

## **CASE STUDY**

**SAMIR KHAN**



### Case Study: Samir Khan

Samir Khan was perhaps most notoriously known as the editor and primary contributor of the al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) online jihad magazine, *Inspire*. Written in colloquial English, with a keen understanding of American youth culture, and illustrated with sophisticated graphics and photos uncommon in the jihadi world, *Inspire* aimed directly at a Western audience and sought to recruit terrorist operatives to strike their own homelands or abroad. Khan was 25 years old when he was killed by a September 2011 US drone strike targeting AQAP's operational leader, Anwar al-Aulaqi.

Born in Saudi Arabia of Pakistani ancestry, Khan moved to the New York area with his middle-class family at the age of 7. Neighbors knew him as a teenager who played basketball in the street with his brother, adopting the clothing and slang of his peers until shortly before the 9/11 attacks, when he attended a mosque summer camp.

Following the 9/11 attacks, Khan's attraction to militant websites and a radical shift in his social and religious views alarmed his parents. Khan's family moved to North Carolina in 2004. Acquaintances in Charlotte described him as introverted, awkward, and already radicalized upon his arrival. He expressed outrage that local mosque leaders were not preaching about the injustice of the US-led war against Muslim countries.

Khan became a prolific blogger supporting the cause of violent jihadis. He took the precaution of consulting an attorney regarding the limits of his free speech and was advised to avoid directly advocating violence. There was no evidence at the time that Khan was violating the law by providing material support to terrorists. However, he leveraged his fluency in the English language and American culture to make relevant the messages broadcast by al-Qa'ida and its affiliates.

Many online jihadi forums perpetuate the myth that American forces routinely and deliberately commit atrocities against Muslim civilians. Many view the United States and its allies as waging a war not against terrorist groups, but against Islam and all Muslims. Khan believed in the value of winning what he called the "media jihad," producing propaganda that would convert terrorist sympathizers into actual operatives willing to take violent action.

Several times, vigilante groups notified Khan's Internet service provider about his extremist bloggings, causing his access to be suspended. Khan himself was surprised that the government did not directly contact him.

Khan's father tried to bring him to religious scholars in an effort to reverse his radicalization. According to one imam, Samir "would give you the impression that he would

## Outreach Strategy



### Case Study: Samir Khan

change,” before he disconnected from the mosque. Khan’s father also cut off Samir’s Internet access several times.

In 2009, Khan is believed to have moved to Yemen, the stronghold of AQAP. The inaugural issue of *Inspire* magazine appeared in summer 2010, and by the time of his death, Khan was able to publish six more issues.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/01/world/la-fg-khan-profile-20111001>

<http://www.longislandpress.com/2011/10/06/slain-al-qaeda-mouthpiece-samir-kahns-westbury-long-island-roots/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/world/middleeast/samir-khan-killed-by-drone-spun-out-of-the-american-middle-class.html>

[http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/samir\\_khan/index.html?scp=6&sq=internet%20jihad%20aims%20at%20american&st=cse](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/samir_khan/index.html?scp=6&sq=internet%20jihad%20aims%20at%20american&st=cse)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/15/us/15net.html?ref=samirkhan>



### Slain al Qaeda Mouthpiece Samir Khan's



The Westbury home where al Qaeda propagandist Samir Khan once lived. (Photo credit: Long Island Press) Foreground: Samir Khan

Samir Khan, the al Qaeda propagandist killed in U.S. airstrikes alongside militant cleric Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen last week, spent some of his teenage years living in Westbury, Long Island, just down the road from two prime targets: Roosevelt Field Mall and the Long Island Rail Road, officials and neighbors say.

Khan, 25, was the editor of *Inspire*, an English-language al Qaeda magazine that publishes interviews with leading terrorists as well as how-to articles on topics such as bomb building and firing assault rifles. Khan and al-Awlaki were seen as key players in sowing anti-Western sentiment that helped in recruiting new fighters. They became the first American citizens targeted and killed in a drone strike [Sept. 30](#).

"He's a person who was basically raised on Long Island, became radicalized and became a terrorist while he was on Long Island," Rep. Peter King (R-Seafood), the chair of the House Homeland Security Committee, tells the *Press*. "It really makes you wonder."

A law enforcement source confirmed that the Khan family moved from Queens to Nassau County, where they lived several years before moving to North Carolina eight years ago. It was unclear when he moved to the tidy L-shaped Plymouth Drive in Westbury, but the [New York Times](#) reported Khan began became radicalized after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks—despite his family's interventions.

"I am proud to be a traitor to America," is the title of one article reportedly penned by Khan after he moved to Yemen in 2008 to head up *Inspire* magazine. [East Meadow Patch](#) reported Khan graduated in 2003 from W.T. Clarke High School, where he wrote for the student newspaper. Neighbors who remembered the family were stunned at the news, but the new owners of the Khan residence saw it coming.

"I wasn't shocked when we heard about this," says the new owner of the ranch-style home, Rocco Abbatiello. The 44-year-old independent contractor tells the *Press* he got the first of several visits from federal investigators asking about the house where Khan had lived with his parents and older sister six months after his family moved in to the home in the fall of 2003.



## SAMIR KHAN ARTICLES

"Even when we purchased the house we never actually met them," he says. "We gutted the whole house, it's not like we found anything."

Neighbors did not take the news as lightly.

"It takes away the whole sense of suburbia," says one neighbor who asked not to be named. "They tell you if you see something, say something. Are we supposed to be suspicious of every new neighbor?"

The neighbor found it odd that the family suddenly moved to North Carolina on a week's notice, but had never suspected anything out of the ordinary. The family reportedly wore traditional garb and mostly kept to themselves.

The Khan family released a statement Wednesday defending Samir and condemning his death, according to [The Charlotte Observer](#).

"We feel appalled by the indifference shown to us by our government," it reads. "No U.S. official has contacted us with any news about the recovery of our son's remains, nor offered us any condolences."

The statement charges Samir was deprived of his Fifth Amendment rights to due process.

"Was this style of execution the only solution?" it asks. "Why couldn't there have been a capture and trial? Where is the justice?"

King has said the killing of al-Awlaki was justifiable despite his U.S. citizenship because he was at war. He tells the *Press* that al-Awlaki and Khan were more dangerous in recent years than the late al Qaeda chief, Osama bin Laden, "because they knew how to talk to Americans."

"I read his magazine every month," King says. "It's scary stuff. I know the impact it has."

Khan is not the first al Qaeda member from Long Island. [Bryant Neal Vinas](#), Patchogue native and Muslim convert, pleaded guilty to conspiring to kill U.S. nationals in 2009. That was a year after he was captured in Pakistan, where he admitted giving al Qaeda information about the LIRR for a bomb plot.

In a related case, 45-year-old [Mohammad Younis](#) of Centereach pleaded guilty in August to operating an unlicensed money transmitting business after admitting in federal court that he unwittingly provided \$7,000 to Faisal Shahzad, the would-be Times Square Bomber. Younis will be sentenced Nov. 30.

"No one was as effective as al-Awlaki and Samir Khan," King says. "They knew American culture. They knew American hopes and fears."

*More articles filed under [Long Island News, News](#)*

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**The New York Times**

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

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### Samir Khan

News about Samir Khan, including commentary and archival articles published in The New York Times.

Updated: Sept. 30, 2011

Samir Khan, a young Web-savvy American of Pakistani origin thought to be behind the Al Qaeda magazine Inspire, was killed in the same September 2011 strike that killed the radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki.

Mr. Awlaki, whom the United States had been hunting in Yemen for more than two years, had been identified as the target in advance and was killed with a Hellfire missile fired from a drone operated by the Central Intelligence Agency. Mr. Khan was traveling with Mr. Awlaki, but it was not clear whether he was also a deliberate target of the strike.

Mr. Khan, who was born in 1986, was an enthusiast of jihad who lived with his parents in North Carolina as recently as 2007, before leaving the United States for Yemen in 2009, where he is thought to have started Inspire magazine.

Mr. Khan was born in Saudi Arabia and grew up in Queens. He was an unlikely foot soldier in what Al Qaeda calls the "Islamic jihadi media." He had grown up in middle-class America and wrestled with his worried parents about his religious fervor.

Before leaving the United States, Mr. Khan had served as a Western conduit for the multimedia productions of violent Islamic groups, a role he appeared to have continued to pursue from Yemen. At the time, he was not thought to have had terrorist ties.

In recent years, Mr. Khan had become a strong part of the information arm of Al Qaeda's Yemen affiliate, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. He proclaimed, in an early edition of the Qaeda magazine, that "I am proud to be a traitor," according to an ABC News report from 2010.

Inspire magazine attracted attention in September 2011 for its issue commemorating and celebrating the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. In the issue, the group criticized President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran for repeating conspiracy theories that diminished Al Qaeda's role in the attacks.

### Multimedia



#### Killing of Awlaki Is Latest in Campaign Against Qaeda Leaders

Anwar al-Awlaki's lectures were linked to several investigations in the United States, Britain and Canada.

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### **Al Qaeda Group Confirms Deaths of Two American Citizens**

By CHARLIE SAVAGE

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula confirmed the deaths of the American citizens Anwar Al-Awlaki and Samir Khan, but said their killings went against the principles the United States says it was founded upon.

October 11, 2011

MORE ON SAMIR KHAN AND: AL QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA, AWLAKI, ANWAR AL-, KHAN, SAMIR

### **Secret U.S. Memo Made Legal Case to Kill a Citizen**

By CHARLIE SAVAGE

A memo offers a glimpse at the legal debate that led to the Obama administration's decision to kill Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen, in Yemen.

October 9, 2011

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### 2nd American in Strike Waged Qaeda Media War

By [ROBBIE BROWN](#) and [KIM SEVERSON](#)  
 Published: September 30, 2011

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — From his parents' basement in a part of town where homes have lots of bedrooms and most children go to college, [Samir Khan](#) blogged his way into the highest circles of [Al Qaeda](#), waging a media war he believed was as important as the battles with guns on the ground.

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Fox News, via Associated Press

Samir Khan, 25, pictured in 2008, was killed on Friday in Yemen. In 2009, he began a magazine for jihadists called Inspire.

His parents — by all accounts a low-key, respected couple who had moved south from Queens in 2004 — were worried about the increasingly radical nature of their son's philosophy and the increasing [media reports](#) that exposed it.

They turned more than once to members of their religious communities to impress upon their college-aged son the perils of such thinking and behavior.

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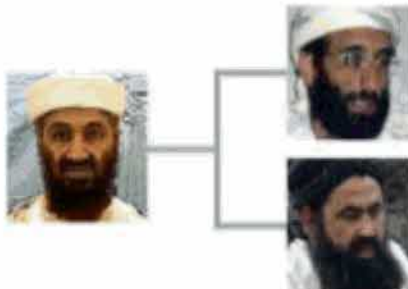




## Multimedia



TimesCast | September 30, 2011



Killing of Awlaki Is Latest in Campaign Against Qaeda Leaders



Map of Countries Where Al Qaeda and Its Affiliates Operate

It did not work. In 2009, he left his comfortable life in Charlotte for [Yemen](#), started a slick magazine for jihadists called Inspire that featured political and how-to articles written in a comfortable American vernacular, and continued to digitally dodge government and civilian efforts to stop his self-described “media jihad.”

His life ended in Yemen on Friday, when Mr. Khan, 25, was killed in a drone strike that also took the life of the radical cleric [Anwar al-Awlaki](#) and two other men, according to both American and Yemeni officials.

At a mosque run by the Islamic Society of Greater Charlotte, few of the several hundred Muslims gathered for Friday Prayer wanted to talk about Mr. Khan.

“This is a very dangerous road when you go and kill someone like this,” said Ayeb Suleiman, 25, a medical resident. “He was just an editor. He was just writing.”

Others felt grief for a family who had lost a son, no matter the nature of the son’s activities.

Mr. Khan’s father, Zafar Khan, is an information technology executive and a respected, regular worshiper who bought his family a two-story brick house near a mosque. He often talked cricket with Yasin Raja, a fellow

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Pakistani-American.

"If Samir got caught up with something, that was on his own," Mr. Raja said.

Steve Glocke, who lives across the street from the family, watched Mr. Khan grow from a cordial teenager who played basketball with his brother in the street into a quiet, but radical, young man. When Mr. Khan moved to Yemen, he said, "I would ask if he was O.K., and they would say they didn't know."

His parents were worried even before the family moved from Queens. Mustapha Elturk, the imam and president of the Islamic Organization of North America, met the family in the mid-1990s during an educational program at a mosque in Flushing, Queens. Mr. Khan was interested in Islam as a way to "stay away from the peer pressure of his teenage days," he said.



But after the Sept. 11 attacks, Mr. Khan's attraction to militant sites on the Internet and his radical views grew to the point where his father intervened.

"He tried his best to make his son meet all sorts of imams and scholars to dissuade him from those views," said Mr. Elturk, who spoke with Mr. Khan's father on Friday to offer condolences. "He would give you the impression that he would change."

Early intervention by members of the local community is key to preventing the radicalization of Islamic youth, said Sue Myrick, the member of Congress who represents the part of Charlotte where Mr. Khan lived.

Mr. Khan's last issue of Inspire came out this week. It was 20 pages, smaller than the rest, and dedicated largely to the Sept. 11 attacks. It has lost some of the cheekiness of early editions, which outlined what to expect on a jihad and had headlines like "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom."

In this edition, he made clear the role he believed he played in the war. "While America was focused on battling mujahedeen in the mountains of Afghanistan and the streets of Iraq," he wrote, "the jihadi media and its supporters were in fifth gear."

*Robbie Brown reported from Charlotte, and Kim Severson from Atlanta. Matt Flegenheimer contributed reporting from New York.*

A version of this article appeared in print on October 1, 2011, on page A8 of the New York edition with the headline: Drone Victim Went From American Middle Class to Waging a Media War for Al Qaeda.



## The New York Times

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October 15, 2007

# An Internet Jihad Aims at U.S. Viewers

By MICHAEL MOSS and SOUAD MEKHENNET

When Osama bin Laden issued his videotaped message to the American people last month, a young jihad enthusiast went online to help spread the word.

“America needs to listen to Shaykh Usaamah very carefully and take his message with great seriousness,” he wrote on his blog. “America is known to be a people of arrogance.”

Unlike Mr. bin Laden, the blogger was not operating from a remote location. It turns out he is a 21-year-old American named Samir Khan who produces his blog from his parents’ home in North Carolina, where he serves as a kind of Western relay station for the multimedia productions of violent Islamic groups.

In recent days, he has featured “glad tidings” from a North African militant leader whose group killed 31 Algerian troops. He posted a scholarly treatise arguing for violent jihad, translated into English. He listed hundreds of links to secret sites from which his readers could obtain the latest blood-drenched insurgent videos from Iraq.

His neatly organized site also includes a file called “United States of Losers,” which showcased a recent news broadcast about a firefight in Afghanistan with this added commentary from Mr. Khan: “You can even see an American soldier hiding during the ambush like a baby!! AllahuAkbar! AllahuAkbar!”

Mr. Khan, who was born in Saudi Arabia and grew up in Queens, is an unlikely foot soldier in what [Al Qaeda](#) calls the “Islamic jihadi media.” He has grown up in middle-class America and wrestles with his worried parents about his religious fervor. Yet he is stubborn. “I will do my best to speak the truth, and even if it annoys the disbelievers, the truth must be preached,” Mr. Khan said in an interview.

While there is nothing to suggest that Mr. Khan is operating in concert with militant leaders, or breaking any laws, he is part of a growing constellation of apparently independent media operators who are broadcasting the message of Al Qaeda and other groups, a message that is increasingly devised, translated and aimed for a Western audience.

Terrorism experts at West Point say there are as many as 100 English language sites offering militant Islamic views, with Mr. Khan’s — which claims 500 regular readers — among the more active. While their reach is difficult to assess, it is clear from a review of extremist material and



interviews that militants are seeking to appeal to young American and European Muslims by playing on their anger over the war in Iraq and the image of Islam under attack.

Tedious Arabic screeds are reworked into flashy English productions. Recruitment tracts are issued in multiple languages, like a 39-page, electronic, English version of a booklet urging women to join the fight against the West.

There are even online novellas like “Rakan bin Williams,” about a band of Christian European converts who embraced Al Qaeda and “promised God that they will carry the flag of their distant brothers and seek vengeance on the evil doers.”

Militant Islamists are turning grainy car-bombing tapes into slick hip-hop videos and montage movies, all readily available on Western sites like YouTube, the online video smorgasbord.

“It is as if you would watch a Hollywood movie,” said Abu Saleh, a 21-year-old German devotee of Al Qaeda videos who visits Internet cafes in Berlin twice a week to get the latest releases. “The Internet has totally changed my view on things.”

### **An Internet Strategy**

Al Qaeda and its followers have used the Internet to communicate and rally support for years, but in the past several months the Western tilt of the message and the sophistication of the media have accelerated. So has the output. Since the beginning of the year, Al Qaeda’s media operation, Al Sahab, has issued new videotapes as often as every three days. Even more come from Iraq, where insurgents are pumping them out daily.

That production line is the legacy of one man: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the former leader of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia who was killed in June 2006 by American bombs.

Mr. Zarqawi learned the power of the Internet in prison, according to a former associate who was imprisoned with him in Jordan a decade ago. Mr. Zarqawi’s jailhouse group of 32 Islamists sought to recruit other prisoners by handwriting a newsletter, Al Tawheed, when it discovered a larger audience.

“We sent them outside, to brothers in Europe and England,” who posted the newsletters on militant Web sites, the associate said, asking not be identified because he said he is involved with Islamist activities.

In Iraq, Mr. Zarqawi embraced the video camera as a weapon of war. “He made the decision that every group should have a video camera with them, and every operation should be taped,” said a [Palestinian](#) militant who went to Iraq in 2005 to teach foreign fighters from Morocco and parts of Europe how to build bombs and stage roadside attacks.

Two Lebanese intelligence officials confirmed that the Palestinian, who goes by the nom de guerre Abu Omar, had worked with Mr. Zarqawi in Iraq, and he played a video of foreign fighters in Iraq for reporters of The New York Times.



Abu Omar, 37, a muscular man who carried a Glock 21 pistol tucked into the belt of his camouflage pants during an interview at his home in Lebanon, said Mr. Zargawi also had him tape his bombmaking classes so his expertise would not be lost if he were killed.

"We had two cameramen, people who learned how to do this before they came to Iraq," Abu Omar said. "And after filming, we had different houses in the area where we made the videos."

Dahia al-Maqdassi, 26, a Palestinian who said he produced insurgent videos in Iraq two years ago, said, "In every city in Iraq they had a little office where someone did film operations." He described his "media section" as a house near Falluja where 6 to 10 people worked. "We finished the film and then sent it to jihadi Web sites," Mr. Maqdassi said.

### **Propaganda Rap Video**

One of the most influential sites is Tajdeed, which is based in London and run by Dr. Muhammad Massari, a Saudi physicist and dissident. Over lunch at a McDonald's near his home, Dr. Massari said Mr. Zargawi's insurgent videos from Iraq inspired local productions like "Dirty Kuffar," the Arabic word for nonbeliever. The 2004 rap music video mixed images of Western leaders with others purporting to show American troops cheer as they shot injured Iraqi civilians.

Dr. Massari, who helped promote the video, said similar crossover productions soon followed and made their way to his Web site.

"I never touch the videos that are on my forums," said Dr. Massari, who wears a long white Arabic robe. "Someone with Al Qaeda uploads them, probably at Internet cafes, to password-protected sites. Then they call a friend, say, in Australia or Brasília, and say, 'Hi Johnny, your mom is traveling today.' That is the code to download the video. It goes up and down like that a few times, with no trace, until someone posts a link on my site."

Last spring, Al Qaeda made what analysts say was a bold attempt to tap potential supporters in the United States. In a videotaped interview, Ayman al-Zawahri, a bin Laden lieutenant, praised Malcolm X and urged American blacks and other minorities to see that "we are waging jihad to lift oppression from all of mankind."

The tape quickly found an audience. Mr. Zawahri "cares about black people," wrote a blogger with Vibe, the American hip-hop and urban culture magazine, which claims 1.6 million visits a month. "At least, I think that's why he's quoting Malcolm X in his latest mix tape, which dropped last weekend."

Umar Lee, a 32-year-old Muslim convert from St. Louis, offered a stinging critique of Mr. Zawahri on his blog for Muslim Americans, criticizing "the second-class status many blacks live in right in the Arab World." Soon, Mr. Lee's blog churned with commentary on the parallels between Arab and black American radicals.

A four-minute version of the hourlong Qaeda video, entitled "To Black Americans," has logged more than 1,800 views on YouTube in the four months since it was posted.



Among those who posted a link to the YouTube version was Mr. Khan, the North Carolina blogger who said he was struck by the simplicity in the messages of both Al Qaeda and Malcolm X. "They are geniuses for having the ability to mold their ideology into simple yet influential messages that can reach the grass-roots level," he said.

Mr. Khan produces his blog anonymously, but was identified by The Times through the e-mail account he used in previous online discussions. (Pictures he had posted online helped The Times distinguish him from another, unrelated North Carolina resident, about 10 years older, who has the same name.)

In an interview at a local mosque, where he sat on a prayer rug wearing a traditional Arabic robe, Mr. Khan traced his increasing militancy.

His blog has attracted enough notoriety that vigilante groups opposed to jihadi sites have gotten him shut down a few times in recent months. He said he was somewhat surprised he had not been confronted by government authorities, although, he said, "I've never told anybody to build bombs."

His early postings, beginning in 2003, promoted strengthening Islam in North America through nonviolent confrontations. But with the escalating war in Iraq, bloodshed became a recurrent theme.

He described his favorite video from Iraq: a fiery suicide-bomber attack on an American outpost.

"It was something that brought great happiness to me," he said. "Because this is something America would never want to admit, that they are being crushed."

Asked how he felt living among people who had sent soldiers to Iraq, Mr. Khan said: "Whatever happens to their sons and daughters is none of my concern. They are people of hellfire and I have no concern for them."

### **A Teenage Transformation**

Born in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, Mr. Khan was 7 when his family moved to New York City and settled into the Queens neighborhood of Maspeth.

He mirrored his teenage peers, from their slang to their baggy pants, until August 2001 when, at age 15, he said, he attended a weeklong summer camp at a mosque in Queens, which was sponsored by a fundamentalist but nonviolent group now known as the Islamic Organization of North America (IONA).

"They were teaching things about religion and brotherhood that captivated me," Mr. Khan said. He said he went back to school knowing "what I wanted to do with my life: be a firm Muslim, a strong Muslim, a practicing Muslim."

He prayed more regularly. He dressed more modestly. He stopped listening to music except for Soldiers of Allah, a Los Angeles hip-hop group, now defunct, whose tunes like "Bring Islam Back" continue to have worldwide appeal among militant youths.



He also befriended members of the Islamic Thinkers Society, a tiny group that promotes radical, nonviolent Islam by leafleting in Times Square and Jackson Heights, Queens.

After moving with his family to North Carolina in 2004, Mr. Khan said, he attended a community college for three years and earned money selling various products, including kitchen knives.

But he began spending chunks of his days on the blog he created in late 2005, "Inshallahshaheed," which translates as "a martyr soon if God wills." The Internet traffic counter [Alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com), which rarely is able to measure the popularity of blogs because they do not have enough readers, ranked his among the top one percent of one hundred million Internet sites in the world.

If Mr. Khan's extreme rhetoric has won him a wider audience, it has caused him problems at home. Last year, his father tried to pull him back to the family's more moderate views by asking an imam to intervene.

"I tried to bring arguments from the Koran and scholars, and said, 'Whatever you are thinking it is not true,'" said Mustapha Elturk, a family friend and the leader of IONA, the Islamic organization that first inspired Mr. Khan. But Mr. Khan did not budge, he said.

Mr. Khan said he separated from IONA over one matter: the organization would not support violent jihad without the endorsement of a Muslim nation's leader, which Mr. Khan argues is unnecessary.

Mr. Elturk said, "His father and family are really scared that he might do something."

### **Attempts to Shut Down Blog**

From time to time, Mr. Khan said, his father also cut off his Internet access and, to placate him, Mr. Khan recently added a disclaimer to his blog disavowing responsibility for the views expressed on the site.

He has also been fending off citizen watchdogs who are working to knock sites like his off the Internet. Twice in September his blog went dark when his service provider shut him down, citing complaints about the nature of his postings.

Mr. Khan has now moved his blog to a site called Muslimpad, whose American operators recently moved from Texas to Amman, Jordan. Their larger forum, Islamic Network, is the host of discussions among English-speaking Muslims. One of their former employees, Daniel Maldonado, was convicted this year in federal court of associating with terrorists at their training camps in Somalia.

Mr. Khan said that he had dreams about meeting Mr. bin Laden and that he would not rule out picking up a weapon himself one day. In a recent essay, he argued that jihad was mandatory for all Muslims, and he cited three ways to fulfill this obligation: join fighters in Iraq, Afghanistan or Algeria; send them money; or promote militant videos as part of the jihad media.

For now, he said, he is fulfilling his obligations by helping other Muslims understand their religion. Recently he posted a video of a news report from Somalia showing a grenade-wielding American



who had joined the Islamists.

“He is an example of a Muslim who follows the Religion of Islaam,” Mr. Khan wrote.

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## Radical blogger was 'Al Qaeda to the core'

*Samir Khan, killed with Awlaki, was a skilled propagandist from North Carolina.*

October 01, 2011 | David Zucchino

NEW BERN, N.C. — Before he was the Yemen-based editor of the English-language online magazine for Al Qaeda's branch in the Arabian peninsula, Samir Khan was a radical young Muslim blogger in North Carolina.

Khan, 25, a skilled propagandist, wrote virulently pro-Al Qaeda blog posts while a student at a community college in Charlotte. As a teenager, he posted blogs championing holy war from his parents' home on suburban Tradition View Drive in a modern Charlotte subdivision.

Khan was one of two American citizens killed by a U.S. drone strike in Yemen, American and Yemeni officials announced Friday. Along with Anwar Awlaki, 40, who was also reported killed, Khan parlayed his idiomatic American English and familiarity with American culture to recruit converts for Al Qaeda throughout the English-speaking world.

Khan edited Inspire, an online English-language magazine that served as Al Qaeda's propaganda arm. From his base in Yemen, Khan wrote stories with headlines such as "How to Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom" and "What to Expect in Jihad."

In the bomb article, Khan wrote: "In one or two days the bomb could be ready to kill at least 10 people. In a month you may make a bigger and more lethal bomb that could kill tens of people."

In late 2009, in an introductory interview article titled, "I Am Proud to Be a Traitor to America," Khan said he was "Al Qaeda to the core."

He also was quoted by Inspire as saying:

"I am a traitor to America because my religion requires me to be. We pledge to wage jihad for the rest of our lives until either we implant Islam all over the world or meet our lord as bearers of Islam."

Khan, of Pakistani descent, was born in Saudi Arabia and raised from age 7 in Queens, N.Y. He moved to Charlotte in 2004 when his father, Zafar Khan, who is now 62, was transferred.

Khan arrived in North Carolina as an introverted, awkward young man who did not make friends easily. But he was already radicalized, according to Adam Azad, who befriended Khan in Charlotte.

Khan was outraged that local mosque leaders didn't preach about U.S.-led wars in Muslim nations, Azad told National Public Radio last year.

"He was kind of critical, like, why don't they talk more about injustices that are going on around the world?" Azad said.

While attending Central Piedmont Community College in 2005, Khan began writing a radical blog titled, "Inshallahshaheed," which translates from Arabic as "a martyr if God wills it."

But before he launched the blog, according to NPR, Khan hired a lawyer and asked how far he could go under the 1st Amendment in writing a blog praising Al Qaeda and jihad, or holy war. He was advised to not directly advocate violence.

After Khan championed the killing of U.S. soldiers overseas, Rep. Sue Myrick (R-N.C.) raised a public alarm in 2007.

"How far does someone have to go before we take them seriously?" Myrick asked. She has since criticized the U.S. intelligence community for failing to heed warnings about Khan.

Khan was so radical that local Muslim leaders met with him and his father in an effort to persuade him to renounce violence in the name of Islam.

The leaders rejected Khan's views and banned him from speaking at local mosques, Jibril Hough, a spokesman for the Islamic Center of Charlotte, told the Charlotte Observer last year.

Hough told NPR that Khan and his father met at Hough's home with Muslim elders. The men sat in a circle and talked for hours.

Khan "mostly just listened," Hough told NPR. "I think at one time during the conversation he tried to give some kind of justification for killing innocent people, but it was a very short rebuttal. And that's why it kind of gave me the idea that we were making progress."

But Khan continued posting to his blog, and he told people that he planned to move to Yemen to teach English. In October 2009, he boarded a flight to Yemen and never returned.

Hough did not respond to telephone messages left at the Islamic center on Friday. A phone number in the name of Zafar Khan was out of service, according to the local phone company.

Samir Khan was invaluable to Al Qaeda because of his verbal skills and provocative prose. His death and that of Awlaki, an operational leader and English-

DHS-001-425-000279



speaking propagandist, are serious losses for Al Qaeda.

"They use this understanding [of English] to develop and refine new tactics and techniques to defeat our security measures and attack us," FBI Assistant Director Mark Giuliano told the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in April. "But there's more to it than just understanding our culture; they also understand the use of technology and, more especially, how to use social networking media to their advantage."

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