

Inside the Mind of an Islamic Terrorist

A look inside the mind of Islamic terrorists reveals why they are willing to give up their lives-and why they can't be stopped by weapons made by man.

Indoctrinated since childhood and trained in secret camps across the Middle East, they are dominated by an aggressive religion and fueled by a belief that they are doing God's will. Ultimately, they can't be stopped with weapons made by man.

"Why we are fighting and opposing you? The answer is very simple: Because you attacked us and continue to attack us. ... The British handed over Palestine, with your help and your support, to the Jews, who have occupied it for over 50 years; years overflowing with oppression, tyranny, crimes, killing, expulsion, destruction and devastation. The creation and continuation of Israel is one of the greatest crimes, and you are the leaders of its criminals. ... It brings us both laughter and tears to see that you have not yet tired of repeating your fabricated lies that Jews have a historical right to Palestine, as it was promised to them in the Torah. ... The blood pouring out of Palestine must be equally revenged."

From Osama bin Laden's 2002 "Letter to America"

Mark Gabriel knows the spirit of hatred and revenge. Back in Egypt, the teachers in his Muslim-run school taught him to hate Christians and Jews-hate them for the crime of stealing Palestine, for occupying sacred land and for opposing the one true religion of Islam.

Gabriel embraced his lessons, eventually becoming a professor

of Islamic history and culture at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Ironically, it was during his in-depth studies and exploration of his religion's past that he grew disenchanted with it.

"It's a violent history," says Gabriel, who emigrated to the United States in 1999 after being imprisoned and repeatedly threatened for questioning Islam. "In 1,400 years, the Islamic world has never experienced a time of peace. They finish one war and [then] it's another war."

Just examine the last century. After losing wars with Israel in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973, Muslims turned on each other, Gabriel says.

He ticks off examples: Chad against Yemen, Iran invading Iraq in a nine-year war that killed one million and injured two million more, Libya against Chad, and a civil war in Algeria that has claimed more than 200,000 lives.

"This to me is the spirit of Islam," says Gabriel, author of several books, including *Journey Into the Mind of an Islamic Terrorist* (Charisma House, available Jan. 3). "Islam is a religion built on blood. Blood is a sign of mercy in the Bible, of the sacrifice God did for His people. In Islam, you have to kill to survive."

The letter from Osama bin Laden that opens this article illustrates perfectly what runs through the minds of Islamic extremists, Gabriel explains. Indoctrinated since childhood and trained in secret camps across the Middle East, they are dominated by an aggressive religion and believe that they are living in the final time of Allah's revelation and facing the final test of their faith.

The center of activity once located in Afghanistan has since shifted to Iraq, Gabriel claims. And while many blame terrorists' aggression on America's invasion of Iraq, the author says that attitude existed long before 2003.

Ultimately, Gabriel says terrorists are driven by hatred because in the Quran, Mohammed commands Muslims to hate non-Muslims, who are seen as infidels.

"This is why these people have stood up now and they're fighting, just to obey the commandment of the Quran and Islam to them," says Gabriel, who was forced out of Al-Azar University in 1992 and was stabbed and shot before leaving Egypt. "They're standing up to defend that religion and confront the infidels."

Seedbed of Extremism

Veteran author and student of Islam Don Richardson echoes Gabriel's thoughts. In researching his book, *Secrets of the Koran* (Regal), the former missionary to Indonesia found a seedbed of extremism.

For example, Richardson found that one of every eight verses in the Quran threatens hellfire if one doesn't believe Mohammed is the prophet or doubts the religion. Another 109 verses call for Muslims to make war on infidels; five of them command followers to make war in the cause of Allah.

"The Quran is radical," says Richardson, who spent 15 years among the Sawi tribe in what is now Papua New Guinea in eastern Indonesia. "Mohammed was not a moderate," he adds. "He had at least 500 Jewish men beheaded in one day in Medina, although others say it was 900 or 1,200. They refused to say, 'We believe you are a prophet sent by God.' Then he made all the women and children slaves. I would say if he had the technology bin Laden had at his fingertips, he would have been more radical."

Richardson emphasizes that understanding Islamic extremism starts with understanding history. Starting in Saudi Arabia, after Mohammed died in 622, his followers overran two-thirds of the Roman Empire. From there, they conquered all of northern Africa and invaded Spain and Portugal, which they

controlled until 1492, the year Columbus sailed for the West. Muslims also took over Syria, Iraq and Turkey (which had been Christian) and in 732 invaded France, intent on conquering all of Europe.

Although they were turned back within 300 miles of England, Muslims overtook Pakistan and parts of Indonesia. After a slowdown, they invaded the Balkans and established a presence in Serbia and Albania. From that base, Turkish Muslims invaded Europe again and got as far as Austria, where they were conquered on Sept. 11, 1683.

"There is speculation that bin Laden picked that date [in 2001] to say, 'You thought you defeated us, but we're back,'" Richardson says.

One of the developments that concerns Richardson the most is what he calls the "radicalizing of Muslim moderates" in England, other parts of Europe, Canada and the United States.

The origin of this movement comes from the Wahhabi sect, which originated in the 1700s in Saudi Arabia. Reflecting on how the Muslims were being outpaced by the rest of the world in technological innovations and commerce, including sailing, a mullah asked why Islam was sliding into second place if it was destined to conquer the world. He decided the reason was because the Muslim world had forgotten about the use of jihad, or holy war. The five pillars of Islam—confessing Allah, praying five times a day, giving alms, fasting during Ramadan and making a pilgrimage to Mecca—weren't enough.

Richardson says billions in foreign oil money are spent exporting these radical beliefs. He advises a wide-eyed awareness that Islamic radicals hope to destroy America's entire legal and social system and replace it with Sharia law.

"If you're bored by Islam and don't want to understand it, you're indulging in a luxury you can't afford," Richardson says.

Still, seminary professor Samuel Shahid cautions against labeling all Muslims as the enemy. According to Shahid, a professor of Islamic studies in Fort Worth, Texas, the confusion over whether Islam is peaceful or warlike stems from developments in the life of its founder, Mohammed.

In the early part of his life, his message was one of peace and such beliefs as heaven and hell, the Day of Judgment and the need to care for widows and orphans. But after moving from Mecca to Medina, Mohammed took a different stance and waged 78 military campaigns against his enemies.

Radicals claim this latter revelation abrogated the verses of peace, while moderate Muslims rely on the first phase of the Quran to argue it is a peaceful religion, Shahid says, author of *The Last Trumpet* (Xulon Press), a comparative study of Islamic and Christian eschatology.

The professor says one reason the religion is a magnet for men in particular is because of its emphasis on discipline. That can be particularly attractive in Western societies where people sense that something is missing from their lives.

"The Islamic religion provides that discipline, and those who are lacking it are looking for it," he says. "In Christianity we have a discipline, but that is something you choose to do ... from within. In Islam, it comes from without."

How can Christian men oppose terrorism? Pointing to numerous Muslims he knows who have converted to Christianity, Shahid says the difference came from exposure to people who demonstrated Christ's love. Many Muslims associate Christianity with imperialism and the Crusades of the Dark Ages, but those who follow Jesus can explain that their beliefs encompass love, care and understanding, Shahid adds.

"It is not an easy job because when people are so radical, they don't stop to think because they are driven by their own ideology as well as their own feelings," Shahid explains. "But

the Word of God has its own power.”

Gabriel agrees: “The church needs another Reformation. It was founded as one church by one Man, and it was one vision. Look at it today; it’s just unbelievable. All these pictures are giving Muslims the understanding-especially the radicals-that this is not the Christianity Christ taught.”

Ken Walker is a freelance writer and co-author of *God@Work: Developing Ministers in the Marketplace* (Destiny Image). This article originally appeared in *New Man* magazine in 2006.

Top Ten Terrorists of Our Time

1. Hassan Al-Benah, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. Started preaching at the age of 12 despite paralysis from a childhood accident. Established the Brotherhood in 1928. After the group tried to assassinate its prime minister, Egypt’s government declared it illegal. He was assassinated in Cairo in 1949.
2. Syed Abul a’la Mawdudi, author of *Jihad in Islam* (1928). He later established a magazine to promote a return to the Quran’s roots.
3. Sayyid Qutb, the “Martin Luther” of radical Islam. Memorized the Quran by age 10. He was arrested and executed in 1965, but his writings have spread across the Islamic world.
4. Ayatollah Khomeini, exported fundamentalist Islam. Although expelled from Iran, he returned after the shah’s overthrow to lead the largest Islamic revolution in modern history.
5. Sheikh Omar Abdul Rachman, the “Blind Sheikh.” Learned Braille and memorized the Quran by age 10. Led the group that attacked the World Trade Center in 1993.
6. Muammar Qaddafi, leader of Libya. In the early 1970s he started using petroleum money to support terrorist groups. Accused of masterminding a 1980 bombing in Berlin, Germany, and helping with the 1989 bombing of a Pan Am plane.
7. Sheikh Ahmed Yasin, founder of Hamas. Although paralyzed by an accident in his youth, he was arrested in 1983 on various

charges, including inciting others to destroy Israel. Although twice sentenced to long prison terms, Yasin was freed in prisoner exchanges with Israel.

8. Saddam Hussein, former president of Iraq. Became a hero for trying to assassinate Iraq's prime minister. Became president in 1979 and killed millions.

9. Ayman Al-Zawahiri, right-hand man of Osama bin Laden. Led a group that assassinated Anwar Sadat. Spread jihad movements in 13 other countries and masterminded attacks against two American embassies in Africa.

10. Osama bin Laden. His animosity goes back to 1991, when the United States established military bases in Saudi Arabia. Involved in the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, the 1996 killing of 19 soldiers in Saudi Arabia, the 1998 bombings of two American embassies, and Sept. 11.

Adapted from *Journey Into the Mind of an Islamic Terrorist* by Mark A. Gabriel.