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Federal Bureau of Investigation
Intelligence
ASSESSMENT

(U//FOUO) The Role of Overseas Experiences in the Radicalization of US Muslim Converts to Islamic Extremism

10 October 2007

Prepared by

FBI

~~Derived from: Multiple Sources
Declassify on: 20320321~~

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FBI052998

(U//FOUO) The Role of Overseas Experiences in the Radicalization of US Muslim Converts to Islamic Extremism

(U//FOUO) Scope Note

(U//FOUO) This assessment explores the role of overseas travel and accompanying experiences in the radicalization of legal US persons who convert to [REDACTED] using examples drawn from FBI cases. In addition, it informs of potential issues that arise when US converts travel abroad to countries of concern. This paper should be read in conjunction with the FBI intelligence assessments [REDACTED] dated 17 April 2006, and [REDACTED] dated 21 April 2006. Information contained in this assessment was derived from open and closed FBI terrorism investigations and USIC reporting available as of 1 June 2007.

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(U//FOUO) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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(U) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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(U) Key Judgments

- (U//FOUO) Overseas travel has been a significant common experience for US Muslim converts who have [REDACTED] b7E
- (U) • ~~(S)~~ US Muslim converts travel overseas for reasons that range from learning Arabic to building social ties, and a small number of this group [REDACTED] b7E
[REDACTED]
- (U//FOUO) For US Muslim converts in what the FBI terms the [REDACTED] b7E
[REDACTED]
- (U//FOUO) US Muslim converts in what the FBI terms the [REDACTED] b7E
[REDACTED]
- (U) • ~~(S)~~ US Muslim converts returning from abroad often use the cachet of their experiences to [REDACTED] b7E
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] b1 b7E

(S)

(U//FOUO) The Role of Overseas Experiences in the Radicalization of US Muslim Converts to Islamic Extremism

(U) Introduction

(U) ~~(S//NF)~~ The FBI is concerned with identifying factors that contribute to the radicalization of US Muslim converts to Islamic extremism. A review of over 100 FBI cases and USIC reporting suggests that, for those US Muslim converts who become radicalized to the point of engaging in violent extremism, an overseas experience appears to be one such factor.

(U) ~~(S//NF)~~ FBI investigations reveal that US Muslim converts often travel overseas to learn more

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]—the group on which this assessment focuses—
traveling overseas to countries where [REDACTED] have a presence, or
[REDACTED] has been a particularly radicalizing experience.

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(U) The Radicalization Process

(U) ~~(S//NF)~~ In the FBI's model of the radicalization process, an overseas experience is a significant component in both the identification and indoctrination stages of a US Muslim convert's path to violent extremism (see graph). The motivation for and the impact of overseas travel varies from stage to stage.

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The Radicalization Process



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(U//FOUO) [redacted]

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(U) ~~(S)~~ In the [redacted]

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- (U//FOUO) During interviews with the FBI [redacted]

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(U) ~~(S)~~ REL USA [redacted]

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(U) ~~(S)~~ A difficulty that some converts to Islam face in the United States is the alienation that occurs from changing one's life drastically. To overcome these feelings, a convert will often travel to other countries where he has the opportunity to socialize in an Islamic setting with other Muslims. Some converts—such as [redacted] for example—find wives overseas. By marrying into local families, converts gain a social network that may include Islamic extremists. Islamic extremists, in turn, may gain access through this relationship to the United States.

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(U) ~~(S)~~ Proximity to an area of conflict where Muslims are killed by foreign troops may also influence an individual's decision on whether to participate in violent jihad. [redacted] for example,

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(U//FOUO) [redacted]

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(U//FOUO) The process of [redacted]

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[REDACTED]

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(U//FOUO) [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

(U) • ~~(S)~~ (OC/NF) According to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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(U) • ~~(S)~~ (OC/NF) According to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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(U) • ~~(S)~~ (NF) US Muslim converts who become members of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] are required to participate in a 40 day or four month proselytizing trip, with heavy emphasis on traveling to Pakistan. [REDACTED]

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(U) • ~~(S)~~ All of the members of the [REDACTED] for example, were indicted by a Federal Grand Jury for providing material support to a terrorist organization through their [REDACTED] in the summer of 2001. These individuals, none of whom are [REDACTED] converts, attempted to cover their travel to Afghanistan by claiming they were going to Pakistan for "religious" training with the JT.

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(U//FOUO) Status in the Extremist Community

(U) • ~~(S)~~ Radicalized US Muslim converts also have sought out overseas travel to bolster their stature with fellow extremists. Overseas experiences such as meeting with Islamic scholars, training at camps and learning at least minimal amounts of Arabic lend bona fides to converts that they otherwise may not attain. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

(U) ~~(S)~~/REL USA

[REDACTED]

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- (U//FOUO) According to FBI interviews with [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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(U//FOUO) The Attractiveness of US-Born Muslim Converts to Foreign Terrorists

- (U) ~~(S)~~ The participation of US Muslim converts in terrorist operations can yield both tactical and strategic benefits to foreign jihadist groups, particularly when the converts [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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(U) ~~(S)~~ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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(U//FOUO) Radicalizing Overseas Experiences

- (U) ~~(S)~~ Based on multiple FBI investigations and extensive USIC reporting, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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(U//FOUO) Language and Religious Training

(S)

[REDACTED]

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(S)

[Redacted]

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(S)

~~(S)~~//OC/NE [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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(U//FOUO) [Redacted]

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(U)

~~(S)~~ [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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(U//FOUO) [Redacted]

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(U)

~~(S)~~ [Redacted]
[Redacted]

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[REDACTED]

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(U//FOUO) Paramilitary Training Camps

(S)

~~(S)~~ Training camps still operate and function in some parts of the world. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The fact that these camps do exist opens up an opportunity for US Muslim converts to become trained in terrorist activities, including making improvised explosive devices (IEDs), weapons practice, urban warfare, and close quarter combat.

- (U//FOUO) During interviews with the FBI, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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(U)

~~(S)~~(NF) The increased reliance by US Muslim converts on the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] informs interested individuals of possible training locations and ways to attend the camps.

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- (U//FOUO) During interviews with the FBI, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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(U//FOUO) Radical US Muslim Convert Traveling Trends

(S)

~~(S)~~ [REDACTED]

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(U)

~~(S)~~ [Redacted]
[Redacted]

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(U//FOUO) Radical US Muslim Convert

[Redacted]

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(S)

~~(S)~~ [Redacted]
[Redacted]

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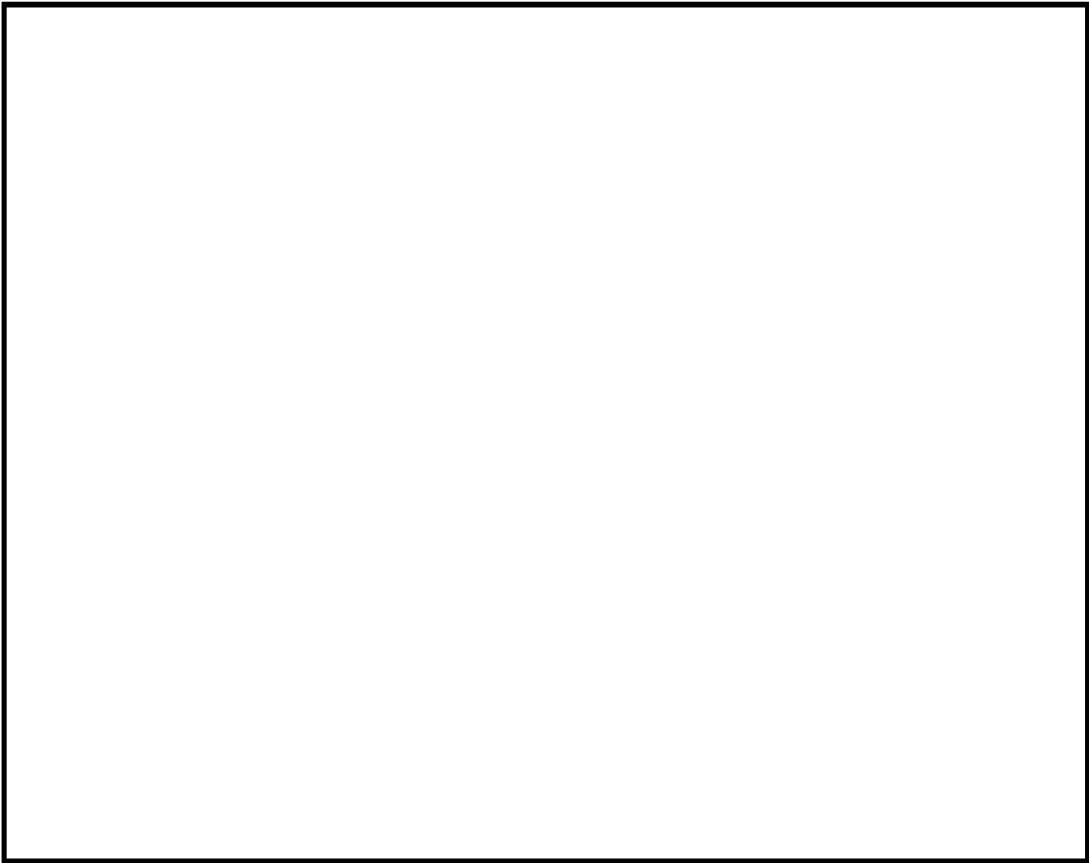
(S)

[Redacted]

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(U//FOUO) Intelligence Gaps

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(U) Endnotes

- i (U) FBI [redacted] UNCLASSIFIED).
- ii (U) FBI [redacted] (~~SECRET~~).
- iii (U) FBI [redacted] UNCLASSIFIED). b7E
- iv (U) FBI [redacted] (~~SECRET~~).
- v (U) Ibid.
- vi (U) FBI [redacted] UNCLASSIFIED).
- vii (U) FBI [redacted] (~~SECRET~~).
- viii (U) Ibid.
- ix (U) FBI [redacted] (~~SECRET~~). b1
- x (U) FBI [redacted] UNCLASSIFIED). b7E
- (S) xi (U) FBI [redacted] (~~SECRET~~).
- xii (U) FBI [redacted] (~~SECRET~~).
- xiii (U) FBI [redacted] (~~SECRET~~).
- xiv (U) FBI [redacted] 27
- April 2006 (~~SECRET~~).
- xv (U) [redacted] (~~SECRET~~).
- (S) xvi (U) [redacted] (~~SECRET~~); (U) [redacted] b1
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- xvii (U) [redacted] (~~SECRET~~); (U) [redacted] (~~SECRET~~).
- xviii (U) [redacted] (~~SECRET~~).
- xix (U) FBI [redacted] UNCLASSIFIED).
- xx (U) FBI [redacted] (~~SECRET~~).

FBI Customer Satisfaction Survey

Return to:

Unit Chief

FBI Headquarters

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Marking instructions: Circle the appropriate response accordingly.

- 1 Strongly Disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither Agree or Disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree
- N/A Not Applicable

Dear Customer:

Please take a moment to complete this survey and help evaluate the quality and value of FBI products. Your response will help us serve you more effectively and efficiently in the future.

Thank you for cooperation and assistance.

Product Title: (U//FOUO) The Role of Overseas Experiences in the Radicalization of US Muslim Converts to Islamic Extremism

Product Date 10 October 2007

Customer _____

Intelligence Function/Investigative Program _____

Quality

1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
						This product was delivered within established deadlines.

1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
						The product was timely and relevant to your mission, programs, priorities or initiatives.

1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
						The product was clear and logical in the presentation of information with supported judgments and conclusions.

1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
						The product is reliable i.e., sources well documented and reputable.

Value

1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
						The product contributed to satisfying intelligence gaps or predicated cases or intelligence operations, especially in previously unknown areas.

1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
						The product resulted in change in investigative or intelligence priorities and/or a shift from unaddressed to addressed work, or vice versa.

1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
						The product resulted in more informed decisions concerning investigative or intelligence initiatives and/or resource allocation.

1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
						The product identified new information associated with pending matters or offered insights into information that could change the working premise in a program or initiative.

Comments
