

Strange case of North Carolina “jihadists” used to heighten terror scare

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Based on what appears to be scant evidence, US federal authorities rounded up seven North Carolina men on July 27 on charges of “conspiring to provide material support to terrorists” and “conspiring to murder, kidnap, maim and injure persons abroad.”

Four heavily armed Swat teams and a hostage-rescue group from Quantico, Virginia—over 100 cops and agents in all—were mobilized for the raids. Arrested were Daniel Patrick Boyd, 39; his two sons, Zakariya, 20, and Dylan, 22; Anes Subasic, 33; Mohammad Omar Aly Hassan, 22; Ziyad Yaghi, 21; and Hysen Sherifi, 24. All are US citizens except for Sherifi, a native of Kosovo who has legal permanent resident status in the US.

The 14-page indictment released by the Justice Department makes no claim that any of the men engaged in violent terrorist activities, nor does it provide even an indication of a conspiracy to carry out any concrete act at any definite point in the future. Indeed, federal prosecutors acknowledged that they had no reason to believe that those arrested were planning anything in the US, but rather were supposedly preparing for “jihad” in some unspecified country abroad.

Nonetheless, the arrests have been trumpeted by both Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and US Attorney General Eric Holder as supposed proof that the US is facing a growing threat of “homegrown terrorism.”

The flimsiness of the federal indictment and the way in which it has been exploited by senior US officials strongly suggest that this case—like so many others prosecuted under the Bush administration—is a government-hatched provocation aimed at furthering definite reactionary political ends.

Virtually all of the previous “homegrown terror” cases—the Lackawanna Six, the Albany Stinger case, the Liberty City Seven and the Fort Dix Five—have originated with government agent provocateurs who have worked with the FBI to lure Muslims, Arab Americans and others into so-called “terrorist plots” that were manufactured by the government itself.

There is no indication in the indictment that this is the modus operandi in the North Carolina case, though there is an unnamed and as yet un-arrested eighth defendant, who is said to have traveled to Pakistan in 2008.

Daniel Boyd is accused of being the ringleader of the supposed conspiracy. “In the period from 1989-1992,” the indictment states, Boyd “traveled to Pakistan and Afghanistan where he received

military-style training in terrorist training camps for the purpose of engaging in violent jihad.” It adds that, “Following the training, Boyd fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union.”

There are a number of incongruent elements in these claims that deserve careful examination. First, Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan in February of 1989, before Boyd, then 19, had even arrived in Pakistan.

The US government and the Central Intelligence Agency had poured billions of dollars worth of arms and aid into backing the Afghan mujahedeen—or holy warriors—against the Soviet Union over the previous nine years. Their *jihad* had been sponsored from the outset by Washington, with the aim of luring the Soviet military into an unwinnable war in Afghanistan.

The so-called “terrorist training camps” were funded and advised by the CIA in partnership with the ISI, the Pakistani intelligence agency. During this period, President Ronald Reagan hailed those in the “terrorist” camps as “freedom fighters.” Among those receiving support was Osama bin Laden.

After the Soviet withdrawal, the CIA continued to promote a civil war against the government in Kabul, backing—among others—the Hezb-e-Islami movement of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar with hundreds of millions of dollars in US aid.

It was during this period that Boyd—who had converted to Islam as a teenager—arrived in Peshwar, Pakistan, then a center of Afghan refugees and of the mujahedeen, apparently to work for a Muslim relief organization with connections to Hezb-e-Islami.

His role during this period was widely reported in the US press when, in 1991, he and his brother Daniel, who had also come to Afghanistan, were arrested on charges of robbing a bank in Peshwar and sentenced under Sharia law to having their right hands and left feet amputated.

Steve Coll, then a reporter for the *Washington Post* in Pakistan—and subsequently the author of “*Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*”—interviewed both Daniel Boyd, then in a jail cell, and his wife. While his article described their life in Pakistan in some detail, there was no reference to Daniel Boyd having trained and fought as a mujahedeen, something which at that point in Pakistan would have raised his stature and presumably helped his defense against the criminal charges.

In the end, the charges were dropped and Boyd was allowed to return to the US. As the Associated Press reported this week, “A former CIA official stationed in Pakistan at the time said the

agency intervened and quickly persuaded the Pakistani intelligence service to help free the Boyd brothers. The former official spoke on the condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly about the incident."

So, whatever Boyd was doing in Pakistan in 1989-1991—the first and foundational point in the terror indictment—it was apparently with the blessings of the US government, given the CIA intervention on his behalf.

What precise relation existed between Boyd and the agency, as well as whether it continued after he returned from Pakistan is not known.

The rest of the indictment consists of allegations concerning Boyd's religious beliefs, his overseas travel and his purchase of firearms.

It repeats Islamic scare words like "mujahedeen", "jihad" and "shahid," or martyr, claiming that the defendants had tried to convince others that such activity was a "personal obligation of every good Muslim."

The indictment makes much of the claim that Boyd had stopped attending services at local mosques, and that instead he and "others known and unknown, met for Friday prayer at the Boyd house."

Among the supposed evidence is the assertion that Daniel Boyd and his son Zakariya traveled to Israel in June of 2007 and returned a month later "having failed in their attempt to engage in violent *jihad*." Yet there is no reference to any evidence that such an attempt was made. The Boyds claimed that they went to Israel to visit Muslim holy sites.

Similar claims are made concerning other defendants' travels to the Middle East and Kosovo, where members of their families live.

The Associated Press reported that the police in Kosovo acknowledged having cooperated with the FBI in supplying information about Hysen Sherifi, but told the news agency that the young man "had no criminal record in Kosovo and was not considered to have been a security threat here."

The rest of the indictment consists of a list of firearms purchased by Boyd—all of them legal—the claim that he lied to a customs agent when returning from his trip to Israel and the allegation that he gave a pistol to someone who had been convicted of a felony.

In the end, the only possible basis for a terrorist conspiracy charge is talk between the defendants, but the indictment fails to cite any statements indicating even thoughts about carrying out violent acts.

In a statement to the media, Daniel Boyd's wife Sabrina said that her husband's actions in Pakistan had enjoyed the "full backing of the United States government." She added, "The charges have not been substantiated. We are an ordinary family, and we have the right to justice, and we believe justice will prevail. We are decent people who care about other human beings."

Neighbors quoted in the media expressed shock and anger over the arrests, indicating that they did not believe the charges in the indictment.

"The government came and took away perfectly good people," said Jeremy Kuhn, who lives across the street from the Boyds. "And it's going to take a whole lot of evidence to convince me

otherwise.

"If he's a terrorist, he's the nicest terrorist I ever met in my life," another neighbor said of Daniel Boyd, who runs a family drywall business.

Despite the thinness of the evidence in the North Carolina case, Attorney General Holder cited it Wednesday in an interview with ABC News. He said it pointed to a growing problem of "radicalization of Americans," a danger of people "leaving this country and going to different parts of the world and then coming back, all, again, in aim of doing harm to the American people."

The same day in a speech in New York City Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano highlighted what she said was the growth of "homegrown threats," referring to both the North Carolina case and earlier arrests of Somali immigrants in Minneapolis.

Significantly, in neither case have federal authorities claimed that the accused were conspiring to carry out terrorist attacks in the US. Rather, the allegations are that the men in North Carolina had talked of joining struggles in other countries, and that the Somali-Americans had gone back to their home country to join the resistance to a US-backed occupation by the Ethiopian army.

On the day after the arrests in North Carolina, federal authorities issued a bulletin to law enforcement agencies throughout the country expressing growing concern on the part of the FBI and Homeland Security about "the danger posed by little-noticed Americans traveling abroad to learn terrorism techniques, then coming back to the United States, where they may be dormant for long periods of time while they look for followers to recruit for future attacks," the Associated Press reported.

In his interview with ABC News, Attorney General Holder praised the Bush administration for its "war on terrorism" policies, saying it had "left us an infrastructure that I think is very good."

In addition to utilizing the repressive measures and institutions bequeathed to it by its Republican predecessor, the Obama administration is apparently also appropriating its methods for fomenting an atmosphere of escalating terrorist threats designed to politically intimidate and instill fear in the population.



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