison said: "[The van] could be driven up to a given spot, parked there, and a timed detonating device could be triggered so that the driver could walk away and leave the vehicle in a position and he would have time to clear the area before the rockets launched."

As these plans progressed, the CSA continued its bleak crusade of terror. In December, 68-year-old William Wade approached Ellison with a plan that also came from the pages of *The Turner Diaries*. Wade owned the land where Gordon Kahl had been killed by federal agents a year earlier. Still bitter over the affair, Wade solicited the CSA's help in assassinating the judge, U.S. attorney, and federal agent who were involved in the prosecution of those who had harbored Kahl. Accordingly, on December 26, Richard Snell along with CSA members Ivan Wade, Lambert Miller, and David McGuire set out for Fort Smith to kill FBI special agent Jack Knox, U.S. District Judge H. Franklin Waters, and U.S. Attorney Asa Hutchinson. But a snow storm prevented the group from reaching Fort Smith, and the assassinations never occurred.

Shortly thereafter Noble began pleading with Ellison to abandon violence and return to spiritual matters. After Ellison accused his top lieutenant of being a traitor, Noble made a desperate bid to prove his loyalty. He traveled to Kansas City, Missouri, with a briefcase full of C-4, dynamite, and a .22 pistol with a silencer on it. Noble had been given orders to blow up an adult bookstore and then go on a shooting rampage at a "queer park." When the bookstore owner wouldn't let him in with his briefcase, Noble decided to bomb a church that ministered to homosexuals. When it came time to set the switch, however, Noble picked up his briefcase and walked away.

#### *Meltdown: "War of '84"*

By end of 1983, Ellison had begun to envision himself as a founding father of the second American revolution, even though his campaign of terror had produced nothing of the kind. In a four-page declaration, entitled the "War of '84," Ellison avowed, "It is inevitable that war is coming to the United States of America...It is predestined!" He implored his warriors "to attack

the enemy at every opportunity.” For Ellison, this was judgement day, the beginning of the great apocalyptic battle itself. The “War of ‘84” would prove to be one more example of Ellison’s delusions of grandeur. Instead, 1984 saw the CSA spiral downward in a series of events distinguished only by their rapacious violence and criminal ineptitude.

First came the absurd plan to strike the Oklahoma City Federal Building with rocket launchers. After casing the Murrah Building, Ellison designed a remote-controlled bomb and asked Kent Yates to put it together for him. In early December 1983, Yates began preparing and testing rockets for the attack. In one of his first test runs, however, a rocket blew up in Yates’ hands, burning them severely. Unable to handle anything, let alone a rocket, Yates’ tenure as the CSA’s munitions expert came to an end. And with it came an end to the CSA’s plan to bomb the Murrah Building. For now at least. Yates’s accident “was interpreted as a sign from God,” Noble warned, “that another plan was to be implemented [at a later date].”

Next came the equally preposterous plan to poison municipal water supplies with thirty gallons of cyanide. As Jessica Stern observes, potassium cyanide *is not* a sophisticated weapon of mass destruction. It is commonly found in rat poison, silver and metal polishes, photographic solutions, and cleaning products. Although cyanide is highly toxic, it is not a simple task to deliver it in a fashion capable of killing large numbers of people. Citing a United Nations study, Stern shows that the amount of potassium cyanide required to poison an untreated reservoir is ten tons. The effects of water dilution on thirty gallons of cyanide would have rendered it completely ineffective. Even if the CSA had dumped the cyanide into the reservoir of a major city—the most frequently mentioned target was the nation’s capitol—reservoir water is routinely tested and treated.

“At one point we put some of the cyanide into hollow point bullets and sealed them with hot wax,” Noble said in my 2004 interview with him. “But other than that, we kept it locked up. Back then there were no books on [chemical warfare], we didn’t have the Internet, and we didn’t really know what we could do with it [the cyanide]. We were ignorant on that kind of thing.” Another reason for the CSA’s ignorance is that Ellison had failed to recruit a specialist in the area of chemical weaponry. In fact, by 1984 the CSA had lost all of its specialists.

That included Randall Rader, who had been gone since late 1982. It was then that Rader was ostracized by the CSA following the tragic death of his thirteen-month-old daughter, who drowned in a basement full of water at the main compound while Rader was supposed to be watching her. Rader drifted aimlessly until he was invited to Idaho to run paramilitary training operations for the Order. “After Rader left,” write Flynn and Gerhardt, “CSA went over the edge.” That became clear with Richard Snell’s final act as a serial predator.

On the morning of June 30, 1984, Snell and Scott were pulled over for a routine traffic violation by state trooper Louis Bryant, a black officer, in DeQueen, Arkansas. Snell opened his door, got out of the vehicle, and drew a .45 caliber pistol that he had previously stolen in the pawnshop robbery. As Bryant approached, Snell shot him in the mid-section, then shot him again as he lay on the ground, killing him.

A trucker saw the incident and called the police. Roadblocks immediately went up twenty-five miles away in Broken Bow, in the direction that Snell would likely be traveling. When Snell reached the roadblock forty minutes later, he again rolled out of his van, pulled a Ruger Mini-14 assault rifle on dozens of officers, and starting firing. The officers shot back and Snell took seven bullets.

The 54-year-old racist was loaded into an ambulance and rushed to the hospital. His heart stopped beating twice along the way, but he was revived both times. When Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agent Bill Buford arrived in Broken Bow to examine the cache of weapons found at the roadblock, he found the Ruger Mini-14 used in the shootout, along with several hand grenades, a silencer for a MAC-10, and a Ruger .22-caliber semi-automatic pistol. Buford also found a crude sketch of his own home. Agent Buford, it seems, was to have been Snell's next victim.

After running a firearms trace, Buford learned that the Ruger Mini-14 had been purchased in Jacksonville, Arkansas, by one James D. Ellison back in 1979. And the .22 Ruger semi-automatic—which subsequent ballistics tests determined was the weapon used in the killing of pawnshop owner William Strumpp—had been purchased several months earlier by Ellison in Marshville, Missouri.

This was the beginning of the end for Ellison and the CSA. At the request of Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, Snell was extradited to Arkansas and charged with capital murder in the Strumpp case. Later that month, Kent Yates was arrested at the compound on an outstanding New Mexico warrant for federal firearms violations. Bill Thomas was later arrested in Missouri on charges stemming from the pawnshop murder. Facing the death penalty, he turned state's evidence against Snell and revealed information about other illegal activities at the CSA. Then, in late August, Ellison received a summons from a federal grand jury in Muskogee, Oklahoma, investigating the murder of trooper Bryant. The grand jury wanted to question Ellison about the guns found in Snell's van at the Broken Bow roadblock.

Ellison had no intention of cooperating and sent a letter back to the grand jury, saying that

he was unable to appear due to problems with the mortgage on his property. A misdemeanor warrant was issued for his arrest and a federal marshal, accompanied by state and federal officers, eventually tracked Ellison to his attorney's office in Yellville, Arkansas. Accompanying Ellison was his "spiritual advisor," Robert Millar. As the agents questioned Millar about his relationship with Ellison, Ellison slipped out the back door, jumped off a thirty-foot cliff, and escaped into the pines. Two days later, however, Ellison was taken into custody in Harrison, Arkansas.

Ellison made his grand jury appearance on September 26, three months after the murder of trooper Bryant. Ellison presented himself as a humble "woodcutter" with an interest in the religious lives of wayward youth, especially those with drug and alcohol problems. When asked about the firearms, Ellison claimed that he had traded the Ruger Mini-14 semi-automatic rifle to Richard Snell for a load of scrap automobile alternators. Ellison said he had no knowledge of Snell's involvement in the killing of officer Bryant, nor did he know anything about the .22-caliber Ruger used in the Strumpp murder. Ellison went on to say that while Snell was a frequent visitor to CSA, Snell was not a member of his congregation, nor did he live at the commune. And with this, Ellison was dismissed.

Yet the federal government was not through with James Ellison. In fact, Bill Buford had been gathering intelligence on the CSA since 1978. Through local people and CSA informants, Buford had learned that Ellison's organization was preparing for a confrontation with federal agents by stockpiling food, supplies, weapons, ammunition, and explosives. Inside his house, Ellison was said to have hidden thirty to forty pounds of C-4 plastic explosives and a .90-caliber automatic weapon. Also hidden on the property were another two-hundred pounds of C-4 and C-3 explosives, hundreds of assault rifles, unlimited quantities of ammunition, infrared night-vision

devices, various types of hand grenades, four anti-aircraft weapons, and a military rocket launcher with a C-4 hand grenade in place and ready to fire—a weapon capable of destroying an armored personnel carrier. Claymore mines surrounded the camp, sources said, and the trees were rigged with trip wires and booby traps. In addition to these dangers, Buford’s sources said that the CSA had kidnaped a number of children who were being “kept for Elohim City.”

Around the time of Ellison’s grand jury appearance, Buford started sharing his intelligence with Jack Knox of the FBI’s Fayetteville office (his office *was not* in Fort Smith as Snell and the others thought when they set out to assassinate him in late December). This was mainly a bureaucratic strategy: If ATF agent Buford could prove that the CSA was involved in terrorist-related activities, then Ellison could be prosecuted under the Department of Justice’s racketeering law, which demanded FBI participation in the case. Hence, Buford’s collaboration with Knox.

Also around this time, the physically-imposing Ellison (he stood 5' 10" with wide shoulders, a thick chest and large forearms) began to beat Ollie—sending her into an even deeper state of depression. “The abuse started after Ellison took his second wife,” said Noble. “It was both physical and psychological.” Then, after months of failing to make payments, the bank foreclosed on the CSA property and a judge ordered Ellison get out within ten days.

With his paranoia at an all-time high, Ellison ordered Noble to prepare CSA’s Home Guard for a possible incursion by ZOG. Far from a formidable threat, the Home Guard included such inexperienced and troubled young men as Mike McNabb. Due to a gunshot blast to the face at age thirteen, McNabb had only one eye and a damaged brain. The boy was stabbed in the stomach two years later, causing even further harm to his system. Indeed, Noble described the

Home Guard as “a unit that had a man fifteen years older than me that had an artificial leg;...an epileptic, retarded man; two half-blind, fat, young men; and two men who could care less about the military than I did.”

### **The Siege**

Ellison received an eleventh-hour reprieve on the foreclosure when a CSA sympathizer paid off the bank note on his property from monies obtained in an insurance settlement on a house fire, yet that did little to quell his paranoia. Primarily because of Governor Clinton. Following the murder of trooper Bryant, Clinton took steps that would make available to law enforcement a list of suspected or known members of Arkansas’ numerous white supremacy groups. As part of that effort, in early 1985 Clinton convinced the state legislature to pass an anti-paramilitary training law designed by the Anti-Defamation League. These efforts placed the CSA squarely in the bull’s eye. Then the unexpected happened.

In March 1985, the FBI received a tip that Order member Randy Evans, along with several other members of the group (Thomas Bentley, James Wallington, and Jefferson Butler) had moved into the CSA encampment to avoid arrests on outstanding warrants out of Washington, Idaho, and Colorado. Also with them was Sue West (aka Jean Carrigan), wife of one Walter West, who had been killed by the Order a year earlier. On March 19, Oklahoma state police found Sue West’s body under a bridge on the Turner Turnpike. Her throat had been slit with a 9-inch knife. Over the next month, Buford’s intelligence would lead the FBI to believe that the homicide was committed by an obscure CSA figure named James Rolston.

Back at the compound, Ellison bleached his black hair white to disguise his identity and designed an escape plan from Bull Shoals Lake. This plan involved a steel-plated armored



personnel carrier that had been constructed on the chassis of a four-wheel drive truck. Mounted on top was an English-made anti-aircraft machine gun.

The stage was now set for the event that would trigger the siege.

On Monday, April 15, Missouri state trooper Jimmie Linegar was conducting random traffic checks along a lonely stretch of highway between the tourist town of Branson, Missouri, and the Arkansas border. At 1:45 p.m., Linegar pulled over a brown 1975 Chevy van and asked the driver for his license. The young man behind the wheel complied, and Linegar returned to his cruiser to run a background check. The name on the license, Matthew Mark Samuels, corresponded to an alias used by a 22-year-old neo-Nazi from Athol, Idaho, named David Tate. Coincidentally, several hours earlier federal authorities in Seattle identified Tate as one of twenty-three people indicted on racketeering and conspiracy charges in connection with the terrorist activities of the Order. Specifically, Tate was wanted for the murder of Walter West.

Sensing trouble, officer Linegar radioed for backup and within minutes trooper Allen Hines rolled up. As the two officers approached the van, Tate opened the door and lurched onto the ground, clutching a .380-caliber Ingram MAC-11 automatic machine pistol. As Linegar reached for his service revolver, Tate opened fire. The bullets slammed into Linegar's side, killing him instantly. Tate ran to the back of the van and fired three shots at Hines, hitting him in the arm, hip and neck. Then Tate fled into the heavily-wooded terrain.

A massive manhunt was launched involving a combined force of FBI SWAT teams, Missouri state police, and local deputy sheriffs. Armed Cobra gun ship helicopters from the Missouri National Guard flew repeated patterns over the Ozarks while bloodhounds tore through the dense underbrush. FBI agents tried to pick up Tate using sensors aboard a Bureau spy plane

capable of detecting living humans in total darkness by their body heat. Roadblocks were set up and Tate's picture appeared on television and was posted on shops. During the sweep, agents stumbled onto 26-year-old Frank Silva, another Order fugitive, and arrested him at the Safari Campground near Beaver Lake in Benton County, Arkansas. But Tate eluded the dragnet.

Meanwhile, a search of Tate's abandoned vehicle had turned up a veritable arsenal, including six machine guns, three handguns, a sniper rifle, two assault rifles, dynamite, hand grenades, a pint whiskey bottle filled with nitroglycerine, boxes of silencers, and thousands of rounds of ammunition. Officers also found police scanners, knives, camping gear, ski masks, and four birth certificates for Tate aliases. Along with the indictment against the Order, these discoveries led agents to believe that Tate was making his way on foot to the CSA compound at Bull Shoals Lake (an hour and a half drive from Branson), where he would find sanctuary among the Identity Christians. Buford's intelligence indicated that Tate had visited the compound back in 1981. "Tate was just a punk kid then," said Noble. "He came for our national convention with Richard Butler from Aryan Nations."

News of these events was monitored by Ellison and his followers back at the CSA communications office, sending the group into a state of panic. "By then we had TV," Noble recalled, "but we had no idea that he [Tate] was coming to CSA. We were already nervous because we had seen federal cars in Mountain Home and the media was on the road outside the compound everyday." The paranoia was especially acute among the four Order fugitives who expected the police to use the search for Tate as a pretext to raid the encampment. The Home Guard may not have posed much of a threat to outsiders, but the Order did. Consequently, Ellison vowed not to leave his house until the commotion over Tate had died down. In the meantime, the

CSA began to destroy some of their weapons in anticipation of a federal raid.

On Tuesday, April 16, Jack Knox took the FBI's case to the United States Magistrate in Fort Smith, seeking a search warrant to allow agents to enter the CSA camp. Knox got his warrant, charging Ellison with racketeering, kidnaping, bombing, arson, attempted murder, and a raft of federal firearm violations. The next day, United States Attorney General Edwin M. Meese arrived in Fort Smith to oversee the government's unfolding case against Ellison.

On Thursday, April 18, Sergeant Gene Irby of the Arkansas State Police, well-known to the CSA residents, appeared at the front gate of the compound and informed Kerry Noble that a federal warrant had been issued for Ellison. After delivering the news to Ellison, Noble returned to the gate and told Irby that Ellison wanted to pray about it overnight. The request was granted.

Around ten o'clock the next morning—Friday, April 19—Irby returned to the front gate only to be told by Noble that Ellison was refusing to surrender. The FBI then set up roadblocks, established a siege perimeter, and surrounded the encampment with a massive contingent of two-hundred heavily armed agents. A Huey helicopter and an armed personnel carrier were brought in. “At this point,” said Danny Coulson, “the FBI was contemplating the biggest shoot out in its history.”

### **Terrorism, Feminism, and Conflict Resolution**

As helicopter gun ships hovered near the compound, negotiations began between Noble and Coulson, the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team commander. “April 19 was our D day,” Coulson would later write in his penetrating account of his negotiations with the CSA. “They expected ZOG to come in and shoot the place up...We had to convince them that we weren't the devils they were waiting for, and that we were patient and that we weren't going away.” Of special

concern to the FBI were the sixteen women and at least two dozen children inside the camp.

By Saturday morning, April 20, the siege was receiving extensive coverage by local and national media. One of the reporters, James Coates of the *Chicago Tribune*, filed this account:

A solid chain link gate closed off the dirt road leading up to the CSA compound, and all visitors were greeted by a group of roughly a half dozen obviously frightened and surly young men carrying Mini-14s, MAC 10s, and other automatic and semi-automatic weapons. Other armed CSA soldiers were clearly visible in a fifty-foot-tall guard tower overlooking the front gate, from which they pointed machine guns at reporters....[A] large number of buzzards... circled lazily overhead, almost as if they had some foreknowledge that blood soon would spill....FBI commandos congregated on the fringes of the compound. Trim men in spit-shined paratroop boots sat around assault helicopters just out of sight from the CSA guard tower and painted one another's faces in camouflage makeup.

Ellison was still refusing to surrender, primarily because of a drama being played out inside the compound. Early in the day, Randy Evans tried to marshal the CSA forces into a shoot out with the FBI because it was Adolf Hitler's birthday. Ellison stifled this Aryan bravado by punching Evans in the eye, knocking him down and shutting him up. After that, the negotiations began in earnest. This was due to several key events that transpired over the next two days.

First, on Sunday, April 21, Ellison allowed four women and twelve children to leave the camp, thus removing a major source of concern on both sides. Second, later that day a filthy and exhausted David Tate was captured in a city park near Branson without a shot being fired (he had

simply laid down his MAC-11), thereby eliminating another source of concern for both Ellison and the FBI. “Tate was ready to give up,” the county sheriff told reporters. “The man was getting hungry.” Finally, and most importantly, Coulson allowed Ellison to bring in two third-party negotiators.

The first was Ollie Ellison. Appreciating the social role of women in Identity circles, Coulson remarked: “In that culture, women are honored for their intuition. Our meeting was very brief. Her purpose was to size us up. To see if I was a man of honor.” In his memoir, *No Heroes*, Coulson is almost rhapsodic in his description of their meeting at the siege perimeter on April 21:

Ollie Ellison gave me a Mona Lisa smile and a slight nod....This was not the terrified, beaten-down gun nut’s wife I had envisioned. Ollie was a true beauty, five feet seven or five feet eight inches tall, with long dark hair, and high cheekbones that reminded me of Emmylou Harris or Rita Coolidge. In a modest sleeveless print dress that hung loosely below her knees, she might have been a flower child or a Berkeley grad student...The lives of every man, woman, and child depended on her, including eleven children under her own roof. We had to be her worst nightmare, ZOG warriors, men poised to launch an attack upon her home. Yet her eyes were cool and intelligent. She stood ramrod straight, shoulders back, chin up.

After Coulson assured Ollie that only Ellison would be arrested, though others inside the compound may be arrested in the future, and that the agents would not bust up their homes during the search for evidence, Ollie convinced her husband to surrender. Never has a woman in the American racist right played such a defining role in mediating conflict. “She was totally

unique,” said Coulson, who had managed dozens of hostage situations during his acclaimed career. “I was very impressed with her. Our meeting was the first place for failure and we had a lot of stigma to break through. I play for breaks and I got one with Ollie.”

But Evans and the other neo-Nazis were still inside and they had no intention of laying down their weapons. Toward that end, Coulson permitted Ellison to call in the second third-party negotiator: Robert Millar. Coulson dispatched a plane to Oklahoma to pick up the Identity patriarch. He arrived around noon and was permitted to join Ellison for a prayer meeting with Evans and the others. At 3:30 p.m., Millar radioed Coulson with the bad news: While he was making progress, Millar needed to stay over night. Again, the request was granted.

At 10:05 a.m.—Monday, April 22—Ellison, Millar, and Noble came to the perimeter with a document listing the CSA’s terms of surrender. Most of the twenty-three items in the document dealt with Ellison’s legal counsel and the conditions of his incarceration. Before surrendering though, Ellison demanded that he be able to return to his house so that he could comb his hair for the media photographers at the roadblock. Coulson agreed and shortly after noon, four days into the siege, sixty-four occupants of the CSA camp, including the four wanted members of the Order, walked out of the encampment with hands on head. Agents then entered the CSA where they confiscated evidence leading to a 19-part indictment against Ellison and five accomplices. The Order fugitives would be tried separately.

The next day, the *Baxter Bulletin* carried a photograph of the backside of an ATF agent with a blond-haired girl laying her head on his shoulder. The photo was picked up by wire services and carried nationwide. It later became a symbol on plaques awarded by the ATF to agents for outstanding service. The plaque—called “In the Arms of the Law”—symbolized

everything federal law enforcement stood for: the need to rescue innocents from evil. It would endure as a symbol of federal law enforcement until it was replaced by another iconic photograph, this one taken on April 19, 1995. That photo showed a fireman turning from the hellish jumble of glass, steel, and concrete of the demolished Federal Building in Oklahoma City. In his arms is the body of a dead baby.

**CASE FIVE:**  
**RACKETEERING**

Edwin Sutherland argued that all criminal behavior is learned, and that it is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of interpersonal communication. According to Sutherland, this learning process involves two characteristics: techniques of committing the crime—skill, or criminal trade craft—which can sometimes be very complicated; and ideology, or the specific motives for the offense. Because terrorism is a special form of criminality (arguably, it is the most serious form of criminality within any society), it requires a third element in a person who is willing to use it as a tactic: fanatical dedication to a cause. The confluence of skill, ideology, and fanatical dedication has been the engine driving most terrorist groups throughout history. Yet in the rarest of cases—reserved only for the followers of Carlos the Jackal, Osama bin Laden and a few others—there has been a fourth dimension of terrorism. And that is charisma, or the power of the gifted.

Max Weber viewed charisma as an inherent gift that evoked the loyalty of people afflicted by a crisis so great as to defy resolution by constituted authorities or institutions. A charismatic person is seen as capable of alleviating the crisis and restoring equilibrium to the community. This person's capabilities are a function of his/her unique talents; indeed, the charismatic leader's authority derives solely from these talents. Psychologist William Freid points out that the characteristics of a leader's talents will always be a function of the nature of the crisis facing the community. Therefore, if the crisis involves spiritual decay, the leader's gifts will be in the area of religion. If the crisis involves disease or famine, the gifts tend to be



organizational. If the critical problem involves political conflict, the gifts will be in the realm of oratory. And if that conflict leads to violence, the leader is likely to be gifted in paramilitary tactics.

In practice, most charismatic leaders are endowed with not one, but combinations of these gifts in varying measures. Fidel Castro, one of the most charismatic leaders of modern times, has proven to be an exceptional administrator, an electrifying orator, a fabled paramilitary commander, and a deified social reformer. Castro is not a terrorist in the classic definition of the term, but some of his personal gifts *have* been ascribed to the man who led the near-mythical American neo-Nazi terrorist cell known as the Order. “It was the way he carried himself,” remembered a confederate, “sinuously, as though at any moment he were poised to leap—a graceful leap to some strange place.”

### *The Revolutionary*

Robert Jay Mathews was born into a hard-working, middle-class family in the small, desolate town of Marfa, Texas, on January 16, 1953. His father, Johnny, ran an appliance store in Marfa and his mother, Una, was a housewife who stayed home to raise “Robbie” and his two older brothers. Research suggests that the formative years of a charismatic leader are marked by such experiences as profound loss, injustice, repeated episodes of failure and/or humiliation, and early exposure to rigid belief systems. It was this final experience that would shape Mathews’s leadership style.

The world began to change for the Mathews family in 1957. Hard times had fallen on Marfa and business at Mathews Appliance was in trouble. After selling the store Johnny went into the import-export business, but that failed, too. Then he took a job as an insurance agent, but

that also proved to be fruitless. By late 1958 he was broke. Una sold enough of their personal property to stake a road trip and before Christmas the Mathews family left Texas. Johnny Mathews and his wife had worked hard, risen to prominent stature in the community, and then they were beaten into rank poverty.

They settled in Phoenix where Johnny found work as an account. Una went to work in a bank and the boys continued their schooling. Robbie excelled at history and, with his mother's encouragement, became an avid reader of the daily newspaper. In 1964, the biggest news story in Phoenix was the presidential race between Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater, the hard-line conservative who represented Arizona in the U.S. Senate. At the time, Goldwater advocated using small nuclear bombs to defoliate the jungles in South Vietnam. Against this perilous backdrop, Mathews experienced perhaps the most significant change of his early life.

On Sunday, October 25, 1964, the *Arizona Republic* ran a sixteen-page special feature on the John Birch Society. The Birch Society was then waging a media assault against the communist influence—something that resonated deeply among Goldwater supporters. Mathews locked himself in his bedroom and studied the article fully. The thought of Russian communists taking over America seemed to have frightened him severely. Whatever the case, he was hooked. Mathews clipped a coupon for more information and sent it into regional headquarters in Santa Monica, California. Shortly thereafter, Mathews became a card-carrying member of the John Birch Society. He was twelve years old.

Thus began his journey into political extremism. As Mathews entered his teenage years, he rebelled against the fad and fashion of sixties youth subculture by adopting a hard, iconoclastic masculinity. At a time when millions of youth were letting their freak flags fly,

Mathews kept his hair short, stayed away from marijuana and LSD, and never even took a drag from a cigarette. Nor did he date. Instead he took up wrestling and weight lifting, trimming off his body fat and leaving him fit as a Marine. In his Birch Society meetings, Mathews learned the skill of public speaking and began to express his feelings about patriotism and the communist menace.

His involvement with the Birch Society coincided with two other pivotal events that contributed to his emerging extremism. First, in 1969 the Mathews family moved to Tempe where Robbie enrolled in a high school dominated by Mormons. Mathews viewed these students as quintessential Americans. Like him, they were clean cut, diligent, and proudly conservative. And second, through contacts made upon joining the Mormon church in 1970, Robbie began attending tax resistance seminars in nearby Mesa. Here he was taught that paying income taxes was not only illegal, but that doing so actually aided the communists. His enthusiasm for the subject was contagious and Mathews was rewarded by his appointment to the post of Sargent-at-arms for the seminars. At this point, according to Flynn and Gerhardt, “Una and Johnny began to worry that their youngest son was turning into a revolutionary.” What began as a hatred of the Soviets was now turning into a hatred of the United States. This would affect Mathews’s educational career and everything that followed.

Robbie began his senior year of high school in 1970. Yet he soon got into an argument with his economics teacher over the efficacy of the Keynesian theory of government intervention in the free market. Through the tax resistance meetings, Mathews had been taught that President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s endorsement of Keynesian theory was responsible for leading America into the first stages of socialism. In protest against his teacher’s approval of Keynesian theory,

Robbie stopped going to class altogether. When informed that this would effect his chances of getting into college, Mathews told his parents that he wasn't going to college because universities were nothing more than "hotbeds of communism."

By the end of 1971, Mathews was adrift. Because he failed to complete his economics course, he was not allowed to graduate from high school. Unemployed, unskilled, and romantically unattached, he drifted further onto the fringes of the extreme right where he came under the influence of an organization called the Minutemen. Founded by Robert Boliver DePugh in Independence, Missouri, in the early 1960s, the Minutemen ultimately became one of the most formidable right-wing groups in America. DePugh's followers carried military-style weapons, were organized into secret cells, and were dedicated to eradicating communist infiltrators working for the U.S. government.

In 1972, nineteen-year-old Robert Mathews assembled a ragtag guerilla army of his own. He drew his followers from the tax resister's group, the Mormon church, and from gun and motorcycle shops. In all, Mathews recruited some thirty men into a group he christened the Sons of Liberty. And it was here that Mathews began to show the first signs of charismatic leadership.

That summer, Mathews anonymously phoned a Phoenix television reporter and told him that the Sons of Liberty were training for guerrilla war in the desert. Knowing a good story when he heard one, the reporter showed up with a camera crew at a prearranged location at night where he was met by a band of camouflage-masked men with assault rifles and bandoliers of ammunition and grenades strapped to their chests. As the film rolled, one of them stepped forth and proudly said: "We are the Sons of Liberty." The film showed a young white man speaking with confidence and passion. He said that the Sons were made up of army vets who believed that

the United States was doomed to collapse under communist infiltration. Twenty-four hours later, after the reporter contacted the FBI and turned over his tapes, a federal investigation was launched to find out the identity of the articulate young man behind the camouflage mask.

By day, Mathews was now working at a Carnation plant making ice cream. By night, he split his time between the Sons of Liberty, the Birch Society, the tax resisters, and the Young Republicans. Through this ambitious political activity, Mathews honed his orator's gift, impressing the older activists with his hatred for communists and tax collectors.

In the fall of 1972, the FBI found a snitch inside the Sons of Liberty who could identify the individual on the news tape. It was a young Mormon tax protestor named Robbie Mathews. Agents then visited Johnny Mathews at his home in Tempe. Robbie had left town, Johnny told the feds, whereabouts unknown.

### *The Good Lieutenant*

Charismatic leaders are only as good as the loyalty they inspire in their followers. For Robert Mathews, no one would prove as loyal as Bruce Pierce. What inspires such loyalty?

Bruce Carroll Pierce was born in Frankfort, Kentucky, on May 14, 1954. His father, Eugene, was a successful carpenter, specializing in wood furniture. Lucilla, Pierce's mother, was a housewife who gave birth to Bruce late in life; she had borne four children some twenty years earlier and now they were raised and living on their own. For all practical purposes, Bruce Pierce was an only child.

Pierce's childhood was marked by intense isolation. With no siblings around, and few neighbors to play with, he spent most of his time alone, exploring the hills around Devils Hollow Road, several miles from the desolate grave of Daniel Boone. The boy dreamed of working with

his father in the carpentry shop located near their house, as had his older brothers before him, but that dream vanished in 1967 when an arsonist burned the shop down and Eugene retired from the business. Two years later, Pierce underwent another trial when his parents divorced after years of marital problems.

Bruce was an average student at Frankfort High School, yet at a strapping 6-foot-2 he easily made the varsity basketball team. He also had no trouble with the girls and during his senior year Bruce's girlfriend, Elizabeth Scott, became pregnant. After secretly marrying on April 1, 1972, Pierce exhibited the first signs of a character flaw that would dog him for years to come. Smarting from an argument with Lucilla over Elizabeth's pregnancy, Bruce impetuously dropped out of school before graduation and headed to Atlanta with his young bride.

The couple returned to Frankfort a year later where Pierce landed a job as a circulation manager for the *Lexington Herald Leader*. Over the next five years Pierce made friends, drove a sports car, wore fashionable clothing, smoked marijuana, and enjoyed listening to then-popular country rock bands like the Eagles. By 1979, though, he had grown tired of his job and impulsively resigned without employment prospects elsewhere. Having also grown tired of his wife, Pierce began a series of extramarital affairs.

His impetuous nature arose again later that year when Pierce confessed to Elizabeth that he was consumed with a dream of living in the wide-open expanses of the American West. Elizabeth would have no part of it, however, and in August she filed for divorce, leaving Pierce free to move to Missoula, Montana, with his brother Greg.

Bruce found work at a Western Wear store and moved with Greg into a house near the University of Montana. In late 1979, Pierce met a divorcee named Julie Wilson and by early

1980 they were living together with her infant daughter and his son, who had come for a visit with his father and stayed. A year later, the couple married. But things were not so rosy on the employment front.

Pierce left Western Wear and began to bounce from one menial job to the next. By 1981 he realized that the “romantic West” was not all it was cracked up to be. Pierce was a playboy at heart and he missed his sports car, weed, friends and the affairs he had left behind in Kentucky. Now, however, he was trapped in a house trailer with little money, a new wife, and two screaming kids. Things only got worse. In the fall of 1981 Pierce moved his family into a broken down house trailer on a mountainside near the tiny town of Plains, Montana. On November 22, 1982, Julie gave birth to the couple’s third child and Pierce was reduced to drawing food stamps. It was at this low point in his life that Pierce found solace in Christian Identity.

It all happened fortuitously. One day in the fall of 1982, while lifting weights at a Plains gymnasium, Pierce overheard a group of boys quarreling about the Holocaust. One boy maintained that the Holocaust was a hoax, and four others began to berate him. Pierce jumped to the lone boy’s defense and when the argument was over the boy thanked Pierce. A week later, the boy brought his father to the gym and introduced him to Pierce. The man’s name was Jefferson Butler and over the next several months he introduced Pierce to the Identity philosophy.

In March 1983, another Identity convert invited Pierce to join him on a trip to the Church of Jesus Christ Christian at the Aryan Nations compound at Hayden Lake, Idaho. Pierce was introduced to Aryan Nations founder Pastor Richard Butler (no relation to Jefferson Butler) and a number of his followers. In these people, Pierce seemed to have found not only spiritual succor, but an escape from the loneliness that had afflicted him since moving West. Pierce returned to

Aryan Nations with Julie and the kids several times and soon he began to wear the blue uniform of an Aryan Nations security guard. The defining event of his life took place that summer.

On June 26, 1983, Butler led an Aryan Nations rally at the Riverfront Park in Spokane, Washington. Because the rally had attracted wide publicity and plans for counter-demonstrations, Butler arranged to have his security detail on hand. Pierce was among them, taking his place with a half dozen men at the base of the speaker's platform. In the crowd stood some three-hundred Aryan Nations supporters and an equal number of counter-demonstrators, police, bystanders, and media people.

As Butler took the stage, protestors began shouting, including one with a bullhorn screaming "Racists!" and "Nazis!" Near the stage a small group of protestors held signs reading "Smash Racism. Build Multiracial Unity." Some of them started pushing and shoving. Then a woman protestor stepped up to the security detail and kicked one of Butler's men in the groin.

At this point, a muscular guard moved toward the protestors with his arms outspread. He looked about thirty and was dressed simply in blue jeans and T-shirt. His eyes showed fierce determination. When he reached the protestors, he pointed at them and unleashed a torrent of angry words. Shocked by the sheer force of the man's words, the protestors grew silent. Pierce felt himself drawn to the man's side, and together with the other guards, they linked arms to form a human wall and began forcing the protestors back.

It was an extraordinary experience for Pierce. He had never before engaged in political activism, let alone a small victory like this one; but then again, Pierce had never witnessed such intensity as he saw in that man's eyes. For Pierce, and the other guards at the rally that day, something about this man made a lasting impression. He was someone who clearly put action



behind his words. This man was, of course, the charismatic Robert Mathews.

### **The Plot**

Mathews had been in the Pacific Northwest for nearly a decade. He moved there in 1974, in his words, with “only twenty-five dollars to my name...and the dream of someday acquiring my own farmland.” Mathews found work first in a zinc mine and then at the Lehi Cement Company in Metaline Falls, Washington (population 850). After buying a 53-acre plot of forested land and building a home, Mathews put a personal ad in *Mother Earth News* and thereby met Debbie McGarrity from Jackson, Wyoming. The couple married in 1976 and had a child four years later. The rest of the Mathews clan—Johnny, Una and his two brothers—moved onto the property in 1977.

During this period, Mathews continued his voracious reading of history. One book, *Which Way Western Man?* by the racist William Gayley Simpson, introduced Mathews to the idea that white Christians were in danger of losing their racial identity because of affirmative action and interracial marriage. The book’s publisher, William Pierce (no relation to Bruce Pierce) of the Virginia-based National Alliance, also had a decisive influence on Mathews’s thinking. In fact, Mathews worshiped William Pierce. Not only was he the author of *The Turner Diaries*, but Pierce was responsible for introducing Mathews to Aryan Nations in 1982. A month after his show of leadership at the 1983 Spokane rally, Mathews attended the Aryan World Congress where he met James Ellison and the other racists who were about to begin their mythical conspiracy to topple the federal government.

Bob Mathews and Bruce Pierce formed the Order, also known as *Bruders Schweigen* or the Silent Brotherhood, at Mathews’s home in September, 1983. They were accompanied by two

Aryan Nations activists: Randy Duey, a thirty-two-year-old Air Force veteran and history student at Eastern Washington University, and a twenty-nine-year-old former Marine and ex-convict from Arizona named Gary Lee Yarbrough. “The unifying thread binding them together,” write Flynn and Gerhardt, “was their own brand of superpatriotism, based on their vision of America’s meaning.” This vision formed the cultural myth of the Order and created a social space that allowed Mathews’s charisma to flourish.

### *Organization*

It was in this way, then, that Robert Mathews embarked upon one of the most profitable crime sprees in American history. More than anything, this required the creation of an effective criminal enterprise, something traditional racists had never been particularly good at. Most scholars assert that the Order achieved their criminal syndicate by integrating neo-Nazism with Christian Identity and the fantastic possibilities of *The Turner Diaries*. As one member told undercover journalist Peter Lake at the dawning of the Order, “Read *The Turner Diaries*. It’s all there.” Lying beneath the surface, though, was a more precise criminal sensibility.

The Order was comprised of men who had come of age in the crucible of Vietnam, yet none of its inner circle had made a personal appearance on the battlefield. As adults, they came to view America as a land beset with dark forces of chaos in the form of immigration, drugs, crime, and Ronald Reagan’s “trickle down” economy. Since these hot-button issues were seeded with race and gender considerations, it became morally imperative for some powerless white men to transform their personal rage into a political cause. Masculinity and whiteness became entwined as never before—to be a “real” white man was to be hyper-masculine. Paramilitary mythology became the path to redemption.

This process of criminality was displayed in many ways. It was demonstrated in the behavior of men like Duey, Yarbrough and Randall Radar, all of whom liked to play war but wanted no part of the real thing. It was also displayed in the Order's cultural orientation to everyday life. One of Mathews's favorite films was Charles Bronson's *Death Wish II*, the story of a vigilante who avenges his wife's death in a post-apocalyptic New York by killing a gang of street thugs. "That is what is wrong with society today," Mathews said of the fictional murders. "We have to do that because the government won't. Our police state doesn't do that. We have to cleanse the land ourselves." Through these sorts of processes, then, the men of the Order were reborn as Aryan warriors.

As he had done a decade earlier with the Sons of Liberty, Mathews recruited his followers from different sources—Aryan Nations, National Alliance, CSA, and the Klan. Because these were national organizations, Mathews was able to assemble some of the most dangerous white militants in America. "We were all a bunch of lost souls," said Order operative Tom Martinez in an interview for this research. "Our parents were all fucked up." While the Order would eventually include some fifty members, its "action group" consisted of nine men. In addition to Mathews, Pierce, Duey, and Yarbrough, they included:

\* Andrew Barnhill, a twenty-seven-year-old former seminarian from Plantation, Florida, who was introduced to Ellison's CSA through his involvement in the American Pistol and Rifle Association. After Ellison anointed himself King of the Ozarks, Barnhill left the CSA and moved to Missoula where he became a poker dealer. He was recruited into the Order in 1983 by Bruce Pierce during a visit to Aryan Nations.

\* Richard Kemp, a twenty-year-old former high school basketball star from Salinas,

California, who met Mathews at a 1981 National Alliance convention in Virginia.

\* David Lane, a forty-three-year-old champion amateur golfer from Aurora, Colorado. During the late 1970s, Lane was an organizer for David Duke's Knights of the Ku Klux Klan; in 1981 he became the Colorado organizer for Aryan Nations. A year later, Lane moved to Hayden Lake where he met Mathews who later appointed him minister of propaganda for the Order.

\* Denver Parmenter, a thirty-one-year-old former soldier with a drinking problem from Brownwood, Texas. After his honorable discharge from the Army, Parmenter became an administrator at Eastern Washington University. There he met Randy Duey who introduced him to Mathews. Parmenter would later testify that he was an "unstable person" before joining the Order, but that Mathews had given him a purpose in life. "I thought we were fighting the second American revolution," said Parmenter. "Our goal was to take the government down."

\* Richard Scutari, a thirty-six-year-old former Naval officer, deep sea diver, and martial arts expert from Port Salerno, Florida. In 1979, Scutari met Minutemen founder Robert DePugh at a conference in Fort Lauderdale, and later joined the American Pistol and Rifle Association. Through APRA, he met Virgil Barnhill, Andrew's father. Andrew Barnhill then introduced Scutari to James Ellison who, according to Flynn and Gerhardt, dispatched Scutari to South America to provide security at a CSA-owned gold mine. In early 1984, Andrew Barnhill invited Scutari to Metaline Falls where he was introduced to Mathews. Scutari would eventually become Mathews's closest confidant. But more importantly, Scutari's criminal skills would play a major role in the Order's reign of terrorism.

Most members of the Order were adherents of Christian Identity, though Mathews himself was an Odinist (a theological reconstruction of Viking-era Norse mythology). And like

the fictitious guerrilla army in *The Diaries* (known as “The Order” or simply “The Organization”), the real-life Order began by drawing up a list of Jewish assassination targets. These included former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Baron Elie de Rothschild of the international Jewish banking family. The Order would finance its cause through armed robbery, thereby creating a “war chest” to support a campaign of violence against what propagandist David Lane termed “a coalition of blacks, browns, yellows, liberals, Communists, queers, race mixing religious zealots, race traitors, preachers, teachers and judges.”

At the suggestion of Denver Parmenter, Mathews created cells for each operation and implemented security procedures to guard against informants—beginning with the requirement that each member take a loyalty oath in a ceremony where inductees held hands in a circle around a white infant that symbolized the future of the Aryan race. In his *Politics of Righteousness*, terrorism scholar James Aho describes this oath as a “ritual ordination into the cult”:

I, as a free Aryan man, hereby swear an unrelenting oath there upon the green graves of our sires, upon the children in the wombs of our wives, upon the throne of God Almighty, sacred be his name, to join together in holy union with those brothers in this circle and to declare forthright from this moment on I have no fear of death, no fear of foe, that I have a sacred duty to do whatever is necessary to deliver our people from the Jew and bring total victory to the Aryan race.

The Order wrote the book on living in the white underground. Most importantly, each member was trained in the acquisition of false identity documents. This involved visiting cemeteries and locating tombstones showing the birth and death of an infant. Members would then use that information to apply for a death certificate. From the death certificate they would

apply for a birth certificate. Once they had that in hand, they would apply for drivers' licences and motor vehicle registrations. They were also given code names. Pierce, for instance, was known as "Brigham" or "Logan" (good Mormon names). Yarbrough was called "Yosemite Sam" or "Reds" because of his long red beard. Scutari was known as "Mr. Black." And Mathews went by "Carlos"—in honor of the Jackal (more on this in the final case study). Operating on a need-to-know basis, most Order members knew each other only by these code names, thus making the identification of accomplices impossible in the event of arrest by law enforcement.

Mathews eventually set up safe houses around the country—in Philadelphia, Boise, Idaho, and other small towns in the Northwest—and instructed his men to move frequently from location to location. The houses were rented under assumed names and payed for in cash, thus leaving no paper trail. Each member was also instructed in the use of disguises. They often wore wigs, fake beards and mustaches; some dyed their hair and others dressed as women. They bought cars in cash using false names, were armed at all times, and were required to periodically submit themselves to one of Richard Scutari's voice stress analyzer tests. "The Order," said an FBI agent familiar with the case, "was the most organized group of terrorist-type people ever to have operated in the United States."

### **The Attacks**

In her controversial work on the American neo-Nazi movement, *A Hundred Little Hitlers*, Elinor Langer notes that "the Order is undoubtably the best-known chapter in the history of the American racist movement in the 1980s." This is unquestionably true and it is so by virtue of the outstanding research contained in Flynn and Gerhardt's *The Silent Brotherhood*. Within the terrorism literature, it is a book without peer. Yet previous writers, including Flynn and Gerhardt,

have not systematically examined the Order's crimes committed in support of a terrorist agenda. That was not their purpose; but it is mine.

These crimes began with a haphazard plan to rob drug dealers and pimps in Spokane. Around mid-October 1983, Mathews and two associates combed the downtown area for cocaine dealers and hookers. For the Order, these people stood for everything that was wrong about America. After several hours, they found a dealer and accosted him in an alley. For some unknown reason, though, the dealer proved too tough and the three Aryan warriors backed down.

So Mathews turned his attention to robbing a pornography store. On October 28, Mathews, Pierce, and Duey entered Spokane's World Wide Video Store disguised as Mexicans, and armed with pistols and knives. They bound and gagged two clerks with duct tape, and rifled the till, making off with a mere \$369. The "revolution" was off to a poor start; in fact, it nearly imploded on take off.

Ten days later, Mathews, Pierce, Duey, Kemp, Parmenter and two others loaded their cars with firearms and drove to Seattle where they conducted surveillance on armored vehicles. They scouted these trucks for several days, taking note of security arrangements and timing getaway routes. During this time, two key events transpired.

First, Pierce saw a newspaper story about an upcoming lecture at a Seattle synagogue by Baron Elie de Rothschild—one of the Order's assassination targets. This led to a split in the Order (which at this point was only weeks old). Contrary to the lore that has grown up around the Silent Brotherhood, Mathews's gang was not an authoritarian organization but a democratic one. Reflecting those roots, Pierce led one faction that wanted to jettison the armored truck heist in favor of a plot to assassinate de Rothschild. In their discussions, Pierce's group talked about the

possibility of conducting a suicide mission in which one of them would strap on a bomb and detonate it inside the Olympic Hotel, killing the Baron and anyone who got in the way. Equally important, and also a “first-ever” in the white underground, while conducting research on explosives at the University of Washington, Denver Parmenter attempted to forge a coalition with UW’s Arab American Student Association. Mathews led the faction opposing Pierce, arguing that assassinations would come later, once the group had built up its war chest. Unable to reach a consensus, the Order abandoned both plans and returned to Metaline Falls on November 12.

Meanwhile, Yarbrough and Lane were involved in criminal activities that were also unique for their time. Today, there is mounting evidence of terrorists’ involvement in the lucrative underworld of counterfeiting. In 1996, for example, the FBI confiscated 100,000 counterfeit T-shirts bearing fake Nike “swoosh” and Olympic logos that were intended to be sold at the 1996 summer Olympic games. The operation reportedly generated millions of dollars and was run by the followers of Sheik Omar Abel Rahman—who was later sentenced to prison for plotting to bomb New York City landmarks. But in 1983, counterfeiting among terrorist groups in the United States was unheard of.

Yarbrough and Lane set up their racket at Aryan Nations, using the church’s printing press. But their foray into counterfeiting was an abject failure. Most counterfeiters press \$20 bills and pass them with small purchases. Yarbrough and Lane began by printing \$200,000 worth of phony \$50 bills which were then dried and treated with coffee grounds to make them look older.

On December 23, Pierce and Lane spent the day passing the poorly-made bills at stores in Union Gap, Washington. A clerk became suspicious of one of the bills and called the police,



leading to Pierce's arrest. He was turned over to the Secret Service (the agency responsible for investigating counterfeiting in the U.S.) and charged with passing counterfeit money and carrying a concealed weapon. Not only that, but during his interrogation Peirce voluntarily revealed his affiliation with Aryan Nations, thus bringing the heat down on Pastor Butler.

Pierce was held on \$25,000 bail, which neither he or Mathews had. Posing yet another security threat, Pierce began calling other Order members from jail, thus linking them to a known counterfeiter. In response, several men contemplated leaving the group and even Mathews considered pulling the plug. The entire operation, he told a confidant, was "going down the toilet." It was then that Mathews decided to "stand up like a man and fight."

On December 20, Mathews armed himself with a handgun and entered the Innis Arden Branch of the City Bank in Seattle. He told a female clerk to stuff his bag full of cash and ordered several other women employees into the vault. Just then, a snowstorm hit Puget Sound; remarkably, it was Seattle's only snowstorm of the year. As Mathews left the bank, a security device exploded a dye pack inside the bag. The explosion stained the money, showered Mathews in red dye, and knocked him to the ground. Stunned, Mathews slowly drove away in the snowstorm carrying \$25,900 in tainted money. The robbery was distinguished only by its lack of criminal sophistication.

The purpose of the robbery was to raise bail for Pierce. And on that score it was a failure. Before Mathews could clean the money—using Zip Strip that discolored the bills creating what is called "blue backs"—Julie Pierce persuaded the judge to lower her husband's bail to \$2,500. Pierce's brother posted a \$250 surety bond and on December 23 Bruce Pierce walked out of jail. Three weeks later, on January 30, 1984, Pierce and Yarbrough robbed the Washington Mutual

Savings Bank in Spokane, making off with \$3,600. Prior to the robbery, they placed a fake bomb in nearby store as a diversionary tactic.

By February, the Order was in dire straits. After three insignificant armed robberies and a bungled counterfeiting operation—crimes that undermined both the morale and security of the group—the Order had stolen less than \$30,000, much of it useless blue backs. With no other visible means of support (Mathews and the others had given up their day jobs by now), the core members of the group began to pawn their belongings.

Around this time David Lane distributed a *Bruders Schweigen* manual designed to improve the Order's criminal effectiveness. Those tactics began with covert operations. "Sometimes you are a sheep," wrote Lane, "and then you change to a wolf. Until you can sit at a table or in a bar with a beautiful white woman and her nigger boy friend or husband and convince them you are overflowing with brotherly love and affection, you are not yet a completed agent of the white underground." Lane's manual also gave instructions on bank robbery, communications, disguises, and diversionary tactics. The Order was instructed to use police scanners to monitor locations; to wear gloves during all operations (to avoid leaving fingerprints); to always carry at least \$500 cash; and to use factory-produced ammunition rather than home-made bullets.

With these new procedures in place, the Order went back to work. Returning to Seattle on March 16, Mathews, Pierce, Yarbrough, and Duey set their sites on a Continental Armored Transport truck—identified in their surveillance the previous November—making pickups at a Fred Meyer department store in a shopping mall. Shortly before the Continental truck arrived at its target location, once again the Order placed a fake bomb in a nearby store as a diversionary tactic.

When a security guard walked out of Fred Meyer pushing a shopping cart loaded with bags of money, Duey blocked the aisle leading to the door. Pierce then drew his gun and stopped the guard as Mathews came up from behind and took his weapon away. At this point Yarbrough pulled a battered old Dodge Dart to the curb—a car so decrepit that its reverse no longer worked. The others grabbed the money bags and loaded them into the car. In less than two minutes, the gang made off with \$43,345 in untainted bills. After fits and starts, the Order was finally off and running.

Mathews's organizational skills then began to coalesce. He re-booted the counterfeiting operation, put each member of his action group on salary, and bought them life insurance policies so that their families would be covered in the event of death. Yet his greatest achievements lay in the execution of armored truck robberies and the ascended authority those robberies gave him within the organization. As one Order member recalled, "Money gave Mathews power."

On April 19, the Order returned to Seattle for another heist. After checking his men into a Motel 6, Mathews split them into three teams. Mathews led the first one, responsible for conducting surveillance on a Continental Armored Transport truck at the Northgate Mall. Pierce's team was responsible for buying two cars for the robbery (a Ford van and a Chrysler sedan). And Yarbrough group was responsible for bombing a porno theater as a diversionary tactic. Though successful, the robbery was not executed with the military precision that would mark later operations.

After building a small explosive device in his motel room, on April 22 Yarbrough led his crew to the Embassy Theater, a pornographic movie house located in a seedy part of the city. They placed the bomb under a seat in a vacant section of the theater and set the timer. The

powerful blast occurred around 5:00 p.m., blowing shards of debris and smoke through the lobby, causing panic but no serious injuries.

Around noon the next day, April 23, as the gang approached the Northgate Mall, Richard Kemp unloaded several boxes of roofing nails in a highway tunnel, hoping to create a massive traffic jam caused by flat tires. An hour earlier, a phone call had been made to the Embassy Theater, warning that another bomb was about to go off. This call was intended to further divert police from the Mall and add to the confusion. Yet these tactics had no impact at all. Despite the nails, tunnel traffic proceed as usual; the Embassy staff ignored the bomb threat and started showing movies as usual. The threat, as it turns out, was made hours too early.

At about 3:00 p.m. (four hours after the bomb threat) the armored truck arrived at the Northgate Mall. Pierce and Duey, armed with semi-automatic pistols, posed as window washers at a Mall store. When the armored vehicle pulled to a stop, a courier got out and walked to the rear compartment. Pierce calmly walked up and pressed the barrel of his gun to the courier's head. (Coincidentally, it was the same Continental guard he had robbed five weeks earlier.) Yarbrough then drove up in the Ford van and Mathews jumped out holding a sign up to the driver reading: "Get Out or You Die." Parmenter and Barnhill, wearing masks and brandishing shotguns, pulled up in the Chrysler. The Continental driver and courier were forced into the back of the truck while Pierce began throwing money bags into the van. Moments later, the bandits left the scene with more than half a million dollars. Again, the entire robbery had taken less than two minutes.

### *Strategy*

The Northgate robbery was a turning point for the Order. Even though Mathews had to

burn some \$300,000 in checks taken in the heist, the gang still made off with more than \$200,000 in unmarked bills. Mathews put \$85,000 into reserve for future operations and gave Yarbrough \$40,000 for a donation to Aryan Nations (Butler would turn it down, however). The rest of the money went into stipends for the action group (\$24,000 a piece), incentives for new recruits, a printing press for the counterfeiting operation, computers to access the newly-established Aryan Nations Liberty Net bulletin board, and firearms. One of these purchases—the April 26 acquisition of a Smith & Wesson 9 mm semi-automatic pistol from a Missoula gun shop by Andrew Barnhill (who had failed to acquire fake IDs)—would ultimately have severe repercussions.

The Order's terrorism also began in the wake of the Northgate job. On April 26, three days after the robbery, a bench warrant was issued for Bruce Pierce after he failed to appear for sentencing on the counterfeiting charges. Now a federal fugitive, Pierce moved his family into a converted school bus camper and prepared for a major attack. Following directions in a terrorist manual, Pierce built a small bomb made out of dynamite, electrical blasting caps, a battery, and timer. On April 29, Pierce and Kemp tested the device on the Congregation Ahavath Israel Synagogue in Boise. This “act of war,” as Pierce would later describe it, was intended to serve “a greater good.” The blast did little damage, however, but more importantly the bombing was condemned by Mathews as an “unauthorized” action, thereby contributing to an unfolding rift between Mathews and his top lieutenant.

Internal conflict wasn't the Order's only problem at this point. Despite the instructions in Lane's *Bruders Schweigen* manual, the group was still saddled with a good deal of criminal incompetence. After Pierce failed to appear for sentencing, sheriff's deputies visited Mathews's home looking for him. Failing to find Pierce, the sheriff issued a press release asking the public

to be on the lookout for the “Aryan counterfeiter.” Mathews reacted with an angry reply in the local newspaper, vowing that he and Pierce would stand strong for the white race “even if it costs us our lives.” Rarely do terrorists go public with their intentions. When they do, it is almost certain that ideology has trumped criminal skill.

This became even more apparent in May when deputies received a tip on a vehicle matching Pierce’s parked at Randy Duey’s safe house in Newport, Washington. Inside, officers found Duey, Lane, and a professional counterfeiter named Robert Merki standing at a printing press (used to produce counterfeit \$10 bills) and a phone bill listing the number of Bob Mathews in Metaline Falls. Duey panicked and moved the operation to Merki’s home in Boise on May 15. There, Merki eventually manufactured thousands of bills which were transported by Lane to Philadelphia for passing by other operatives.

After these slip-ups, Mathews hired Richard Scutari to provide internal security. “Bob wasn’t street smart,” recalled Tom Martinez. “He was very impatient. He took tips from Scutari, Mr. Black. He was the brains behind the whole thing.” With that move, the Order became more effective in both its criminal operations and its terrorist actions.

Around this time, Mathews learned that there was a problem at Aryan Nations. Walter West, an unemployed recovering alcoholic, was hanging out in bars around Hayden Lake and saying things about Yarbrough’s involvement in armed robberies. To shut him up, Mathews asked Randy Duey to murder Walter West. On May 27, Duey and Kemp, along with two young Aryan Nations activists—Randy Evans and David Tate—lured 42-year-old West into a national forest near Hayden Lake. As they walked through the woods, Kemp came up behind West and smashed his skull with a sledge hammer. After a second blow failed to bring him down, West

looked at Duey and cried, “What’s going on Randy?” Duey then blew the top of his head off with a mini-14 semi-automatic rifle, scattering his brains on the ground. West and his brains were buried in an unmarked grave that has never been found. Kemp later bragged to a friend: “I put him so far back in the woods that only God knows where he is.” Walter West’s murder would go unnoticed, but the Order’s next action would make a statement to the world.

That summer, Mathews added three names to the assassination list. The first was Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Dees was a well-known civil rights attorney who had recently bankrupted South Carolina’s Ku Klux Klan over their involvement in the lynching of a black youth. (The Order incorrectly assumed that Dees was Jewish.) The second was television producer Norman Lear, creator of such popular programs as *All in the Family* and *The Jeffersons*, both of which portrayed African Americans in a positive light. The third target was Alan Berg, a controversial Jewish radio talk show host from Denver. Berg had recently castigated the publisher of Colorado’s *Primrose and Cattlemen’s Gazette* for making anti-Semitic remarks in his newspaper. The publisher filed an \$8 million defamation suit against Berg, but the case was dismissed. Plagued by debts incurred in the lawsuit, the publisher closed the newspaper and laid off his employees. One of these employees was David Lane. Then in June 1983, Lane debated Berg on his radio show and Berg humiliated the Klansman by calling him “a sick and pathetic human being.” It was an experience that Lane would never forget.

The Order’s assassination of Alan Berg has received wide attention. It has been the subject of several books, a news documentary, and two Hollywood movies. Yet typically overlooked in this coverage is the degree to which Mathews was able to use his charisma to build people’s sense of outrage over perceived injustices until they felt they had no choice but to act

violently. “Mathews had a baby face,” an Order member once said to a reporter for the news program *Turning Point*, “so what came out of his mouth seemed acceptable.” This seems to have been especially true for the women in Mathews’s life. No one demonstrated this better than Jean Craig—mother of Mathews’s mistress, twenty-year-old Zillah Craig—of Laramie, Wyoming. In 1984, Jean Craig was a 51-year-old overweight grandmother with health problems. Although she had never committed a crime in her life, Mathews seduced her into his assassination plot.

In early June, Mathews asked Craig to create an “intelligence folder” on Berg by visiting Denver and monitoring his movements. Posing as a “writing student” from the University of Wyoming, Craig walked into the offices of KOA radio and asked for background information on Berg. After being handed a promotional package on Berg, Craig photographed the exterior of the building, including its surveillance cameras. By mid-June, she had tracked Berg’s every move. Based on her intelligence, Mathews and Scutari were able to learn what Berg looked like, the model of car he drove, where he lived, when he left for work and departed the station, and what restaurants he ate in.

On the balmy afternoon of June 18, Mathews, Pierce, Lane, and Scutari checked into a Motel 6 in east Denver which had been reserved by Pierce under the name Joseph Shelby. They went over Scutari’s plan. It was not complicated: The hit squad would simply follow Berg from the radio station to his condominium where they would kill him.

Around 9 o’clock that evening, Lane wheeled a dark blue Plymouth sedan to the curb near Berg’s home and turned on his police scanner. Lane was wearing a shoulder-length wig, a fake mustache, and plastic framed glasses. Mathews sat in the passenger seat, Pierce was in the back, and Scutari was waiting in a backup car several blocks away. In his hands, Pierce held a



case carrying an Ingram MAC-10 automatic machine pistol—purchased by the Order’s Andrew Barnhill from CSA’s Randall Rader several months earlier. Unloading the weapon from its case, Pierce slipped a silencer over the barrel and jammed a thirty-round magazine into the clip.

At about 9:15, Berg pulled his shiny black Volkswagen into the driveway. Lane started the Plymouth, drove up behind Berg’s car, and parked sideways across the driveway. As Berg opened the door and swivelled to get out, Mathews jumped from the Plymouth and opened the rear door for Pierce who ran up the short driveway and trained his gun on Berg’s torso. Then he opened up, sending a dozen .45 caliber slugs into Berg’s chest and face. Bruce Carroll Pierce, the impetuous criminal novice from the Kentucky hollers, had now crossed a moral divide.

### *The Great Heist*

While the Northgate robbery had advanced the Order’s agenda, funds were now running low and there were more projects on the horizon. These included plans to bomb the Boundary Dam in northwest Washington (a huge power plant) and sabotage shipping lanes in Puget Sound. This need for additional capital led to one of the most electrifying crimes in the annals of American crime and justice. It began with a man named Charles Ostrout.

Back in 1982, Mathews had placed an ad in the ultra-right magazine, *The Spotlight*, calling for the establishment of a “White American Bastion.” His intent was to promote the Pacific Northwest as a natural territory for white families. The ad offered an invitation to visit the Northwest and meet Mathews who would act as a local guide. Among those who replied was Charles Ostrout, a money room supervisor at the Brinks Security agency in San Francisco. During his visit, Ostrout lamented the fact that he had been passed over for promotion in favor of blacks because of the company’s affirmative action policies. Mathews commiserated by

welcoming Ostrout into his home and giving him \$50. Two years later, Mathews began to pump Ostrout for inside information about Brinks security arrangements.

In late June 1984, Mathews and Parmenter met with Ostrout in San Leandro, California. Ostrout talked about a Brinks run on California Highway 20 between Eureka and Sacramento, about a hundred miles north of San Francisco. He gave Mathews a map of the run and pointed out a location near the small town of Ukiah where the armored truck had to climb a steep and winding hill. At that point, where the highway rises 350 feet in less than a mile, the six-cylinder Brinks truck would be traveling at less than twenty miles an hour. With this, Mathews identified the ideal location for the Order's next robbery.

By July 4<sup>th</sup>, Pierce and Duey had joined Mathews and Parmenter at a Motel 6 in Santa Rosa, fifty miles south of Ukiah, where they began planning the robbery. Pierce and Duey bought three vehicles for the operation: two Ford pickups and a Fleetside sedan. They also visited the incline on the scheduled day that the armored truck made its run from Eureka; to time the operation, Mathews followed the truck up the hill, clocking its speed. After a week of planning, Mathews sent a message to the rest of the action group: They should come to California at once.

Seven new arrivals, including Richard Scutari, checked into various motels in Ukiah and Santa Rosa on the weekend of July 14. After Mathews went over the plot, Scutari pointed out that they had failed to design an escape plan, the most important part of a successful robbery. After deflecting several hair-brained schemes offered by Pierce, Scutari convinced the others that they should make a fast getaway, switch cars in a secluded area, and then separately go into hiding. This would require no less than three sets of vehicles: One for the robbery, one for the money switch, and another for the getaway. By mid-week, Duey had purchased two more

vehicles—a 1971 white Ford van and a 1973 Buick Rivera. Scutari located a spot in the Palmo Recreational area near Lake Medocino to make the switch. After clearing a swatch of land in a heavily wooded area down a steep hillside, Scutari brought in food, water, and other supplies in case the gang had to make their getaway on foot. Not only had Scutari designed a comprehensive getaway plan, but he had built in a contingency as well.

Once everything was in place, Mathews called a meeting to lay out the mission's primary rule: "We come for the money," he said. "No one is to get hurt." It is a testament to the Order's discipline, and Mathews's leadership, that this would come to pass. It would do so by dint of a force multiplier: Each man would be armed and several of them would carry heavy-fire power. This overwhelming show of force would compel the security guards to give up without a fight, thus expediting the robbery so that the gang could make its getaway.

On the morning of July 19, after more than two weeks of meticulous preparation, the counterfeiter Robert Merki drove to the small town of Willits, California, where he pulled into a McDonald's parking lot to wait for the Brinks truck to pass on its way to Ukiah. Merki's Cutlass was outfitted with a CB radio to relay messages to Scutari. Merki was armed with a Ruger .357 Magnum revolver and was disguised as an old woman—complete with a grey wig, skirt, blouse, panty hose, bra and falsies. The rest of the gang were waiting in Mathews's hotel room in Santa Rosa. All eleven men were dressed plainly in ball caps, blue jeans, and T-shirts with bandanas tied around their necks. After applying Krazy Glue to their fingertips, they slipped on surgical gloves to conceal fingerprints. Their final act of preparation was spiritual. As the room fell silent, Scutari recited the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm, which ends with the words: "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor the arrow that flieth by day."

Around 9:00 a.m., they climbed into the two Ford pickups and made their way to a staging area along Highway 101. Scutari, armed with an assault rifle, drove a green pickup equipped with a CB radio and a police scanner tuned to the local sheriff's office. Beside him was Mathews, carrying the 9mm Smith & Wesson purchased by Barnhill in Missoula after the Northgate raid. Pierce was in the truck bed, armed with a Heckler & Koch .308-caliber semi-automatic rifle loaded with armor piercing bullets. Next to him was Parmenter, holding a fake bazooka and manning a box of roofing nails. Yarbrough drove a blue pickup and carried the MAC-10 used to kill Alan Berg. Duey sat besides him with an Israeli 9mm Uzi. Barnhill, armed with an H&K .308, was in the bed along with Randy Evans and Richard Kemp, both armed with shotguns.

Shortly after noon, Merki radioed Scutari with a coded message indicating that the Brinks truck was on its way. Moments later, the truck rumbled past the staging area and into the history books of routine activity theory.

Scutari pulled out followed by Yarbrough. They caught up with the armored truck just as it turned onto Highway 20 and began lumbering up the steep incline. Scutari moved his pickup into the left lane and passed the Brinks truck, followed by Yarbrough who stayed alongside the Brinks. Then Scutari jammed on the brakes, forcing the heavy Brinks truck to a stop.

The men in the pickups stood up and trained their weapons on the guards. All had bandannas over their faces except for the ever-erratic Pierce who brazenly showed his face. One of them held up a sign reading: "Get Out or Die."

Mathews ran to the passenger side, yelling "Get out, now!" Yet the guards didn't move. As they sat there in stunned silence, Parmenter pointed what appeared to be a rocket launcher at

them and after ten seconds without a reply, Pierce jumped onto the hood of the Brinks truck and blistered the top of the bullet-proof windshield with four shots, showering the guards with glass. They jumped out with their hands in the air, shouting “We’ll give you anything you want!”

“Shut up,” Pierce snarled.

At this point, the Brinks truck started rolling backward; in his haste to get out the driver had failed to set the emergency brake. Evans and Kemp turned their shotguns on the rear tandem and blew the tires flat, bringing the truck to a cockeyed stop. Mathews ordered the guards to lie face down on the shoulder of the road then he tried to open the doors of the cab so he could trip a switch unlocking the rear compartment. But the doors were locked. Mathews tried to enter the truck from the backdoor but it was locked, too. Still sitting in back was a third guard, a young African American woman. When she stood up, Evans fired his shotgun through a side window. Badly shaken, she opened the side door, locking it behind her, and surrendered. Now the truck was locked with no one inside. The only way to enter the rear compartment was by tripping the unlock switch in the cab.

Scutari was manning the police scanner and calling out the timing of the robbery every thirty seconds as Duey directed traffic on Highway 20 with his rifle. By now, the Order had been on the road for ten long minutes and Scutari expected to hear the robbery called out over his scanner at any moment. Mathews got in the woman’s face and screamed, “Open that door! Get that door open now!” Then Pierce aimed his weapon at her head. The force multiplier worked. She pulled the keys from her pocket and opened the cab, allowing Mathews to trip the unlock switch.

After Scutari backed up to the rear of the Brinks truck, Mathews jumped in the back of

the Brinks and took his place at the front of a bucket-brigade, passing one bag of money after another to the other men who stacked them in Scutari's bed. After passing a few bags, Mathews felt his pistol digging into his waist. To relieve the pressure, he shoved the gun down his pant leg. After Mathews passed several more bags, the gun fell on the floor and was covered by debris.

Once the bed was filled, Scutari pulled away following Yarbrough. The roofing nails were then tossed onto the road behind the fleeing vehicles. When the pickups were several hundred feet away, the female guard got off the ground; Pierce fired off a round over her head, forcing the woman to hit the ground.

Within minutes, the pickups arrived at the Palmo Recreational area where the gang quickly transferred everything into the white van—the money, guns, gloves, CB radio, and scanner. Then each man put on a different shirt and piled into the van and the Riviera. The switch cars pulled onto the highway where they easily blended into the routine traffic flow. Several minutes later, the switch cars pulled into two other areas where the money, guns, and equipment were transferred to several getaway cars. The robbers left those areas just as police cars screamed by in the opposite direction responding to the robbery.

In less than twenty minutes, the Order had stolen \$3.6 million and, on Mathews's explicit instructions, no one had been hurt in the process. It was, at the time, the most successful overland robbery ever committed on American soil.

### **Aftermath**

The gang met up in Reno, Nevada, where they cleaned the inside of the van and ditched it. From there the Order headed to Merki's home in Boise, arriving on July 21, where they

counted out the robbery money and discussed plans for the future. Despite their success, this discussion deepened the inter-group conflict and again it centered on Pierce's simmering feud with Mathews.

When Mathews said that he wanted to divide the money among other white power groups, Pierce began bitching that he wanted more say in the Order's structure and direction. The Identity Christians sided with Pierce. Tempers flared and a shoving match ensued between the Yarbrough and Mathews. Once civility was restored, Mathews agreed to a reorganization plan. From now on, Pierce would lead a break-away cell responsible for "procurements [sic]," or future robberies. Mathews would remain the overall coordinator, concentrating on strategy and the recruitment of new soldiers. Duey would take responsibility for indoctrination; Yarbrough would handle assassinations; and Scutari would continue as head of security.

So that's the way it was. Pierce organized his own cell and Bob Mathews became a roving ambassador for the American radical right, spreading his largesse far and wide. After a brief visit with Zillah Craig in Laramie—where he dramatically changed his appearance by dying his dark brown hair blond—Mathews loaded hundreds of thousands of dollars in the trunk of a used Pontiac and began donating money to Identity preachers, Ku Klux Klan members, and neo-Nazis. Most of it was earmarked for recruiting youth into the movement. In Columbus, Ohio, Mathews gave a racist college professor an undetermined amount of cash to start a white power rock band that would appeal to America's emerging skinhead movement. He donated \$300,000 to Tom Metzger of the White Aryan Resistance in Fallbrook, California; Metzger used these proceeds to support his communications system of racist teen magazines, telephone hotlines, computer bulletin boards, a cable access television program, and white power rock concerts. In

Arlington, Virginia, Mathews gave William Pierce \$50,000; Pierce bought a 364-acre farm and began writing *Hunter*, his sequel to *The Turner Diaries*. In Angier, North Carolina, Mathews donated \$200,000 to the Grand Dragon of the Confederate Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, which he used to open an all-white Christian school for Klan children. In perhaps his most audacious attempt to secure the future of the Aryan race, Mathews established a surrogate mother program in Portland. Here, the robbery money was used to support a sperm bank for the “siring” of future Aryan warriors.

Mathews also used the Ukiah windfall to secure the loyalty of his inner circle. Each robbery participant received \$40,000. Duey was also given nearly half a million dollars to start his indoctrination center in Bluecreek, Washington. His Aryan Academy was soon outfitted with a television, video disc player, loud speakers, and cassette decks. Scutari received more than a hundred thousand dollars and began spending money like a drunken sailor, buying police scanners, wiretap detectors, telephone scramblers, walkie talkies, and a radio frequency detector—a device that could pick up radio signals and detect FBI informants wearing a wire. Lane was given \$310,000 for his propaganda program and Pierce was given \$642,000 to support his splinter group. He immediately went to work identifying robbery targets in San Francisco. Totally obsessed with his role as an Aryan warrior, Pierce envisioned a scheme to hit a Brinks cash vault and then rob an incoming air shipment of Brinks money at the San Francisco Airport. The expected take: \$20 million. But the Order’s most ambitious plans were for terrorist training. This included a plan to forge an alliance between the Order and an official of the Syrian government. Any enemy of the Jews, Mathews reasoned, was a friend of the Order.

At the center of this new initiative was the ever-skillful Randall Rader. Less than a week



after the Ukiah robbery, Scutari traveled to Gentry, Arkansas, where he met Rader and offered him \$145,000 to set up two paramilitary training bases. Radar's talents in this area were, according to Flynn and Gerhardt, "second to none." Rader, then unemployed and adrift from the CSA, jumped at the chance. He began by amassing supplies ranging from combat boots, backpacks, and paramilitary uniforms to flares, tents, and camping gear. In September, Rader left his wife and relocated to the Northwest with a nominally-talented cook named Nash. After scouting the area, Rader payed \$88,000 for 110 acres of rural property near Priest River, Idaho—a place of breathtaking beauty—and began converting the land to a training camp. (A160-acre parcel in Shannon County Missouri was later purchased for a second camp.) Rader's crew cleared the land, dug foxholes, set up a mess tent, and surrounded the area with machine gun nests. As a cover, Rader formed the Mountain Man Supply Company for the purpose of buying equipment for the camp. On shopping sprees to Las Vegas and Reno, Rader spent more than forty-thousand dollars on radio towers, a base station, chainsaws, all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, generators, a trailer, and surveillance cameras along with dozens of firearms and tons of ammunition. It is worth remembering that all of this took place years before Osama bin Laden established his first terrorist training camp in the mountains of Afghanistan.

Yet the training and re-organization created more heat than light. As the Order set out to develop more sophisticated skills for the future, the FBI was taking advantage of the gang's mistakes of the past.

### **Evidence as Totem**

The primary goal of this research is to identify the distinguishing features of terrorist-oriented criminality. The FBI's investigation of the Brink truck robbery revealed such a

distinction. And like all terrorism, this distinction was located in the varieties of criminality associated with deviant subcultures.

When the CSA's Richard Snell was found with a .22-caliber pistol following his killing of an Arkansas state trooper—the same gun Snell previously used to murder a pawnshop owner—he was not simply showing a lack of judgement. Nor was he exhibiting the sort of criminal stupidity we've so far witnessed with the international jihadists. This was something entirely different. Instead, Snell was demonstrating a fundamental characteristic of the American radical right. Rather than concealing incriminating evidence, American terrorists actually hold onto this evidence, thereby recasting it as a symbol of their struggle. The terrorist's ends (bombing targets, assassination victims, etc.) are always symbolic. And so are the means to those ends. For Snell, the .22-caliber pistol was far more than physical evidence worthy of capital punishment. For him, it was proof of a noble performance.

This facet of domestic terrorism is all about individual reputation, or the prospect of generating stories that cast the terrorist as brave, loyal to confederates, and fearless to a fault. In these stories, the terrorist assumes a heroic identity that becomes a permanent part of their biography. Terrorists use evidence gained in battle, then, to create stories that reveal themselves as admirable to present and future audiences. Why do terrorists consider evidence to be venerated emblems of their crimes? "Beats me," said the FBI's Danny Coulson. "It's kind of like the Sioux when they slaughtered Custer's troops at Little Big Horn. They cut off fingers of dead soldiers and wore them as necklaces. To them, it was totem."

### *Manhunt*

Within days of the Ukiah robbery, FBI agents from San Francisco traced the 9mm Smith

& Wesson pistol found in the Brinks truck to Andrew Barnhill of Laclede, Idaho. This information was passed on to the special agent in charge of the investigation, Wayne Manis of the FBI office in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. When Manis and two agents kicked in Barnhill's door several days later, they discovered evidence indicating that the Ukiah heist was not a conventional armed robbery. Along with racist material tying Barnhill to Aryan Nations, the agents discovered totem in the form of a newspaper article about the Continental armored truck robbery at the Northgate Mall in Seattle. "The article was neatly folded," said Manis in my interview with him. "It was in a stack of personal items, including Barnhill's baby teeth. It was being preserved and we knew that it was very personal to him."

The article was just the beginning of evidence linking Barnhill to a broader conspiracy. A background check revealed that on June 19, 1984, Andrew Barnhill (again using his own name) had been arrested in Madras, Oregon, on weapons charges. Arrested with him was Randy Evans, who also gave his real name to police. When officers asked Evans for his car registration, he handed over a title and registration issued to Denver Parmenter. That caused the FBI to take another look at Randy Duey, Parmenter's former roommate in Newport, Washington, who—along with David Lane and Robert Merki—had been questioned in May by deputies looking for Bruce Pierce.

Barnhill's failure to use a fake ID when purchasing the Smith & Wesson in Missoula was the thread that unraveled the conspiracy, yet Barnhill was not the only one who exhibited a slipshod criminality. The Order's greatest failing was in the area of communications.

Back in January 1984, Mathews instructed Robert Merki's wife, Sharon, to set up a communications system in the couple's basement at their home in Boise. Known as the "Bear

Trap,” a separate telephone line served as a message center and all contact between Mathews and the others was to be made through this center using code names only. This way, operatives would never have to phone Mathews directly. Instead, they would phone the Bear Trap and Sharon Merki would log in the call and relay the message to Carlos. Yet this system was not used for ordinary calls to family members, and that was straw that broke the Order’s back.

Following the Brinks robbery, agents in Santa Rosa interviewed several people who sold cars to the robbery suspects (agents located these people by tracing license numbers from the vehicles after they’d been abandoned by the Order near the robbery site). The seller of the Buick Riviera told agents that the car was sold to a Caucasian man who said he was staying at the Motel 6 on Cleveland Street. Agents then began checking toll call records from pay phones in the Cleveland Street area made prior to the robbery. Knowing that a man from Idaho (Barnhill) had purchased the abandoned gun in the Brinks truck, investigators narrowed the vast volume of toll records to ten telephone calls from pay phones around Cleveland Street to various locations in the Montana-Idaho-Washington area.

Among these was a call to a number belonging to “Gary Olbu” in Sandpoint, Idaho. Several months earlier, Wayne Manis quietly began investigating allegations of an armed robbery committed by an Aryan Nations security guard named...Gary Lee Yarbrough. Following the leads provided by the check of phone records in Santa Rosa, on September 5, 1984, Manis set up a stakeout in a strip mall near the home of “Gary Olbu.” To his amazement, Manis saw Gary Yarbrough leave that house, get on his motorcycle, and drive to a pay phone. “I knew this was unusual,” Manis recalled, “because I’d just phoned his house sixty seconds earlier and the phone was working fine. So, why was he going to a pay phone?” A search of that pay phone record

showed that Yarbrough had called a number belonging to Suzanne Stewart in Boise—Sharon Merki's daughter.

There were also calls made from the Santa Rosa pay phones to the homes of Denver Parmenter's wife in Cheney, Washington; Zillah Craig in Laramie; Charles Ostrout in San Leandro; and Robert Mathews in Metaline Falls. But perhaps the most important call was made to the home of Sandra Glee in Troy, Montana. For "Sandra Glee," as it turns out, was an alias used by Bruce Pierce's wife, Julie.

On September 8, Manis left his surveillance of Yarbrough house to supervise the execution a search warrant on Pierce's home in Troy. Finding the house empty, Manis searched the grounds where he came across a plywood silhouette target of a police officer shot full of holes. Buried in some nearby trees, he discovered numerous slugs from a .45-caliber weapon. Ballistics tests showed that they came from the Ingram MAC-10 automatic machine pistol used to kill Alan Berg.

Essentially, the FBI now had the Order dead to rights, primarily because of their inattention to the security of communications. "Most of them were not seasoned criminals," said Manis. "They thought they were dealing with a toothless dog [in the FBI] at the time. They thought the phones would be safe, but, of course, they weren't. The records gave us leads to discover the whole organization." Had the Silent Brotherhood lived in the age of cell phones, the investigation may never have gone beyond the leads associated with Barnhill's purchase of the gun found in the Brinks truck. But the fact of the matter was that Mathews's gang was not burdened by one loose cannon; rather, the Order was comprised of nothing but loose cannons. Their incompetence was about to play itself out in the Berg investigation as well.

In many ways, selecting David Lane as the wheel man in the Berg assassination was the dumbest decision ever made by Mathews and Scutari. Back in 1981, Lane was pulled over on a routine traffic stop in Denver and police discovered a batch of Aryan Nations material in his trunk. The media were called in and the next day Lane's picture was splashed across the front pages of the newspapers. Also, Lane had debated Berg on the radio in June 1983, so there were publicly-available tapes of that program. Not surprisingly, then, following the Berg assassination Denver police announced that Lane was wanted for questioning, and again his picture appeared in the newspapers. When Lane learned of it, he wrote an open letter to the Denver media denying his involvement in the Berg murder. Investigators got another break in the case when they checked registrations at Denver hotels. Near the Motel 6 in east Denver, where "Joseph Shelby" and three other men stayed prior to Berg's murder, records showed that calls were made from pay phones to Mathews's home in Metaline Falls, and to a number in Fort Lupton, Colorado, that was situated around the corner from an occasional residence used by David Lane.

It would take months for the FBI to make the arrests, however. Because Bureau officials believed that the evidence was not yet strong enough, Manis and his investigators were instructed to remain in "intelligence-gathering mode" by placing the suspects under surveillance. By the end of September, 1984, some forty FBI agents had joined the surveillance. They staked out Mathews's home in Metaline Falls, Craig's house in Laramie, Parmenter's apartment in Seattle, the Merki's bungalow in Boise, and, of course, Yarbrough's home in Sandpoint. This final stakeout set in motion a series of events that would bring the case to a close.

On the morning of October 18, three FBI agents, dressed in blue jeans and with no identifying insignias, drove a U.S. Forest Service vehicle down a dirt road leading to

Yarbrough's rented house, passing a "no trespassing" sign he had posted at the edge of his property. As the truck neared the house, Yarbrough pulled on a military fatigue jacket, grabbed his .45-caliber pistol, and ran toward the moving vehicle. Then, from about one-hundred feet away, Yarbrough opened fire. The bullet cracked over the vehicle and then Yarbrough fired again. The shooting, he would later claim, was a "stupid thing" on his part, intended only to scare the agents away. That, of course, made little difference to the agents on the morning of October 18.

As Yarbrough escaped into the dense woods, the agents made their way back to town where they summoned the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team. Nine hours later, the agents obtained a search warrant and returned to Yarbrough's house. Meanwhile, other agents were dispatched to nearby Samuels, Idaho, where Yarbrough's brother, Stephen, lived. By this time, Gary Yarbrough had made his way to Stephen's house and he saw the agents coming in the dead of night. Rather than making a break for it, though, Yarbrough rolled into a ditch, pointed his gun at the house, and pretended to be an undercover agent himself. Remarkably, no one questioned him. After awhile Yarbrough saw his chance to escape and, for the second time that day, disappeared into the tree line.

As this was going on, Manis led the search of Yarbrough's home in Sandpoint. In the bedroom, agents found a copy of Kenneth Goddard's *Balefire*, about a terrorist strike on the Los Angeles Olympic Games, with key sections outlined in red. Firearms and ordinance were spread throughout the residence, including pistols, shotguns, assault rifles, thousands of rounds of ammunition, along with wigs, ski masks, brass knuckles, switch blades, a commando crossbow, plastic explosives, dynamite, and tear gas grenades. Next to a mantle piece was a large portrait of

Adolf Hitler, surrounded by black crepe paper and candles, and nearby was a picture of Jesus Christ. On the floor was a brown case, and inside was an Ingram MAC-10 automatic machine pistol.

Agents also came across a document labeled *Bruders Schweigen*, which set forth a national command structure headed by someone named “Carlos,” along with a roster of dozens of operatives responsible to him. Further hinting at the gang’s sophistication, the document contained information on local law enforcement officers including computer printouts with their names, home addresses and phone numbers, vehicle license plates, along with photographs of these officers and other pertinent information. But even that paled in comparison to the totem discovered.

Among Yarbrough’s papers, Manis found receipts for equipment delivered to the Mountain Man Supply Company at Priest River. “I assigned two agents to go to the camp,” Manis recalled with a tone of regret, “but I was told [by higher-ups] that there was a shortage of manpower. Had we gone to Priest River, we could have got them all, right then. Everything else could have been avoided.”

### *Last Call*

By now, Yarbrough had made his way to a pay phone where he contacted Carlos via the Bear Trap, indicating that he had been shot during the raid (which turned out to be a lie in order to gain sympathy). Mathews, in turn, put out a message saying that “Gary has been shot by the FBI.” This call led to a gathering of the Order at the Priest River camp two days later.

At 8:00 p.m. on the cold night of October 21, Mathews stood inside the mess tent before twenty members of his Silent Brotherhood—the largest gathering of the organization ever—and



attempted to regroup after the Sandpoint raid. First and foremost, Mathews instructed Duey to travel to Washington, D.C., and meet with his Syrian contacts. Mathews's goal was to form an Aryan-Islamic alliance capable of mounting a campaign of urban terrorism, focusing on the assassination of FBI agents. The campaign would begin with a strike against the FBI office in Sandpoint to retrieve the documents taken from Yarbrough. The plan to establish a confederacy of American neo-Nazis and Middle Eastern jihadists was, and remains to this day, a unique development in the history of worldwide terrorism—one that goes far beyond the revolutionary screed of *The Turner Diaries* or any other anti-government tract of the era.

Cooler heads would prevail, however. After delivering his battle cry, Mathews was taken aside by Scutari and Rader who persuaded him that the others were not up to a commando war against the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This was especially so for Rader's crew, which included Barnhill, Parmenter, Kemp, and half a dozen others. Rader's training camp may have preceded bin Laden's, but the Order was no al-Qaeda. Having grown tired of the camp's primitive living conditions, Nash's poor cooking, and the driving Idaho snow storms, Rader's cell had fractured within a matter of weeks. Three of his men were drinking heavily, one had a drug problem, and another was being held in disciplinary custody for spending too much money, gossiping, and running home to his mother. There was talk of mutiny. Their leader, Randall Rader—the maniacal neo-Nazi munitions expert who once ate his own dog—had become lost in a netherworld of delusion and paranoia. Rader came to believe that his camp was being monitored by a coven of witches living down the road, so he was conducting surveillance on the place. He also became more ruthless than ever by cracking down on his men with reminders of Walter West's brutal murder. Moreover, as a defense attorney would later say in court, at this point the

Order's likelihood of mounting a war against the FBI was akin to "the Three Stooges trying to conduct brain surgery."

Mathews, it seems, had lost his charisma. One man at the Priest River summit later recalled that Mathews had aged ten years since the Berg assassination. Rader testified that Mathews had "flipped out at this point, he was really losing it." Another said that Carlos had gone "cuckoo." Others—including Barnhill, Kemp, and even Rader himself—left the Order shortly after Mathews's call to arms. Though Mathews was ready for battle, only a handful of his kinsmen were still willing to follow him. So Carlos closed down the Priest River camp, divvied up roughly \$1.5 million in remaining loot, and his warriors went their separate ways. Mathews and his closest remaining allies—Scutari, Yarbrough, and a new recruit from California named Frank Silva—would head to Portland.

### **The Martyrdom of Robert Jay Mathews**

Tom Martinez was one of the Order operatives responsible for passing counterfeit bills in Philadelphia. He was arrested on June 29, 1984, after passing some phony tens at a liquor store near his home. After being released on bail, Martinez called Mathews to discuss his legal problems, and Mathews convinced him to skip bail and go underground. Shortly thereafter, however, Mathews initiated a plan to murder the liquor store merchant who was the primary witness in the Martinez case. In order to avoid that murder, Martinez made the decision to cooperate with the FBI in its investigation of Mathews's secret army. By this point, the FBI had identified the Order as the most serious terrorist threat in the nation.

Martinez flew to Portland on November 23 where he was met at the airport by Mathews and Yarbrough. "I liked Mathews a whole lot," said Martinez. "But he'd become a weird bird by

then. And Yarbrough: he had two grenades in the back seat and talked about nothing but finding some prostitutes to fuck up.”

Through Martinez’s cooperation, the FBI tracked the three men to the Capri Motel—Martinez to Room 14 on the ground level and Mathews and Yarbrough to Room 42 on the second floor. After Yarbrough checked the walls (and Martinez) for hidden microphones, they met in Room 42 where Mathews laid out Martinez’s new role. “I was supposed to meet with David Lane in Mobile, Alabama,” he said, “and then assassinate Morris Dees.” (By now, Jean Craig had already been in Birmingham, Alabama, where she’d conducted surveillance on Dees’s home and office.) “Mathews was crazy,” Martinez recalled, “I could see it in his eyes.”

By 4:00 a.m., the Capri was surrounded by twenty FBI agents, including a SWAT team. Their primary target was Yarbrough—not only because he had shot at one of their own back in Sandpoint, but because agents had discovered a perfect match between the firing pin of the MAC-10 found at Yarbrough’s house and the shell casings taken from the Berg murder scene in Denver. Yarbrough, the only career criminal in the Order, had apparently learned little in his criminal career. Investigators never expected to find the murder weapon, assuming instead that it was corroding at the bottom of a lake somewhere. “Incredibly,” writes Coulson, “Yarbrough had preserved the best possible evidence short of a confession.” But that is a rather polite accounting of events. When I asked Manis about Yarbrough’s possession of the gun, he replied: “It was one of the stupidest things I’ve ever seen.” Coulson was even more adamant in his interview: “What an idiot! Yarbrough wasn’t even at the Berg murder. He had nothing to do with it.” That’s one way of looking at it. Another is that Yarbrough could not avoid the temptation of gathering totem.

When the sun came up, Manis evacuated all of the guests from the Capri, except for those in Rooms 14 and 42. Around 8:40 a.m., Mathews appeared on the catwalk outside his room. He was carrying a clipboard in his hands, a wad of robbery money in his pocket, and a 9 mm pistol in his belt. As he began walking down the stairs on his way to Martinez's room, Mathews caught a glimpse of someone hiding in the bushes near the parking lot.

He bolted down the stairs and an agent fired at him; yet the bullet missed and ricocheted into the motel office injuring the manager. Mathews ran across the parking lot, down the street, and around a corner. Agents followed shouting, "Stop Mathews!" "Halt, FBI!" and "Freeze, you bastard!" Outrunning them, Mathews found cover behind a concrete wall, drew his gun, and waited. Hearing the commotion, Yarbrough jumped from the bathroom window of his room into some bushes where he was instantly surrounded by Uzi-toting agents and taken into custody.

When one of the agents reached the wall, Mathews squeezed off two rounds, hitting him in the foot and leg. Another agent fired back with a shotgun, blasting the pistol out of Mathews's right hand and tearing a chunk of flesh from it. In searing pain, Mathews bolted down the street, jumped a fence, and disappeared down an alley.

Several blocks away, he met two workers installing a burglar alarm on a house and persuaded them to take him to the emergency room of a nearby hospital. On the way, Mathews spotted a car with skis mounted on top sitting at a Union 76 gas station. Presuming the car was headed to the ski resort on Mount Hood, Mathews told his driver to stop and then he ran up to the car and asked for a ride. A half hour later, Mathews was let out in the small community of Brightwood where, coincidentally, Silva and Scutari had recently rented a safe house. Through nothing but his own sheer determination, Mathews had eluded the dragnet.

Scutari tended to Mathews's wound by cutting the torn flesh off his hand with a hunting knife—sans painkillers. After Mathews explained what had happened at the Capri, Scutari made the case for leaving for Arizona at once. Mathews, though, favored a move north—to safe houses Duey and Merki had rented on Whidbey Island, a vacation resort located in the middle of Puget Sound near Everett, Washington, north of Seattle.

Mathews and Silva left immediately for Whidbey Island. They were joined there a day later by Scutari, Duey, and Robert and Sharon Merki, who helped Mathews settle into a two-story cedar home on a cliff overlooking the Sound. Based largely on articles published in William Pierce's *National Vanguard*, Mathews then began writing a "Declaration of War on ZOG," awkwardly scrawling out thoughts with his left hand. On November 25, after hearing about the shootout in Portland, Bruce Pierce—who had been living with his cell in a trailer park in Pahrump, Nevada—arrived on the Island along with Randy Evans.

Pierce and Mathews buried the hatchet and embraced one another. Pierce congratulated Mathews for showing his mettle in Portland and then filled his comrade in on what he'd been up to during the past few months. Before hitting the Brinks vault in San Francisco, Pierce said his cell had plans to re-rob the armored truck in Ukiah. With that money, they would fund the bombing of three major power lines in Los Angeles (Pierce had already gathered ammonium nitrate fertilizer for the bomb and had stored it in a Texas rental locker). Amid the ensuing bedlam, they would unload a barrel of cyanide into the L.A. water supply. Consistent with *The Turner Diaries*, this would trigger an urban race war. "The niggers'll be in the streets in an hour," Pierce predicted, "and the cops'll be shooting."

Mathews handed Pierce a typed copy of his eight-page Declaration, indicating that the

Order was “in a full and unrelenting state of war with those forces seeking and consciously promoting the destruction of our faith and our race.” The document was then signed by Mathews, Pierce, Duey, Scutari, Evans, Silva, and Robert Merki. Pierce left with Evans the following day to rejoin his group in Nevada. On December 1, Duey ferried to the mainland and had a thousand copies of the Declaration made for distribution to the nation’s biggest newspapers.

Then, on December 7, one of Mathews’s confidants went to a payphone on Whidbey Island and called the FBI office in Seattle. This person—whose identity has never been revealed—told the FBI that Mathews was staying in one of three houses the Order was renting on the Island, and went on to identify those addresses.

The previous day, December 6, Scutari and Silva had left the Island to locate safe houses in the Southwest. They tried to persuade Mathews to come along, but he declined, preferring, in his words, to “go out in a blaze of glory.” Shortly after receiving their December 7 tip, FBI agents took the Merkis into custody without incident. Duey was also arrested, as he ran from the backdoor of his house with a fully loaded submachine gun in one hand and a loaded 9 mm. pistol in the other. Inside agents found two copies of the Declaration of War along with eleven copies of *The Diaries*, ten thousand dollars in cash, and a letter to an unnamed Syrian authority stipulating terms of financial assistance to the Order.

Mathews was now in his safe house along with Merki’s son, Ian Stewart. Mathews had one good hand, a 9 mm. Uzi machine gun, a gas mask, and several thousand rounds of ammunition.

On the afternoon of December 7, approximately one-hundred FBI agents surrounded the safe house, causing Stewart to surrender. Danny Coulson telephoned Mathews and attempted to

coax him out, but that came to no avail. After several attempts, Mathews quit answering the phone. Then, shortly after sundown, a gunshot rang out from the house, followed by a mournful wail.

The next morning, SWAT teams began pumping CS gas into the house in order to drive out any living person. Mathews, they assumed, was dead. At midday—after pumping more than 250 rounds of tear gas into the second floor—agents threw flash bang grenades into the ground floor and stormed inside. Suddenly, through the ceiling above them came a torrent of machine gun fire. The agents retreated and took cover behind some trees. Then Mathews opened up again, causing the agents to fire back in a thunderous clank of firepower that went on for fifteen minutes.

At sundown, an FBI gun ship flew in and cast a huge searchlight on the house. Hovering three feet from the roof, the helicopter immediately took on gun fire as Mathews ran across the upper floor shooting round after round through the ceiling. As the chopper pulled away, a SWAT team sent a volley of shots into the second floor. Again Mathews retaliated with a ferocious barrage of machine gun fire, driving the agents back. Then he opened fire on a second SWAT team and drove them off the perimeter as well.

At this point, a command decision was made to burn the house to the ground. Sometime on the evening of August 8, agents fired a round of phosphorescent flares through a ground floor window. Within seconds, an intense fire erupted that was aggravated by the explosion of ammunition inside the house. As the flames raged upwards two hundred feet into the blackened sky, still Mathews rained down automatic gunfire from his second floor perch. Then, finally, the shooting stopped.

The next morning, after the debris had cooled enough to start the search for evidence, investigators found a scorched bathtub that had fallen from the second floor. Lying beside it were the burned remains of Mathews's body. Buried in his chest cavity was a piece of molten gold. Still legible was a diagram of a shield with a Roman cross and two German words printed across the center: *Bruders Schweigen*—the Silent Brotherhood.

\* \* \*

Approximately one year after Mathews's death, the U.S. Justice Department completed its successful prosecution of the Order. The trial, which cost over \$1 million and featured the presentation of 1,538 pieces of evidence and the appearance of 280 witness, brought to light sixty-five crimes ranging from robberies, arson, bombings, counterfeiting, and murder to conspiracy to rob affecting interstate commerce, and transporting stolen property across state lines. Together, these crimes constituted 176 overt acts fitting the definition of “racketeering activity” specified in the federal RICO statute (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act), originally designed to prosecute organized crime figures. The inner circle received the harshest punishments. Bruce Pierce (captured in Rossville, Georgia, on March 26, 1985) was sentenced to 250 years in prison. Randy Duey received a one-hundred year sentence. Gary Yarbrough was sentenced to eighty years; Andrew Barnhill drew forty-years; Richard Kemp and Richard Scutari were both sentenced to sixty years. David Lane received a life sentence. Randall Rader turned state's evidence and became a key witness against both the Order and the CSA. He entered the Witness Protection Program in 1986, as did Tom Martinez.

And Robert Jay Mathews became a revolutionary role model for the white supremacy movement. He had an especially deep effect on racist skinheads throughout the world. Mathews



became their martyr, a fallen hero immortalized in countless underground publications and white power rock anthems. The date of his killing at the hands of ZOG became, in fact, an international memorial day for the white power world, a day to commemorate not only Mathews but all “white warriors who have fallen in battle.” Thus, December 8—known in the movement as the Day of Martyrs—ultimately took its place alongside April 19 (the “Date of Doom” commemorating the FBI’s deadly 1993 raid on the Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas) and April 20 (Hitler’s birthday) in the pantheon of Aryan mythology. Wherever white supremacists would gather in the years after Mathews’s death, the Order was held up as the supreme example of racial integrity. That others would seek to emulate their terrorism was inevitable.

**CASE SIX:**  
**ROBBERY AND BURGLARY**

One of the most perplexing aspects of terrorism is the question of why certain people become enamored by terrorists, and then sacrifice their lives to emulate them. Some scholars explain this process through the social construction of terrorism, or what Philip Jenkins describes in his *Images of Terror* as “the interests that groups have in presenting a particular image, and the rhetorical means by which they establish this picture.” In this regard, no terrorist in modern history has been more influential than Carlos the Jackal. Carlos was the first terrorist to achieve worldwide media fame, thereby creating a glorified image of the terrorist as celebrity. Without the Jackal, Osama bin Laden would have never become a living myth of international terrorism.

Ilich Ramirez Sanchez was destined to become a revolutionary. Born in Caracas, Venezuela on October 12, 1949, his father, a wealthy yet militant Marxist lawyer, named him Ilich after the founder of Bolshevism (Ilich was Lenin’s middle name). When he was nineteen years old, Ilich’s father enrolled him in Moscow’s Patrice Lumumba University, training grounds for the Soviet KGB, where he was taught the arts of espionage and guerrilla warfare. Yet Ramirez Sanchez was expelled in 1970 “for anti-Soviet provocation and leading a dissipated life.” He then traveled to a guerrilla training camp run by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in Amman, Jordan. There he achieved the status of a highly trained guerrilla and was given the pseudonym “Carlos” by Bassam Abu-Sharif, the PFLP’s spokesman. After fighting with the PFLP against the Jordanian government in the “Black September” of 1970, Carlos relocated to Britain and became a student at the London School of Economics.

Carlos performed his first terrorist act for the PFLP on December 30, 1973 when he attempted to assassinate an influential Jewish businessman in London. In 1974 he participated in a bomb attack on a London bank, car bombed three French newspapers who supported the Israelis, and bombed a crowded Parisian restaurant, killing two and injuring thirty. In January 1975 he took part in two failed rocket propelled grenade attacks on El Al airliners at Orly Airport near Paris. That summer, in Paris, he murdered two unarmed policemen and an informant, and then fled to Algeria. The brazen shooting gained worldwide attention and following a raid on Carlos's arms cache in London a reporter for the *Guardian* gave him a new name—"The Jackal"—after police discovered a copy of Frederick Forsyth's 1971 novel *The Day of the Jackal*. With this, the myth of Carlos the Jackal was born.

The peak of his career came just before Christmas 1975 when he led the six-person team that assaulted the conference of OPEC leaders in Vienna. Three of his accomplices were Arabs and three were Germans from the Baader-Meinhoff gang, including Hans-Joachim Klien (the former chauffeur for Jean-Paul Sartre) and the notoriously violent Gabrielle Krocher-Tiedemann. Carlos was tricked out as a Mexican outlaw—in a brown leather jacket, black beret, long hair, a thin beard, sideburns, and wielding an Italian-made Beretta machine pistol. Upon entering the conference, Krocher-Tiedemann shot and killed two policemen. Carlos then killed a Libyan economist by shooting him in the neck with his Beretta before rounding up the eleven OPEC oil ministers, along with fifty-one other OPEC staff. After negotiating with the Austrians for a DC9 jet liner and crew, he pirated the eleven ministers to Tripoli via Algiers—handing out Cuban cigars and autographs like a rock star—and then walked away with \$50 million in ransom money paid by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and the Shah of Iran, as well as a \$1 million bonus

from President Muammar al-Gaddafi of Lybia.

The OPEC raid spawned extraordinary media coverage across the globe, thereby according Carlos a reputation as the “terrorist’s terrorist.” He selected the terrorists for the 1976 hijacking of Air France Flight 193 to Entebbe; set free Arab prisoners held in a French prison; and was treated like a prince at training camps in Libya, Iraq, and Syria. One writer claimed that Carlos’s humiliation of the hostages in Vienna had done more to moderate OPEC oil prices than Henry Kissinger. The “jet-set” terrorist traveled on diplomatic passports and maintained safe houses in Bucharest, Belgrade, Damascus, and Khartoum. His organization was as impenetrable as his missions were unpredictable. He was a master of disguise who lived under assumed identities surrounded by a cosmopolitan group of Syrian, Lebanese, West German and Swiss radicals who boasted a variety of criminal skills. He reportedly had possession of a nuclear bomb and “freelanced” for such high-profile clients as Saddam Hussein, Marshal Tito, the Italian Red Brigade, the Spanish Basque ETA, and the secret services of much of the Soviet bloc.

Carlos therefore provided the West with a perfect Cold War enemy and became the target of assassination attempts by the world’s most powerful intelligence agencies. Carlos and his group killed twenty-four people and maimed another 257, yet he evaded capture thanks to powerful backers and the blunders of Western intelligence. Nicknamed “Il Gordo” (“The Fat One”), he had millions in Hungarian and Czechoslovakian bank accounts, drove a red Ferrari, maintained a stable of high-class prostitutes, and drank far too much. But more than anything, Carlos was a walking paradox. He was a millionaire playboy who murdered in the name of Third World revolutionary causes, yet he was not a committed Marxist. Individual terrorists must avoid publicity or exposure, yet Carlos thrived on international exposure and attention.

By the early 1980s Carlos was considered the most feared international terrorist of the twentieth century. As the “most wanted man in the world,” he generated even more media attention, much of it bestowing Carlos with superhuman qualities. And ultimately, “Carlos the Jackal” entered the realm of folklore. Robert Ludlum wrote a series of novels in which Carlos was portrayed as an invincible criminal mastermind (*The Bourne Identity*, *The Bourne Supremacy*, and *The Bourne Ultimatum*). America’s most successful novelist, Tom Clancy, devoted his *Rainbow Six* to a band of terrorists who attempt to free “Carlos” from prison.

The most lustrous projection of the American psyche—the movies—portrayed him as a romantic revolutionary of the champagne left. The Jackal’s murderous reign was glorified in *True Lies* (starring Arnold Schwarzenegger as a secret service agent who pursues a terrorist called “Carlos”), *The Jackal* (with Bruce Willis in the role of an assassin), *The Assignment* (in which “Carlos” is played by actor Aidan Quinn), and the erotic *Death has a Bad Reputation* (where Elizabeth Hurley plays a reporter seduced by “Carlos”). A half dozen biographies were written about Carlos and the myth eventually overcame reality. Dozens of hijackings, car-bombings, and assassinations were linked to Carlos for lack of anyone else to claim the credit. He was believed to be responsible for the massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972. In 1980 it was assumed that Carlos had assassinated the ousted Nicaraguan dictator, Anastasio Somoza. The same year he was credited with masterminding the hostage-taking at the United States embassy in Tehran. And in 1986 he supposedly organized a Libyan hit squad bent on assassinating President Reagan. None of it was true.

The Jackal’s career came to an end in August 1994 when the government of Sudan “sold” him to France. An early press report claimed that the vainglorious romantic was seized by French

intelligence in a Khartoum hospital while he was sedated for liposuction surgery; years of extravagant living had left him a bloated and melancholy clunk of a man. In reality, he was having a minor operation on a testicle. In 1997 Carlos was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of two French counter-terrorism agents.

By this time, however, the myth of Carlos the Jackal had become synonymous with terrorism. “Myths do exist;” Carlos recently told a British reporter, “it is our duty to use the ‘Carlos myth’ to further the revolution.” But the Carlos myth had scattered traditions of terrorism by setting standards no one could follow. Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne call this pattern *the Carlos complex*. The world has seen other wholesale terrorists, but only Carlos the Jackal functioned like a multi-national conglomerate.

Yet this description not only obscures the role Carlos has played in cultures obsessed by celebrity, but it is also a narrow conceptualization of the complex. In other words, it may be entirely appropriate to consider the “Carlos complex” in both organizational and psychological terms. Organizationally, America’s most accomplished terrorist was Robert Jay Mathews. The Order’s string of professionally executed armored truck robberies stands as a testament to that proficiency. Yet for Mathews, symbolism was everything: From the Silent Brotherhood medallion and the use of evidence as totem to the very name of the group, symbolism defined the Order. That applied to code names as well.

In his *Brotherhood of Murder*, Tom Martinez, who would play the role of Judas in the Order, says this of his discussions with Mathews: “He’s Carlos...Bob had adopted [the name] in emulation of Carlos Sanchez, the terrorist who had murdered the Israelis at the Munich Olympics.” Martinez expanded on the subject in an interview for this project:

Bob told me that in my living room in my house. We talked for hours about that kind of stuff. He was always praising Carlos. Carlos Sanchez was an idol to him. All those guys [in the Order] were into that stuff [international terrorism].

Yet “Carlos Sanchez” *was not* part of the eight-man Arab hit team at Munich. Carlos the Jackal—nee Ramirez Sanchez—played no part in the affair whatsoever. Not only did Mathews confuse the two names, but he mistakenly assumed that Carlos the Jackal carried out the Munich massacre. Put simply, America’s most effective terrorist embraced the Carlos myth without reservation. That he ascribed to the myth a magical aura was evidenced by the fact that Mathews dressed as a Mexican outlaw during the Order’s robberies. And in the end, Mathews died for that myth. So in this way, then, the *Carlos complex* may be viewed as representing a set of repressed ideas related to the disjunction between terrorism’s facts and legends.

In the early 1990s, those illusions would guide a new generation of American terrorists as well. Though better educated, more widely read, and more urban than their predecessors, the new terrorists would also prove to be so in love with their images and legends that they would pay for it with their lives. “Revolution devours its own children,” said Carlos, “it is a price which true revolutionaries are ready to pay.”

### **Background**

In 1996 the FBI broke the back of one of the most dangerous phantom cells ever assembled by the radical right—the Aryan Republican Army (ARA). The ARA were a flamboyant gang of gun-and-bomb-toting extremists who crossed the Midwest, robbing banks in Iowa, Wisconsin, Missouri, Kansas, Ohio, Nebraska, and Kentucky. They wore FBI ball caps and masks that impersonated various U.S. Presidents. They used FBI agents’ names to buy getaway

cars and mocked their pursuers in cartoons and letters to local newspapers. They printed their own business cards, produced their own recruitment video, and their own CD of “terrorist rock” music. If terrorism is theater, as Brian Jenkins argues, then the ARA were the Barnum & Baily of terrorism. Their story begins with two wildy eccentric career criminals.

### *The Warrior*

Peter Kevin McGregor Langan was born on May 18, 1958, on the Marianas island of Saipan, the sixth child of Eugene Langan and Mary Ann McGregor. Like the Jackal, Langan had extremism in his blood. Eugene was an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency and a decorated veteran of the Allied battle against Aryan racism in Europe. Mary Ann was a descendant of the outlaw Rob Roy MacGregor—the giant of Scottish folklore who was the hero of Sir Walter Scott’s novel bearing his name.

After the Langans moved to Saigon in 1961, Eugene became involved in a plot by South Vietnamese rebel generals to assassinate South Vietnam’s ascetic Catholic president, Ngo Dinh Diem. These were times of great excitement and untold terror for the Langan children. They witnessed violent street riots between Buddhists and the Diem government, as well as the historic self-immolation by the Buddhist monk Quang Duc in May 1963.

Following the Diem assassination later that year, Mary Ann and the kids moved to Wheaton, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C., while Eugene continued his work for the CIA in Vietnam—including a stint in the notorious Phoenix program (known for its systematic torture and mass murder of the Vietcong.) When Eugene died in 1967, Peter dropped out of school and slipped into a lifestyle of petty thievery and drug abuse. Despite his lack of formal education, at this young age Peter spoke three languages (French, Vietnamese, and English) and



was a voracious consumer of popular culture. S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, a deeply sympathetic portrayal of a gang member's search for identity; Abbie Hoffman's ode to anarchy, *Steal This Book*; the Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers* and David Bowie's *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust* would all contribute to Langan's evolving identity. Whatever he did, he would do intelligently—especially his crimes.

After progressing to car theft, burglary, and drug dealing, Langan left Maryland in 1974 to avoid arrest warrants for breaking and entry, grand theft auto, and assault against a police officer. He hitch hiked to Florida where he became a homeless teenager. On May 15 of that year, Peter armed himself with a loaded .357 Magnum, kidnaped a department store manager, and robbed the business of \$78. When he was spotted by police the next day, Peter fired on the pursuing officer. The officer shot back, ripping a chunk of flesh and bone from Peter's left hand and blowing a hole in his rib cage.

He was hammered with a 20-year sentence and remanded to Florida's adult prison system. In 1975, Peter—a small-built 17-year-old who had begun to experience confusion about his sexuality—was raped by a cell mate doing time for child molestation. And during the fall of 1976, Peter was raped again, only this time by a gang of black prisoners. After that, Langan was involved in numerous fights and took several serious head shots. For protection, he carried shanks and flammable liquids, which he would throw at the predatory convicts, who were black. "I was a small person you didn't wanna fuck with," he told me. Sometime in early 1978, prior to his twentieth birthday, Langan met a group of prisoners who were involved in the southern white supremacy movement. In short order, he became seduced by the Christian Identity religion.

Upon his parole in 1979, Langan returned to Maryland where he found work as a night

watchman at the American Foundation's Biomedical Research Institute in Rockville. He also bought a used Harley Davidson, grew his hair long, developed a cocaine habit, and immersed himself in the outlaw biker subculture where he met a young man he would later describe as "a raving psychopath, a cross between Ted Kaczynski and Ted Bundy."

### *Jokerman*

Richard Lee Guthrie, Jr. was born to Scotch-Irish parents in Washington, D.C. on February 25, 1958. Guthrie's mother died when he was fifteen years old, leaving his father with the difficult task of raising five children on a modest printer's salary. Guthrie attended Wheaton High School where he was an above-average student. Like Langan, Guthrie also developed several traits during these years that would ultimately define his criminal identity. The first was a considerable aptitude for science and history. The second was an exceptional eccentricity that manifested itself in a dark, racist sense of humor. And the third trait was an unbridled appetite for destructiveness.

By the time he met Langan in 1979, Guthrie had been arrested for destruction of personal property, carrying a concealed weapon, and had gotten away with at least one armed robbery. No matter: He joined the U.S. Navy in December 1979 and after completing basic training Guthrie was assigned to the DOD's (Department of Defense) Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, where received training in nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Later he received additional training at DOD's explosive ordinance disposal school in Indian Head, Maryland. He was accepted into the SEALs—the Navy's elite sea, land, and air team—but quickly washed out because he couldn't meet its rigid physical demands.

Guthrie was re-classified a "black shoe" Navy man—a position he hated—and posted in

Europe. After going AWOL, Guthrie served time in a ship's brig where he was introduced to *The Turner Diaries*. Not surprisingly, his reaction to the book was eccentric and destructive: He crawled out a porthole and painted a swastika on his ship. For that he was court-martialed. Following his dishonorable discharge in March 1983, Guthrie began a one-man vendetta against the U.S. government.

Guthrie returned to Maryland where he began a sophisticated buy-and-return scam on area Kmart stores. Guthrie would later tell authorities that he raised "hundreds of thousands of dollars" in the Kmart scams and that he'd sent the bulk of the money to Richard Butler at Aryan Nations headquarters in Idaho. He supplemented this revenue with several insurance scams and a half dozen more armed robberies. All of these crimes were committed with a finesse that left no trace of Guthrie's hand. During one of the robberies he assaulted a female employee sexually as well as physically. Twice he pistol-whipped his victims before making off with the cash. Guthrie also shot his own brother in a dispute over money, tried to dynamite the car of an enemy, and may have torched an abortion clinic.

In 1990, Guthrie briefly visited Aryan Nations in Idaho where, no doubt, these violent tendencies were reinforced. That summer, he was arrested in Rockville on assault charges and served three weeks in jail. He did not return to face charges in court, and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

### **The Plot**

Unable to hold down a steady job, Langan moved to Cincinnati in 1991 and Guthrie met him there in December. In July 1992, they drove to Aryan Nations in Guthrie's pickup truck festooned with Nazi symbols and a bumper sticker reading, *Just Say No to ZOG* followed by the

Aryan Nations telephone number. This was a time of intense emotions at Butler's encampment, as everyone was following the dramatic events unfolding between federal agents and white separatist Randy Weaver and family at nearby Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Langan and Guthrie met with pastor Butler and a gaggle of racists who had known Bob Mathews and the Order. "They were losers," Langan recalled later. "They were nowhere near ready to start the so-called second American Revolution...Aryan Nations had more security leaks than just about anything."

Langan and Guthrie were more serious than that. They had begun to see "the movement," not in terms of living in a public compound surrounded by red necks celebrating some bygone illusion, but as a clarion call to revolutionary action that demanded anonymity and mobility. By the time he left Aryan Nations in August, Langan had become an "ordained minister" of Christian Identity and an Aryan warrior armed to the teeth.

And as his militarized masculinity intensified, so did his sexual identity problems. Privately, following his visit to Aryan Nations, Langan began spending time dressed as a woman. "I went from one extreme to another," he said. "The radical politics and macho behavior were just overcompensating for when I was ashamed of how I felt."

When he and Guthrie returned to Cincinnati in the fall—shortly after the shoot-out at Ruby Ridge—they began meeting with an Aryan Nations skinhead named Shawn Kenney. Langan and Guthrie introduced Kenney to two books that would ultimately serve as the basis for the group that became the Aryan Republican Army. The first, Flynn and Gerhardt's *The Silent Brotherhood*, would serve as the ARA's ideological blueprint. The second, Richard Kelly Hoskins's lesser-known *Vigalantes of Christendom: The History of the Phineas Priesthood*, would become the gang's spiritual guide—thereby replacing the fictitious *Turner Diaries* as a

rightist manifesto. In his book, Hoskins (who had been converted to Identity by Byron de la Beckwith, the Klansman responsible for the 1963 assassination of civil rights worker Medgar Evers) argues that assassination and robbery are biblically and historically justified when employed to restore what is seen to be God's law. To prove his point, Hoskins links the violence of the biblical Phineas (in Numbers 25:6, Phineas slays a couple wedded in an unlawful union with a javelin and appeases Yahweh) to the "distinct priestly military orders" of the Crusaders, who drove the infidels from the Holy Land. From there, the Phineas legacy runs to Robin Hood. And from there, Phineas has common ancestry with John Wilkes Booth, Jesse James, and finally, Robert Mathews. These are the Phineas priests.

Langan and Guthrie saw themselves as part of this racist hagiography, and set out to complete what they called the Order's "unfinished business." Kenney would later testify that "Langan and me were pretty much convinced that what [the Order] had done was right, except as far as the mistakes they made. We were analyzing and trying to figure out...if they had done things a little different, how they could have been successful." These discussions centered on the criminal skills necessary for robbing banks, bombings, and assassinations, including the assassination of the President of the United States.

#### *The Carlos Complex Revisited*

Shortly before the 1992 elections, George H. Bush made an old-fashioned whistle-stop campaign through north Georgia, stopping at small towns along the way to deliver speeches. A few days before his planned stop in Atlanta, the Secret Service received a tip that "some individuals" in the area were planning to gun down the President when he arrived in Atlanta. The ringleader of this plot, said the informant, was one Richard Guthrie of Livonia, Georgia. Guthrie

had boasted of his plan to kill the President during a recent conversation at his Livonia apartment. Guthrie had acquired a Heckler & Koch .308-caliber semi-automatic rifle for the killing, and had loaded it with armor piercing bullets. This he had done in honor of Bruce Pierce, who had used the same type of armament in the Order's famous 1984 Brinks holdup. Furthermore, the informant admitted that he had recently participated in an armed robbery of a Livonia Pizza Hut, at the behest of Guthrie and an associate known as Pedro Gomez. Agents raided Guthrie's apartment and found an assortment of weapons and Aryan Nations literature. The raid was filmed by CNN and shown to audiences round the world. But Guthrie had moved on. The Secret Service then mounted a nation-wide search for Guthrie and his partner, Pedro Gomez.

The greatest challenge facing Pete Langan was how to attract apprentice terrorists into his underground army; once that was accomplished, he and Guthrie had the necessary technical skills to train them. Langan hit upon the novel idea of reinventing himself as a romantic urban guerrilla in the Carlos tradition. His first step was purely symbolic. Because Mathews had chosen "Carlos" as his code name, Langan took the similar moniker: "Pedro." Pedro Gomez was therefore fabricated from a myth no more trustworthy than the Jackal's. Langan simply carried on the process of self-deception by making the Carlos myth contingent on his own Phineas-inspired illusions.

Due to an earlier traffic violation, though, law enforcement also knew about Pedro Gomez and on November 9 Langan was arrested in Cincinnati in connection with the Livonia Pizza Hut case. Ten months later he was extradited to Carnesville, Georgia, to await trial in the Franklin County jail for armed robbery—a crime punishable by life imprisonment. Once again,

Langan found himself in a southern hellhole of the first degree.

The Secret Service was still keenly interested in Guthrie for his threat against Bush, however, and in September Langan agreed to help the Secret Service find Guthrie in exchange for a signature bond and a ticket out of jail. Langan returned to Cincinnati and made a half-hearted attempt to find the would-be assassin. Eventually, Langan did find Guthrie; but instead of turning him over to the Secret Service and saving his own hide, Langan decided to screw the government and renew the violent political agenda he had begun with Guthrie ten months earlier. First and foremost, that included robbing banks to support the terrorist underground.

Langan emerged from this experience with an invigorated commitment to build his army and a burning hatred of FBI for its recent actions against the Branch Davidians in Waco. Thus was born the Aryan Republican Army and its audacious leader, Commander Pedro. In the Carlos tradition, he began dressing as a Mexican outlaw in cowboy boots, jeans, sunglasses, and black shirts. That—combined with his dark hair cascading below his shoulders, his eyes lined with mascara, and his bullet wounds from previous gun battles—gave him the air of a rock star from the American badlands—a sort of Jim Morrison figure, before he lost his step.

Prosecutors would later describe Langan as a “transsexual white-supremacist bank-robbing terrorist,” but that ignores his criminal skills. To his followers—Guthrie, Kenney, and those who would come later—Langan presented himself as a revolutionary at war with the federal government. Similar to Carlos’s leftist intellectuals “with a pistol in the drawer,” Pedro could recite lines from Shakespeare’s *Merchants of Venice* one minute, and quote the Who’s “Mmm-y Generation” the next. He once told Sam Donaldson of ABC’s *Primetime Live*: “I’m just another person caught up in the tyrannical legal system. Power to the people. Up with revolution!” His

goal was to “set free the oppressed people of North America.” Such rhetoric would be panned by the media, but it wasn’t really intended for the mass media, or even the alternative media.

Langan’s bombast was meant to speak to the emotional cracks between media representations of current events; namely, to the neo-Nazi skinhead counter-culture where “in-depth analysis” is worthless. Langan represented a new kind of American terrorist who fed off the urban taste for quick takes: one minute photo-ops, bumper-sticker summations of complex issues, and elevator muzak. To recruit his army, Pedro would rely on the high-energy blood and thunder of white power heavy metal music.

### *Organization*

By 1994 Langan and Guthrie (now both fugitives wanted by the Secret Service) had developed extensive contacts in the white underground. Among them was a forty-four-year-old Identity preacher and Aryan Nations activist named Mark Thomas. Thomas had spent the last several years cultivating his ability to reach out to young people at a confusing point in their lives, and then using that confusion strategically, to draw them into the white power movement. At his “farm” outside Allentown, Pennsylvania, (actually a bleak parcel of rural land sitting across from a toxic waste dump) Thomas held weekend religious retreats involving sermons, white power rock concerts, and firearms instruction, sometimes drawing as many as three hundred skinheads and members of the Ku Klux Klan, the Posse Comitatus, Aryan Nations, and other disenfranchised whites. Thomas preached a panache of racist ideas: Christian Identity; Odinism, the religion of pre-Christian Nordics; an interpretation of Carl Jung’s social archetype theory, which said that the Norse-Germanic people’s archetypes could only be inherited, not culturally transmitted; and the apocalyptic view of Jim Morrison of The Doors. (Thomas claimed



to have experienced an epiphany in the late 1960s when he had a chance encounter with Morrison in Greenwich Village.) Thomas had recently gained national attention for his activities; first by appearing in a Fox television documentary called *Face of Hate*—a wholly unflattering portrayal of the preacher as a latter-day Hitler, whom Thomas resembled slightly, even wearing a trimmed mustache like the Fuhrer’s—and then as a guest on *Geraldo*, as the subject of a *New York Times* article, and other nationally broadcast news shows.

On October 5, 1994, Langan and Guthrie visited Thomas at his home for the purpose of recruiting others into their bank robbery crew. “We could care less who they were,” Guthrie coldly reflected in an unpublished memoir, “as long as they agreed with the same things we did. To conduct [the robberies] the old-fashioned way. The Jesse James way—to plunder with extreme prejudice.” And plunder they would. These young men would become the ARA’s foot soldiers:

\* Scott Stedeford, the dynamic twenty-six-year-old front man for a Camden, New Jersey, skinhead band called Cyanide. Highly intelligent and with no criminal record, Stedeford claimed to have had a life-changing experience during his high school years after hearing the music of Jim Morrison and The Doors. He met Thomas in the summer of 1993, whereupon Thomas introduced Stedeford to *The Silent Brotherhood*. Stedeford began distributing Aryan Nations literature at his gigs and changed the band’s name to Day of the Sword. After joining the ARA, Stedeford used a portion of the bank robbery money to record an acclaimed white power CD, *Ear to Ear*, that combined the sensuality of The Doors’ music with the legacy of Carlos/Mathews to justify a vision of apocalyptic terror. (The CD is dedicated, in fact, to Robert Mathews, Richard Snell, and Vicki Weaver.) Stedeford’s ARA code name became “Tuco” in honor of William Harris (known as “Tico”) of the Sybianese Liberation Army, responsible for the 1974 kidnaping

of heiress Patty Hearst.

\* Kevin McCarthy, a seventeen-year-old junior high school dropout from Philadelphia who suffered from depression and organic brain syndrome (brain damage) as a result of alcoholism. After several institutional commitments for his drinking problem, McCarthy became a homeless teenager in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where he was indoctrinated into Christian Identity by a recruiter for the Atlantic City Skinheads (the AC Boys). He then embarked upon a crime spree with other AC Boys up and down the Jersey Coast, robbing and beating homeless men. McCarthy met Scott Stedeford in early 1993 and became Cyanide's bass player. Soon after that, he met Mark Thomas and moved to his home in Allentown. That summer, Thomas drove the sixteen year old to Elohim City, Robert Millar's Identity enclave in the Ozarks, where McCarthy participated in firearms training and paramilitary maneuvers with other armed children and adults. McCarthy's ARA code name became "Newt" after Newt Gingrich, the bellicose author of the ill-fated Contract With America.

\* Michael Brescia, the twenty-one-year-old son of a Philadelphia-area fire chief father and socialite mother. A former Eagle Scout, Brescia enrolled in Philadelphia's La Salle University in 1990. Also an aspiring rock star, three years later he met Stedeford and became his rhythm guitar player. Brescia was asked to leave La Salle in the spring of 1993 after failing to heed prior warnings concerning his distribution of Aryan Nations literature. That fall, after meeting Thomas through McCarthy, Brescia relocated to Elohim City. He moved into a house with EC's thirty-three-year-old security director, Andreas Carl Strassmeir, and became engaged to Robert Millar's granddaughter. Brescia's ARA code name was "Tim" in deference to Timothy McVeigh.

*Strategy*

For terrorists, raising money through bank robbery is not only logistically correct but it is also politically correct because it can be interpreted as dispossessing the state of its most precious resource (capital); which, in turn, can be portrayed as a proletarian action. This criminal dynamic was recently displayed in the audacious \$26 million bank robbery committed by the Irish Republican Army in Belfast on December 20, 2004. Allegedly led by a Carlos-like IRA sympathizer known as “The Striker,” the robbery damaged the peace process between Sinn Fein (the IRA’s political arm) and the British government, causing Prime Minister Tony Blair to declare, “There could be absolutely no place, not merely for terrorist activity, but for criminal activity of any sort by people associated with a political party.” Not only did the bank robbery significantly increase the terrorists’ war chest, but it also carried a heavy political cost for the state.

The ARA began its bank robbery campaign by making a detailed study of the IRA—its namesake. Through his reading of the *Handbook for Volunteers of the Irish Republican Army*, Langan envisioned what this so-called “Green Book” describes as “dispersed units” that “decide its own local targets and carry out its jobs” by “deceiving the enemy as to [its] methods and intentions.” Central to this strategy is the use of decoys. “The guerrilla will use many ruses,” says the Green Book. “He can always [find ways] to cover his tracks.”

From this came a pattern to the ARA robberies. From January through August 1994, Langan’s gang hit seven Midwestern banks located in and around shopping malls—for the protection offered by pedestrian foot traffic. Planning was the key. After casing and videotaping their targets, they designed escape routes, and monitored law enforcement dispatch channels with radio scanners. They purchased cheap getaway cars (referred to as “drop cars”) with fake IDs,

and “combat-parked” these vehicles outside the targets. (Combat parking involves backing a car into a parking space, thereby concealing the car’s license plate and permitting a quick getaway.) Each robbery took no more than sixty seconds and the ARA took only what was in the cash drawers (known as “teller runs”)—never getting greedy by attempting to hit the vault. Posing as construction workers wearing ski masks, they carried hand-held radios and armed themselves with assault rifles and grenades, but their signature was what they called the “hoax device”—a phony but deadly-looking bomb made of road flares, gun powder, black electrical tape, wires, and a small clock.

With each successful robbery, Langan and Guthrie grew more confident in their bank-robbing skills; to the point, in fact, of becoming arrogant. By the time they hit the Society National Bank in Springdale, Ohio, on June 8, 1994, a dark sense of humor had been added to their repertoire—humor based not on the pages of *The Silent Brotherhood* (the Order lacked any pretense of humor), but on the script of the 1991 Hollywood movie *Point Blank*, starring Patrick Swayze as the leader of a California bank robbery crew called the “Ex-Presidents” who wore masks of Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Lyndon Johnson. During the Springdale heist, life imitated art as Langan wore a mask of Richard Nixon and Guthrie wore a Jimmy Carter mask.

More low-brow humor would follow, due mainly to the influence of Richard Guthrie (code name: Commander Pavell after an unknown idol). “Guthrie as a person,” testified an FBI agent at Langan’s trial, “had a remarkable sense of humor.” It was Guthrie who came up with the idea to register drop cars in the names of FBI agents; to wear FBI raid jackets and ball caps during the bank robberies; to send letters and cartoons to newspapers; to produce and distribute

their recruitment video (*The Aryan Republican Army Presents: The Armed Struggle Underground*), complete with advertisements for such phony products as “Blammo Ammo...the choice of Revolutionaries everywhere”; and to print his own business cards reading: ARA IS EVERYWHERE! COMING TO YOUR TOWN SOON! While Guthrie’s inventions could be funny, they were no joke.

Like the robberies, Guthrie’s humor was a Phineas action modeled after the Jesse James gang. History books are replete with examples of such humor on the part of the James gang. “These bold fellows only laugh at authorities” noted a journalist in 1873, “and seemingly invite their sleepy enterprise, by bearding the legal lion in his lazy lair.” Not only did the gang print their own press releases and taunt law enforcement at every turn in their string of seventeen violent bank robberies, but Jesse James eventually became a commodity—a criminal rock star on perpetual tour. After Jesse’s death, his landlord sold bloody splinters from the floorboards for a quarter apiece. When all the splinters sold out, the landlord soaked new floorboards in ox blood and kept the business rolling. Upon his release from prison years later, Frank James embarked upon a second career as a successful carnival attraction.

This showcasing of imagery and style is singularly American; international terrorist fronts—from Black September, and the IRA to al-Qaeda—would never entertain the idea of using humor in a direct confrontation. But the ARA took it a new level by portraying themselves as entertainers rather than terrorists, thereby making violence a performance. During the robberies, Guthrie would typically run around the bank in his Jimmy Carter mask, yelling Arabic gibberish, and waving the fake bomb in the air like a lunatic. Langan would end the heists by shouting at terrified cashiers: “Up the revolution! Bank you very much!” For the ARA, the whole point of

this was to mock their victims. Their cruel sense of humor, intended to parody the misfortune of helpless bank employees and innocent citizens by transforming terrorism into carnival, was exemplified by the December 9 robbery of the Third Federal Savings & Loan Bank in the Cleveland suburb of Middleburg Heights.

In this robbery, Langan approached the bank dressed as Santa Claus, followed Kevin McCarthy in an elf's hat and a black ski mask. As they entered the bank, Langan chanted "Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas!" as a group of children cheered him on. Moments later, Scott Stedeford approached the teller window, also dressed in a ski mask and elf's hat. In one hand he carried a Christmas stocking holding a fake bomb and in the other he held a Ruger 10-millimeter revolver. None of the victims were hurt; but, then again, it is likely that none were ever the same.

### **The Defining Attack**

By early 1995 the ARA had amassed an unprecedented record of successful robberies. Their spree had netted roughly \$300,000, allowing the gang to purchase numerous vehicles, guns, military gear, video equipment, and a safe house in rural Kansas near the Missouri border. Later that year, *USA Today* ran a lengthy article about the gang—referred to as the "Midwestern Bank Bandits"—explaining how they had eluded authorities for more than a year, stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars, some of which might have been funneled to the terrorist underground. An FBI spokesman called the Bandit investigation "a major case." Much to the delight of Langan and Guthrie, the article ended by saying that the Bandits were on the verge of breaking Jesse James's record for bank robberies carried out along the Kansas-Missouri border between 1866 and 1882 (in fact, the ARA had already broken that record). "The number of banks they robbed [twenty-two] is *not* unique," countered FBI agent Gil Hendrickson, a key figure in the

government's investigation of the ARA. "We've seen gangs rob as many as thirty banks before. They are unique because, unlike other robbers, [the ARA] used their money to create a war chest to overthrow the United States government. They did it for a cause."

Yet unlike the Order, who squandered vast sums on personal indulgences and futile training operations, the ARA lived a simple life. They drove used cars, did their own mechanical work, bought their clothing at army surplus shops, stayed in cheap hotels and campgrounds, and ate at family restaurants. What was truly unique about them, though, and the factor that explains their successes more than anything, were the ways in which the ARA exploited routine activities.

Much like al-Qaeda in the East African attacks, the ARA devoted considerable attention to reconnaissance. Langan and Guthrie would often spend weeks casing banks, taking into account every moment in the taken-for-granted order of daily life in and around their targets. They would fully occupy these urban spaces by entering the banks in disguise, then walking the streets and sidewalks, visiting area stores and eateries, and by driving egress routes over and over again. These spaces were then videotaped and studied for the small, often unnoticed practices of routine security. In this way, they were able to reconstruct urban space on their own terms. Such attentiveness to urban space is not unusual for society's transgressors. As criminologist Jeff Ferrell notes incisively, all manner of criminals—from burglars and graffiti writers to gang members, "all read the everyday functionality and legality of the city in reverse, remaking the urban grid in their own image and animating it with their own illicit desires. In their worlds the most common of urban spaces—freeway on-ramps, stairwells, alleys and alley walls, front stoops and back doors—are re-imagined as illegal staging areas, entry points, escape routes."

The ARA had both the ability to re-imagine these city spaces and the patience that

allowed them to abort a mission when the situation demanded it. Langan called off more than a dozen robberies, after weeks of reconnaissance, due to such things as changes in bank security, shifting police patrol patterns, and the unexpected presence of construction crews near the banks. He once scraped plans to rob an Indianapolis bank after discovering that the city's financial institutions were all connected to a twenty-five-channel trunked radio system, which made monitoring on the ARA's radio scanner impossible.

But just as Jesse James would be undone by his own almighty self-confidence, the first chink in the ARA's armor came about a result of their showcasing of imagery and style. This was played out in Pete Langan's most careless move as a serial bank robber, and it stands as an exemplar of terrorists' hubris in criminal affairs.

### *Melodrama in Ohio*

In early October, 1994, Langan, Guthrie, Stedeford, and Kenney moved into a motel in Columbus, Ohio, and began a three-week surveillance of the Columbus National Bank on Livingston Avenue—studying the bank, running the egress route, selecting disguises, gathering weaponry, and constructing their hoax device. On October 23, Guthrie purchased a five-hundred-dollar 1979 gray Ford Galaxy for the drop car. Two days later, they were locked and loaded.

At 11:15 a.m., October 25, Guthrie combat-parked the Galaxy in front of the Columbus National. Langan and Stedeford got out, armed with semi-automatic pistols and wearing gloves, jungle boots, bulletproof vests, and disguises of hard hats over camouflage ski masks and sunglasses. The masks were functional because they disguised identity. But the hard hats and sunglasses were redundant—they served only to highlight a sort of bad-assed identity through the presentation of imagery and style. The same can be said of Stedeford's decision to tote an



automatic assault rifle inside his guitar case as a backup weapon. He also carried a lunch box containing a fake bomb, to which Guthrie had attached a pack of Hostess Twinkies for a touch of humor.

Sprinting to the entrance, Langan and Stedeford bolted through the front door with such fury that they created an air vacuum, jarring the bank lobby and frightening everyone inside. Amid the bedlam, Langan pulled his gun and took a running leap over the counter, smacking his knee hard and causing the hard hat to fall over his eyes. Regaining his composure, Langan yelled, “Everybody get down! Everybody get down on the floor! Lay down!” Then, unable to see and frustrated with the clumsy get-up he was wearing, Langan yanked off the mask, sunglasses, and hard hat, and tossed them on the floor, exposing his face.

Stedeford went to a second entrance, placed the lunch box on the floor, opened it, and returned to the center of the lobby where he began waving his gun around, yelling, “*Andale! Andale!*” (Hurry! Hurry!) Just then two women walked into the lobby and Stedeford pointed his gun in their faces, shouting, “Get down on the ground! Now!” As Langan went down the line of teller stations, scooping money into a bag, the bank’s loan officer, Lisa Copley, waited—not face-down on the floor, but crouched at the end of the teller line. Two female tellers lay beside her, one hyperventilating from fear.

When Langan reached Copley’s station, he bent over to open the drawer; it hit Copley in the head, knocking her backward and giving her a clear view of Langan’s face. He muttered something about not getting enough money and ran to the drive-through window’s teller station and tried to open the drawers, but they were locked. “*Andale! Andale!*” Stedeford shouted. “Come on, man, we gotta get out of here, now!” Langan jumped over the counter yelling, “We

didn't get shit!" A moment later they ran outside and jumped in the Galaxy.

Guthrie wheeled away and within minutes they pulled into an apartment complex, jumped into a Ford van, and headed down Interstate 70. Guthrie was monitoring the police frequency on his radio when it reported that the Columbus bomb squad and the FBI were called to the bank, where they investigated the hoax device after rendering it safe by using a water cannon. As usual, once this broadcast was heard, laughter erupted inside the van. Three hours later the ARA pulled into a truck stop in Wheeling, West Virginia, where Langan counted the money. It was a paltry score—only \$3,400. Three weeks of planning had gone into the robbery and each man had earned less than the minimum wage. Not only that, but Lisa Copley had given authorities a description of one of the robbers. An all-points-bulletin then went out for a white male, possibly Hispanic. The bulletin stated that the explosive device was “very complicated in its making,” and that it was a “live” bomb capable of causing injury or death.

Under federal law, the robbery of a financial institution with such a device is a crime punishable by life in prison. That is precisely the sentence Langan would ultimately receive for his part in the Columbus raid, due entirely to his decision to add the nonessential sunglasses and hard hat to his disguise. The existential need to assert one's identity through imagery and style had trumped criminal competence in the pursuit of terrorist goals.

### **Aftermath**

For the FBI, the path connecting the fugitive “Pedro Gomez” to the Midwestern Bank Bandits (soon to be known to the Bureau as the Aryan Republican Army) and the Columbus robbery would be circuitous, to say the least. The investigation would ultimately turn on the pathologies of individual ARA members along with the extraordinary events of April 19, 1995.

On April 19, the so-called Date of Doom, Richard Wayne Snell—originator of the plan to bomb the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City—was executed by the State of Arkansas for the murder of pawnshop owner William Strumpff. On the same day, Timothy McVeigh ignited a 7,000 pound ammonium nitrate fertilizer bomb in front of the Murrah Building, instantly killing 168 people including nineteen children. This act of terrorism was intended to revenge the deaths of some seventy-five adults and children at the hands of the FBI in Waco two years to the day earlier. Some view the relationship between Snell’s execution and McVeigh’s terrorism as purely coincidental, others see it as part of a broader conspiracy, but neither perspective is of interest to us here. Rather, our concern is with several specific facts related to the early stages of the bombing investigation.

First, two days after the bombing—April 21—a former ATF informant at Elohim City reminded her handlers of a previously-filed report indicating that Andreas Strassmeir, the commune’s security director, was a terrorist instigator who had talked frequently about attacking federal buildings. According to the previous report, back on January 19, 1995, Strassmeir had traveled to Oklahoma City where he and another man had inspected the Murrah Building. Now, on April 21, the ATF informant told agents that “no one in the world looks more like the sketch of [bombing suspect] John Doe 2 than Michael Brescia”—Strassmeir’s room mate at Elohim City. The FBI also learned that, two weeks before the bombing, McVeigh made a phone call to Strassmeir at Elohim City. Thus began the government’s investigation into the link between the McVeigh and the Midwestern bank robbers.

Second, on April 21 FBI agents in Pensacola, Florida, began questioning McVeigh’s sister, Jennifer, about her brother’s alleged involvement in a series of Midwestern bank

robberies. She told agents that in the fall of 1994 her brother had given her several one-hundred-dollar bills and asked her to exchange them for “clean money” at a Lockport, New York, credit union. These hundred-dollar bills, according to McVeigh’s statement to Jennifer, came from a recent bank robbery he had taken part in. Jennifer also told agents about a letter she’d received from her brother, fulminating about powerful Jews and bankers, and concluding that, since the banks were “the real thieves,” people who rob them were not criminals at all. “It’s a sort of Robin Hood thing,” said the letter. An internal FBI memo, heavily redacted, indicates that McVeigh made several visits to Elohim City and suggests that he was involved with the “Midwest Bank Robbery Gang.” Specifically mentioned in that memo is Richard Guthrie. Hence, by April 24 investigators were openly speculating that McVeigh and Terry Nichols could have been involved with the Midwestern Bank Bandits. Capturing the Bandits then became the FBI’s top priority.

And third, on April 25 the U.S. Secret Service reported that it had security video footage of the bombing and witness testimony indicating that McVeigh had accomplices at the scene. A log of agents’ activities and evidence in the investigation reads: “Security video tapes from the area show the truck detonation 3 minutes and 6 seconds after the *suspects* exited the truck” (emphasis added). According to the Secret Service, the purpose of the video was “to locate *personnel* lost in the bombing and determine if the agency was a specific target of the attack” (emphasis added). Questions as to the identity of the accomplices or why the Secret Service was at the Murrah Building on the morning of April 19 remain a mystery. What is known, of course, is that Pete Langan was a rogue informant (personnel) for the Secret Service at the time.

Over the next several days, the media reported on the possible connection between

McVeigh and the Midwestern bank robbers. Then in early May, *Newsweek* screamed that the end was near in the hunt for McVeigh's coconspirators. Quoting an unnamed source, the magazine reported that "an Aryan Republican Army compound in Elohim City, Oklahoma," was about to be surrounded and taken by the FBI.

None of this was lost on the ARA. "The media blitz about the Midwestern Bank Bandits had deeply concerned us," wrote Guthrie in his memoir. "And during the weeks to follow, everyone in [the ARA] began to notice that the media had become ridiculous [sic] with their contemplation." As a result, the ARA became saddled with immense paranoia.

### **Commodity Fetish**

Paranoia, backbiting, and contentious lying have long characterized the internal structure of the American radical right. These problems ultimately brought down the CSA and the Order, and now they would cripple the ARA as well. Beginning in the early summer of 1995, a rift developed between the already disturbed Richard Guthrie and the equally neurotic Pete Langan. By this point, Langan was spending most of his time in Kansas City where he was known in the transsexual community as Donna McClure—a red-headed, chain-smoking drag queen typically dressed in a black satin skirt, a blue top, with nail polish, high heels, and a necklace. In late June, incapable with dealing with such emotional messiness, Guthrie attempted to kill Langan at the Kansas safe house.

Then Guthrie came to loggerheads with Stedeford. Their conflict reached a breaking point during the August 16, 1995, robbery of the Magna Bank in the St. Louis suburb of Bridgeton, Missouri. McCarthy made the teller run on this job, making off with \$17,000 from the drawers, as Stedeford held the lobby armed with a semi-automatic rifle, a hoax device, and a smoke

grenade. Guthrie handled the getaway. When McCarthy and Stedeford exited the bank, however, they were astonished to find that Guthrie was nowhere to be found. Despite the sweltering 95-degree heat, Guthrie had shown up for the robbery drunk on tequila—and was now vomiting in an alley as Stedeford and McCarthy stood stupidly alone on the sidewalk with their assault rifles and stolen money. Moments later, Guthrie made the pick up, but the damage had already been done: Stedeford vowed never to work with Guthrie again. As Kevin McCarthy later testified: “Me and Scott Stedeford and also Peter Langan came to the conclusion that Guthrie was an unstable person.”

By November the ARA myth had soured. It was then that Guthrie rented a second safe house in a run-down apartment duplex in Columbus, Ohio, where he slipped further into alienation. Now thirty-seven years old, Guthrie had no friends, no lover, and no hope of fitting into conventional society. He was terribly out of shape: Too much beer and too many White Castle hamburgers had swollen his belly, leaving him in a constant state of crankiness that was only aggravated by the ceaseless cacophony of car traffic and boom-box thunder outside his door. Guthrie hated this with a passion equal to his contempt for the neighborhood’s hookers, crack heads, and undercover cops. “They are low-life degenerates,” he wrote, “who are worth less than the feces they produce every day.” He was also paranoid and delusional. And for good reason. Guthrie was wanted for multiple armed robberies, for plotting to assassinate the President of the United States, and for questioning in connection with the Oklahoma City bombing.

And so, he attempted to vicariously re-live his glory days through the gang’s remembrances. On December 24, Guthrie left Columbus in the Ford van bound for Kansas to close down the old safe house. He arrived on Christmas night in a blue funk and pulled slugs

from a fifth of tequila until he passed out. On December 28, Langan arrived and the two patched up their relationship, agreeing to participate in an Indiana bank robbery in several weeks.

The next day, Langan and Guthrie loaded their vans and drove to Shawnee, Kansas, and Joplin, Missouri, respectively, where they rented storage lockers. And into those lockers Langan and Guthrie moved totem—everything from the masks of Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter, to three dozen notary public seals and numerous fake ID cards, Semtex explosives, blasting caps, and a military TOW missile, along with FBI ball caps and police uniforms, thousands of rounds of ammunition, shotguns, rifles, pipe bombs, hand grenades, numerous copies of *The Aryan Republican Army Presents: The Armed Struggle Underground* (in which Guthrie threatens to bomb a federal building), and a video containing footage of banks and an armored car in Columbus. Essentially, these storage lockers now held enough evidence to condemn every member of the ARA to life in prison.

Why did Langan and Guthrie follow the path of other domestic terrorists by saving such incriminating evidence, rather than destroying it? Karl Marx called the natural connection between people and objects they lived with the condition of commodity fetishism. For Marx, this process changed the value of objects by endowing them with an aura based on qualities like newness, sex appeal, or status, rather than such mundane factors as how they worked. Conceived as a commodity fetish, the evidentiary base of terrorism—weapons, ammo, explosives, disguises, and manifestos—provide terrorists with a coded reminder of their existential immersion in the physical task of killing and mayhem. This is similar to what criminologist Jack Katz refers to as “the sensual attractions of crime,” the magical and creative appeals of transgression. For American terrorists like Pete Langan, Richard Guthrie, Gary Yarbrough, Andrew Barnhill, and

Richard Snell, evidence of terrorism offers them a means of self-transcendence, a method for overcoming the dreariness associated with such banal routines as casing banks, building bombs, and stalking assassination victims.

It may be no coincident that these men drew their criminality from the well of Nazism. Criminologist Wayne Morrison reminds us that it was the perpetrators of the Nazi Holocaust who recorded their own voluntary participation in the genocide by memorializing the slaughter of Jews in photographs that they took, passed around, pasted into family albums, and sent home to loved ones. As the German Nazis took pride in their genocidal vocation through the photographic record, the American neo-Nazis celebrated their terrorist experiences by husbanding private mementoes.

### **Final Days**

Upon his return to Ohio on January 6, 1996, Guthrie began casing banks in Dayton, and then drove to Cincinnati where he sought the assistance of Shawn Kenney to drive the getaway car. Kenney said he'd consider Guthrie's plan and would call with his decision in several days. One of Langan's security procedures was that details of an operation should only be shared with others on a need-to-know basis. But Kenney was no Langan, and during the interval Kenney shared plans about the Dayton heist with his wife, Janice. While the ARA had survived FBI manhunts, intense media attention, and numerous threats to internal security, it would not withstand the meddlesome nature of Janice Kenney. Guthrie called her the "Dragon Lady." According to his memoir: "The Dragon Lady had a mouth the size of the Holland Tunnel and the face of a bull dog; [she] spent more time talking than she did breathing."

For Janice, the feeling was mutual. Having no fondness for Guthrie to begin with, she



instantly picked up the phone and called the Cincinnati office of the FBI. She was put in touch with special agent Ed Woods, who met with Shawn Kenney sometime around January 11. Woods instructed Kenney to go along with Guthrie's plan to hit the Dayton bank and notify him of their next meeting. That date was Monday, January 15, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and the rendezvous location was an Italian restaurant in the Cincinnati suburb of Chevoit, at four p.m.

For Guthrie, the end came not with a bang but a whimper. Around 5 p.m., as he approached the restaurant in his van, Woods put a tail on him in an unmarked Ford Thunderbird. Guthrie drove away at forty miles an hour, turned into a housing development, and pulled into a cul-de-sac where the Thunderbird easily cut him off. Guthrie jumped out and slowly ran toward the woods. Moments later, he fell into a three-foot snowdrift. Woods and more than a dozen agents then piled onto Guthrie and cuffed him face-down in the snow.

It took Guthrie exactly one hour to roll over on Langan, informing agents that his old friend was scheduled to arrive at the Columbus safe house on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January. Guthrie told Woods that Langan was an "Aryan Nations zealot" who was responsible for the 1994 robbery of the Society National Bank in Springdale, Ohio, adding that Langan had vowed "not to be taken alive" should federal agents try to arrest him. Pedro would go out with a bang.

In the early morning hours of January 18, a thirteen-member FBI SWAT team surrounded the safe house, along with ten supporting officers from the U.S. Marshals Service and the Columbus Police Department. They were armed with pistols, batons, chemical spray, shotguns, submachine guns, and assault rifles.

At 9:45 a.m., Langan walked out the back door dressed in several layers of black winter clothing. He wore cowboy boots, had shoulder-length red hair tied back in a ponytail, and carried

a black bag in his left hand. Strapped to his leg was a .38-caliber Bersa semi-automatic pistol. He walked to his vehicle, a white 1979 Chevy van with Iowa plates, and slowly entered the driver's seat. Suddenly the agents charged down the alley shouting "Put your hands up!" "FBI!" "Police!"

Langan froze at the wheel, lifted his hands slightly, and hesitated. Then he whirled out of the driver's seat and dived into the back of the van, out of sight. An agent saw Langan come forward in a two-handed shooting stance, pointing a blue-steel pistol at him.

"He's got a gun," another agent shouted. "Take cover!"

Then seven SWAT team agents fired a total of forty-eight full metal jackets at the cargo bay, where Langan would be retreating, creating a thunderous clank of firepower—more bullets, in fact, than were fired at the Palestinian terrorists by German police at the Munich Olympics.

Langan stood up, bleeding from the face and put his hands through the broken glass on the driver's side. He had survived the rain of steel by crawling headfirst into a four-by-four wooden toolbox in the back. Someone opened the door and Langan came tumbling onto the ground where agents spread him out face-down in the dirt and began stomping him.

Records say that the van was still full of smoke from all the firepower when agents entered to begin their search. In the front seat they found the bag Langan had been carrying. It contained a Bible case—which, when opened, held a loaded 9-millimeter Taurus pistol—a hand grenade, and a live pipe bomb. Then they checked the cargo bay: It held a loaded .223-caliber SGW carbine rifle, a loaded Chinese AR-15 assault rifle, and more than three thousand rounds of Chinese-made ammunition packed into military-style bandoliers.

Agents pumped Langan and Guthrie for information about the identity of other cell members, but no matter how hard the agents tried they couldn't ferret out this information

because neither Langan or Guthrie knew the last names of their accomplices. This was part of the ARA's need-to-know arrangement and it paid off with Guthrie at a time when he was ready to drop a dime on everybody, especially Stedeford. All he was able to tell Ed Woods was that three skinheads from Philadelphia were also involved in the bank robberies. For what it was worth, their names were Kevin, Scott, and "Tim."

The first major break came by coincidence when the FBI's Gil Hendrickson began questioning Philadelphia police about the local skinhead scene. During the third week of February, 1996, one officer told Hendrickson that he had a nephew who was involved in the white power movement—a heavily tattooed kid who was living with his grandmother in northeast Philly. His name was Kevin McCarthy. Thus began a three-month, round-the-clock surveillance of McCarthy.

Love of hard-core music had inspired the skinheads to become foot soldiers in the ARA, and it would now lead to their demise. Around May 1, agents saw McCarthy get into his grandmother's car and head for Terminal Station. There he parked the car and walked into the Sound Under recording studio carrying his guitar case. Agents then recorded all the license numbers of the vehicles parked in the vicinity. The computer check showed that one of those license numbers belonged to Scott Stedeford.

Three weeks later, on May 24, teams of armed FBI agents quietly surrounded the home of McCarthy's grandmother and the Sound Under studio. Stedeford and McCarthy were both taken into custody without incident. Facing a fifty-year sentence, McCarthy turned state's evidence and began divulging details about the bank robberies. That included information about Michael Brescia's involvement in the June 1995 robbery of the Bank One in Madison, Wisconsin.

Back in Ohio, Guthrie had pled guilty to nineteen bank robberies in seven states and claimed to have given a large portion of the stolen money to individuals within the terrorist underground. In a sealed plea-bargain agreement, Guthrie cut a deal with federal prosecutors to testify against Langan, Stedeford, and Mark Thomas in return for a reduced sentence. He also promised to name individuals who had benefitted from the ARA's largesse. Guthrie was scheduled to divulge information related to the terms of his plea agreement under oath before U.S. district judge John D. Holschuh in Columbus on July 15, 1996. But that never happened. At six a.m., July 12, Guthrie was found hanging from a bed sheet tied to a heating duct in his Covington, Kentucky, jail cell. He had committed suicide.

On January 29, 1997, the Justice Department announced that the infamous John Doe 2 never existed. The next day, Michael Brescia was arrested and indicted on charges of conspiring to commit seven of the Midwestern bank robberies.

Three months earlier, in November 1996, Mark Thomas was subpoenaed to testify for the defense in the government's case against Langan. Thomas was prepared to take the stand and reveal that Kevin McCarthy had assisted McVeigh in the Oklahoma City bombing. A week before Thomas was scheduled to testify, however, he was indicted in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, thus canceling his appearance at the Langan trial. FBI agents arrested Thomas at his farm in early 1997. Agents told Thomas that he'd be going to prison for twenty-five years, unless he cooperated. Forty-seven-year-old Thomas buckled under pressure and became an FBI informant.

### **Part III:**

## **Content Analysis**

## **CRIMINAL SKILLS AND ROUTINE ACTIVITIES: THE CLOSING ARGUMENTS**

This study ends with a content analysis of the closing arguments for the terrorism cases presented in the previous section. Once again, those cases included the World Trade Center bombing (aircraft and motor vehicle violations); the East African embassy bombings (explosive materials and firearms); the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord (machine guns and destructive devices); the Order (racketeering); and the Aryan Republican Army (robbery and burglary). The closing arguments for these cases constitute a sizeable amount of information; summations in the Order trial alone run to more than a thousand pages. The purpose of content analysis is to transform such large amounts of data into smaller, more manageable categories.

Because closing arguments include both a defense and prosecution summation, a total of ten summations are examined here (five for the defense and five for the prosecution). My goal is not to compare defense and prosecution summations, but to discover their pervasive themes. Toward that end, every argument found in the summations is grouped with all similar arguments. When combined, these arguments represent the themes presented at the various trials. Results of the content analysis can then be used to triangulate the discoveries made in the other two phases of this study.

Content analysis of closing arguments has never been used in terrorism research; hence, this study is a “first.” Yet prior legal research on capital punishment shows that themes are likely to cover a range of topics, including defendant(s) motivation, character, personal history, as well as group dynamics and processes, leadership patterns, victim impact statements, and reports of community sentiment. These topics represent the first set of themes examined in the content

analysis.

A second set of themes is drawn from factual items of the closing arguments—or statements about the factual guilt or innocence of a defendant (or defendants). These themes include statements about the strength of evidence, guilt of defendant(s), sentencing, morality and justice, ideology, juror obligations, and attorney obligations.

A third and final set of themes is derived from an operationalization of the routine activity and social learning theories. This is the primary concern of the content analysis: to examine the closing arguments for indicators of these theoretical underpinnings. The themes include terrorist-oriented crimes committed by defendant(s), opportunities for committing crimes, and criminal skills necessary for committing crimes. When compared to the prevalence of other themes (e.g., defendant's motivation, character, etc.), this part of the content analysis will reveal the relative importance of theoretical criminology in the legal processing of terrorists.

### **Methods**

Reliable content analysis depends on objective coding. Therefore, three independent coders were employed in the research. All three were criminology graduate students. Prior to coding any closing argument, the coders were trained in the use of the coding instrument. At the initial training session, the coders were guided through the instrument to ensure that they understood each item. Then each coder completed a test closing argument selected from a terrorism case that was *not* addressed in the case studies. This was the “McVeigh Closing Arguments” written by Professor Robert M. Beattie, Jr. of Pittsburg State University. Beattie's document was written for a university moot-jury trial of Timothy McVeigh. Both the “closing argument” of the “defense attorney” and the “closing argument” of the “prosecutor” were written

by Beattie based on his analysis of the actual court record. In a word, the test closing argument was a simulation.

Coders were instructed to identify the various themes in the simulated closing argument, and note their presence with tally marks on the coding instrument. Once coders had completed the exercise, their tally marks were added up, thus indicating the prevalence of themes for the case. Once that was completed, the coders' responses were compared to my own and an adequate level of similarity was found.

Once the coding of the cases began, weekly meetings were held with the coders to discuss problems with a particular closing argument, or the need to add new categories to the instrument. The objective of pretesting, and of the weekly discussions of coding consensus, was to increase the reliability of the content analysis.

### **Results and Discussion**

The prevalence of themes is displayed in Table 10 by mean frequencies. (Table 10 is located at the end of this section..) The results warrant a caveat, however: The prevalence of themes for two cases—the CSA and the ARA—are relatively low. The reason for this is that both cases were plea bargained, hence there were no closing arguments. It is important to note that the ARA's Peter Langan did receive a jury trial (*USA v. Peter Kevin Langan*, CR 2-96-015), producing a closing argument. Yet the empirical baseline for the present research is the ATS database, which refers to the ARA case in terms of Scott Stedeford's plea agreement in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (*USA v. Scott Anthony Stedeford* 97 CR-00051-03). Therefore, the Stedeford plea agreement was used in the content analysis. At any rate, the terms of the plea agreements for the CSA and ARA cases were used as proxies for the summations. Now on to the



results.

To begin with, it is hardly surprising that strength of evidence against the defendant(s), and guilt of the defendant(s), are the most prevalent themes of the terrorism cases. (Together, these themes constitute 29 percent of the total statements made.) After all, terrorism cases rise or fall on strength of evidence pertaining to guilt, as well they should. But more to the point of this study is the importance of terrorist-oriented crimes (or predicate acts), opportunities to commit crimes, and criminal skills as thematic issues. Combined, these themes make up 20 percent of the total statements, thereby confirming the research of Brent Smith and his colleagues who found that federal prosecutors usually indict terrorist groups, not on terrorism charges, but on criminal charges. Smith and associates found that of the 2,748 counts brought against 430 terrorists from over fifty groups between 1980 and 1998, only 425 of them (15%) related to terrorism; the rest were criminal charges. Moreover, general crimes figure prominently in terrorism trials.

Yet Table 1 leads to a second conclusion; namely, that the actualities of criminality also figure prominently in terrorism trials. At a theoretical level, one of the most significant points of the case studies is that terrorist subcultures arise from everyday locales—in the world of the streets, the prison, and in paramilitary training camps. Criminologists have long acknowledged that actions labeled criminal are typically generated within the boundaries of deviant subcultures. (I am referring here to the pioneering works of Albert Cohen [1955]; Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin [1960]; and Edwin Sutherland and Donald Cressey [1978].) Terrorism is no different. We do not study terrorists for who they are, but for what they do. Terrorist behavior is, more often than not, subcultural behavior. Al-Qaeda, CSA, the Order, and the Aryan Republican Army: all are subcultural networks as much as individual identities.

This theoretical notion is confirmed quantitatively when we add to the mix the theme of group dynamics and processes. Indeed, criminal skill development and the exploitation of routine activities occur within the context of group dynamics and processes. When combined, terrorist-oriented crimes (7% of the total statements), opportunities to commit crimes (8%), criminal skills (5%), and group dynamics and processes (8%), make up 28 percent of the total statements—placing these themes on equal par with strength of evidence and guilt. In short, not only are the federal courts concerned with criminal charges brought against terrorists, but they are also concerned about the lived reality of criminal behavior within terrorist organizations. Table 10 shows that the opportunities to commit crimes and criminal skills are more important to the legal processing of terrorists than their motivation and ideology; more important, in fact, than their character, morality, and personal history. We learn more about the importance of these factors by taking a closer look at selected statements from the summations.

### *Criminal Skills*

Consider, first, this statement made in the prosecution's closing argument against the Order:

Mr. [Bruce] Pierce's van—excuse me—the trailer which his wife was driving in Alabama was searched with her consent and Mr. Pierce's consent. Among the things recovered were a number of books. One is called, *Death Dealer's Manual*. There is another called, *Assassination, Theory and Practice*. There is a five-volume set on how to kill people. There is an identical five-volume [set] on how to kill people recovered from Randy Evans two weeks later, from the truck of Randy Evans two weeks later in Arkansas where he is arrested at the CSA compound. There is another book called, *Hit Man*. Another one

called, *Two Component High Explosive Mixtures*. There is one called, *Improvised Munitions*. There is one called, *Disguise Techniques*. There were a number of conversion kits for making guns from semi-automatic MAC 10 weapons. There were instructions on how to make live grenades from the practice grenades which you have seen here in court and have seen photographs of (p. 11,248) .

From this statement—one of nineteen made in the summation on the Order’s criminal skills—we learn that terrorists actually become students of assassination, bombing, and manufacturing illegal firearms. We also learn something about how criminal skills are compromised by commodity fetishism. At the time of their arrests, both Pierce and Evans were wanted for a raft of federal crimes. As such, they deliberately placed themselves in jeopardy by hauling these highly incriminating documents over the open road. Especially Pierce. What kind of criminal, we may ask, assassinates the well-known radio personality Alan Berg, gaining national media attention, and then drives cross country with a veritable library on assassination techniques? An American terrorist does.

We are also able to make several interesting comparisons. First, international jihadists are also students of terrorism, as evidenced by this statement from the World Trade Center bombing case:

We also know...that this is an individual [Ramzi Yousef] who has know-how and expertise in explosives....Yousef ordered chemicals, went there [to a chemical business] and ordered chemicals and he referred to a particular chemical by two different names, and I’m not even sure I can pronounce it. The first name is hexymethaline tetramine, and the same chemical is called methamine or methamine [sic]—I really can’t do it very

well—but in any case, Ramzi Yousef was able to do it very well. He knew this chemical by two different names (pp. 8,540-41).

Second, one of the volumes favored by the Order, *Improvised Munitions*, would later be found among the ARA's possessions; court records in the McVeigh case indicate that the Oklahoma City bomber possessed this book as well. *Improvised Munitions* is also listed as a resource in the Qaeda training manual. Training manuals are extremely important to domestic right-wingers and jihadist alike. Not only did these manuals play a crucial role in developing the skills necessary for the jihadists to build the bombs used in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the East African embassies, but they also provided instruction on such important activities as international travel, passport forgery, money laundering, and establishing safe houses. Training manuals were also indispensable in the CSA's manufacturing of machine guns, the ARA's bank robbery spree, and the Order's racketeering, as exemplified in the following summation on David Lane:

Is he opposed to robberies? Next page. Part of the [Order's] manual is how to do them.

[Reading from the manual:] "Should a unit be inclined to raid the gold of ZOG, be aware of exploding dye packets and radio beepers planted inside money packets. Dye bombs are usually but not always planted inside bundles of tens. They're usually in the tellers' cages but not in the vaults. Do not underestimate the value of diversionary tactics before your primary action."

"Porno theaters and book stores are full of filth showing homosexuals and niggers doing vile acts with white women. A large bomb planted in one of these places is not only an excellent diversion, but it serves the will of our God" (pp.11, 278-279).

The upshot of these statements is this: Armed with social learning theory, criminological inquiry makes it possible to compare different kinds of terrorist groups in different kinds of contexts and in different historical eras.

Despite these similarities, and also consistent with the case studies, there is at least one major difference between international jihad groups and domestic terrorist organizations in terms of their deployment of criminal skills. In American groups, individuals are recruited for their skills and those individuals typically consider it an honor to apply them to the terrorist project, thereby gaining the respect and protection of confederates. For example, the plea agreement for CSA leader James Ellison reads:

Ardie McBrearty, 60, also is serving a 40-year sentence on racketeering charges. A former member of the Posse Comitatus [sic], he was recruited by the Order because of his expertise in using voice-stress analysis to detect infiltrators. He served as intelligence chief and legal advisor to the Order and was affiliated with the CSA (n.p.)

Jihad groups, on the other hand, often rely on low-level operatives to perform menial tasks necessary for the operation's success. They are recruited less for their criminal skills—in fact, sometimes they perform these tasks with remarkable incompetence—than for their connections to the local community. Once the tasks are completed, these low-level operatives are abandoned by the organizational leadership. This phenomenon is observable in several passages from the closing arguments in the World Trade Center bombing case:

Mr. Yousef, with his own plan, came to this country. He needed people to do his dirty work. He needed people for his manpower. The government said as much yesterday. The government said that Mr. Yousef had to get people to help him. And I think the evidence

is pretty clear, ladies and gentlemen, that Mr. Yousef did get Mr. [Mohammad] Salameh to help him, but he kept Mr. Salameh in the dark about the fundamental plan that he came to this country with (pp. 8,534-35).

Now, why did Ramzi need someone like Mohammad Salameh? Well, based on what we know of Mr. Ramzi Yousef he needed someone who was somewhat familiar with the Jersey City community. We know that Mr. Salami [sic] was active in his mosque...and we know that he had lived in this area for some time, and that he had friends. And Ramzi Yousef needed someone who had some basic familiarity with the area, and who would follow tasks and do his assignment without asking a lot of questions (p. 8,578).

What evidence do we have that...Mohammad Salameh [was] driving the van in the early morning hours of February 26 [the day of the attack]? What other evidence? We have evidence that Mr. Salameh is one of the world's worst drivers.

Mr. Salameh gets into a car accident whenever he even gets near a car, it seems....Ramzi Yousef has to find a driver. And according to the government's theory, the most logical choice is Mohammad Salameh. Now, that is so absurd....No reasonable person would want Mohammad Salameh driving on an important mission, on an important errand, and certainly no one would ever want Mohammad Salameh even near a vehicle which was carrying a 1,500 pound bomb (pp. 8,598-99)

We see the same pattern of manipulation by al-Qaeda's leadership in the East African bombing case. The following quote comes from the capital case against KK Mohamed.

Parenthetically, the statement highlights the robustness of closing arguments in terrorism trials inasmuch as the passage incorporates elements of ideology, group dynamics and processes, as

well as criminal skills (the coders coded it all three ways):

In the end, if you kill him, you'll allow him to be used twice. Now, when I say used, don't think that I'm saying he didn't know what he was doing. Don't think I am saying he was not responsible for what he did. He knew and he is. That doesn't mean that people bigger than him don't use all they've learned over the years and years to manipulate people, to look for people with the kind of zeal he has, with the kind of belief he has. And so they got him, and he agreed of his own free will to participate, and he was just what the doctor ordered for this operation. He was a local man. It would be no real loss in the end if something happened to him. And he was there to help him [Selah] speak Swahili and get cars and whatever, and so he served their purposes (pp. 8,640-41).

### *Routine Activities*

In terms of implications for the criminology of terrorism, the Order is endlessly relevant. Few statements in the content analysis speak so directly to the significance of routine activity theory than the following item concerning Jean Craig's surveillance of Alan Berg's offices at KOA radio in Denver. It shows unquestionably how terrorism feeds off the larger system of daily activities and situations. Again, the fifty-one-year-old Craig gained access to the offices by posing as a "writing student" from the University of Wyoming.

There were a number of things about her that stood out, her age, the fact that she was a university student, from the University of Wyoming; he [a witness at the station] had never met anybody from the University of Wyoming. More importantly, the questions that were asked just didn't make any sense, questions relating to the security at the radio station. None of the usual questions he got from students. No questions about your radio

ratings, no questions about this, no questions about that.

He was so concerned when he went out after that and saw her taking photographs of the station that he went to the security manager and told him, “There’s a very strange lady out there taking photographs in some unusual places around the radio station.”...So, it was an unusual incident. It was not an everyday occurrence (pp. 11,256-257).

Not an everyday occurrence. The same can be said about this statement regarding Ramzi Yousef’s ability to breach airline security at New York’s JFK Airport:

Remember how he entered the airport? He was described by one of the airport officials as entering the airport in a harem suit, in a very colorful suit. He spoke English very well, according to [INS officer] Moralez [sic]. He had a very good vocabulary. He understood the questions being asked him very well. And above all...this was a man entering the country basically illegally, with, the government’s own theory, a design or a plot to destroy buildings here. He was described, despite the fact that he was entering this country under those circumstances, as being very calm. What does that tell you?...That tells us that we’re dealing with a professional...[T]hrough some quick thinking and maneuvering at the airport he was able to elude law enforcement and slipped stealthily into the New York area. What does that tell us? It tells us that this is an individual to be reckoned with (pp. 8,538-39).

Equally instructive are the ways in which al-Qaeda exploits the routine activities of communities targeted for a terrorist strike. The case study of the embassy bombings demonstrated that bin Laden’s group is particularly adept at integrating its operatives into the daily life of local communities—a finding confirmed in two closing argument statements. The first



involves KK Mohamed:

Khalfan Mohamed is responsible for 11 [deaths]. He specifically chose to do the job he did. Not only that, but he went and reconnoitered. He looked around [for a suitable bomb factory] and said, wow, that is [a] crowded neighborhood. There's houses and trains and banks and this and that. And he even tried to get them [his coconspirators] to change it, but when they didn't, ah, that's all right. We'll go ahead anyway.

The second statement involves defendant Mamdouh Salim, a member of bin Laden's *shura* council, who provided logistical support for al-Qaeda operatives in Sudan.

You know that in Khartoum all these [al-Qaeda] people had businesses. And you remember at one point [defense witness] Jamal al-Fadl said, no, no, no, it's not true that just the most powerful people, just the most connected people do well. And I said, name one person who doesn't own a factory or have a good business. Get back to me when you think of it. And I'm still waiting for him to get back to me (p. 8,681).

In this case, though, exploiting the labor networks of Khartoum created a threat to the United States that far exceeds anything posed by domestic terrorists:

Salim is a person who tried to buy nuclear fuel to build a bomb. Remember Jamal al-Fadl came in here and he told you how he was sent into the middle of Khartoum somewhere to meet with someone who had South African uranium, and he was told he had to get in contact with Salim and get something to weigh it. Salim is one of the big moneymakers for al-Qaeda, and I want to talk to you for a minute about that, because the top people in al-Qaeda seem to live pretty good lives (pp. 8,680-81).

## Conclusions

The content analysis shows that information about terrorist-oriented criminality is an important source of knowledge for prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, and jurors. Yet this knowledge does not stand alone; rather, it interacts with other influences including strength of evidence, guilt of defendants, and other case specific factors. And these factors can in turn be influenced by personal feelings and myths surrounding the various acts of terrorism.

When the ARA's Scott Stedeford appeared before U.S. district judge Charles Wolle for sentencing on six counts of bank robbery in February, 1997, the judge told him: "I'm putting you where you belong, young man: In federal prison for twenty years." What incensed the judge most was the ARA's "use of clown outfits." "The excitement or thrill of the chase was horrible," Wolle said. One year later, a federal prosecutor in the Peter Langan case said in his closing argument that Langan had adopted the code name "Commander Pedro" from the Order's Robert Mathews. "Mathews used a Spanish code name, too," he claimed, "and that name was 'Carlos.'" Yet the fact of these important legal matters is that Stedeford never did wear a "clown outfit" during the bank robberies and Langan's alias was congested in a psychological complex of repressed abstractions concerning the split between terrorism's realities and folk tales.

Criminological knowledge on terrorism is still in its infancy. Criminologists have explored the socialization of terrorists, the organization of terrorism, the social construction and control of terrorism, but they have done little to advance testable theories of terrorism that explain how symbolism, style and aesthetics shape the lived reality of terrorist groups. To get there—to move beyond terrorism's myths, misconceptions, and existential self-definitions of scholars and jurists who respond to terrorists—researchers must advance a criminology that

describes precisely *how* terrorist groups have engaged in violence for political causes. This research has addressed that imperative by identifying the distinguishing features of terrorist-related crime. The accumulated evidence shows that these distinguishing features are shaped not only by the human dimension of criminality, but by their relationship to social, cultural, and political processes as well. In this way, criminological perspectives can be viewed as essential to contemporary policy debates over terrorism.

Table 10. Content Analysis: Prevalence of Themes (Means Reported)

Cases

<u>Theme</u>	<u>WTC</u>	<u>Embassy</u>	<u>CSA</u>	<u>Order</u>	<u>ARA</u>	<u>%</u>
Defendant Motivation	3	6	1	21	1	4
Character	11	27	1	21	1	8
Personal History	9	10	5	10	3	5
Group Dynamics/Processes	6	16	2	36	2	8
Victim Impact	5	18	0	7	0	4
Community Sentiment	2	2	0	4	0	1
Strength of Evidence	33	30	3	67	3	18
Guilt of Defendant	9	25	4	37	7	11
Sentencing	0	19	4	3	0	1
Morality and Justice	2	15	0	7	1	1
Ideology	3	11	2	16	0	4
Juror Obligations	10	18	-	24	-	7
Attorney Obligations	4	5	0	24	3	4
Terrorist-Oriented Crimes	6	17	8	27	3	7
Opportunities	12	11	3	36	1	8
Criminal Skills	9	7	4	19	0	5
Totals	124	237	37	307	28	96%

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