



Arabian Knightz: The Ever-Evolving Al-Qaeda Threat

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September 11, 2001: AQ Core



March 11, 2004: AQ Inspired



December 25, 2009 and May 1, 2010: AQ Allies and Affiliates



The Al-Qaeda Threat



Al-Qaeda Core



Al-Qaeda Inspired



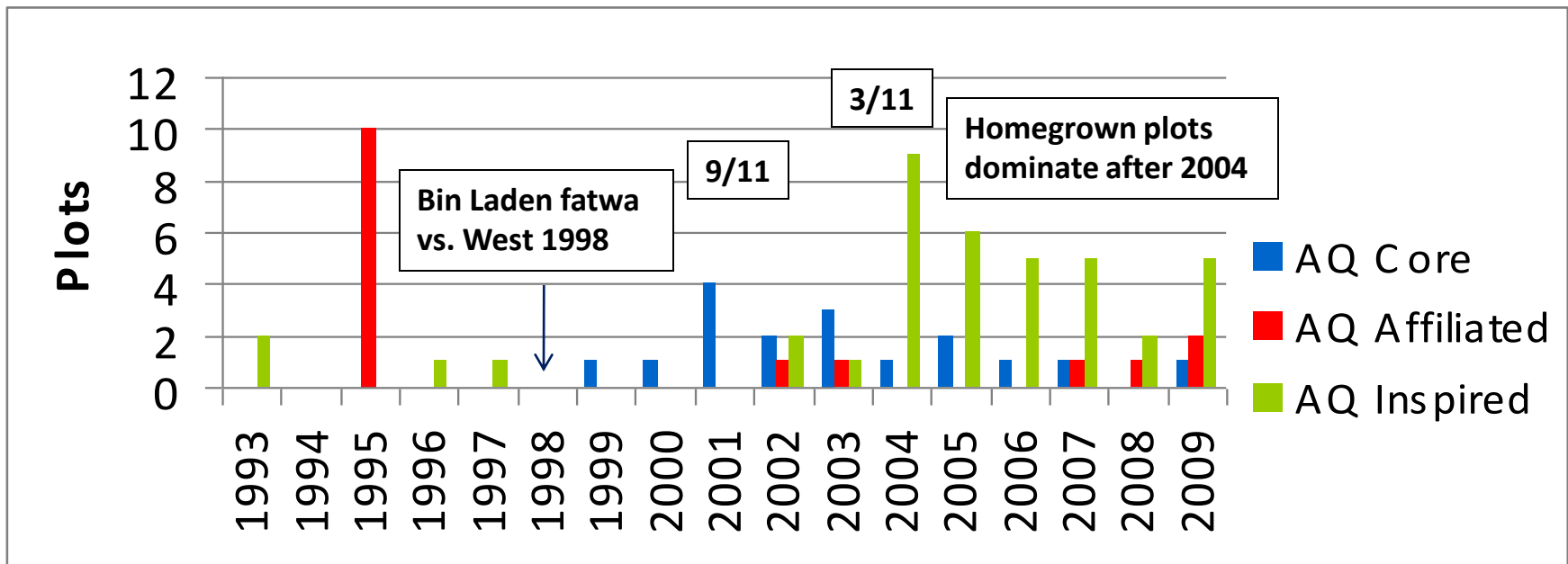
Al-Qaeda Affiliates and Allies



RADICALIZED IN THE WEST



AQ Plots v. the West 1993-2009





Radicalization in the United States 2008-2010

- More than 50 Americans radicalized to AQ inspired acts of violence and/or conspiracies during the last 24 months
 - Bryant Neal Vinas
 - Riverdale Plotters
 - Raleigh 7
 - Najibullah Zazi
 - Betim Kaziu
 - David Headley
 - Major Nidal Hasan
 - Tarek Mehanna
 - Minneapolis Somalis
 - Jihad Jane
 - Faisal Shahzad
 - Arabian Knightz
- Phenomena has now materialized with greater frequency in the United States

Al Qaeda in English

- Internet is important venue for radicalization
- Provides religious justification for violent political extremism
- “44 Constants of Jihad”
- Military jihad a religious obligation for all Muslims
- “The hatred of kuffar [non-Muslims] is a central element of our military creed”






Travel to Af/Pak



2007



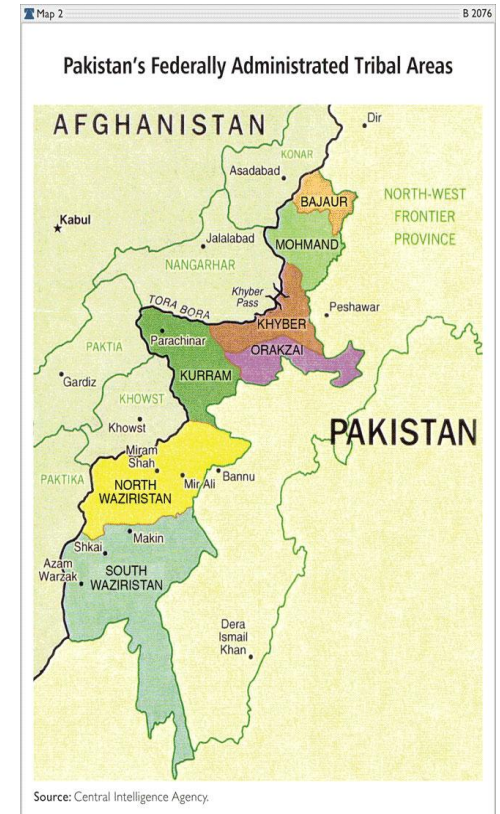
2008/2009



2009



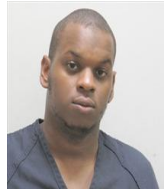
2008/2009



Travel to Yemen



2004



2007-2009



2005/2009





Travel/Attempted Travel to Somalia



2006



2007/2008



2007/2008

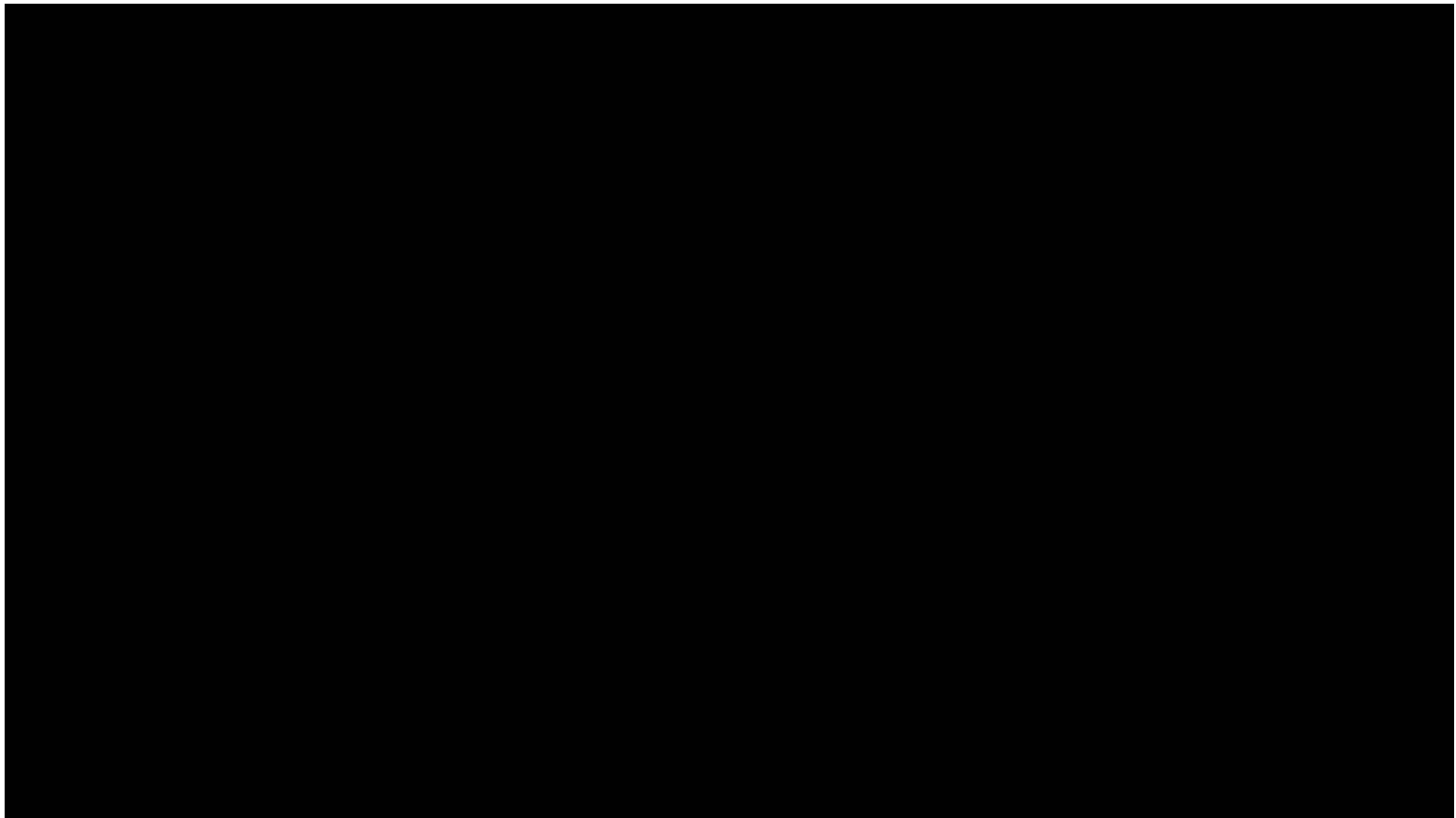


2010





Radicalization and Recruitment



Arabian Knightz



*“We’ll start doing killing here if I can’t do it over there”
Mohammed Alessa,*

Pre-Radicalization: Mohammed Alessa

- Born in the US of Palestinian descent
- Mother from West Bank; father from Jordan
 - Convenience store owners
- Parents moderately religious



Alessa family home



Pre-Radicalization: Carlos Almonte

- Born in the Dominican Republic
- Naturalized US citizen
- Middle-class, suburban upbringing
 - Father school bus driver
 - Brother-in-law a Wayne, NJ cop
- Oldest son in a Catholic family
- Graduated from high school in 2005
 - “Normal, outgoing” kid, according to classmates



Self Identification: Mohammed Alessa

- Born Muslim
- Drifted from family and longtime friends as he grew older
- As a teenager, argued frequently with parents
 - Ran away several times



Self Identification: Carlos Almonte

- Converted to Islam after high school, against father's wishes
- Encountered preacher at local mall
- Changed name to "Omar"
- Began visiting mosques in Paterson and Union City, NJ
- Learns some aspects of Islam from Alessa's nieces



Self Identification: “Arabian Knightz”

- Subjects met in local mall circa 2005
- Form crew calling themselves “The Arabian Knightz”
- Muslim-born/non-Muslim youths
- Age range 16-22
- Active in Jersey City, NJ area



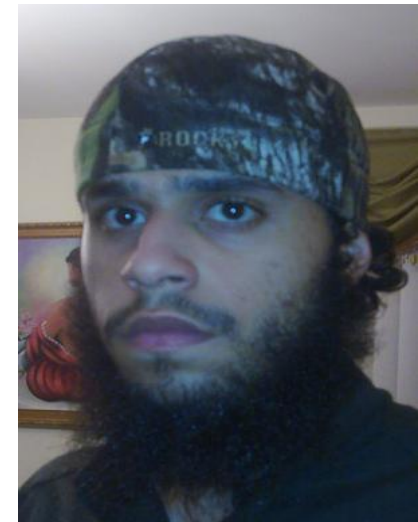
Ideological Commitment: Alessa

- Alessa argued with mother because she didn't cover herself
 - Father reached out to local imams to counsel son
- Extreme rhetoric



Ideological Commitment: Almonte

- Dropped non-Muslim friends
- Started aggressively preaching a militant form of Islam
- Proselytized at place of work
- Assaulted brother for refusing to adopt Islam
- Whole passages on Facebook profile attributed to Abu Qatadah



Attracted to the Extremist Scene



Attracted to the Extremist Scene



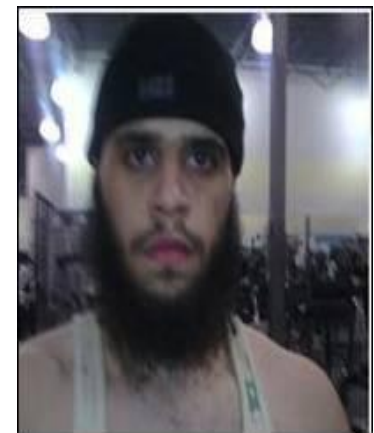
Mohammed Alessa, May 1, 2010



Alessa and Almonte, Israel Day Parade 2010

Jihadization: Almonte and Alessa

- Begins in November 2009
- Almonte/Alessa transition from talk to action
- Begin preparations for war fighting/acquire: camouflage portable hydration system, tactical pants, binoculars, camouflage folding knife, combat boots, tactical brand flashlight
- Join gym -- intense, extensive physical training
 - Daily visits to gym, mountain hiking in snow and mud at Garrett Mountain, NJ
 - “Stronger muscles means bigger muscles which means killing more kuffar”



Almonte at gym

Jihadization: Almonte and Alessa

- January 2010 – Somalia chosen as location for jihad
 - “But Shabaab is the main one, yanni. The main thing.”
- Mental preparation for jihad
 - Watching violent videos
 - Computer combat simulation games
 - Visiting jihadist websites





Jihadization: Almonte and Alessa

- March 20, 2010 – Almonte purchases airline tickets
- April 2010 – Airline reservations made for Alessa

Almonte: Soon there will be US troops in Somalia; this is good because it wouldn't be fun to kill only Africans

- More Anwar al Awlaqi and Omar Hammami videos watched
- May 23, 2010 – Almonte goes to book store to get Somali language phrase book

June 5, 2010: The Takedown



Jihadization: Almonte and Alessa

- Overt acts:
 - Purchase flight tickets
 - Purchase items to bring to Somalia
 - Flashlights
 - Binoculars
 - Camelbak water hydration systems
 - Military-style clothing and gear
 - Transfer of 6K to withdraw in Egypt





Conclusions

- U.S. authorities have uncovered a number radicalized individuals intent on committing violent jihad in the U.S.
 - These arrests confirm that radicalization is occurring in the U.S.
- Travel to “Zones of Conflict” (Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen) accelerates the radicalization to violence
- New York City remains a top target
- Law enforcement has a limited time frame to detect and disrupt terrorist plots, especially when terrorists have trained overseas

The Al-Qaeda Threat

Al-Qaeda Core



Al-Qaeda Inspired

Al-Qaeda Affiliates and Allies

RADICALIZED IN THE WEST

