

Three Lessons from the Times Square Bomber

By STELLA PAUL

As he was sentenced to life imprisonment for the Times Square bombing, Faisal Shahzad, 31, said, “Brace yourselves, because the war with Muslims has just begun. Consider me only a first droplet of the blood that will follow me.”

“We do not accept your democracy or your freedom because we already have Sharia law and freedom... If I am given a thousand lives, I will sacrifice them all for the sake of Allah fighting this cause, defending our lands, making the word of Allah supreme over any religion or system.”

The judge reminded Shahzad, who was born in Pakistan, that he had recently chosen to become a U.S. citizen. “Didn’t you swear allegiance to this country?” she asked.

“I swore, but I didn’t mean it,” Shahzad replied.

Several lessons can be learned from the chilling story of Faisal Shahzad, who abandoned a wife, two children, and a good professional career in Connecticut to travel to Pakistan to learn how to murder Americans.

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Lesson 1: Our enemies are telling us what they intend to do, but we refuse to listen. Shahzad explained that “the war with Muslims has just begun,” and that despite his deceptive embrace of American citizenship, he would never “accept your democracy or your freedom.” His ideology permits no compromise through interfaith dialogue or moderation through Western acculturation. As he told the judge, “And so it’s very clear for us Muslims, either we are with the mujahedeen or we are with crusading Jews and Christians. There is no in between.” America is facing an absolute culture

Stella Paul decided to educate herself about the dangers to American freedom and security in the aftermath of 9/11. She began writing for *American Thinker*, *Pajamas Media*, and other online publications, focusing on radical Islam. She believes every American should learn the facts about Islam, Shariah, and the stealth jihad under way in the United States, and share their knowledge with fellow citizens.

clash, against enemies who plan for centuries ahead.

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Lesson 2: Our protections are frighteningly inadequate. All that saved the innocent passersby in Times Square from death and destruction was a quick-witted T-shirt vendor, who noticed smoke from the SUV that Shahzad had packed with explosives. And, despite the fact that Shahzad had trained with a terrorist group in Pakistan, he was free to return to the U.S. and go about his business, collecting explosives and studying real-time videos of Times Square to maximize his murderous efficiency. Astonishingly, after the bombing, Shahzad



The Nissan Pathfinder that Faisal Shahzad allegedly used in the attempted bomb attack on Times Square.

almost escaped by boarding a jet headed to the United Arab Emirates, even though his name was on a no-fly list. In fact, Shahzad managed to book his flight on the way to the airport, pay for the ticket in cash, walk through security without being stopped, and then stroll onto the plane, where he was arrested. Notwithstanding our massive Homeland Security apparatus, our protections are disturbingly flimsy. And we have to be lucky every time; they only have to be lucky once.

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Lesson 3: Our enemies are well-educated, wealthy professionals, not pitiable, impoverished wretches. Shahzad comes from a wealthy family in Pakistan; his father was a high-level military officer. Shahzad came to the U.S. to study computer science and engineering, and after receiving an MBA, he was working as a

financial analyst. In the words of the prosecutor, “Prior to his decision to attempt to kill and maim scores of unsuspecting men, women and children in the heart of New York City, Shahzad had achieved a degree of academic and professional success in the United States and was living a life with his wife and two young children that was full of promise.”

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In this respect, Shahzad matches the typical terrorist profile. Aafia Siddiqui, the “Grey Lady of Al Qaeda” who was convicted of attempted murder of a U.S. Army captain, studied at MIT and has a doctorate in neuroscience from Brandeis. Abdouraham Alamoudi, the founder of the Islamic Society of Boston, now serving 23 years for Al Qaeda-linked crimes, came to the U.S. to study at MIT; Tarek Mehanna, arrested for planning to machine-gun shoppers in New England malls, studied at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Science. And, Mohamed Atta, the ringleader of the 9/11 attacks, graduated with a degree in architecture from Cairo University, continued his studies at the Technical University in Hamburg, and came to the U.S. to enroll in an Accelerated Pilot Program.

What drives these terrorists is not despair, but commitment to an implacable murderous ideology. To read the prosecution’s memorandum on Faisal Shahzad is to step into a brutal international conspiracy powered by homicidal rage against all infidels, for whom there can never be mercy.

Here are some riveting excerpts from the prosecution’s memorandum:

- In 2009, Shahzad, a naturalized U.S. citizen, traveled from the United States to Pakistan where he sought instruction in bomb-making in order to wage an attack inside the United States. While in Pakistan, he received instruction on the building and the detonation of different types of bombs from trainers affiliated with Tehrik-e-Taliban (the “TTP”), a militant extremist group based in Pakistan that was recently designated a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State.

- During his time in Pakistan, Shahzad appeared in a video recorded by the TTP in which he discussed his plan to attack the United States and encouraged other Muslims to follow his example. Thereafter, Shahzad returned to the United States, and, over the course of three months in early 2010, he purchased all of the components necessary for his bomb, including fertilizer, propane, and gasoline, and he received approximately \$12,000 in cash from the TTP to help fund the attack.

- In the weeks leading up to the attempted bombing, Shahzad used the Internet as part of his effort

to maximize the deadly effect of his bomb by accessing websites that provided real-time video of the crowds in Times Square. Finally, during the late afternoon of May 1, 2010, Shahzad drove his car, which was packed with the bomb he had built, from his residence in Connecticut to Times Square and parked the car on 45th Street near Seventh Avenue. He then attempted to initiate the bomb detonation process inside the car by lighting a fuse, and after doing so, he got out of the car, armed with the semi-automatic rifle that he had brought with him, and walked to Grand Central terminal. While walking to Grand



Faisal Shahzad

Central terminal, he listened for the sound of the bomb exploding. Two days later, he was arrested at John F. Kennedy International Airport while trying to leave the United States on a commercial flight.

- Following his arrest, Shahzad waived his Miranda rights and stated, among other things, that he believed his bomb would have killed at least 40 people, and that, if he had not been arrested, he planned to detonate a second bomb in New York City two weeks later.

Shahzad’s Time with The TTP in Pakistan

During his stay with the TTP in Pakistan, Shahzad agreed to appear in a TTP-produced video about the planned attack. At one point in the video, Shahzad explains that “jihad is one of the pillars upon which Islam stands,” and he later advises that “Jews and Christians have to accept Islam as a religion and if you don’t do that, then you are bound to go in hellfire.” Toward the end of the video, Shahzad makes his intentions clear: “I have been trying to join my brothers in jihad ever since 9/11 happened. I am planning to wage an attack inside America.”

And before the video concludes, Shahzad appeals to fellow Muslims to follow his example and do their part by attacking the United States: “I also want to inform my brother Muslim abroad living abroad [sic] that it is not difficult at all to wage an attack on the West, and specifically in the U.S., and completely defeat them inshallah. Get up and learn from me and make an effort. Nothing is impossible if you just keep in mind that Allah is with you.”

Factors and the Appropriate Sentence

Far from providing an explanation for his criminal activity, Shahzad's history and characteristics strongly militate in favor of the maximum available sentence. Prior to his

decision to attempt to kill and maim scores of unsuspecting men, women, and children in the heart of New York City, Shahzad had achieved a degree of academic and professional success in the United States and was living a life with his wife and two young children that was full of promise. Before seeking bomb-making training from a terrorist group in rural Pakistan in 2009, Shahzad had lived in the United States for nearly ten years and had taken advantage of an array of opportunities that this country provided. In his early years here, he was permitted to study at a university in Connecticut on a student visa and obtain a college degree. After graduating from college, a U.S. company hired him and agreed to sponsor him, thereby allowing him to remain in the United States on a working visa. And thereafter, a second U.S. company hired him and continued to sponsor him until he became a naturalized U.S. citizen in April 2009. He was paid competitive salaries at both jobs, which permitted him and his family to live comfortably in the suburbs of Connecticut.

Notwithstanding this series of opportunities and accomplishments, and the recent births of his two children, Shahzad knowingly and deliberately chose a different path — a nihilistic path that celebrated conflict and death cloaked in the rhetoric of a distorted interpretation of Islam.

Shahzad did not select his target at random but had every intention of delivering a powerful and terrorizing strike to the heart of New York City. That he did not succeed should in no way inure to his benefit. Had the bombing played out as Shahzad had so carefully planned, the lives of numerous residents and visitors of the city would have been lost and countless others would have

been forever traumatized. This is to say nothing of the significant economic and emotional impact a successful attack would have had on the entire nation.

Beyond the premeditation, the preparation, and the sophistication of the offense,

Shahzad's crimes are uniquely disturbing because they were committed by a U.S. citizen who received training from a foreign terrorist organization. Foreign terrorist organizations depend upon a wide array of individuals across the world to survive and to accomplish their terrorist objectives.

History has demonstrated that some within the networks of terrorist organizations are U.S. citizens who exploit the benefits of their citizenship to identify vulnerabilities within the United States or align themselves against the United States for the operational advantage of terrorist organizations. These individuals constitute a particularly pernicious threat to the national security of the United States. Under the cover of their U.S. citizenship, these operatives, facilitators, and sympathizers can remain in the United States undetected as well as travel freely around the world on their U.S. passports, gathering information and developing expertise for the benefit of those committed to harming the United States directly and its interests abroad. Indeed, some terrorist organizations, including al Qaeda, have publicly acknowledged the unique value that U.S. citizens provide to their terrorist missions.

There are few threats to the national security and the way of life in this country greater than a citizen who chooses to serve as an operative for a foreign terrorist organization and attempts to wage an attack inside the United States. Shahzad exploited the freedom and the opportunities provided to him in the United States to further his and the TTP's violent ends. He privately declared his own war on the United States, armed himself with a semi-automatic rifle, and was prepared to open fire on law enforcement agents and officers if they attempted to arrest him. ■