



No American Muslim Terrorists?

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"It's startling," proclaims Spencer Ackerman in a *New Republic* cover story dated today, "how few American Muslim extremists there actually are." The article, "[Religious Protection: Why American Muslims haven't turned to terrorism](#)," contrasts American Muslims with their European counterparts, whom he finds have turned to terrorism.

American Muslims are not terrorists? What is Ackerman thinking? In an [article](#) and [blog](#) just this past week, I reported on fifteen American Muslim converts who have either engaged in terrorism or been convicted of trying to do so. In a [follow-up piece](#), I listed another fifteen American converts to Islam suspected, arrested, or indicted of terrorism. That's thirty converts. I have not counted the immigrant

Muslims and their offspring implicated in terrorism, but here is [some information](#) that hints to their numbers:

With the exception of the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995, notes Al-Qaeda authority Rohan Gunaratna, all major terrorist attacks of the past decade in the West have been carried out by immigrants. A closer look finds that these were not just any immigrants but invariably from a specific background: Of the 212 suspected and convicted terrorist perpetrators during 1993-2003, 86% were Muslim immigrants and the remainder mainly converts to Islam. "In Western countries jihad has grown mainly via Muslim immigration," concludes Robert S. Leiken, a specialist on immigration and national security issues, in an impor-

tant new monograph, [Bearers of Global Jihad: Immigration and National Security after 9/11](#).

Or, to quote a conclusion [Khalid Durán and I](#) reached in 2002: "In its long history of immigration, the United States has never encountered so violence-prone and radicalized a community as the Muslims who have arrived since 1965."

Applying that 86 percent figure just to the United States implies some 175 immigrant Muslims associated with terrorism. Let's round it off to 200 cases in all of American Muslims who have "turned to terrorism," which strikes me as a reasonable figure.

Ackerman waves these hundreds away as irrelevant: "It's true that extremist messages exist in American Muslim communities, and there have been a few instances of American Muslims becoming terrorists. Those extremely rare cases, however, are far better explained by individual pathology than by rising Islamic militancy due to group disaffection." Yes, 200 persons out of a population of some 3 million American Muslims is "extremely rare," but the same low ratio applies in Europe, where terrorists are also "extremely rare."

In short, Ackerman's premise is flawed from the start; and so, unsurprisingly, is the analysis that follows, namely his claim that better social and economic opportunities open to American Muslims as well as "America's ability to accommodate Islam itself" account for the

supposedly benign situation in the United States. Rather, the differences between U.S. and European Muslims have less to do with their respective social virtues than with their Muslim populations. America's Muslims tend to be engineers and doctors; Europe's tend to be factory hands and street sweepers.

Ackerman thinks American Muslims have launched few terrorist attacks; in fact, they have engaged in or attempted many since 1980. They are so little known because prosecutors avoid applying the terrorist label and the media ignores them, but they are there. Some twelve attacks involving fatalities occurred on American soil [pre-9/11](#), in addition to many others that did not involve deaths or were thwarted. Since 9/11, there have been a number of attacks involving American Muslim terrorists, including:

- July 2002 - [Hesham Mohamed Ali Hadayet](#)'s double murder at the El Al counter in Los Angeles airport.
- October 2002 - The [Beltway Snipers](#)' multiple murders in the Washington, D.C. area.
- March 2003 - [Hasan Akbar](#)'s fragging of his two officers (at an overseas U.S. military base).
- August 2003 - [Mohammed Ali Alayed](#)'s murder of Ariel Sellouk in Houston.
- January 2005 - The [Armanious family](#) massacre.
- May-July 2005 - The [Jam'iyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh](#) robbery spree to fund future terrorist activities.

Finally, worrisome signs exist of a growing radicalization among American-born children of immigrants. Space constraints keep from listing the many instances here, but two recent cases come to mind: [Ahmed Omar Abu Ali](#) (convicted in November of belonging to Al Qaeda and plotting to kill George W. Bush; he could be sentenced to life in prison) and [Ali Tamimi](#) (jailed for life in July for recruiting volunteers to go to terrorist training camps abroad). Parents worry about this trend; [Achmed Habib](#), who identifies himself as an American Muslim father, wrote to an Islamist forum asking for help dissuading his son from seeking martyrdom as his two brothers did before him.

A tad less self-congratulation and a lot more research and worrying is in order, Mr. Ackerman.

Dec. 12, 2005 update: In the article above, I refer to the Armanious family murders as an instance of Islamist terrorism. I did so aware that this view is at odds with the findings of the police in New Jersey, who [arrested Edward McDonald and Hamilton Sanchez](#), both drug dealers, for the crime on March 3. I wrote the above consistent with a blog, "[The Armanious Family Massacre](#)," and an article, "[Denying \[Islamist\] Terrorism](#)," both from early 2005. My evidence was in large part based on information Robert Spencer reported at "[Inside information on the New Jersey murders](#)."

However, after my article appeared this morning, Robert Spencer posted the following update on the same page:

UPDATE 12/12/05: A [new article by Daniel Pipes](#) leads me to make this clarification: I do not know the quality of the information I was given by these sources. This has all been an extremely puzzling experience. I was approached with this evidence; I did not seek it out. It was confirmed by several parties. I presented it in good faith without ever saying (as some have charged) that it was necessarily accurate or true. But the circulation of this story—before and after I got it—explains why the Copts were so angry with Muslims in New Jersey at the time. As far as I know, the police examined this evidence and found it wanting. I do not know what the motives were of the friends of the Armanious family who told it to me and insisted on it, and continued to do so after the two thugs were arrested who were charged with this crime. I still have many unanswered questions. But I have nothing to go on.

Unknown to me, then, Spencer no longer has confidence in the information he made public. Like him, I am unsure to make of this horrid murder. We should learn more when McDonald and Sanchez go on trial.