

Community Awareness Briefing: Foreign Fighter Focus

Slide 1: Community Awareness Briefing

Scene Setter: *The presentation's goal is to inform the audience how violent extremists get their message out (including by the internet), and how government and communities can work together to prevent youth from being tricked by this recruitment. We present the information to help communities understand the phenomenon of radicalization and mobilization, but we can only hope to get to a discussion on solutions through audience participation. We encourage the audience to stop the briefer at any point to ask questions, raise points, or do whatever to help the group arrive at the best way to work on this problem before another person is lost to violent extremism.*

Slide 2: Why Are We Here?

Scene Setter: *In this slide, we talk about how we are here to raise awareness of how violent extremist groups ensnare vulnerable individuals to commit violent or illegal acts, thereby negatively impacting the lives of these individuals, their families and communities. The 2011 Domestic Countering Violent Extremism Strategy emphasizes that communities are invaluable partners in prevention, and government's role is to empower and catalyze communities to take action. We have seen there is often a time period, before law enforcement gets involved, in which parents, friends, community/religious leaders, and teachers see signs of someone being radicalized to violence, creating a window of opportunity for them to act to protect their communities.*

Key Points:

We have been invited by (Law Enforcement / Community Leaders) to provide an awareness briefing to enable you to understand the threat from violent extremism

- We want ensure you understand the threat from violent extremism, in all its forms--
- We are going to review case studies to show you how individuals buy into committing violent action
- And we are going to discuss ways we, the U.S. Government, and you, the Community, can work together to truly mitigate against this threat
- We want to emphasize that our intention is definitely not to have you “spy” on your neighbors and report back to us. You are in no means “agents of the government.” Our intention is to empower communities such as yourselves by imparting you all with information in the hopes that it prevents radicalization and mobilization to violence.
- *Overall Pitch:* Often the most vulnerable in our communities, our youth, get ensnared in dangerous groups, which can then destroy families and ultimately, negatively impact our society

We need your help

- The USG has traditional roles it uses to address the threat from VE, but they only go so far and only address so much of the violent extremism spectrum of activity
 - These roles include local U.S. District Attorneys, FBI Field Offices, local police, and representatives from DHS and NCTC
 - However, often these government representatives only get involved after things have gone wrong; i.e. something illegal has occurred. This might include after the individual is recruited and radicalized and takes a step in furtherance of their violent or criminal act—that's when the government plays a role.

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- Communities, however, have the ability to get involved at a much earlier stage during which there is a window of opportunity to prevent an individual from progressing down the path towards committing illegal acts. In this arena, it is communities who are the most important actors, not the government. And if communities are successful in this prevention phase, then there will no longer even be a need for the government to get involved at all.
- In the end, local communities are the most powerful asset we have in the struggle against violent extremism. We cannot address this threat without your help.
 - We've crunched the data on this. In the more than 80 percent of cases involving homegrown violent extremists, people in the community—whether peers or family members or authority figures or even strangers—had observed warning signs a person was becoming radicalized to violence.¹
 - Many of these warning signs were ignored, however.²
 - Studies have shown that in the vast majority of cases, people who see troubling signs do not act upon this information, becoming passive bystanders.³
 - This happens in a variety of social situations, everything from witnessing bullying to witnessing prejudice, and social science has called this passive witnessing the “Bystander Effect”.⁴
 - However, just like has been done in anti-bullying campaigns, we want to empower you all to become what's called “active bystanders.” This means overcoming the subtle pressures that can cause passive behavior, such as diffusion of responsibility and pluralistic ignorance.⁵
 - With this presentation, we hope to impart to you a personal sense of responsibility for protecting your communities, including your youth, and to empower you with knowledge by raising your awareness of the signs of radicalization and possible responses.
- You, the Community, are in a much better position to see early on when a threat may be materializing
- We hope this presentation will leave with a better understanding of the threat, why it's important, and what **you** can do to help.

Slide 3: Why Are We Here? (video)

Scene Setter: *In this slide, we emphasize that we are here to protect our children, and the video we show of a mother grieving over the attempt of her son to join ISIL is meant to portray how violent extremists are exploiting our communities and our youth.*

Background:

Mohammed's mother Zarine Khan (USPER) made a statement to the media after her son was charged with material support to ISIL.⁶

¹ <http://washington.cbslocal.com/2014/04/18/counterterrorism-chief-parents-should-watch-for-sudden-personality-changes-in-children/>

² <http://washington.cbslocal.com/2014/04/18/counterterrorism-chief-parents-should-watch-for-sudden-personality-changes-in-children/>

³ http://activebystander.com/?page_id=18

⁴ http://activebystander.com/?page_id=18

⁵ http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/we_are_all_bystanders

⁶ <http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/bolingbrook/ct-terrorism-parents-speak-out-met-20150113-story.html>

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- "We have a message for ISIS, Mr. Baghdadi and his fellow social media recruiters. Leave our children alone!"⁷

Slide 4: Violent Extremism

Scene Setter: *In this slide, we provide background on violent extremism, which comes in all forms, whether it is neo-Nazis, sovereign citizens, etc. We explain that the absolutist mindset appeals to adolescents searching for meaning and identity. It is very important to demonstrate to the audience that the government understands there is a range of threats and ensure them that our government's concern is not solely on al-Qaeda or ISIL-inspired terrorism. In terms of relating to the audience, it is important to continue to portray, within reason, some of the youth involved as victims of recruiting.*

Key Points:

Definition: Violent extremism refers to violence committed in the name of ideology to further a political agenda

Violent extremism takes many forms

- Violent Extremism takes many forms, from international terrorist organizations to domestic terrorist groups.
- It is important to remember, among others:
 - The 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing;
 - Gangs such as MS- 13, terrorizing communities across the country
 - Neo-Nazis and white supremacists;
 - Issue-driven violent extremists such as the Animal Liberation Front; Earth Liberation Front
- In fact, we recognize that there are a range of threats to our nation including from non- al-Qaeda inspired extremist groups.
- Today we're going to talk briefly about how violent extremism groups use similar techniques to recruit individuals. Then, we're going to discuss one form of violent extremism, inspired by al-Qaeda and recently expanded by ISIL. We do so because there are a concerning number of individuals leaving their homes in countries around the world, including ours, to join ISIL.

Background:

According to studies by the University of Maryland START, between 2000 and 2013, the vast majority of attacks in the homeland were carried out by environmental and animal rights violent extremist groups.⁸

Known Perpetrators Attacks 2000-2013⁹

• Unaffiliated Individual(s)	64
• Earth Liberation Front	60
• Animal Liberation Front	42
• Anti-Abortion Activists	15
• Coalition to Save the Preserves	8
• Al-Qaida	4

⁷ <http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/07/us/who-is-mohammed-hamzah-khan/>

⁸ Erin Miller, START Research Highlight, "Terrorist Attacks in the U.S. Between 1970 and 2013: Data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD)," November 2014.

⁹ Erin Miller, START Research Highlight, "Terrorist Attacks in the U.S. Between 1970 and 2013: Data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD)," November 2014.

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• Neo-Nazi Group	2
• Revolutionary Cells-Animal Liberation Brigade 2	
• White Extremists	2
• Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula	1
• Anarchists	1
• The Justice Department	1
• Ku Klux Klan	1
• Minutemen American Defense	1
• Revenge of the Trees	1
• Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan	1
• Veterans for Non-Religious Memorials	1

Meanwhile, DHS recently surveyed several hundred police officers, asking them what they perceived to be the biggest terrorist threat. The report, released in July, found that the greatest fear was from "sovereign citizens" - loosely-affiliated individuals who reject most laws at federal, state and local levels.¹⁰

- Individuals belonging to the sovereign citizen movement have been responsible for a spate of cop killings in recent years.
- The DHS report also cites militia groups, racist skinheads, neo-Nazis and both animal rights and environmentalist violent extremists as ranking highly among law enforcement's fears.

Slide 5: Case Study: Robert Talbot Jr. (USPER)

Scene Setter: *With this slide, we provide a case study of a Patriot violent extremist to highlight the similarities between his activities and those we'll review later on that are related to Al-Qaeda and ISIL. We focus on Robert Talbot (USPER) because of his extensive online activity which resembles AQ/ISIL online recruitment and because he was targeting Mosques – which is meant to convey to communities that we also care about this type of threat, which affects them directly. Lastly, if we are asked about FBI's use of informants we can refer back to Talbot to show how the FBI uses such techniques for all types of VEs, not just Islamic extremist ones.*

Key Points:

The case of Robert Talbot Jr. is an example of non-al-Qaeda inspired violent extremism that shares similarities with al-Qaeda in recruitment, use of the internet, and absolutist beliefs. Robert Talbot Jr. was part of a radical group that saw the federal government as their primary enemy.¹¹

- He propagated his views on his Facebook page (called American Insurgent Movement (AIM)) and actively recruited others online to join;
- Wrote a Manifesto in which he described AIM as "a Pre-Constitutionalist Community that offers those who seek True patriotism and are looking for absolute Freedom by doing the Will of God. Who want to restore America Pre-Constitutionally and look forward to stopping the Regime with action by bloodshed";
- Plotted to use C-4 explosives and weapons to kill police officers, rob banks, and blow up government buildings and mosques;

¹⁰ <http://m.theweek.com/article/index/270443/forget-dirty-bombs-and-cyberwar-here-are-3-threats-that-should-truly-terrify-you>

¹¹ <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2012/spring/the-year-in-hate-and-extremism>

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- FBI agents swept in and arrested Talbot while he was on his way to the heist that he had desperately hoped would fund his revolution.¹² FBI had been tracking his activities online.¹³

Background:

Internet:

- The FBI opened its investigation into Talbot in August 2013, apparently after finding Talbot's Facebook posts searching for "like-minded" recruits to join his cause.
- After setting up a Facebook page called American Insurgent Movement (AIM), Talbot allegedly sought to recruit five or six like-minded people who wanted "to restore America Pre-Constitutionally and look forward to stopping the Regime with action by bloodshed."
- He described his movement as "a Pre-Constitutionalist Community that offers those who seek True patriotism and are looking for absolute Freedom by doing the Will of God who want to restore America Pre-Constitutionally and look forward to stopping the Regime with action by bloodshed."
- He himself was radicalized partially by watching anti-government videos online.
- After using Facebook to recruit three followers, who really were undercover agents and an informant, Talbot encouraged them to "start watching violent war movies to mentally prepare for killing people."¹⁴

Operational activities:

- He said online that he wanted to rob an armored truck so he could buy the "larger weapons" he needed to launch his movement. Shortly thereafter, Talbot began conducting routine surveillance on a local Bank of America branch in March, watching the cash-carriers come and go, according to court records. This was to be the first phase of his larger scheme to kill police officers and blow up mosques and government buildings.
- Undercover agents claimed he started carrying around a Glock 31 and a fully-loaded 15-round magazine in his backpack when he met with them. In late March Talbot sent \$500 to someone he thought was a black market arms dealer (in reality, the FBI) to buy C-4 explosives. He provided his recruits (in reality, undercover agents) maps of the armored truck route. Talbot planned to blast the truck doors with explosives before jumping inside and executing the guard, according to records. On March 26, Talbot took undercover agents on a three-hour tour to trace the armored truck's path and plan the heist, according to court records.¹⁵
- The next day, undercover agents met him at a Houston storage unit. After again going over his plan to rob the truck and execute the driver, Talbot read them his manifesto: "We must rebel. There is no other option no. Blood and bullets are the only two things that will change this world, short of divine action."¹⁶

¹² Michael Barajas, "American Insurgent Movement Leader Pleads Guilty to Plot to Overthrow Government, Rob Banks and Blow up Mosques," Houston Press, October 3, 2014.

http://blogs.houstonpress.com/news/2014/10/american_insurgent_movement_leader_pleads_guilty_to_plot_to_overthrow_government_rob_banks_and_blow.php

¹³ <http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2014/03/28/fbi-smashes-alleged-radical-right-terror-plot-in-texas/>

¹⁴ <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2014/fall/Man-Arrested-After-Allegedly-Recruiting>

¹⁵ <http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2014/03/28/fbi-smashes-alleged-radical-right-terror-plot-in-texas/>

¹⁶ <http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2014/03/28/fbi-smashes-alleged-radical-right-terror-plot-in-texas/>

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Slide 6: Screen shot of ‘White Pride’ Propaganda on YouTube¹⁷

Scene Setter: *This slide is meant to convey how easy it is to find material online for any type of violent extremist messages, including white pride, a term used by white supremacist groups.*

Slide 7: All Violent Extremist Groups

Scene Setter: *This slide is meant to continue the theme about how all forms of violent extremism are similar, but focusing specifically on their tactics of recruitment and how they entice individuals to join their cause.*

Key Points:

Similarities between violent extremist groups

Regardless of ideology, all violent extremism share similar ways of attracting recruits. While these groups may have completely different agendas and beliefs, they all recruit online and target our youth.

- **Recruitment:** Recruitment begins at an early age (indoctrination) and occurs increasingly online.
- **Target youth:** They focus on finding the young, the lost, and the vulnerable.
- **Community of Interest:** They provide a sense of belonging, of being a part of something bigger. They offer a community of interest that responds to their grievances.
- **Violent action:** They sell an absolutist worldview in which violent action is the only effective solution, highlighted as a duty.

Slide 8: Why Would Someone Join a Violent Extremist Group?

Scene Setter: *This slide is meant to inform the audience of the radicalization to violence process.*

Background:¹⁸

The presenter should be familiar with the radicalization and mobilization process when giving this presentation. The following can serve as a baseline foundation from which to speak:

- **Definition:** Radicalization refers to the process by which individuals come to accept a violent extremist narrative and conclude that non state violence and their participation in it is necessary and justified to affect political or societal change.
- **Radicalization** is not a linear process. It involves the interplay of personal, group, community, sociopolitical, and ideological factors. No single factor accounts for why one individual radicalizes while another does not.

¹⁷ Open Source Search, “White Pride”, YouTube

¹⁸ NCTC Product, “Radicalization Dynamics: A Primer,” June 2012 (UNCLASSIFIED)

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- It's important to note two caveats: (1) no single factor leads to radicalization and (2) a person may have some or all of these factors and not become violent. Violence occurs when the individual mobilizes to action.
- **Definition:** Mobilization refers to the process by which radicalized individuals take action to prepare for or engage in violence or material support for violence to advance their cause.
 - Some of the factors that come into play during the mobilization process are: (1) the individual's willingness and capacity to act, and (2) the perceived availability of likely targets.
 - Action occurs if the mobilized individual does not encounter inhibiting factors. Changes in capacity or opportunity may inhibit action. Some individuals who are inhibited at this stage may remain mobilized and seek alternate opportunities to act, while others may abandon their plans to act.

Slide 9: Forming the Black and White Narrative

Scene Setter: *This slide outlines the six elements of any violent extremist narrative, and highlights how they apply to Al-Qa'ida's narrative. Also highlighted are ways to weaken the narrative by deconstructing one or more of its elements.*

Key Points:

Violent extremist ideologies typically are made up of six core assertions that violent extremists use to rhetorically justify violence and spur people to action. Generally, all six elements are necessary to persuade, radicalize, and mobilize people to become violent extremists: the loss or removal of one or more elements collapses the argument and undercuts the appeal of the ideology.

- The core structural elements of an extremist ideology specify that the world has gone wrong because of the actions of an enemy who hates or threatens what is good. Now is the time when violence is necessary to prevent catastrophe. If we stay true to our righteous course, we will achieve victory.
- This narrative creates and justifies the logic extremists use to continue espousing hatred, and ultimately violence by dehumanizing the Other and positioning them as an "enemy."

One of the goals in prevention is to break down this narrative, which is something both the USG, but most definitely, the Community can do.

- This narrative presents an overly simplified view that can be broken down by adding complexity and highlighting inconsistencies. Weakening any one of the six elements can cause the entire framework of the narrative to fall apart.

Background:

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ELEMENT	MESSAGE	WHAT THE ELEMENT DOES	ELEMENT IS NECESSARY BECAUSE
Decline	<i>The world has gone wrong.</i>	Interprets someone's world as decimated or in jeopardy.	Without <i>Decline</i> , the violent extremist sees no need to rescue their world.
Two Camps	<i>Our enemy hates us and all that is good.</i>	Identifies and demonizes an enemy who is to blame for the decline, and depicts those who resist that enemy as heroic.	Without <i>Two Camps</i> , there is no enemy to combat.
Crisis Point	<i>We must act now.</i>	Creates a sense of panic that action must be taken now to save that world, and says all one holds dear now hangs in the balance.	Without <i>Crisis Point</i> , there is no sense that immediate action is required.
Method	<i>Violence is necessary.</i>	Provides the appropriate—even heroic—way to resist.	Without <i>Method</i> , there is no clearly defined way to resist the enemy.
Danger of Contamination	<i>We must stay true to our course.</i>	Prevents compromise or moderation of extremist views by depicting them as treason or complicity with the enemy, or dangerous to the movement's success, the salvation of the world, or one's own soul.	Without <i>Danger of Contamination</i> , dialogue and compromise with perceived enemies is allowable to reach goals.
Reward	<i>We will defeat our enemy and achieve what we want as a movement and as individuals.</i>	Provides a motivating image of victory or paradise for the movement or individual.	Without <i>Reward</i> , there is no goal to work toward.

Slide 10: Example of the Narrative (video)

Scene Setter: For this slide, we show a video to illustrate Al-Qaeda's black and white narrative and how it calls for violent action. The goal is to reinforce the points made in the previous slide by showing an actual example of the narrative and then discussing its key elements. A key point to emphasis is that these videos are in English which is meant to buttress the argument that this recruiting is coming into their homes and targeting their children here in the U.S. not just overseas. We also emphasize to the audience how easy these videos are to find online. We also discuss commonly-held grievances that AQ exploits to recruit Americans and show how violent extremist groups blur the line between legitimate grievances and illegitimate violent responses to those grievances.

Key Points:

The English language video was created by Al-Qa'ida to attract Westerners to their cause. It presents the United States as a ruthless and aggressive enemy to be fought, and uses the words of an American culture icon—Malcolm X—to justify violent struggle. It is sophisticated both in its media quality as well as in its content.¹⁹

¹⁹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/al-qaeda/10687163/Al-Qaeda-unveils-new-magazine-aimed-at-Western-jihadis.html>

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- Released in March 2014, this is meant to be a promotional video for a new English language magazine called “Resurgence” created by Al-Qa’ida²⁰
- The video *twists* audio from a 1965 Malcolm X speech – to justifying violence including the quote “talk the language that they understand” — with images of U.S. soldiers, militants, a purported attack on a U.S. base in Afghanistan and the Boston Marathon bombings²¹
- This video represents how much of terrorist media exploits grievances, using compelling images, to convince audiences it is justified in using violence.

Slide 11: Foreign Fighters: Then

Scene Setter: *In this slide, we introduce the fact that the foreign fighter threat is not something new to the US, but in fact this has happened before – specifically with regards to recruiting for Al-Shabaab. We provide background on this occurrence before delving into key case studies to humanize the boys who were tricked into joining Al-Shabaab.²² This is the crux of the Community Awareness Briefing. It’s storytelling. When looking at the homeland threat, Government sometimes talks in the abstract, X number of plots since 9/11, X% focusing on military attacks, etc. Those are all important numbers but we’ve found through presenting throughout the country that numbers may not resonate with communities. Telling a story does. At the end of the day, this presentation is intended to make people aware of the threat so that if the situation arise, they (the bystanders), may be able to intervene. The individuals who have joined violent extremist organizations were at some point in their life, ‘reachable’. The Government’s preference is that we reach these individuals before they make a decision that they can’t come back from. We want to prevent other parents, friends, husbands, wives from ‘losing’ their loved ones. So we tell stories of those who have left, in attempt to better contextualize and humanize a very complicated issue.*

Key Points:

Minnesota Boys: Between 2007 and 2009, twenty young men, several of which are pictured here, left Minneapolis to fight for Al-Shabaab in Somalia, taking the Muslim community in Minnesota by surprise. According to various sources, at least half a dozen have been reported killed while at least ten have been indicted on terrorism-related charges.

1) Mohamoud Ali Hassan: (top left) Voted “most friendly” by graduating seniors at Roosevelt High School in 2006, Hassan went on to study engineering at the University of Minnesota. He would come home between university classes and take care of his 90 year old grandmother in their Cedar-Riverside apartment in Minneapolis. Known as “Bashir” to friends, Hassan left for Somalia in November 2008. Family members learned he was killed in September 2009 in Mogadishu.

²⁰ <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/mar/10/al-qaeda-launch-english-language-web-magazine-resu/>

²¹ <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/mar/10/al-qaeda-launch-english-language-web-magazine-resu/>

²² DOJ Press Release, Terror Charges Unsealed in Minnesota Against Eight Defendants, Justice Department Announces, November 23, 2009 <http://www.fbi.gov/minneapolis/press-releases/2009/mp112309.htm>

DOJ Press Release, 14 Indicted for Supporting Al-Shabaab, August 5, 2010 <http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2010/august/al-shabaab>
NYtimes, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America”, July 11, 2009 -

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/us/12somalis.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

CNN, Family Learned over Internet that Son Killed, July 24, 2010 <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/24/somalia.americans/>

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2) Mustafa Ali Salat: (top middle) A student at Harding High School in St. Paul, Salat was 17 when he left for Somalia in August 2008. He was indicted in August 2009 on terror-related charges. He is believed to be at large.

3) Burhan Hassan: (top right) A student at Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis, Hassan dreamed of becoming a doctor. He was 17 when he left for Somalia on Nov. 4, 2008. He called his family and said he wanted to come home. He was shot in the head, his family learned of his death by seeing a picture of his body on the internet. He was killed one day before his Roosevelt High School classmates graduated.

4) Abdisalan Hussein Ali: (bottom left) The Edison High School graduate attended the University of Minnesota, where he sold designer sneakers to help support his family. He was 19 when he left for Somalia on Nov. 4, 2008.

5) Jamal Bana: (bottom middle) Bana studied engineering at Minneapolis Community college. He was the only person in his family with a driver's license. He drove his mother to work, siblings to school, and took care of his bed-ridden father. He was 19 when he left for Somalia in November 2008. Family members learned on July 11, 2009, that he was killed in Mogadishu.

6) Troy Kastigar: (bottom right) A Muslim convert, Kastigar was seen at community basketball games and at a Minneapolis mosque where most of the other fighters worshipped. He was 27 when he left for Somalia in November 2008. His family was told in September 2009 that he was dead.

Slide 12: Recent Trends

Scene Setter: *In this slide, we talk about foreign fighters now. We bring up the issue of teenagers (under 18) around the world who have left their homes—including a growing number of girls—and travelled to Iraq and Syria to join terrorism organizations. We'll talk about their stories and the realities of what happened once they get there, including how some regret their decisions but are unable to go back home. We will also talk about the growing threat of these individuals committing acts in their country of origin; if/when they are intercepted.*

Key Points:

List of known minors (to be read out loud for full effect as a list)

Austria	Samra	16
	Sabina	15
Australia	Abdullah	17
Belgium	Younes	13
France	Nora	15
	Sahra	17
	Soukaïna	15
Germany	Sarah	15
UK	Zahra	16
	Salma	16

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US Three girls 15, 15, 17

Austria - Samra Kesinovic, 16, and Sabina Selimovic, 15

Samra and Sabina were two average teenage girls growing up in Austria. You would expect them doing average teenage things — so it might come as a surprise to learn they ran away from home in April to join ISIS.

- Samra and Sabina both come from Bosnia refugee families who settled in Austria during the 1990s. They both converted to Islam and began trying to convert their friends.
- According to the head of their school, they were suspected to be behind vandalism incidents in which tables and walls had the words ‘I love Al Qaeda’ written on them.
- Before they disappeared, the teens informed friends that they were headed for Syria. Soon thereafter, they posted images of themselves holding AK47s surrounded by armed men on social media.
- In September, they relayed a message to loved ones that they wish to escape. However, because of Austria’s laws, once they have left the country, even if they then changed their minds, it is almost impossible to get them back without serious legal repercussions. They have been warned they face up to five years in jail, even as minors, if they return to Vienna.²³²⁴²⁵²⁶

In September, two additional girls from Vienna — ages 16 and 14 — recently were nabbed trying to sneak out of the country and join ISIL. They were caught when the mother of a third friend who was supposed to go with them to Syria grew suspicious when she noticed all the luggage her daughter had packed.²⁷

UK - Zahra and Salma Halane, 16 (twins)

Zahra and Salma are sixteen year old twins who grew up in Manchester. They were planning to become doctors, having just finished their first year of college. In June, they disappeared overnight from their home.²⁸

- Zahra and Salma come from a family of ten, and their parents are of Somali descent.
- It is believed they were radicalized over the internet.
- Zahra is believed to have been married and is active on social media, posting pictures and tweets that support ISIS, such as a tweet that read ‘I support the executions of Syrian soldiers. It’s self defence.’
- Their father Ibrahim and mother Khadra travelled to Syria to try to bring them home, but without success.²⁹

Australia - Abdullah Elmir, 17

²³ <http://nypost.com/2014/09/10/gun-wielding-austrian-teens-trying-to-join-ISIL-recruit-others/>

²⁴ <http://m.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/10/the-teenage-fans-of-ISIL/381736/>

²⁵ <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/522671/Islamic-State-Samra-Kesinovic-Sabina-Selimovic>

²⁶ <http://www.ryot.org/photos-samra-kesinovic-sabina-selimovic-ISIL-poster-girls-runaways/807773>

²⁷ <http://nypost.com/2014/09/10/gun-wielding-austrian-teens-trying-to-join-ISIL-recruit-others/>

²⁸ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2749939/The-British-jihadi-bride-hell-bent-murder-whining-lost-cat-Terror-twin-tweets-fears-missing-kitten-posting-pictures-holding-AK47.html#ixzz3HSlvpAug>

²⁹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2749939/The-British-jihadi-bride-hell-bent-murder-whining-lost-cat-Terror-twin-tweets-fears-missing-kitten-posting-pictures-holding-AK47.html#ixzz3HSlvpAug>

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Seventeen year old Abdullah Elmir went to school at East Hills Boys High School in Western Sydney and was a quiet student who liked video games. He had a job at the butcher shop. In June, Abdullah told his family that he was going on a fishing trip with a friend. Shortly afterwards, he admitted to his family that he was in Turkey and about to "cross the border". He was traveling with another teen, a 16 yr-old named Feiz, but Feiz's family intercepted him in Istanbul and convinced him to travel with him to Lebanon where he was counselled.³⁰³¹³²³³³⁴³⁵

- Abdullah was the son of an Australian-born mother and Lebanese-born father and grew up in Western Sydney. Elmir came from a good Lebanese-Australian family who did not hold extreme religious views.
- Before travelling to the Middle East, Elmir had a love of theatre and last year, wrote about looking forward to more great performances.
- His classmates are shocked by the video and the teen's choice, and saddened by the possibility that he may never come home. He is unlikely to be allowed to return to Australia under the country's new anti-terrorism laws.³⁶³⁷
- Meanwhile, the father of Feiz has said that his son is now back at school and settling back into his life.³⁸³⁹⁴⁰⁴¹

Threat from failed travel

- Lastly, not pictured here, is the disturbing case of a 15-year old from France who wanted to travel to Syria but was intercepted by French authorities. She has since told the authorities that once her recruiters realized she was unlikely to be able to leave the country anytime soon, they began pressing her to strike at home against Jews. She told them she had begun looking for weapons and targets.⁴²

Slide 13: Example of the ISIL Narrative (video)

³⁰ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/terror/australian-teen-abdullah-elmir-is-new-public-face-of-islamic-state/story-fnpdbcmu-1227097275395?nk=cde078974f2bfa3e39a77714d946e1b0>

³¹ <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/sydney-teen-jihadist-abdullah-elmir-in-second-is-video-as-school-parents-share-concerns-20141028-11cpsg.html#ixzz3HS5jpgna>

³² <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/sydney-teen-jihadist-abdullah-elmir-in-second-is-video-as-school-parents-share-concerns-20141028-11cpsg.html#ixzz3HS6GQgSJ>

³³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11179934/Australian-teenager-in-Isil-video-an-idiot-says-family.html>

³⁴ <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/bankstown-butcher-now-a-killer-in-waiting-jihadist-abdullah-elmir-worked-at-a-butcher-in-bankstown/story-fni0cx12-1227100409185?nk=e7bd28a0c9ad18313a529f3957daedf2>

³⁵ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-22/abdullah-elmir-friends-defend-sydney-teens-decision-to-join-is/5834172>

³⁶ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/terror/australian-teen-abdullah-elmir-is-new-public-face-of-islamic-state/story-fnpdbcmu-1227097275395?nk=cde078974f2bfa3e39a77714d946e1b0>

³⁷ <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/sydney-teen-jihadist-abdullah-elmir-in-second-is-video-as-school-parents-share-concerns-20141028-11cpsg.html#ixzz3HS5jpgna>

³⁸ <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/bankstown-butcher-now-a-killer-in-waiting-jihadist-abdullah-elmir-worked-at-a-butcher-in-bankstown/story-fni0cx12-1227100409185?nk=e7bd28a0c9ad18313a529f3957daedf2>

³⁹ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-22/abdullah-elmir-friends-defend-sydney-teens-decision-to-join-is/5834172>

⁴⁰ <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/rescue-mission-to-save-the-ginger-jihadi-thwarted-at-11th-hour-20141025-11bn1t.html#ixzz3K1Ui9PbG>

⁴¹ <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/rescue-mission-to-save-the-ginger-jihadi-thwarted-at-11th-hour-20141025-11bn1t.html>

⁴² http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/02/world/europe/a-french-town-reels-after-teenage-girl-vanishes-apparently-to-join-jihadists.html?_r=0

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Scene Setter: *In this slide, we present an ISIL propaganda video that has gone viral and features the Australian teenager from the previous slide, Abdullah Elmir. The intention is to show how ISIL is exploiting Western youth for propaganda because they recognize how they will draw media attention.*

Key Points:

Let's return back to the case of 17-year old Abdullah from Western Sydney. Unlike his friend Feiz who was intercepted on his way to Syria, Abdullah managed to make it to Syria and within the first four months, was featured in an ISIS propaganda video. In it, Abdullah — identified as “Abu Khaled from Australia” — stands clutching an assault rifle while delivering a 90-second speech with between 70 and 100 heavily armed fighters stand behind him.

- He claims the group will eventually take control of the US and UK, and directs a threat to Tony Abbott that Islamic State will also take its fight to Australian shores.
- Since then, Abdullah has appeared in a second video.⁴³⁴⁴

Background:

Some themes to highlight that are in the video:

- Us vs them
- Warped religious overtones
- Sense of belonging, greater cause, heroism
- Using foreign fighters as prop

Slide 14: Attempted Travel to Syria / Iraq

Scene Setter: *In this slide, we shift to focus exclusively on ISIL and how it has become the newest foreign fighter problem. Using case studies of Americans who have traveled abroad, we highlight the similarities and differences between the aforementioned Minneapolis example, and now.*

Key Points:

- More than 150 Americans have tried to travel to Iraq and Syria to fight, along with thousands from other parts of the world—teenagers, young people, those who are most vulnerable.⁴⁵
- The al-Qa'ida linked Al Nusra Front and ISIL are two of the designated terrorist organizations that are actively recruiting foreign fighters using the internet in Syria and Iraq.⁴⁶
- They have a sophisticated, pervasive, targeted recruitment campaign online.⁴⁷

Foreign Fighters from US to Syria/Iraq:

Note: The following individuals are undergoing various stages of prosecution and are all presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Abdella Ahmad Tounisi (18, Chicago, IL – US Citizen): Tounisi was charged with trying to join a terrorist organization. According to the complaint, Tounisi allegedly searched online for the legality of

⁴³ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-21/australian-is-fighter-threatens-tony-abbott-in-video/5830040>

⁴⁴ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-21/australian-is-fighter-threatens-tony-abbott-in-video/5830040>

⁴⁵ NCTC Director Matt Olsen testimony to Congress, FBI Comey public statements, DOJ released material support numbers

⁴⁶ NCTC Director Matt Olsen testimony to Congress, FBI Comey public statements, DOJ released material support numbers

⁴⁷ NCTC Director Matt Olsen testimony to Congress, FBI Comey public statements, DOJ released material support numbers

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traveling to Syria, information about travel from Chicago to Syria through Turkey, allegedly obtained a new passport, and, allegedly made online contact with an individual Tounisi believed to be a recruiter for Jabhat al Nusrah. He also allegedly sought advice on travel from Istanbul to the Turkish city of Gaziantep. Tounisi purchased an airline ticket from Chicago to Istanbul and on April 18, the undercover employee provided Tounisi with a bus ticket for travel from Istanbul to Gaziantep.⁴⁸

Basit Javed Sheikh (29, Raleigh, NC – Permanent Resident): Sheikh was charged with allegedly attempting to provide material support and resources to Jabhat al-Nusrah. According to the complaint, Sheikh wanted to provide al Nusrah “logistics, media, fight too, God willing.” Sheikh purchased a one-way ticket with a final destination of Lebanon.⁴⁹

Shannon Conley (19, Denver, CO – US Citizen): Conley was charged with allegedly attempting to provide material support to a terrorist organization.⁵⁰

Mohammad Hassan Hamdan (22, Dearborn, MI – US Citizen): Federal agents arrested and charged a Detroit-area man who had intentions of traveling to the Middle East to fight Syrian rebels with Hezbollah. Mohammad, 22, of Dearborn was taken into custody at Detroit Metropolitan Airport after passing through security but before boarding his flight. An agent with the FBI Detroit Joint Terrorism Task Force said in a criminal complaint a source recorded multiple conversations with Hamdan, in which he allegedly spoke candidly about his desires and plans to assist Hezbollah in the war in Syria.⁵¹

Nicholas Teasant (20, Lodi, CA – US Citizen): Teasant was charged with attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization. According to the complaint, Teasant allegedly traveled to the Canadian border with the intent of continuing to travel to Syria to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.⁵²

Akbar Jihad Jordan and Avin Marsalis Brown (Both 21, Raleigh, NC – US Citizens): A Federal criminal complaint says Jordan and Avin Marsalis Brown allegedly had plans to kill non-Muslims in Syria or Yemen. The federal documents show a year’s worth of conversations between the two men and FBI informants. The informant says Jordan allegedly possessed an AK-47, a bullet proof vest, swords and other weapons - some of which were seized from his apartment.^{53,54}

Slide 15: Exploitation of the Humanitarian Crisis (Pictures)

⁴⁸ FBI, “FBI Arrests Suburban Chicago Man on Charge of Supporting Terrorism Overseas” <http://www.fbi.gov/chicago/press-releases/2013/fbi-arrests-suburban-chicago-man-on-charge-of-supporting-terrorism-overseas>

⁴⁹ FBI, “Individual Charged with Attempt to Provide Material Support to a Foreign Terrorist Organization” <http://www.fbi.gov/charlotte/press-releases/2013/individual-charged-with-attempt-to-provide-material-support-to-a-foreign-terrorist-organization>

⁵⁰ http://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/local-news/19-year-old-colorado-woman-shannon-maureen-conley-charged-with-aiding-terrorist-group-fbi-says07022014_ <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/colo-teen-attempted-syria-jihad-fbi-article-1.1852873#ixzz37fc53Per>

⁵¹ <http://www.myfoxdetroit.com/story/24999980/detroit-area-man-accused-of-supporting-hezbollah>

⁵² http://www.justice.gov/usao/cae/news/docs/2014/2014_03/03-17-14Teasant.html

⁵³ http://www.justice.gov/usao/cae/news/docs/2014/2014_03/Teasant%20Complaint%20.pdf

⁵⁴ <http://ftpcontent5.worldnow.com/wncn/pdf/raid.pdf>

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Scene Setter: *In this slide, we focus on another motivation of individuals enticed to travel to Syria/Iraq to fight, that of aiding in the humanitarian crisis. This crisis in Syria continues to mobilize huge swathes of individuals who want to take action to help the aggrieved Syrian population.*⁵⁵

Key Points:

- Especially in the beginning when the majority of foreign fighters were going to Syria, the main motivator was the desire to take action against the atrocities committed by the Assad regime. Many individuals felt a sense of duty to support the Syrian opposition, which was exploited by violent extremist groups such as the Al-Nusra Front and ISIL.
- Now, although the mainstream Western media no longer focuses so much on the humanitarian crisis in Syria, the images of the atrocities being committed continue to dominate on social media and motivate individuals to take action.^{56,57}

Pictures:

- *Devastation of barrel-bombing Aleppo [Reuters]*
- *Zaatari, now Jordan's 4th largest city with approximately 145,000 people, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees [UN]*
- *Refugees from the Yarmouk Camp, in Syria, waiting in a line to receive essentials [Reuters]*

Slide 16: Exploitation of Thrill Seeking (Pictures)

Scene Setter: *In this slide, we focus on thrill seeking as a motivation for individuals who go abroad to fight in Syria/Iraq. We show how this is being pushed out through social media, especially through the phenomenon of "selfies" that promote the message of adventure, action, and thrills in Syria/Iraq.*

Key Points:

- Thrill seeking is a big motivator for individuals going abroad. There is a growing number of individuals who are going to Syria/Iraq looking for an adventure, to fight and be a warrior/hero, or simply to engage in violence, and do not necessarily do so for ideological reasons. This message of the "fun" of fighting is being propagated through selfies individuals on the ground are sending and posting on their online accounts.⁵⁸

Slide 17: The Media as a Weapon

Scene Setter: *This slide and the picture⁵⁹ it shows are meant to reinforce that terrorist organizations, like ISIL, see media as important as actual weapons. During the next couple slides we explore this theme extensively, focusing on the ubiquitous nature of violent extremist propaganda and information online. We talk about sophisticated strategy and techniques used by these groups to rapidly expand the reach of their messages through common social media sites, messaging groups, common hashtags and other specific techniques of dissemination—taking advantage of young people's reliance on the Internet for*

⁵⁵ These are the various themes identified in DOJ Indictments and Criminal complaints of HVEs (Harroun, Sheikh, Tounsii, Teausant) who attempted or did travel to Syria/Iraq.

⁵⁶ <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/page/world/timeline-unrest-in-syria/207/>

⁵⁷ <http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/20/world/syria-torture-photos-amanpour/index.html?sr=tw012014syria2p>

⁵⁸ http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/syrian-jihadist-selfies-tell-us-a-lot-about-their-war

⁵⁹ <http://chechclear.tumblr.com/>

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information and socialization. We also discuss how groups use the same means of communication to distribute advice and guidance for travel, bomb recipes, and other operational and tactical details. This demonstrates that the online environment goes beyond rhetoric and into actual facilitation and operational activities. The most important part of this section is to demonstrate how easy it is, though simple searches and common internet practices, to be drawn in to the world of the extremist narrative.

Key Points:

Democratization of social media

- Recently there has been a marked shift in online recruitment and radicalization. Previously, terrorist web sites were primarily restricted from the general public. Al-Qa'ida propaganda was limited to select web forums and pre-approved web videos. As a result, a potential recruit had to search out and befriend members of radical forums in order to be accepted and subsequently gain access to the full functionality of the sites.
- Today, however, with the popularization of social networking sites, individuals who are becoming radicalized have the ability to find like-minded individuals more easily. In addition, these social networking sites allow for a level of interaction and information sharing that was not feasible even a few years ago.
- Incendiary materials – including videos and lectures – are increasingly found not only on obscure web sites but also on some of the most widely accessed sites in the world – including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. The result has been a pronounced increase in the volume of extremist material online, and a corresponding increase in the number of individuals who are viewing this material.⁶⁰

Slide 18: ISIL: Evolution of Messaging

Scene Setter: *In this slide, we transition to focus on ISIL for the rest of the presentation. We highlight the main similarities and differences between the AQ and ISIL narratives/worldviews and use of media. We want to convey why ISIL's specific message and use of social media is more compelling to an even wider breadth of audiences than even Al-Qa'ida was.*

Key Points:

- Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates such as Al-Shabaab had compelling narratives and were packaging their beliefs using innovative uses of media and English language. At the time, they were cutting edge.
- However, in some ways, ISIL's narrative is even more compelling. They exploit new grievances, especially those held by younger Sunni audiences, and contain different strategic objectives. They urge individuals of all backgrounds—including increasing females--to come be a part of a larger cause, which we assess is attractive to US-based violent extremists, who often seek belonging, validation, identity, or a sense of purpose.⁶¹

⁶⁰ U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. Zachary Chesser: A Case Study in Online Islamist Radicalization and Its Meaning for the Threat of Homegrown Terrorism
[www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CHESSER%20FINAL%20REPORT\(1\)2.pdf](http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CHESSER%20FINAL%20REPORT(1)2.pdf)

⁶¹ "What are ISIL's Narratives and how do they diverge from al-Qaeda?" Monitor 360, November 12, 2014. <http://monitor-360.com/blog/what-are-isils-narratives-and-how-do-they-diverge-from-al-qaeda/>

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- They have also used social media to a much more sophisticated degree than Al-Qa'ida ever has, including more diversified platforms and the use of crowd-sourced propaganda.⁶²

Background

Main themes of ISIL's Narrative and how they differ from Al-Qa'ida: ⁶³

- **“Fighting the Enemy at Home”** — identifies the primary enemy of pious Sunni Muslims as incumbent Arab regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. In their perception, all regimes—whether Sunni or Shia—are considered apostate and fair targets for military action.
- **“Fighting the Far Enemy”** — identifies Western powers, such as the United States and the European Union, as villains that oppress Muslims worldwide. From a tactical perspective, however, experts noted that this narrative is primarily used by ISIL as a rhetorical instrument—potentially to boost recruitment—and that the primary targets of its current military aggression are regional rulers.
- **“Glorifying the Caliphate”** — depicts current territory held by Islamic State fighters as an Islamic Caliphate. This narrative differentiates ISIL from other violent extremist groups, such as al-Qaeda, which never aimed to establish a caliphate immediately. Most groups have been conflicted on its necessity. This narrative leverages feelings of economic disenfranchisement and social exclusion of Muslim communities in the West to promote the caliphate as a place where they have a purpose and are part of a broader transnational movement. This narrative appears to be much more effective in driving recruitment than, for example, al-Qaeda's call for suicide bombers.
- **“Determining Who is a Real Muslim”** — ISIL advances the notion that its caliph, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, has vast religious authority and can decide who is a Muslim. Those with ISIL are Muslims and those against are considered kafir, or non-believers, and therefore subject to a variety of penalties, even death.

Slide 19: ISIL's Use of Social Media

Scene Setter: *This slide provides an overview of how ISIL uses social media to propagate their message.*

Key Points:

The use of social media by violent extremists has intensified in the past year with the rise of ISIL. ISIL has a keen sense of how to attract their target demographics, keep them engaged, and spread their messaging and news via social media to highly interested individuals.^{64,65,66,67}

⁶² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/11208796/How-social-media-is-helping-Islamic-State-to-spread-its-poison.html>

⁶⁴ International Centre for the Study of Radicalism, <http://icsr.info/2014/04/icsr-insight-inspires-syrian-foreign-fighters/>

⁶⁵ http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/29/a-dutch-jihadist-in-syria-speaks-and-blogs/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=1

⁶⁶ EUR2014041645611269 London *BBC Online* in English 15 Apr 14 Middle East

⁶⁷ <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/ISIS-iraq-twitter-social-media-strategy/372856/>

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- **Official media:** the ISIS official media account, which publishes all its video releases, ISIS province accounts, which publish live feed info and pictures, the ISIS mujahideen accounts, where fighters talk about their experience and daily life, and ISIS supporters, who counter Western, Shia, and tyrants' propaganda and lies," says ISIS supporter. "Social media is good for building a network of connections and recruitment," he added. "Fighters talk about experiences in battle and encourage people to rise, and supporters defend and translate ISIS statements." This approach-- a controlled central message, but a diversity of voices — seems to have worked well.
- **Crowd sourced / DIY:** For the first time ever, foreign fighters are using social media to document their activities in real time. The official Twitter accounts of FTOs are less important as sources of info than "disseminator accounts" run by sympathetic individuals who lend moral and political support to those involved in the conflict. These accounts spread real-time information from the battlefield, publish links to new videos and official statements, and share photographs of battles, equipment and meetings.
- **Variety of platforms:** There are question-and-answer sessions, chats, pictures and videos on Twitter®, Facebook®, Tumblr®, AskFM®, and apps such as Whatsapp® and Kik®.
- **Selfies:** Youngsters post pictures of themselves in the desert or in hotel courtyards in Syria, in shades, brandishing Kalashnikovs and inviting friends to join them.
- **English language:** ISIL posted its first English-language violent extremist messaging on Twitter® in October and November 2013; these were simple posters and graphics showing ISIL fighters with quotes emphasizing the "virtues" of seeking martyrdom. Since then, its English language content has proliferated.
- **Hashtag campaigns:** Following the start of US military air strikes last month, ISIL supporters launched a Twitter® campaign threatening retaliation against the Homeland and US interests overseas. Thousands of tweets in support of ISIL appeared on Twitter® in both English and Arabic in response to the US bombing campaign. When ISIS fighters stormed Mosul and the ISIL supporters put out almost 40,000 tweets in one day. Several featured original and creative use of graphics—including a photo of the ISIL flag in front of the White House—and images depicting desecration of US monuments and landmarks.

Slide 20: "Dawn of Glad Tidings" App

Scene Setter: *This slide is meant to emphasize the innovative way ISIL is using social media to create hype online and build up its image.*

Key Points:

Proliferation of popularity

Back in August, a study found 27,000 Twitter accounts that mentioned ISIL positively. They also found ISIL had succeeded in creating hype — a total of 700,000 accounts discussed the terrorist group. One way they create such a huge amount of online activity is through the use of bots, or automatic programs that create tweets, as well as apps.⁶⁸

- ISIL has created an app called "The Dawn of Glad Tidings," or "The Dawn," for short. Users of the app consent to allowing ISIS to post to their social-media accounts. To avoid Twitter's®

⁶⁸ <http://techcrunch.com/2014/10/15/isis-tactics-illustrate-social-medias-new-place-in-modern-war/>

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spam-detection algorithms, the app even spaces out its posts. This allows a proliferation of postings online in support of ISIL that make it seem as though more people support it than actually do.

- Twitter® has tried to counter ISIS, suspending more than 1,000 accounts it suspected of terrorist links. But that hasn't been too successful; because the ISIS propaganda arm isn't rigorously structured, it can be very flexible. When one account gets shut down, another is immediately created, and ISIL uses other guys to promote the new account.⁶⁹

Slide 21: Operational Instructions Online

Scene Setter: *This slide is meant to highlight the ease of getting travel/operational info on how to get to Iraq and Syria. Operational instructions are available online and in English. It's important to relay to the audience that ISIL and its supporters are actively trying to recruit our youth to join their cause. The bar for a youth to understand how to get to a conflict zone is much lower than in previous years. It is also increasingly interactive process, which is not just one-sided.*

Key Points:

One of the chief concerns regarding fighters travelling to Syria is the ease of which they can get there. Unlike perhaps some other countries that have had foreign fighters, entry into Syria has been made easier due to the unrest in Iraq and the numerous facilitators in Turkey.⁷⁰ Another big driver has been the dissemination of travel and operational instructions online.⁷¹

- Blog showing operational instructions for how to get through Turkish security and answer their questions, how to look inconspicuous, how to cross into Syria by foot, what to pack to remain unsuspecting and also be prepared to fight, how to get in shape before the journey, etc.
- Also provides quotes from religious texts to justify fighting.
- Also says that ISIL, unlike Al Qaeda, is not a terrorist group, but rather a group fighting for an Islamic caliphate.

Slide 22: Ask FM (picture)

Scene Setter: *This slide is meant to show ease of talking to someone on ground, show ease of getting travel/operational info.*

Key Points:

Ex's of postings on Ask.fm⁷²

- Is it possible to do jihad half a year?" asks one would-be recruit, apparently seeking to join a rebel group in Syria on a short-stay basis. The question is directed at a man on the Ask.fm website who describes himself as "a stranger currently fighting in Syria." He advises that it is

⁶⁹ <http://techerunch.com/2014/10/15/isis-tactics-illustrate-social-medias-new-place-in-modern-war/>

⁷⁰ Soufan Group, <http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf>

⁷¹ <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/FBI-Terror-plot-suspect-planned-mosque-attack-to-5367722.php>

⁷² "The Facebook jihadis seeking action in Syria," by Ewen MacAskill and Leila Haddou The Guardian,

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/15/facebook-jihadis-action-syria-terror>
Guardian article links to the ask.fm site. <http://ask.fm/Fulan2weet>

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still possible to cross the border from Turkey "but tougher than earlier". He deals, too, with a proposal of marriage, saying he is not looking for a wife.

- Other questioners seek advice on how easy it is to cross the border into Syria from Turkey and the best way to persuade parents to allow them to go.
- They also want to know: "How much is a Glock pistol?" "Which is the best rebel group to join?" "Is there training in jujitsu?"
- One of the key questions is his motivation. "What keeps you motivated to fight and go on?" Referring to barrel bombs widely used in Syria, he replies: "When you see a little girl killed by barrels or an old man crying cuz his house was bombed."

Slide 23: Moner Mohammad Abusalha (USPER)

Scene Setter: We discuss Moner Mohammad Abusalha (USPER) who at 22, became the first American to be a suicide bomber in Syria. We discuss the progression from adolescent angst, identity issues, and loss of his previous social network to his exposure to extremist propaganda, talk about Syria, and eventual travel and death as a suicide bomber. Three key themes pervade the discussion. First, that Moner's situation and development as a young person made him exploitable by unscrupulous recruiters. Second, we emphasize that there were several points along his path from confused teen to suicide bomber where he could have been diverted from the process. Third, al-Nusrah used his short life and death as a propaganda tool to recruit more youth.

Key Points:

Moner Abu-u-Salla "Mo"⁷³⁷⁴

- Grew up in Vero Beach, FL, outside Miami in a gated-community.
- Went to Sebastian River HS and played basketball, where his teammates described him as "funny" and "outgoing".
- His Facebook® page stated he liked basketball, football, the Miami Heat, and Eggo waffles.
- His mom worked with him to get him through high school.
- He told his family he was traveling to Jordan to study nursing.
- A video of him was later released online which showed him blowing up 16 tons of explosives at a regime checkpoint, killing a number of soldiers.
- His video was used for recruitment, specifically targeting English speakers.

Slide 24: Moner's Last Words (video)

Scene Setter: In this slide we show Moner's video to highlight, using his own words, why he went to Syria to join ISIL. The intention is to emphasize how normal he seems – he talks about his time back in Florida and living in the suburbs – and humanize him by including him crying when talking about his mom.

Key Points:

Here are clips from a video of American citizen Moner discussing why he left America and joined a terrorist group.⁷⁵

⁷³ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/04/us/friends-of-moner-mohammad-abusalha-saw-no-indications.html?_r=0

⁷⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/us/Moner-Mohammad-Abusalha-Vero-Beach-Florida-Syria.html>

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Slide 25: How does this happen?

Scene Setter: *At this point in the briefing, we remind the group that we came seeking their help to solve a problem that was threatening their children. We revisit the stages of the previously discussed case(s) and ask, "What could have been done at this point?" We try to get the audience to offer potential solutions or discuss their thought on how to address the problem. If the discussion begins to lag, we offer examples of intervention programs being piloted by American Muslim groups (which demonstrate some possible approaches to fill the space between parenting and law enforcement where the possibility of successful intervention is the highest.*

Key Points:

In his martyrdom video just prior to his suicide operation, Moner described the US as no place for a Muslim and never a place for him, and state he felt at home with other foreign fighters fighting in Syria for ISIL. How did this happen? And what, if anything, could have prevented this?⁷⁶

Let's go through his trajectory, from the time he was a young angsty teenager, like any other kid, growing up in Florida, to the point where he decided to travel to Syria and join ISIL. In that timeframe, he showcased numerous vulnerabilities that could have been addressed by a variety of peers, authority figures, school counselors, and others.

1) Adolescent Angst: He was a normal teen, who liked playing basketball and video games. He also experienced normal adolescent angst, all pretty normal developmental challenges for teenagers. This is usually a time when all teens experience a heightened drive for a distinct identity, meaning, adventure, and belonging. If not addressed, they can increase one's vulnerability to violent extremism as a possible solution to these questions.

- Ask the audience to brainstorm what kind of intervention, and who, could have stepped in here (Ex. exposure to positive role models, access to civic engagement groups, positive peer groups and social activities, sports)^{77,78}

2) Identity Issues: Moner was a second generation immigrant, born in Florida to a Palestinian father from Jordan and an American mother who converted. Immigrants are particularly susceptible to recruitment probably because of their heightened struggle with identity issues, integration, and feelings of exclusion and marginalization. He was once thrown out of school for fighting, spurred on by kids making fun of his mother's hijab. It appears Moner tried to fit in, but eventually grew tired of life in America and started to want to live in an Arabic-speaking country.

- Ask the audience to brainstorm what kind of intervention, and who, could have stepped in here (Ex. Peers, positive role models, school counseling, civic engagement)⁷⁹

⁷⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/middleeast/100000003029549/video-of-us-bomber-moner-mohammad-abusalha-in-syria.html>

⁷⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/middleeast/100000003029549/video-of-us-bomber-moner-mohammad-abusalha-in-syria.html>

⁷⁷ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/04/us/friends-of-moner-mohammad-abusalha-saw-no-indications.html?_r=0

⁷⁸ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/us/Moner-Mohammad-Abusalha-Vero-Beach-Florida-Syria.html>

⁷⁹ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/04/us/friends-of-moner-mohammad-abusalha-saw-no-indications.html?_r=0 and <http://www.businessinsider.com/an-american-suicide-bomber-describes-his-journey-to-syria-2014-8>

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3) **Loss of old social network:** Moner dropped out of high school during his junior year and lost touch with school social groups and friends. He also couldn't hold a job. His mother kept forcing him to go back to school, but he kept dropping out again.

- Ask the audience to brainstorm what kind of intervention, and who, could have stepped in here (Ex. parents, teacher, school counselor, peers)⁸⁰

4) **Exposure to extremist propaganda:** He moved in to live with a new friend, who held extremist views. During this time, friends say he also dramatically changed his dress and behavior, becoming more conservative. He also started watching extremist videos by Awlaki and others with his friend online.

- Ask the audience to brainstorm what kind of intervention, and who, could have stepped in here (Ex. parents, brother, religious cleric)⁸¹

5) **Talk about Syria:** Moner talked about what was going on in Syria with his family and friends. He was always reading on the latest news, very engrossed on social media. He watched a lot of videos of the atrocities in Syria and expressed sympathy for the victims of the Assad regime.

- Ask the audience to brainstorm what kind of intervention, and who, could have stepped in here (Ex. parents, positive role model, friends, religious cleric)⁸²

Shortly thereafter, Moner left for Syria. He became the first American to be a suicide bomber in Syria. He was 22.⁸³

Slide 26: Community Responses

Scene Setter: *For this section we discuss some of the ways communities are organizing prevention programs in the hopes of stopping youth like Moner from radicalizing to violence. The article pictured describes the efforts in Minneapolis of law enforcement and communities who have come together to create intervention programs.*

Key Points:

We can learn from intervention approaches in other situations, such as gang prevention. CVE intervention aims to use the same principles and we can make real progress by adapting the kinds of programs we are using in non-counterterrorism areas for our needs. Some examples of successful programs include:

- Montgomery County, MD, where communities and law enforcement are collaborating to bring together faith-based leaders, as well as education and mental health officials to help at-risk youth.

⁸⁰ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/04/us/friends-of-moner-mohammad-abusalha-saw-no-indications.html?_r=0

⁸¹ http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/american-suicide-bomber-in-syria-raises-fears-for-us/2014/06/02/30a6ab8a-ca82-11e3-93d2-ed4b1f5d9e_story.html and <http://www.ibtimes.com/moner-mohammad-abu-salha-american-suicide-bomber-says-he-was-being-watched-fbi-us-1671912>

and <http://www.businessinsider.com/an-american-suicide-bomber-describes-his-journey-to-syria-2014-8>

and <http://www.businessinsider.com/heres-what-made-4-americans-become-jihadists-2014-9>

⁸² <http://www.businessinsider.com/an-american-suicide-bomber-describes-his-journey-to-syria-2014-8>

and <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/15/world/middleeast/fear-of-trend-after-bombing-by-a-us-man.html>

⁸³ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/04/us/friends-of-moner-mohammad-abusalha-saw-no-indications.html?_r=0

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- Also, the Muslim Public Affairs Council released their Safe Spaces Initiative, which is essentially a guide for community centers on how to deal with violent extremism in their communities using a phased approach of prevention, intervention, and ejection.

Slide 27: What can you do?

Scene Setter: *For this section we discuss the recently completed study on the role of bystanders (family, peers, authority figures, and strangers) in the process of intervention. We place particular emphasis on the high percentages of those who were in a position to see something. Our goal is to demonstrate the importance of those who are most likely to see behavior that indicates the beginnings of a problem, and their opportunity to help. We stress that by the time a youth makes it to the point where his behavior attracts the attention of government or law enforcement, he/she is often too far go in their radicalization to violence process to be easily dissuaded. We emphasize the opportunities of communities to protect their children. We acknowledge the community's reluctance to involve law enforcement or "official" channels stressing that the most effective intervention may come from the community-led networks, or other informal networks of parents, schools and communities to solve these problems before young people approach the line of criminal activity.*