

60 Terrorist Plots Since 9/11: Continued Lessons in Domestic Counterterrorism

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Abstract

The Heritage Foundation has tracked post-9/11 terrorist plots against the United States in an effort to study the evolving nature of the threat and to garner lessons learned. The best way to protect the United States from terrorism is to ensure a strong and capable domestic counterterrorism enterprise—and to understand the continuing nature of the terror threat. The Boston Marathon bombing was the 59th publicly known terror plot against the United States since 9/11. In a political environment of sequestration on the one hand, and privacy concerns on the other, there are those on both sides of the aisle who want to cut counterterrorism spending and restrict the scope of U.S. intelligence agencies. But the long war on terrorism is far from over. Most disturbingly, an increasing number of Islamist-inspired terrorist attacks are originating within America's borders. The rise of homegrown extremism is the next front in the fight against terrorism, and Congress and the Administration must take it seriously. This Special Report features up-to-date information on all 60 plots, and the authors describe a plan for a comprehensive homeland security strategy.

At 2:50 p.m. on April 15, 2013, two explosions went off at the finish line of the Boston Marathon. The brazen terrorist attack killed three people, injured and maimed hundreds more, and shocked the nation. Despite being long recognized as a potential threat by law enforcement and intelligence, few Americans had considered the use of an improvised explosive device (IED) on American soil. And, due to only a few, and relatively small, attacks since 9/11, the public was not in a state of awareness.

Yet, the fact remains that there have been at least 60 Islamist-inspired terrorist plots against the homeland since 9/11, illustrating the continued threat of terrorism against the United States. Fifty-three of these plots were thwarted long before the public was ever in danger, due in large part to the concerted efforts of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence.

The Heritage Foundation has tracked the foiled terrorist plots against the United States since 9/11 in

an effort to study the evolving nature of the threat and garner lessons learned. The best way to protect the United States from the continued threat of terrorism is to ensure a strong and capable domestic counterterrorism enterprise—and to understand the continuing nature of the terror threat.

The bombings in Boston are not likely to be the last such attempt to attack the U.S. as a whole. Now is not the time for the U.S. to stand still. Congress and the Administration should:

- Ensure a proactive approach to halting terrorism,
- Maintain essential counterterrorism tools,
- Break down silos of information,
- Streamline the domestic counterterrorism system, and

- Fully implement a strategy to counter violent extremism.

60 Terrorist Plots Since 9/11

In 2007, The Heritage Foundation began tracking post-9/11 terrorist plots against the United States. Heritage continuously refines and updates the available information, and in light of the Boston Marathon bombing, is now including not only thwarted plots, but those that have been successful.¹

In 2012, Heritage reported that at least 50 publicly known, Islamist-inspired terrorist plots against the homeland had been thwarted since September 11, 2001. The reality, of course, is that no matter how good a nation's security and intelligence agencies are, they cannot prevent 100 percent of planned attacks. While there has not been a catastrophe on the scale of 9/11 in the past 12 years, terrorists have succeeded in attacking the homeland four times: (1) the intentional driving of an SUV into a crowd of students at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill in 2006; (2) the shooting at an army recruitment office in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 2009; (3) the shooting by U.S. Army Major Nidal Hasan at Fort Hood, also in 2009; and (4) the bombings in Boston.

Of the 60 plots, 49 could be considered home-grown terror plots. This means that one or more of the actors were American citizens, legal permanent residents, or visitors radicalized predominately in the United States.²

In each of these plots, the number one target was military facilities, followed closely by targets in New York City. The third most common target was mass gatherings, like the Boston Marathon, nightclubs and bars, and shopping malls.

While four plots were successful, and three foiled merely by luck or the swift action of private citizens, the rest were thwarted in their early stages by U.S., and sometimes international, law enforcement.

1. Richard Reid—December 2001. A British citizen and self-professed follower of Osama bin Laden who trained in Afghanistan, Richard Reid hid explosives inside his shoes before boarding a flight from Paris to Miami on which he attempted to light the fuse with a match. Reid was caught in the act and apprehended aboard the plane by passengers and flight attendants. FBI officials took Reid into custody after the plane made an emergency landing at Boston's Logan International Airport.³

In 2003, Reid was found guilty on charges of terrorism, and a U.S. federal court sentenced him to life in prison.⁴ He is currently incarcerated at a federal maximum-security prison in Colorado.

Saajid Badat, a supporter to Reid, has been sentenced to 13 years in jail for planning to blow up a passenger plane. The 26-year-old, a religious teacher from Gloucester, England, was sentenced after he admitted conspiring with fellow Briton Reid. Badat pleaded guilty in February 2005 to the plot to blow up the transatlantic flight on its way to the U.S. in 2001.⁵

2. Jose Padilla—May 2002. U.S. officials arrested Jose Padilla in May 2002 at Chicago's O'Hare airport as he returned to the United States from Pakistan, where he met with 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and received al-Qaeda training and instructions.⁶ Upon his arrest, he was initially charged as an enemy combatant, and for planning to use a dirty bomb (an explosive laced with radioactive material) in an attack in the U.S.⁷

Along with Padilla, Adham Amin Hassoun and Kifah Wael Jayyousi were convicted in August 2007 of terrorism conspiracy and material support. It was found that the men supported cells that sent recruits, money, and supplies to Islamic extremists worldwide, including al-Qaeda members. Hassoun was the recruiter and Jayyousi served as a financier and propagandist in the cell. Before his conviction, Padilla had brought a case against the federal government claiming that he had been denied the right of habeas corpus (the right of an individual to petition his unlawful imprisonment). In a five-to-four decision, the U.S. Supreme Court found that the case against him had been filed improperly.⁸ In 2005, the government indicted Padilla for conspiring against the U.S. with Islamic terrorist groups.

In August 2007, Padilla was found guilty by a civilian jury after a three-month trial. He was later sentenced by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida to 17 years and four months in prison.⁹ In September 2011, an appellate court ruling deemed Padilla's original sentence to be too lenient.¹⁰ In 2012, Padilla was moved from a federal supermax prison in Florence, Colorado, to the federal detention center in Miami while awaiting resentencing.¹¹ Additionally, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has filed a complaint on behalf of Padilla alleging that being named an enemy combatant was a violation of his rights, and that he was subjected to torture

during interrogation nearly a decade ago. His current release date is set for January 4, 2022.¹²

3. Lackawanna Six—September 2002. When the FBI arrested Sahim Alwan, Yahya Goba, Yasein Taher, Faysal Galab, Shafal Mosed, and Mukhtar al-Bakri in Upstate New York, the press dubbed them the “Lackawanna Six,” the “Buffalo Six,” and the “Buffalo Cell.” Five of the six had been born and raised in Lackawanna, New York.¹³ All six are American citizens of Yemeni descent, and stated that they were going to Pakistan to attend a religious camp, but attended an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan instead. The six men pleaded guilty in 2003 to providing support to al-Qaeda. Goba and al-Bakri were sentenced to 10 years in prison, Taher and Mosed to eight years, Alwan to nine and a half years, and Galab to seven years.¹⁴ Goba’s sentence was later reduced to nine years after he, Alwan, and Taher testified at a Guantanamo Bay military tribunal in the case against Osama bin Laden’s chief propagandist, Ali Hamza al-Bahlul.¹⁵ All the men have served their jail sentences and are now living freely in western New York.¹⁶

Recent reports indicate that Jaber Elbaneh, one of the FBI’s most wanted and often considered to be a seventh member of the Lackawanna cell, has been captured in Yemen. It remains to be seen whether he will be tried in the U.S., since the U.S. does not have an extradition treaty with Yemen.¹⁷

4. Uzair and Saifullah Paracha—March 2003. Uzair Paracha, a Pakistani citizen with permanent residency status in the U.S., was arrested in March 2003 and charged with five counts of providing material and financial support to al-Qaeda. Uzair attempted to help another Pakistani, Majid Khan, an al-Qaeda operative, gain access to the United States via immigration fraud. Khan is said to have been in contact with 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheik Mohammed and planned to bomb underground storage tanks at Maryland gas stations.¹⁸ Uzair was convicted and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Saifullah Paracha, Uzair’s father, a 64-year-old citizen of Pakistan and resident alien of the U.S., is currently being held at Guantanamo Bay awaiting trial. Paracha was arrested in Bangkok, Thailand, on July 8, 2003, through the efforts of the FBI and information provided by his son. He is believed to have had close ties to Khalid Sheik Mohammed, and Mohammed’s nephew Ammar al-Baluchi. Saifullah is said to have used his international business

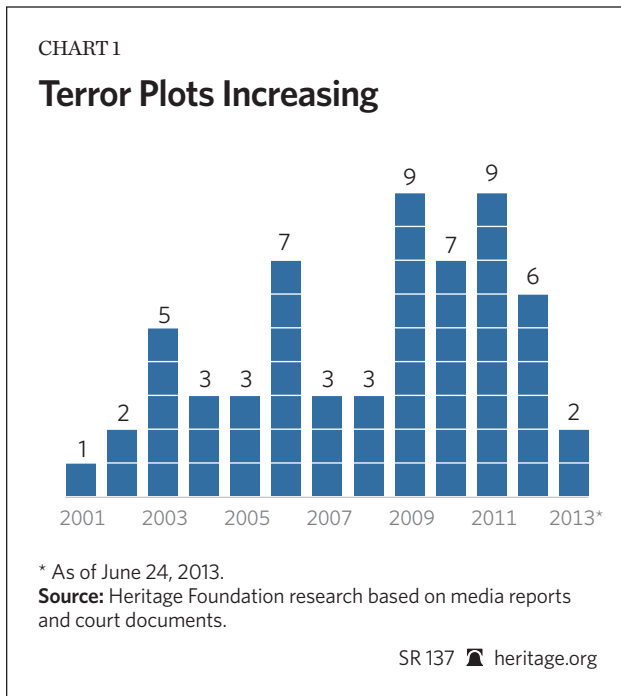
connections to help al-Qaeda procure chemical and biological explosives and assist in their shipment to the U.S., along with the shipment of ready-made explosives.¹⁹

5. Iyman Faris—May 2003. Iyman Faris is a naturalized U.S. citizen, originally from Kashmir, who was living in Columbus, Ohio. He was arrested for conspiring to use blowtorches to collapse the Brooklyn Bridge, a plot devised after meetings with al-Qaeda leadership, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.²⁰ The New York City Police Department learned of the plot and increased police surveillance around the bridge. Faced with the additional security, Faris and his superiors called off the attack.²¹

Faris pleaded guilty to conspiracy and providing material support to al-Qaeda and was later sentenced in federal district court to 20 years in prison, the maximum allowed under his plea agreement.²²

6. Ahmed Omar Abu Ali—June 2003. Ahmed Omar Abu Ali is an American citizen of Jordanian descent who was arrested in Saudi Arabia on charges that he conspired to kill President George W. Bush, hijack airplanes, and provide support to al-Qaeda. He was arrested while attending Medina University in Saudi Arabia, where he had joined an al-Qaeda cell. His plans, according to authorities, were to kill President Bush and then establish an al-Qaeda cell in the United States, with himself as the head.²³ He was convicted by an American court on November 22, 2005, and sentenced to life in prison on July 27, 2009, overturning a 2006 sentence of 30 years that was ruled to be too lenient.²⁴

7. Virginia Jihad Network—June 2003. Eleven men were arrested in Alexandria, Virginia, for weapons counts and for violating the Neutrality Acts, which prohibit U.S. citizens and residents from attacking countries with which the United States is at peace. Four of the 11 men pleaded guilty. Upon further investigation, the remaining seven were indicted on additional charges of conspiring to support terrorist organizations. They were found to have connections with al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, a terrorist organization that targets the Indian government. The authorities stated that the Virginia men had used paintball games to train and prepare for battle. The group had also acquired surveillance and night vision equipment and wireless video cameras.²⁵ Two more men were later indicted in the plot: Ali al-Timimi, the group’s spiritual leader, and Ali Asad Chandia.



Ali al-Timimi was found guilty of soliciting individuals to assault the United States and was sentenced to life in prison. Ali Asad Chandia received 15 years for supporting Lashkar-e-Tayyiba.²⁶ Randall Todd Royer, Ibrahim al-Hamdi, Yong Ki Kwon, Khwaja Mahmood Hasan, Muhammed Aatique, and Donald T. Surratt pleaded guilty and were sentenced to prison terms ranging from three years and 10 months to 20 years. Masoud Khan, Seifullah Chapman, and Hammad Abdur-Raheem were found guilty and later sentenced to prison terms ranging from 52 months to life.²⁷ Both Caliph Basha Ibn Abdur-Raheem and Sabri Benkhala were acquitted at trial.²⁸

8. Nuradin M. Abdi—November 2003. Nuradin M. Abdi, a Somali citizen living in Columbus, Ohio, was arrested and charged in a plot to bomb a local shopping mall. Abdi was an associate of convicted terrorists Christopher Paul and Iyman Faris and admitted to conspiring with the two to provide material support to terrorists. Following his arrest, Abdi admitted to traveling overseas to seek admittance to terrorist training camps, as well as meeting with a Somali warlord associated with Islamists.

Abdi has since pleaded guilty to conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists, one of the four counts for which he was indicted. He was subsequently sentenced to 10 years in jail per the terms of a plea agreement.²⁹ After being released from prison,

Abdi was deported to his home country of Somalia in 2012.³⁰

9. Dhiren Barot—August 2004. Seven members of a terrorist cell led by Dhiren Barot were arrested for plotting to attack the New York Stock Exchange and other financial institutions in New York, Washington, D.C., and Newark, New Jersey. They were later accused of planning attacks in England. The plots included a “memorable black day of terror” that would have included detonating a dirty bomb. A July 2004 police raid on Barot’s house in Pakistan yielded a number of incriminating files on a laptop computer, including instructions for building car bombs.³¹

Barot pleaded guilty and was convicted in the United Kingdom for conspiracy to commit mass murder and sentenced to 40 years.³² However, in May 2007, his sentence was reduced to 30 years.³³ His seven co-conspirators were sentenced to terms ranging from 15 to 26 years on related charges of conspiracy to commit murder and conspiracy to cause explosion.³⁴

10. James Elshafay and Shahawar Matin Siraj—August 2004. James Elshafay and Shahawar Matin Siraj, both reportedly self-radicalized, were arrested for plotting to bomb a subway station near Madison Square Garden in New York City before the Republican National Convention.³⁵ An undercover detective from the New York City Police Department’s Intelligence Division infiltrated the group, providing information to authorities, and later testified against Elshafay and Siraj.³⁶

Siraj was convicted and sentenced to 30 years in prison. Elshafay, a U.S. citizen, pleaded guilty and received a lighter, five-year sentence for testifying against his co-conspirator.³⁷

11. Yassin Aref and Mohammad Hossain—August 2004. Two leaders of a mosque in Albany, New York, were charged with plotting to purchase a shoulder-fired grenade launcher to assassinate a Pakistani diplomat.³⁸ An investigation by the FBI, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and local police contributed to the arrest. With the help of an informant, the FBI set up a sting that lured Mohammad Hossain into a fake terrorist conspiracy. Hossain brought Yassin Aref, a Kurdish refugee, as a witness. The informant offered details of a fake terrorist plot, claiming that he needed the missiles to murder a Pakistani diplomat in New York City. Both Aref and Hossain agreed to help.³⁹

Aref and Hossain were found guilty of money laundering and conspiracy to conceal material support for terrorism and were sentenced to 15 years in prison.⁴⁰

12. Hamid Hayat—June 2005. Hamid Hayat, a Pakistani immigrant, was arrested in Lodi, California, after allegedly lying to the FBI about his attendance at an Islamic terrorist training camp in Pakistan.

Hamid was found guilty of providing himself as “material support” to terrorists and three counts of providing false statements to the FBI.⁴¹ In interviews with the FBI, he stated (correctly) that he specifically requested to come to the United States after receiving training in order to carry out jihad.⁴² He was sentenced to 24 years in prison.⁴³ The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Hamid’s conviction in a split decision. However, his lawyers continue to pursue his appeal.⁴⁴

13. Levar Haley Washington, Gregory Vernon Patterson, Hammad Riaz Samana, and Kevin James—August 2005. The members of the group were arrested in Los Angeles and charged with conspiring to attack National Guard facilities, synagogues, and other targets in the Los Angeles area. Kevin James allegedly founded Jamiyyat ul-Islam Is-Saheeh (JIS), a radical Islamic prison group, and converted Levar Washington and others to the group’s mission. The JIS allegedly planned to finance its operations by robbing gas stations. After Washington and Patterson were arrested for robbery, police and federal agents began a terrorist investigation, and a search of Washington’s apartment revealed a target list.⁴⁵

James and Washington pleaded guilty in December 2007. James was sentenced to 16 years in prison and Washington to 22 years. Patterson received 151 months, while Samana was found unfit to stand trial and was initially detained in a federal prison mental facility. He was later sentenced to 70 months in jail.⁴⁶

14. Michael C. Reynolds—December 2005. Michael C. Reynolds was arrested by the FBI and charged with involvement in a plot to blow up a Wyoming natural gas refinery; the Transcontinental Pipeline, a natural-gas pipeline from the Gulf Coast to New York and New Jersey; and a Standard Oil refinery in New Jersey.⁴⁷ He was arrested while trying to pick up a \$40,000 payment for planning the attack.⁴⁸ Shannen Rossmiller, his purported contact,

was a Montana judge and private citizen working with the FBI. Rossmiller posed as a jihadist, tricking Reynolds into revealing his plan. The FBI later found explosives in a storage locker in Reynolds’s hometown of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.⁴⁹ Reynolds claimed that he was doing much the same as Rossmiller, and was working as a private citizen to find terrorists.⁵⁰

Reynolds was convicted of providing material support to terrorists, soliciting a crime of violence, unlawful distribution of explosives, and unlawful possession of a hand grenade. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison.⁵¹

15. Mohammad Zaki Amawi, Marwan Othman El-Hindi, and Zand Wassim Mazloum—February 2006. Amawi, El-Hindi, and Mazloum were arrested in Toledo, Ohio, for conspiring to kill people outside the United States, including U.S. Armed Forces personnel serving in Iraq.⁵² The men also conspired to train and arm for a violent jihad against the United States, both domestically and abroad.⁵³ Training involved use of materials including those found on secure and exclusive jihadist websites, downloaded and copied training videos, and materials for jihad training sessions. The men also were found to have provided material support to terrorist organizations and to have verbally threatened attacks on President George W. Bush.⁵⁴ The investigation was begun with the help of an informant who was approached to help train the group.⁵⁵

In June 2008, the three men were convicted of conspiring to commit acts of terrorism against Americans overseas, including U.S. military personnel in Iraq, and other terrorism-related violations. Amawi was sentenced to 20 years, El-Hindi to 13 years, and Mazloum to approximately eight years.⁵⁶

16. Mohammed Reza Taheri-azar—March 2006. Mohammed Reza Taheri-azar, a 22-year-old Iranian native, drove his SUV into a crowd of students at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, injuring six people on March 3, 2006. The reasoning, he stated, behind the attack was retribution for the treatment of Muslims around the world.⁵⁷ Taheri-azar called police shortly after the incident, and turned himself over to authorities a few miles from his hit-and-run. Taheri-azar was sentenced to a prison term of at least 26 years and two months, after pleading guilty in 2008 to nine counts of attempted first-degree murder.⁵⁸

17. Syed Haris Ahmed and Ehsanul Islam Sadequee—April 2006. Ahmed and Sadequee, from Atlanta, Georgia, were accused of conspiracy, having discussed terrorist targets with alleged terrorist organizations. They allegedly met with Islamic extremists in the U.S. and gathered video surveillance of potential targets in the Washington, D.C., area, including the U.S. Capitol and the World Bank headquarters, and sent the videos to a London Islamist group. Ahmed is said also to have traveled to Pakistan with the goal of joining Lashkar-e-Tayyiba.⁵⁹

Both men were indicted for providing material support to terrorist organizations and pleaded not guilty.⁶⁰ In June 2009, a federal district judge found Ahmed “guilty of conspiring to provide material support to terrorists here and overseas.”⁶¹ Ahmed was subsequently sentenced to 13 years in jail. Sadequee was also found guilty and sentenced to 17 years.⁶²

18. Narseal Batiste, Patrick Abraham, Stanley Grant Phanor, Naudimar Herrera, Burson Augustin, Lyglenson Lemorin, and Rotschild Augustine—June 2006. Seven men were arrested in Miami and Atlanta for plotting to blow up the Sears Tower in Chicago, FBI offices, and other government buildings around the country. The arrests resulted from an investigation involving an FBI informant. Allegedly, Batiste was the leader of the group and first suggested attacking the Sears Tower in December 2005.⁶³

All of the suspects pleaded not guilty. On December 13, 2007, Lemorin was acquitted of all charges, but the jury failed to reach a verdict on the other six.⁶⁴ The second trial ended in a mistrial in April 2008.⁶⁵ In the third trial, the jury convicted five of the men on multiple conspiracy charges and acquitted Herrera on all counts. On November 20, 2009, the five were sentenced to prison terms ranging from six to 13.5 years, with Batiste receiving the longest sentence.⁶⁶

19. Assem Hammoud—July 2006. Conducting online surveillance of chat rooms, the FBI discovered a plot to attack underground transit links between New York City and New Jersey. Eight suspects, including Assem Hammoud, an al-Qaeda loyalist living in Lebanon, were identified for plotting to bomb New York City train tunnels. Hammoud, a self-proclaimed operative for al-Qaeda, admitted to the plot.⁶⁷ He was held by Lebanese authorities but was not extradited because the U.S. does not

have an extradition treaty with Lebanon. In June 2008, Lebanese authorities released him on bail.⁶⁸ In February 2012, Hammoud was convicted in a Lebanese court. He was sentenced to two years in prison, which he had already served.⁶⁹

20. Liquid Explosives Plot—August 2006. British law enforcement stopped a terrorist plot to blow up 10 U.S.-bound commercial airliners with liquid explosives.⁷⁰ Twenty-four suspects were arrested in the London area. The style of the plot raised speculation that al-Qaeda was behind it, but no concrete evidence has established a link.

The United Kingdom initially indicted 15 of the 24 arrested individuals on charges ranging from conspiring to commit murder to planning to commit terrorist acts.⁷¹ Eventually, in April 2008, only eight men were brought to trial. In September, the jury found none of the defendants guilty of conspiring to target aircraft, but three guilty of conspiracy to commit murder.⁷² The jury was unable to reach verdicts on four of the men. One man was found not guilty on all counts.⁷³

21. Derrick Shareef—December 2006. Derrick Shareef was arrested on charges of planning to set off hand grenades in a shopping mall in Rockford, Illinois, outside Chicago. Shareef reportedly acted alone and was arrested after meeting with an undercover Joint Terrorism Task Force agent. FBI reports indicated that the mall was one of several potential targets, including courthouses, city halls, and government facilities. Shareef, however, settled on attacking a mall in the days immediately preceding Christmas because he believed it would cause the greatest amount of chaos and damage.⁷⁴ Shareef, who was also found to have connections to convicted terrorist Hassan Abujihad, was charged with attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction, and after pleading guilty, was sentenced to 35 years in prison.⁷⁵

22. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed—March 2007. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, captured in Pakistan in 2003, was involved in a number of terrorist plots and is one of the most senior bin Laden operatives ever captured.⁷⁶ He is being held at the U.S. military detention facility in Guantanamo Bay. In March 2007, Mohammed admitted to helping plan, organize, and run the 9/11 attacks. He also claimed responsibility for planning the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and the 2002 bombings of nightclubs in Bali and a Kenyan hotel. He has stated that he was involved in the decapitation of *Wall Street*

Journal reporter Daniel Pearl and took responsibility for helping to plan the failed shoe-bomb attack by Richard Reid, along with plots to attack Heathrow Airport, Canary Wharf, Big Ben, various targets in Israel, the Panama Canal, Los Angeles, Chicago, the Empire State building, and U.S. nuclear power stations. He had also plotted to assassinate Pope John Paul II and former President Bill Clinton.

In December 2008, Mohammed and his four co-defendants (Ramzi Binalshibh, Mustafa Ahmad al-Hawsawi, Ali Abd al-Aziz Ali, and Walid Bin Attash) told the military tribunal judge that they wanted to confess and pleaded guilty to all charges.⁷⁷ The judge has approved the guilty plea of Mohammed and two co-defendants but has required mental competency hearings before allowing the other two conspirators to plead guilty. In November 2009, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder announced that Mohammed would be relocated to the United States to face a civilian trial in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.⁷⁸ That decision has now been reversed and the Administration announced that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and the other Guantanamo Bay detainees would be prosecuted in military tribunals at Guantanamo.⁷⁹ The date for the arraignment of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and his co-defendants was set for May 5, 2012, with pre-trial motion hearings beginning in October 2012 and continuing in January 2013.⁸⁰

23. Fort Dix Plot—May 2007. Six men were arrested in a plot to attack Fort Dix, a U.S. Army post in New Jersey. The plan involved using assault rifles and grenades to attack and kill U.S. soldiers. Five of the alleged conspirators had conducted training missions in the nearby Pocono Mountains. The sixth helped to obtain weapons. The arrests were made after a 16-month FBI operation that included infiltrating the group. The investigation began after a store clerk alerted authorities after discovering a video file of the group firing weapons and calling for jihad. The group has no known direct connections to any international terrorist organization.⁸¹

In December 2008, five of the men were found guilty on conspiracy charges but were acquitted of charges of attempted murder.⁸² Four were also convicted on weapons charges. The five men received sentences ranging from 33 years to life plus 30 years. The sixth co-defendant pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting the others in illegal possession of weapons and was sentenced to 20 months in jail.⁸³

24. JFK Airport Plot—June 2007. Four men plotted to blow up “aviation fuel tanks and pipelines at the John F. Kennedy International Airport” in New York City. They believed that such an attack would cause “greater destruction than in the Sept. 11 attacks.” Authorities stated that the attack “could have caused significant financial and psychological damage, but not major loss of life.”⁸⁴

Russell Defreitas, the leader of the group, was arrested in Brooklyn. The other three members of the group—Abdul Kadir, Kareem Ibrahim, and Abdel Nur—were detained in Trinidad and extradited in June 2008. Kadir and Nur have links to Islamic extremists in South America and the Caribbean. Kadir was an imam in Guyana, a former member of the Guyanese Parliament, and mayor of Linden, Guyana. Ibrahim is a Trinidadian citizen and Nur is a Guyanese citizen.⁸⁵

In 2010, Kadir was found guilty on five counts and sentenced to life in prison. In February, both Defreitas and Nur were also found guilty. Defreitas was sentenced to life in prison, while Nur was sentenced to 15 years.⁸⁶ The final conspirator, Kareem Ibrahim, was convicted in May 2011 and has been sentenced to life in prison.⁸⁷ In June of 2013 a U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the convictions for both Defreitas and Kadir and stated that due to the “gravity of the crimes for which they were convicted” the life sentences were also justified.⁸⁸

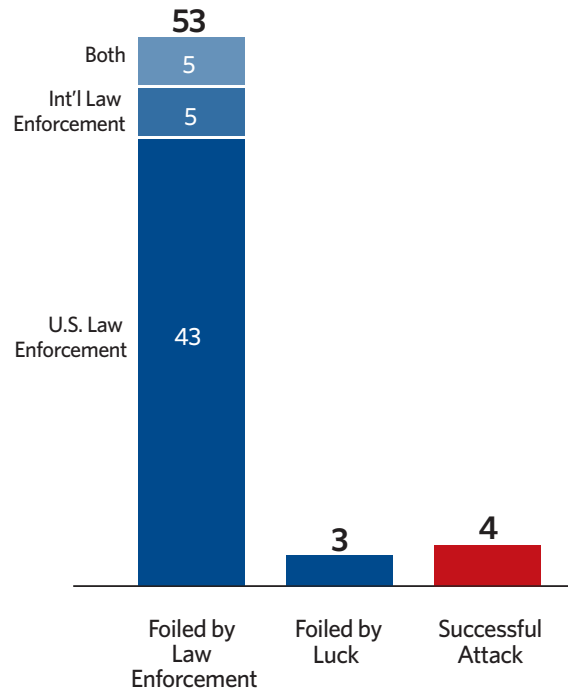
25. Hassan Abujihad—March 2008. Hassan Abujihad, a former U.S. Navy sailor from Phoenix, Arizona, was convicted of supporting terrorism and disclosing classified information, including the location of Navy ships and their vulnerabilities, to Babar Ahmad and Syed Talha Ahsan, the alleged administrators of Azzam Publication websites (the London organization that provided material support and resources to terrorists). Abujihad was arrested in March 2007 and pleaded not guilty to charges of supporting terrorism in April 2007. In May 2008, he was convicted by a jury and sentenced to 10 years in prison.⁸⁹ In 2010, his conviction was upheld in a federal court of appeals.⁹⁰ Both Babar Ahmad and Syed Talha Ahsan are being held in Britain on anti-terrorism charges and are fighting extradition to the U.S.⁹¹

26. Christopher Paul—June 2008. Christopher Paul is a U.S. citizen from Columbus, Ohio. He joined al-Qaeda in the 1990s and was involved in conspiracies to target Americans in the United States and overseas. In 1999, he became connected

CHART 2

How Terror Plots Ended

Of the dozens of terror plots against the United States since September 11, 2001, 56 were foiled and four were successful.



Source: Heritage Foundation research based on media reports and court documents.

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to an Islamic terrorist cell in Germany, where he was involved in a plot to target Americans at foreign vacation resorts. He later returned to Ohio and was subsequently arrested for conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction—specifically, explosive devices—“against targets in Europe and the United States.” Paul pleaded guilty to the charges and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.⁹²

27. Bryant Neal Vinas—November 2008.

Bryant Neal Vinas is an American citizen of Hispanic descent who converted to Islam in 2004.⁹³ In 2007, Vinas left home telling his parents he wanted to study Islam and Arabic. He then traveled to Pakistan where he was trained by and joined the Taliban. During his time in Pakistan, Vinas assisted with unsuccessful attacks on American forces

and provided al-Qaeda with extensive information regarding the Long Island Rail Road for a potential attack.⁹⁴ He was arrested by Pakistani forces and sent back to the United States, where he pleaded guilty and began cooperating with authorities. He is currently in the custody of the U.S. Marshals and is awaiting sentencing.⁹⁵

28. Synagogue Terror Plot—May 2009. On May 20, 2009, the New York Police Department announced the arrest of James Cromitie, David Williams, Onta Williams, and Laguerre Payen for plotting to blow up New York-area Jewish centers and shoot down planes at a nearby Air National Guard Base.⁹⁶ The four had attempted to gain access to Stinger missiles and were caught in the act of placing bombs in the buildings and in a car. (The bombs were duds, because undercover agents sold the four defendants fake explosives as part of an ongoing sting operation). All four men were found guilty. In June 2011, James Cromitie, David Williams, and Onta Williams were sentenced to 25 years in prison.⁹⁷ In September 2011, Laguerre Payen received the same sentence.⁹⁸

29. Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad—June 2009. On June 1, 2009, Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, formerly known as Carlos Bledsoe, walked up to an army recruitment office in Little Rock, Arkansas, and opened fire, killing one soldier and wounding another. Born in Tennessee, the 23-year-old Muslim convert is among a growing group of self-radicalized homegrown terrorists that have emerged in the U.S. in recent years. Muhammad’s reported motivation for the attack was his anger about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and what he viewed as U.S. military abuse towards Muslims worldwide.⁹⁹ Muhammad had been under preliminary investigation by the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force for a trip he made to Yemen prior to the attack.¹⁰⁰

In July 2011, Muhammad pleaded guilty under a plea deal to avoid the death penalty, and was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.¹⁰¹

30. Raleigh Jihad Group—July 2009. A group of seven men in North Carolina were arrested on charges of conspiring to support terrorist groups abroad, engage in terror attacks abroad and plotting an attack on the U.S. Marine base at Quantico, Virginia.¹⁰² Their ringleader, Daniel Patrick Boyd, is believed to have a long association with radical

groups, dating from his time living in Pakistan. In Pakistan, he is believed to have been an active member of Hezb-e-Islami (Party of Islam). The Raleigh group also raised funds and trained extensively in preparation to wage attacks both at home and abroad.¹⁰³ Boyd pleaded guilty on February 9, 2011, to conspiring to provide material support to terrorists and conspiring to murder, kidnap, maim, and injure persons abroad. He was sentenced to 216 months in prison, followed by five years supervised release, and a \$3,000 fine.¹⁰⁴ Prosecutors noted that Boyd cooperated with the government and testified against several of his co-conspirators who were convicted in October 2011.¹⁰⁵

31. Najibullah Zazi—September 2009.

Najibullah Zazi, a 24-year-old Afghan, was arrested after purchasing large quantities of chemicals used to make a TATP bomb, the same type of weapon used in the 2005 bombing of the London Underground and the 2001 shoe-bomb plot. Zazi had traveled to Pakistan, where he received instruction in bomb making and attended an al-Qaeda training camp. Zazi allegedly planned to detonate TATP bombs on the New York City subway.¹⁰⁶ It has since been found that the plot was directed by senior al-Qaeda leadership in Pakistan.¹⁰⁷

Najibullah Zazi's father, Mohammed Wali Zazi, was also indicted for obstructing justice, witness tampering, and lying to the FBI in attempts to help his son cover up plans for his attack.¹⁰⁸ A cousin of Zazi, Amanullah Zazi, also publicly admitted that he played a role in Zazi's 2009 plot. Amanullah pleaded guilty in secret and agreed to become a government witness in federal court in Brooklyn against Najibullah's father.¹⁰⁹ The father has since been found guilty and sentenced to four and a half years in prison.¹¹⁰ Najibullah Zazi pleaded guilty, as the result of a plea bargain, and remains in jail. He is currently awaiting sentencing.¹¹¹

At least three other individuals have since been arrested on allegations of conspiring to carry out the attack with Zazi. One of them, New York religious leader Ahmad Afzali, has pleaded guilty to charges of lying to federal agents about informing Zazi that he was being investigated by authorities.¹¹² As part of a plea deal, Afzali was sentenced to time served and ordered to leave the country within 90 days.¹¹³ A second man, Zarein Ahmedzay has also pleaded guilty to conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction in the foiled plot and lying to investigators.

Adis Medunjanin, a former Queens, New York, resident, has recently been sentenced to serve life in the Florence, Colorado, maximum security prison. The notorious jail is reserved for the worst of the worst, and houses terrorists such as Zacarias Moussaoui and Ted Kaczynski.¹¹⁴ Ahmedzay and Medunjanin are thought to have traveled to Pakistan with Zazi, and to have met with wanted al-Qaeda operative Adnan Gulshair el Shukrijumah, who has also been charged in the plot.¹¹⁵ A fourth individual, Abid Nasser, has also been implicated in the plot led by Zazi, as well as other plots in England and Norway. He is currently in the United Kingdom facing extradition to the United States.¹¹⁶ Also charged in the plot are Tariq Ur Rehman and a fifth defendant known as "Ahmad," "Sohaib," or "Zahid." Both el Shukrijumah and Rehman are not in custody.¹¹⁷

32. Maher Husein Smadi—September 2009.

Smadi, a 19-year-old Jordanian, was apprehended in an attempt to plant a bomb in a Dallas skyscraper. Originally identified through FBI monitoring of extremist chat rooms, Smadi was arrested and charged after agents posing as terrorist cell members gave Smadi a fake bomb, which he later attempted to detonate.¹¹⁸ Smadi was found guilty and sentenced to 24 years in prison.¹¹⁹

33. Michael Finton—September 2009.

Michael Finton, an American citizen, was arrested on September 23, 2009, by undercover FBI agents after attempting to detonate a car bomb filled with what he believed to be close to one ton of explosives outside the Paul Findley Federal Building and Courthouse in downtown Springfield, Illinois. The blast was also intended to destroy the nearby office of Representative Aaron Schock (R-IL).¹²⁰ Evidence presented against Finton has shown that he expressed a desire to become a jihadist fighter and was aware that his planned attack would cause civilian injuries. He has been arrested on charges of attempted murder of federal employees and attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction. Finton pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 28 years in prison.¹²¹

34. Tarek Mehanna and Ahmad Abousamra—October 2009.

Tarek Mehanna, previously indicted for lying to the FBI about the location of terrorist suspect Daniel Maldonado, was arrested on October 21, 2009, on allegations of conspiracy to kill two U.S. politicians, American troops in Iraq, and civilians in local shopping malls, as well as conspiracy to provide material support to a terrorist organization.¹²²

Mehanna and Ahmad Abousamra, his co-conspirator, were indicted on charges of providing and conspiring to provide material support to terrorists, conspiracy to kill Americans in a foreign country, and conspiracy to provide false information to law enforcement.¹²³

The two men are not believed to be associated with any known terrorist organization.¹²⁴ Mehanna pleaded not guilty to charges against him and has since been convicted. He is serving 17 and a half years in federal prison.¹²⁵ Abousamra remains at large in Syria.¹²⁶ The FBI is currently offering a \$50,000 reward for information leading to his capture.¹²⁷

35. Major Nidal Malik Hasan—November 2009. On November 5, 2009, a U.S. Army psychiatrist opened fire at a military processing center at Fort Hood, Texas, killing 13 people and wounding 32 others. During the attack, Major Hasan was reported to have shouted, “Allahu Akbar!” Moreover, his actions were apparently motivated by Yemeni al-Qaeda leader Anwar al-Awlaki, who was killed in a CIA drone strike in September of 2011. Despite the evidence that the Fort Hood massacre was a terrorist attack, the U.S. government has labeled the incident “workplace violence.”¹²⁸

Major Hasan was severely wounded in the attack, but survived, and is now facing pre-meditated murder and attempted murder charges, which makes him eligible for the death penalty.¹²⁹ The formal trial has been delayed because Major Hasan was granted a request to represent himself at trial. A judge recently rejected Major Hasan’s “defense of others” strategy, which would have required him to prove that he acted to prevent immediate harm to others, in this case, to Taliban fighters.¹³⁰

36. The Christmas Day Bomber—December 2009. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a 23-year-old Nigerian engineering student living in London, boarded a plane from Nigeria to Amsterdam and then flew from Amsterdam to the U.S. It was on this second flight when he attempted to detonate a bomb hidden in his underwear as the plane began to land. The device ignited but did not detonate, and passengers quickly stopped Abdulmutallab from trying again, leading to his arrest by U.S. authorities upon landing in Detroit. The bomb, containing the explosives PETN and TATP, was similar to the failed device used by Richard Reid in his shoe in 2001.

Media accounts following the plot indicate that Abdulmutallab admits involvement with al-Qaeda

in Yemen and pleaded not guilty to charges including conspiracy to commit an act of terrorism and attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction.¹³¹ In February 2012, Abdulmutallab was sentenced to life in prison following his conviction.¹³²

37. Raja Lahrasib Khan—March 2010. Chicago taxi driver Raja Lahrasib Khan, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Pakistan, was arrested by the Chicago FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force on two counts of providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization. According to the charges, Khan was affiliated with Ilyas Kashmiri, leader of the al-Qaeda-linked extremist group Harakat ul-Jihad-I-Islami in Kashmir, and has previously been indicted in the U.S. on terrorism charges.¹³³

Khan originally transferred \$950 to Pakistan, to be delivered to Kashmiri, and later attempted to send around \$1,000 provided to him by an undercover agent. Khan attempted to use his son to carry the second pot of money to England, where he planned to rendezvous with his son and carry the money the rest of the way to Pakistan. Khan’s son was stopped by government agents at Chicago’s O’Hare airport before leaving the country. The criminal complaint filed against Khan also alleges that he had discussed plans to bomb an unnamed sports stadium in the United States.

Khan has since pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization as part of a plea deal. He was sentenced in 2012 to seven and a half years in prison.¹³⁴

38. Faisal Shahzad—May 2010. Faisal Shahzad, a naturalized citizen from Pakistan, attempted to detonate explosives in an SUV parked in Times Square. After explosives training in Pakistan, he is said to have received \$12,000 from entities affiliated with the terrorist organization Tehrik-e-Taliban to fund the attack. Following the failed bombing attempt, Shahzad attempted to flee the country to Dubai, but was arrested before the flight was able to leave New York’s JFK airport.¹³⁵

Shahzad pleaded guilty to 10 counts, including conspiracy to commit an act of terrorism and to use a weapon of mass destruction.¹³⁶ He was sentenced to life in prison and is being held at the same Colorado maximum-security prison as Richard Reid and Jose Padilla.¹³⁷

39. Paul G. Rockwood Jr. and Nadia Pirooska Maria Rockwood—July 2010. Paul G. Rockwood Jr., an American citizen, became an adherent of

Anwar al-Awlaki's ideology of violent jihad after converting to Islam. In studying al-Awlaki's teachings, Rockwood came to believe it was his religious responsibility to seek revenge against anyone who defiled Islam. He created a list of 15 individuals to be targeted for assassination, including several members of the U.S. military. Rockwood is said to have researched explosive techniques and discussed the possibility of killing his targets with a gunshot to the head or through mail bombs. Nadia Piroaska Maria Rockwood, Paul's wife, knowingly transported the list to Anchorage, Alaska, to share with an unnamed individual who apparently shared Rockwood's ideology. The list then made it into the hands of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force in Anchorage.

Paul was charged with making false statements to the FBI in a domestic terrorism charge, while Nadia was charged with making false statements to the FBI in connection to the case against her husband. Paul was sentenced to eight years in prison, while his wife was sentenced to five years probation.¹³⁸

40. Farooque Ahmed—October 2010. Pakistani-American Farooque Ahmed was arrested following an FBI investigation into plots to attack the Washington, D.C., subway. Ahmed is said to have conducted surveillance on the D.C. Metrorail system on multiple occasions, and was in contact with undercover FBI agents whom he believed to be individuals affiliated with al-Qaeda.¹³⁹ According to an unsealed affidavit, Ahmed wanted to receive terrorist training overseas and become a martyr. The affidavit also indicates that he sought to specifically target military personnel in his bombing attempt.¹⁴⁰

Ahmed pleaded guilty to charges of material support and collecting information for a terrorist attack on a transit facility. He was then immediately sentenced to 23 years in prison and 50 years of probation.¹⁴¹

41. Air Cargo Bomb Plot—October 2010. Two packages shipped from Yemen to Chicago-area synagogues were discovered to contain explosive materials of the same type used by Richard Reid and Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab in previously thwarted bombing attempts.¹⁴² The packages contained printer cartridges filled with the explosive material and were identified with the help of intelligence tips from Saudi Arabian authorities while in transit on cargo planes in the United Kingdom and Dubai.¹⁴³ While no arrests have been made, the Yemen-based Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

(AQAP) has claimed responsibility for the failed attack.

42. Mohamed Osman Mohamud—November 2010. Mohamed Osman Mohamud, a 19-year-old Somali-American, was arrested after attempting to detonate a car bomb at a Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Portland, Oregon. The bomb was composed of inert explosives given to him by undercover FBI agents. Mohamud had previously sought to travel overseas to obtain training in violent jihad. Having failed in that attempt, he wanted to commit an attack that would cause mass casualties to individuals and their families.¹⁴⁴ Mohamud pleaded not guilty to the charges and was found guilty on January 31, 2013, of attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction.¹⁴⁵ Mohamud is scheduled to be sentenced on September 6, 2013. His lawyers have already promised to appeal the verdict.¹⁴⁶

43. Antonio Martinez—December 2010. Antonio Martinez, a 21-year-old American citizen also known as Muhammad Hussain, planned to bomb a military recruiting center in Maryland. The FBI learned of the plot from an unnamed informant. Martinez was arrested after attempting to detonate a fake explosive device supplied by FBI agents. He was charged with attempted murder of federal officers and employees, as well as attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction.¹⁴⁷ In April 2012, a U.S. District Judge sentenced Martinez to 25 years in prison followed by five years of supervised release.¹⁴⁸

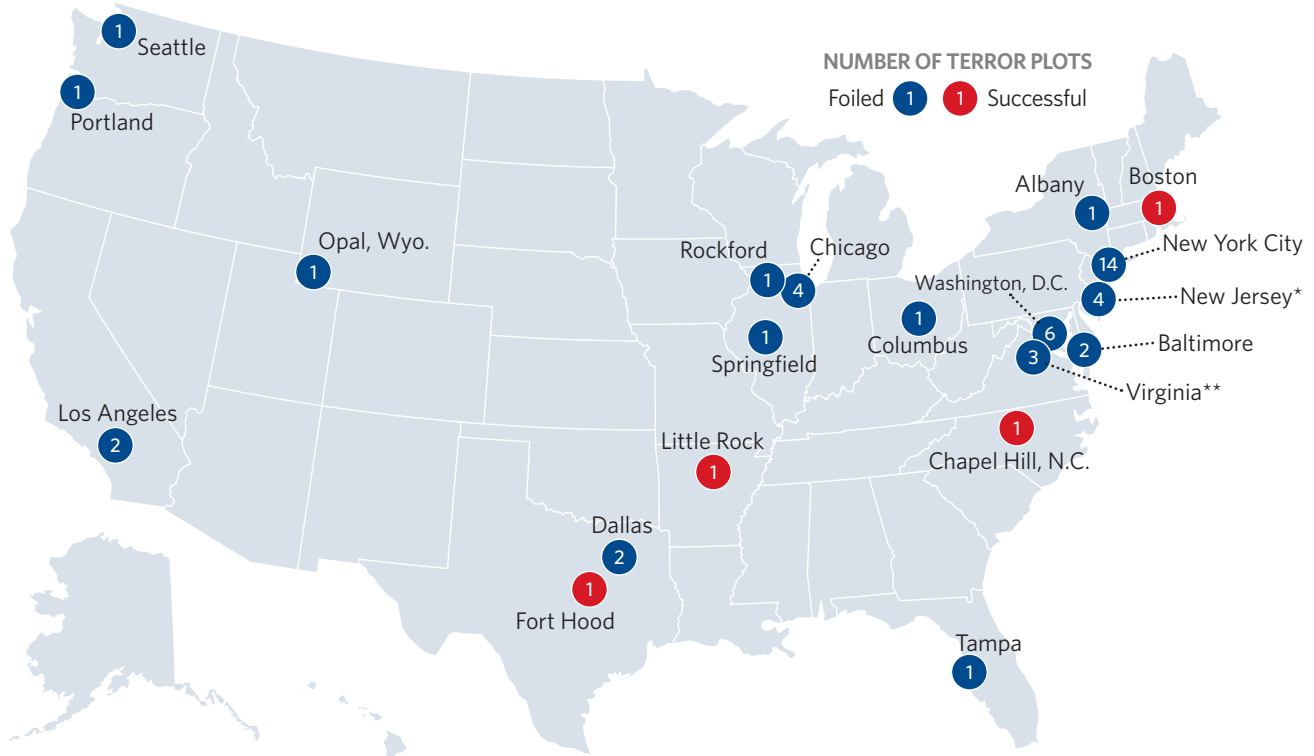
44. Khalid Ali-M Aldawsari—February 2011. Khalid Ali-M Aldawsari, a Saudi citizen studying in Lubbock, Texas, was arrested by the FBI after placing an order for the toxic chemical phenol. Both the chemical supplier and the freight shipping company became suspicious of the order, which could be used to make an improvised explosive device (IED), and alerted the FBI and local police. Surveillance of Aldawsari's e-mail turned up a list of potential "nice targets" including dams, nuclear power plants, military targets, a nightclub, and the Dallas residence of former President George W. Bush. The search also recovered plans to acquire a forged U.S. birth certificate and multiple driver's licenses. Aldawsari seems to have considered using these documents to obtain rental cars for use in vehicle bombings.

After pleading not guilty, Aldawsari was convicted of attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction and sentenced to life in prison on November 13, 2012, by a U.S. District Judge.¹⁴⁹ Attorneys for Aldawsari

MAP 1

Terrorists Have Targeted Locations Across the U.S.

This map locates 49 specific sites targeted for terror attacks since September 11, 2001. More than 10 additional plots with no clear target were also foiled.



* Newark, Perth Amboy, and Trenton ** The Pentagon (2) and Quantico Marine Corps Base

Source: Heritage Foundation research based on media reports and court documents.

SR 137 heritage.org

are currently appealing the case on grounds that evidence discovered in his apartment was obtained improperly.¹⁵⁰

45. Ahmed Ferhani and Mohamed Mamdouh—May 2011. Ahmed Ferhani of Algeria, and Moroccan-born Mohamed Mamdouh, a U.S. citizen, were arrested by the New York Police Department after attempting to purchase a hand grenade, guns, and ammunition to attack an undetermined Manhattan synagogue. The men planned on disguising themselves as Orthodox Jews in order to sneak into the synagogue.¹⁵¹ Reports have also cited the Empire State Building as a possible second target.¹⁵² Both men pleaded guilty to a variety of charges under New York state terror laws, and were sentenced to 10 years and five years, respectively, in prison.¹⁵³ Ferhani, the alleged mastermind, admitted to conspiring with

Mamdouh to bomb synagogues in retaliation for what he viewed as Jewish mistreatment of Muslims throughout the world.¹⁵⁴

46. Yonathan Melaku—June 2011. On June 17, 2011, Yonathan Melaku, an Ethiopian and a naturalized U.S. citizen and former Marine Corps reservist, was arrested at Fort Myer near Arlington National Cemetery, where he was found with a backpack filled with ammonium nitrate, spray paint, and spent ammunition rounds. The discovery led authorities to unravel a series of mysterious events from the fall of 2010, when shots had been fired at night from the street at various military buildings, including the Pentagon, causing over \$100,000 in damages. After searching his bag and house, authorities found video of Melaku shooting at the buildings and providing commentary, a series of notebooks written

in Arabic with references to terrorism, and a list of equipment needed to make a timed explosive device. He has since pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 25 years in prison.¹⁵⁵ Melaku has since been diagnosed with schizophrenia, and attorneys have requested that a judge re-examine the validity of his plea agreement.¹⁵⁶

47. Abu Khalid Abdul-Latif and Walli Mujahidh—June 2011. In a raid on a warehouse in Seattle, the FBI arrested Abu Khalid Abdul-Latif and Walli Mujahidh. The two suspects had arranged to purchase weapons from an anonymous informant in contact with the Seattle Police Department. They were seeking to purchase automatic machine guns and grenades in preparation for an attack on a military recruiting station in Seattle. Since the arrests, authorities have learned that Abdul-Latif, a felon and Muslim convert, had initially planned to attack the Joint Base Lewis–McCord with his friend, Los Angeles resident Mujahidh. The target was later changed to the Seattle Military Entrance Processing Station for undisclosed reasons.¹⁵⁷

The men have been charged with conspiracy to murder officers and employees of the United States government, conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction, and possession of firearms in furtherance of crimes of violence. Abdul-Latif has also been charged with two counts of illegal possession of firearms and is awaiting further trial.¹⁵⁸ Mujahidh pleaded guilty in December 2011 to a conspiracy to murder officers and agents of the United States, to a conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction, as well as to being a felon in possession of a firearm. He was sentenced in April 2013 to 17 years in prison and 10 years of supervised release.¹⁵⁹ Abu Khalid Abdul-Latif was sentenced to 18 years in prison and 10 years of supervised release.¹⁶⁰

48. Ulugbek Kodirov—July 2011. Ulugbek Kodirov, a 22-year-old Uzbekistan national, was living in Alabama on an expired student visa when he was arrested for plotting to assassinate President Obama in 2011.¹⁶¹ Kodirov originally moved to the United States after he was accepted to attend Columbia University's medical school, but never enrolled in classes because his English skills were too poor. Prosecutors argue that Kodirov became radicalized online when he began communicating with an individual whom he believed was a member of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, an organization recognized by the State Department as a

foreign terrorist organization (FTO).¹⁶² In February, Kodirov pleaded guilty to threatening to kill the President, providing material support to terrorism, and unlawfully possessing a firearm. He was sentenced in July 2012 by a U.S. District Judge to 15 years in prison.¹⁶³ An attorney for Kodirov has called him “a victim to a degree of social media,” and stated that Kodirov deeply regrets his actions.¹⁶⁴

49. Emerson Winfield Begolly—August 2011. Begolly, a moderator and supporter for the internationally known Islamic extremist Web forum Ansar al-Mujahideen English Forum (AMEF), was arrested on charges of terrorist actions involving solicitation to commit a crime of violence and distribution of information in relation to explosives, destructive devices, and weapons of mass destruction. Through his profile on AMEF, the Pennsylvania-born man solicited others to engage in violent acts of terrorism against post offices, water plants, military facilities, bridges, train lines, and Jewish schools. Begolly also used the website to post a downloadable 101-page document that contains information on how to create, conduct, and manufacture chemical explosives. The instructional document is loosely linked to al-Qaeda's former top chemical and biological weapons expert Abu Khabbab al-Misri. Begolly pleaded guilty to counts of soliciting others to engage in acts of terrorism within the U.S., and attempting to use a 9-mm semi-automatic handgun during an assault upon inquiring FBI agents. He is currently awaiting further trial.¹⁶⁵

50. Rezwan Ferdaus—September 2011. Ferdaus, a self-radicalized 26-year-old U.S. citizen, was arrested for trying to provide material support to terrorist organizations when he gave a modified cell phone to someone he believed to be an al-Qaeda operative.¹⁶⁶ He did so believing the man would use the cell phone to detonate improvised explosive devices against American soldiers. The alleged al-Qaeda operative was an undercover FBI agent. Ferdaus also sought to use small drone aircraft laden with explosives to attack the Pentagon and U.S. Capitol, followed by a ground attack carried out by armed men with automatic rifles. He had already purchased some items, including C4 and AK-47s, toward this goal from an undercover agent.¹⁶⁷ Ferdaus pleaded guilty on two charges and was convicted in a Federal Court in Boston. He was later sentenced to 17 years in prison after agreeing to a plea deal with federal prosecutors.¹⁶⁸

51. Iranian Terror Plot—October 2011. On October 11, 2011, Manssor Arbabsiar, an Iranian-born U.S. citizen, was arrested for plotting to assassinate the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the U.S., as well as bomb the Saudi and Israeli embassies in Washington, D.C. He claims he was working for the Iranian Quds Forces, a special unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. On behalf of the Quds Forces, Arbabsiar is said to have contacted members of a Mexican drug cartel with the goal of hiring them to assassinate the Saudi ambassador. The two parties allegedly agreed on a payment of \$1.5 million, with a down payment of \$100,000 that Arbabsiar wired to members of the cartel, supposedly from the Iranian government. The plot was uncovered because the supposed members of the cartel he approached were informants for the Drug Enforcement Agency.¹⁶⁹ He was arrested at JFK airport in New York, has pleaded not guilty, and is currently awaiting trial.¹⁷⁰ Another man, Gholam Shakuri, is an Iranian citizen who is wanted in connection with the plot; he is believed to be in Iran.¹⁷¹ This is the first publicly known post-9/11 Islamist-inspired terror plot aimed at the United States specifically linked to state-sponsored terrorism.

In October 2012, Arbabsiar pleaded guilty to one count of murder-for-hire, one count of conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire, and one count of conspiracy to commit an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries.¹⁷² He was sentenced on May 30, 2013, in a New York Federal Court to 25 years in prison for his involvement in the plot, and ordered to pay \$125,000.¹⁷³

52. Jose Pimentel—November 2011. On November 20, 2011, Jose Pimentel, a naturalized U.S. citizen from the Dominican Republic, was arrested on charges of planning to use pipe bombs to attack targets throughout New York City. His proposed targets included police stations, post offices, and U.S. soldiers. He was a homegrown radical inspired by Anwar al-Awlaki. Pimentel also managed his own radical website espousing his beliefs in violent jihad.¹⁷⁴ The plot was uncovered by an informant and Pimentel was arrested by the NYPD. He has pleaded not guilty and awaits trial.¹⁷⁵

53. Sami Osmakac—January 2012. On January 7, 2012, Sami Osmakac, a naturalized U.S. citizen from the Kosovo region of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, was arrested on charges of planning attacks against night clubs, businesses, and a sheriff's

office.¹⁷⁶ He came to the attention of the authorities when a source alerted them that Osmakac had asked how to locate an al-Qaeda flag. He planned to conduct a multi-pronged attack against his proposed targets with vehicle-borne explosives. He also wished to take hostages. He was introduced to an undercover FBI agent whom he believed was an arms dealer and procured disabled AK-47s and explosives from him.¹⁷⁷ He was arrested by the FBI's Tampa office and has since pleaded not guilty.¹⁷⁸ Osmakac is still awaiting trial due to a series of delays over whether the subject was competent enough to stand trial, and a request by his lawyer to withdraw from the case.¹⁷⁹

54. Amine El Khalifi—February 2012. Amine El Khalifi, a Moroccan citizen illegally in the United States, was arrested on charges of plotting to attack the U.S. Capitol. He was arrested as he left his parked car with guns and a bomb. He did not know that the weapons had already been rendered inoperable, as they had been provided to him by FBI agents he believed to be al-Qaeda operatives. Before choosing the Capitol building as a target, El Khalifi had proposed targets including D.C. office buildings, restaurants, and synagogues.¹⁸⁰ Khalifi, after a deal with prosecutors, pleaded guilty in an Alexandria courtroom and was sentenced in September 2012 to 30 years in prison, the maximum sentence.¹⁸¹

55. AQAP Plane Bomb Plot—May 2012. In May 2012, the U.S. government announced that it had successfully thwarted an attack launched by the Yemen-based AQAP. The group was planning to blow up a U.S.-bound airliner around the first anniversary of Osama bin Laden's death.¹⁸² The confiscated device that AQAP had developed was an upgraded version of the explosive used in the thwarted Christmas Day underwear bomb attempt in 2009.¹⁸³ The improvements made to the bomb included use of high-grade military explosives, potential inability to be detected by full-body scanners at airports, and, according to officials, would have been capable of destroying the aircraft.¹⁸⁴ The CIA used a double agent with direct access to AQAP leadership, who then volunteered for the upcoming suicide attack. The infiltration of the network allowed the U.S. to launch a successful drone strike, which killed Fahd al-Quso, who was wanted for the bombing of the USS *Cole* in Yemen in 2000.¹⁸⁵

56. Adel Daoud—September 2012. The FBI arrested 18-year-old Adel Daoud in September 2012 outside a Chicago bar as he attempted to detonate a

car bomb. The FBI and other government agencies had been monitoring Daoud for several months and stated that the public had not been in any immediate danger.¹⁸⁶ Undercover agents were able to complete a sting operation that involved providing fake explosives to Daoud for his attack. Prosecutors claim his ultimate goal was to wage “violent Jihad” against the U.S and that he believed the U.S. was at war with Muslims.¹⁸⁷ Daoud has pleaded “not guilty” in his October 11 hearing and is disputing the charges.¹⁸⁸ He faces the possibility of life in prison if found guilty of conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction. Daoud is currently awaiting trial.

57. Quazi Mohammad Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis—October 2012. According to reports by the FBI, 21-year-old Bangladeshi citizen Quazi Mohammad Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis came to the U.S. in January 2012 on a student visa with the explicit goal of carrying out a terrorist attack on U.S. soil.¹⁸⁹ Upon arriving, Nafis actively sought out al-Qaeda contacts within the U.S. to assist him in carrying out an attack. One of the individuals Nafis sought to recruit for his terrorist cell turned out to be an FBI informant. Federal authorities arrested Nafis outside the Federal Reserve Bank in Lower Manhattan as he attempted to detonate a van he believed to be carrying a 1,000-pound bomb. The explosives had been rendered inoperable by the FBI and the public was not in any immediate danger.¹⁹⁰

In a plea deal reached with federal prosecutors, the car bomber pleaded guilty on February 7, 2013, to attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction.¹⁹¹ Nafis faces at least 30 years in prison, with a sentencing hearing set for August 9, 2013.¹⁹²

58. Qazi Brothers’ Plot—November 2012. On November 29, 2012, brothers Raees Alam Qazi and Sheheryar Alam Qazi were arrested and charged with conspiring to detonate a weapon of mass destruction and providing material support to terrorists. Both brothers are naturalized U.S. citizens who were born in Pakistan and are residents of Oakland Park, Florida.¹⁹³ In November 2012, Raees Qazi travelled to New York to consider potential terror targets including Times Square, Wall Street, and Broadway theaters. His plan was to carry out either a suicide attack or a bombing by a remote control device.¹⁹⁴ While Raees Qazi intended to carry out the attack himself, his brother was aware of his plans and provided funding and support for the operation.¹⁹⁵ In a detention hearing on December 18, 2012,

it was revealed that the men sought to avenge the deaths of those killed in U.S. military drone strikes in Afghanistan.

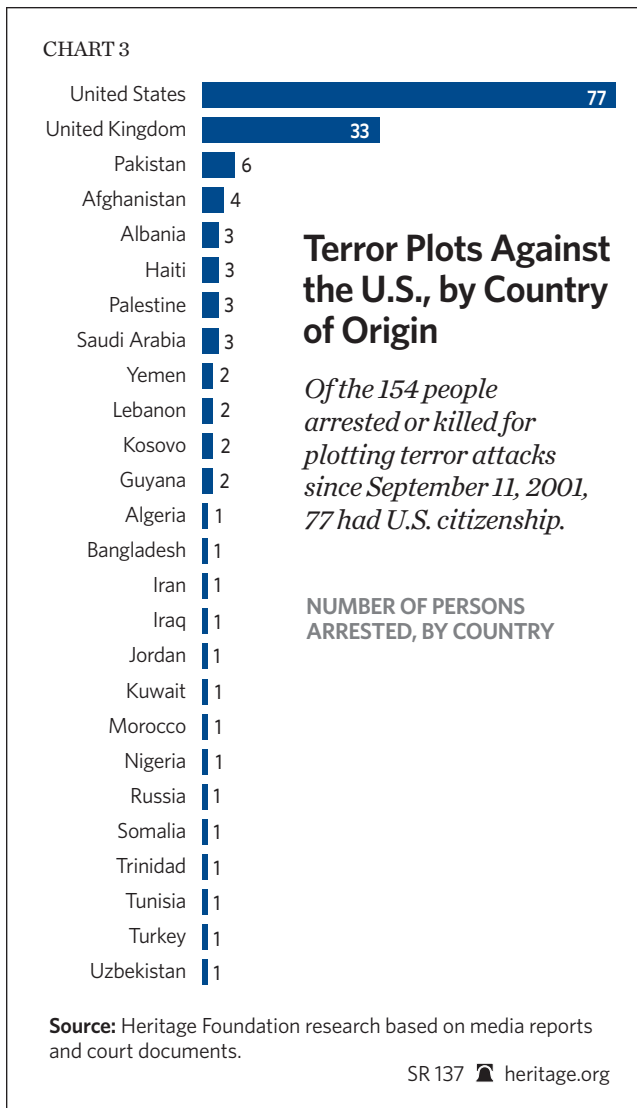
Both brothers have pleaded not guilty and have been denied bail.¹⁹⁶ Sheheryar may be sentenced to up to 15 years in prison, while Raees faces up to life in prison for conspiracy to detonate a weapon of mass destruction.¹⁹⁷ A trial date is still pending.¹⁹⁸

59. Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev—April 2013. Tamerlan Tsarnaev, 26, and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, 19, calmly walked through the crowd of spectators at the annual Boston Marathon on the afternoon of April 15, 2013. The brothers placed two backpacks near the finish line of the race on Boylston Street, each containing homemade pressure-cooker bombs. The bombs detonated approximately 10 seconds apart, killing three people and wounding and maiming 245 bystanders.¹⁹⁹ In the investigation that followed, police linked the Tsarnaev brothers to the murder of an MIT police officer, Sean Collier, who was shot and killed on the school’s campus in Cambridge several days after the bombing.²⁰⁰

After the murder of the MIT officer, the brothers exchanged gunfire with law enforcement officials and threw explosives at police vehicles. Tamerlan was killed by authorities during the confrontation, and purportedly run over by Dzhokhar, who managed to escape.²⁰¹ After another confrontation with police, Dzhokhar, although severely wounded, was captured alive by authorities and transferred to a nearby hospital.

Dzhokhar, who is a naturalized American citizen, was charged with use of a weapon of mass destruction and malicious destruction of property resulting in death. He could face the death penalty.²⁰² The motivation for the attack, according to Dzhokhar, was retaliation for U.S. wars in Muslim lands.²⁰³ In June, Dzhokhar was indicted by a federal grand jury on 30 charges, including his alleged use of weapons of mass destruction and for his involvement in the murder of Sean Collier.²⁰⁴ In July, Dzhokhar pleaded not guilty to terrorism charges.

60. Chiheb Esseghaier and Raed Jaser—April 2013. Chiheb Esseghaier and Raed Jaser were arrested in April 2013 for attempting to carry out an attack on a Via Railway train travelling from Canada to the U.S. The attack, authorities claimed, was supported by an al-Qaeda element in Iran, although there is currently no evidence that it was



Strengthening the Domestic Counterterrorism Enterprise

Three months after the attack at the Boston Marathon, the pendulum of awareness of the terrorist threat has already begun to swing back, just as it did after 9/11. Due to the resilience of the nation and its people, for most, life has returned to business as usual. The threat of terrorism against the United States, however, remains.

Expecting to stop each and every threat that reaches a country's borders is unreasonable, particularly in a free society committed to individual liberty. Nevertheless, there are important steps that America's leaders can take to strengthen the U.S. domestic counterterrorism enterprise and continue to make the U.S. a harder target. Congress and the Administration should:

- **Ensure a proactive approach to preventing terrorist attacks.** Despite the persistent threat of terrorism, the Obama Administration continues to focus on reactive policies and prosecuting terrorists rather than on proactive efforts to enhance intelligence tools and thwart terrorist attempts. This strategy fails to recognize the pervasive nature of the threat posed by terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and homegrown extremism. The Administration, and the nation as a whole, should continue to keep in place a robust, enduring, and proactive counterterrorism framework in order to identify and thwart terrorist threats long before the public is in danger.
- **Maintain essential counterterrorism tools.** Support for important investigative tools such as the PATRIOT Act is essential to maintaining the security of the U.S. and combating terrorist threats. Key provisions within the act, such as the roving surveillance authority and business records provision, have proved essential for thwarting terror plots, yet they require frequent reauthorization. In order to ensure that law enforcement and intelligence authorities have the essential counterterrorism tools they need, Congress should seek permanent authorization of the three sunset provisions within the PATRIOT Act.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, legitimate government surveillance programs are also a vital component of U.S. national security, and should be allowed to continue. Indeed, in testimony

state-sponsored.²⁰⁵ The exact route of the targeted train has not been identified, and Iranian authorities vehemently deny that al-Qaeda is operating within Iranian borders.

Esseghaier and Jaser have been charged in Canada with conspiracy to commit murder for the benefit of a terrorist group, participating in a terrorist group, and conspiring to interfere with transportation facilities for the benefit of a terrorist group. Esseghaier has also been charged with participating in a terrorist group, and both men face up to life in prison.²⁰⁶ The two men are awaiting trial. Chiheb Esseghaier wants to represent himself, basing his defense on the Quran instead of on the Canadian criminal code, which has caused delays in the proceedings.²⁰⁷

before the house, General Keith Alexander, the director of the National Security Agency (NSA), revealed that more than 50 incidents of potential terrorism at home and abroad were stopped by the set of NSA surveillance programs that have recently come under scrutiny. That said, the need for effective counterterrorism operations does not relieve the government of its obligation to follow the law and respect individual privacy and liberty. In the American system, the government must do both equally well.

- **Break down the silos of information.** Washington should emphasize continued cooperation and information sharing among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to prevent terrorists from slipping through the cracks between the various jurisdictions. In particular, the FBI should make a more concerted effort to share information more broadly with state and local law enforcement. State and local law enforcement agencies are the front lines of the U.S. national security strategy. As a result, local authorities are able to recognize potential danger and identify patterns that the federal authorities may miss. They also take the lead in community outreach, which is crucial to identifying and stopping “lone wolf” actors and other homegrown extremists. Federal law enforcement, on the other hand, is not designed to fight against this kind of threat; it is built to battle cells, groups, and organizations, not individuals.
- **Streamline the domestic counterterrorism system.** The domestic counterterrorism enterprise should base future improvements on the reality that governments at all levels are fiscally in crisis. Rather than add additional components to the system, law enforcement officials should streamline the domestic counterterrorism enterprise by improving current capabilities, leveraging state and local law enforcement resources and authorities, and, in some cases, reducing components where the terrorist threat is not high and the financial support is too thin or could be allocated more effectively. For example, the Department of Homeland Security should dramatically reduce the number of fusion centers, many of which exist in low-risk areas or areas where similar capabilities exist. An easy way to reduce the number of

fusion centers is to eliminate funding to those that are located outside the 31 urban areas designated as the highest risk.

- **Fully implement a strategy to counter violent extremism.** Countering violent extremism is an important complementary effort to an effective counterterrorism strategy. In August 2011, the U.S. government released a strategic plan called “Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States.”²⁰⁹ The plan focuses on outlining how federal agencies can assist local officials, groups, and private organizations in preventing violent extremism. It includes strengthening law enforcement cooperation and helping communities understand how to counter extremist propaganda (particularly online). Sadly, this plan is not a true strategy. It fails to assign responsibilities and does not direct action or resource investments. More direction and leadership must be applied to transform a laundry list of good ideas into an effective program to support communities in protecting and strengthening civil society.

Vigilance Is Not Optional

In a political environment of sequestration on the one hand and privacy concerns on the other, there are those on both sides of the aisle who argue that counterterrorism spending should be cut and U.S. intelligence agencies reigned in. As the above list indicates however, the long war on terrorism is far from over. Most disturbingly, an increasing number of Islamist-inspired terrorist attacks are originating within America’s borders. The rise of homegrown extremism is the next front in the fight against terrorism and should be taken seriously by the Administration.

While there has not been another successful attack on the homeland on the scale of 9/11, the bombings in Boston reminded the country that the threat of terrorism is real and that continued vigilance is critical to keeping America safe. Congress and the Administration must continue to upgrade and improve the counterterrorism capabilities of law enforcement and intelligence agencies as well exercise proper oversight of these capabilities. The American people are resilient, but the lesson of Boston is that the government can and should do more to prevent future terror attacks.

Endnotes

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