



## Why's a Nice Guy Like You Doing a Terrorist Act Like This?

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According to former Detroit Public Schools Superintendent Eddie Green, Kifah Jayyousi is “a great guy, one of the nicest people I’ve ever met.” While Green was superintendent, Jayyousi oversaw the Detroit school district’s capital improvement program, which had a \$1.5 billion budget.

Jayyousi is now charged, according to the [Detroit Free Press](#), with “conspiring to kidnap, maim and murder by providing money, recruits and equipment for Islamic struggles in Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechnya from 1993 to 2001.” He could get life in prison.

Christopher Paul, a martial arts instructor at a mosque in Columbus, Ohio, is also a terrific guy. Ahmad Al-Akhras, vice chairman of the

Council on American-Islamic Relations chapter in Columbus, [said](#): “From the things I know, he is a loving husband and he has a wife and parents in town. They are a good family together.”

Yet now Paul, a Muslim, has been charged, according to Associated Press, with “providing material support to terrorists, conspiracy to provide support to terrorists and conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction.” He is accused of training with Al-Qaeda in the early 1990s, training people for violent jihad attacks on targets in Europe and the United States, and more.

But another one of Paul’s friends, Hisham Jenhawi, was skeptical: “I don’t think it’s even close to his personality to act upon something like

that. He's a very kind person. You would meet him on the street and he would want to hug you with the heart that he has." One of his neighbors, Mike James, added: "He seemed like a nice guy, always waving..."

This kind of thing is nothing new. A friend [remembered](#) Gokhan Elaltuntas, a Muslim who carried out a suicide bombing on a synagogue in Istanbul in 2003: "We went partridge hunting together. I still cannot believe how such a quiet person could have been involved in an incident like this." A friend of Naveed Haq, the jihadist killer who murdered one and wounded five at the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle in July 2006, [described him](#) as "pretty much just a normal guy....He was the kind of guy when you talked to him he was always laughing."

[According to a Southern California friend](#) of Raed Albanna, who killed 132 people in a suicide attack outside a medical clinic in Iraq in 2005, "He was into partying. We hit some pretty wild clubs in Hollywood." Frank Lindh, the father of John Walker Lindh, a.k.a. Suleyman Al-Faris, the convert to Islam from Marin County who joined the Taliban and was captured in Afghanistan fighting against American troops, [has said](#): "In simple terms, this is the story of a decent and honorable young man embarked on a spiritual quest."

Great guys all. Some partied and some embarked on a spiritual search, but they all ended up in the

same place, committing acts dedicated to furthering the cause of jihad, or facing charges of having done so.

One clue to this phenomenon may come from jazz musician Tarek Shah, who [recently pled guilty](#) to providing martial arts and hand-to-hand combat with weapons training to Al-Qaeda operatives. In 2004 Shah [told a man](#) he thought was a fellow jihadist but who turned out to be an undercover agent, "I could be joking and smiling and then cutting their throats in the next second."

Or they may be genuinely decent fellows. It was the Nazi genocide mastermind Heinrich Himmler who [told a group of SS leaders](#): "Most of you know what it means to see a hundred corpses lying together, five hundred, or a thousand. To have gone through this and yet -- apart from a few exceptions, examples of human weakness -- to have remained decent fellows, this is what has made us hard. This is a glorious page in our history that has never been written and shall never be written..."

Were these SS mass murderers really decent fellows? To their friends and family, they probably were. After all, they weren't interested in undifferentiated mayhem. They were adherents of a totalitarian, genocidal ideology that convinced them that the murders they were committing were for a good purpose. As far as they were concerned, their goals were rational and good, and the murders were a

means to that goal. It was not just a noteworthy achievement, but a necessity, for them to remain “decent fellows,” for they were busy trying to build what they saw as a decent society. That their vision of a decent society included genocide and torture did not trouble them, for it was all for – in their view – a goal that remained good.

Today’s jihad terrorists are likewise the adherents of a totalitarian, genocidal ideology that teaches them that murders committed under certain circumstances are a good thing. And those murders, here again, are not committed for their own sake, but for the sake of a societal vision hardly less draconian and evil than

that of Hitler, but one also that portrays itself as the exponent of all that is good – as the Taliban showed us. But the continued reference to such people as “terrorists” pure and simple, and the refusal of the media and most law enforcement officials to examine their ideology at all, only reinforces the idea that these people are raving maniacs, interested solely in chaos for its own sake. The society they want to build, and the means besides guns and bombs that they are using to build it, so far remain below the radar screen of most analysts. These people are just “terrorists,” interested only in “terror.” And so we’re continually surprised when they turn out to be nice guys after all. Decent fellows. Like the SS.

*Robert Spencer is a scholar of Islamic history, theology, and law and the director of [Jihad Watch](#). He is the author of five books, seven monographs, and hundreds of articles about jihad and Islamic terrorism, including [Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions About the World’s Fastest Growing Faith](#) and [The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam \(and the Crusades\)](#). He is also an Adjunct Fellow with the Free Congress Foundation.*