

A Wahhabi Crack-Up in America?

By Stephen Schwartz

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Although few American journalists know how to report on it, a change is slowly developing in the American Muslim community. Terrorist atrocities, exemplified by the recent series of horrific, videotaped beheadings, have increased in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other countries, even as the U.S.-led campaign against Islamist extremism, both political and military, continues. The federal authorities, in the Report of the 9/11 Commission, finally summoned up the will to identify the enemy: not merely "terrorism," but radical Islamist ideology.

Given these developments, non-Muslim Americans cannot help but feel heightened suspicion about the very nature of Islam. The situation has been dramatically worsened with news that two Islamic clerics in Albany, New York, Mohammed Hossain, 49, and Yassin Aref, 34, were arrested in an FBI sting operation while expressing support for a proposed assassination of the Pakistani ambassador to the United Nations -- a plot that, thank God, was fictitious.

But the terror links of Albany's Yassin Aref appear anything but fictitious. Aref is allegedly associated with Ansar ul-Islam, a deadly, Saudi-financed terror conspiracy operating in Iraqi Kurdistan but with tentacles in many out-of-the-ordinary places. For example, Ansar's main leader, who calls himself Mullah Krekar, has long resided in Norway as a political refugee, even while his subordinates killed civilians as well as Coalition soldiers in Iraq.

American Muslims cannot help but feel compromised by their own failure to break with terrorist sponsors in Saudi Arabia, based in the Wahhabi sect -- the official cult in the desert kingdom -- and the "Wahhabi lobby" of organizations on our soil, like the so-called Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).

Yet even some of the hard-core apologists for Islamic radicalism may have begun to feel uncomfortable with their bought-and-paid-for Wahhabi agenda. Early in August, the Islamic Saudi Academy (ISA) with campuses in Alexandria and Fairfax, Va., came in for criticism from the Free Muslim Coalition Against Terrorism (www.freemuslims.org), a new group headed by Kamal Nawash. Nawash is a local attorney of Palestinian origin and was an unsuccessful Republican candidate for the Virginia House of Delegates in 2001 and for the state senate in 2003.

Nawash followed the lead of the Saudi Institute, the independent human rights monitoring center headed by Arabian dissident Ali al-Ahmed (www.saudiinstitute.org), in targeting ISA for indoctrinating its first-grade pupils in the hateful doctrines of

Wahhabism. ISA's extremist instruction is not exactly news; the school lost its Virginia accreditation in 2002, and Ali al-Ahmed has been pounding it ever since.

But to the surprise of many, CAIR briefly added its voice to the latest chorus of condemnation. CAIR spokesperson Ibrahim Hooper at first criticized ISA for teaching hatred of Christianity and Judaism, but then backed up and said that while some of the school's curriculum may need changing, it "hardly justified sweeping charges of extremism." Saudi official spokesperson Nail al-Jubeir, brother of the ubiquitous and oleaginous Adel al-Jubeir, reacted with indignation, accusing his fellow-Muslim, Nawash, of... bigotry. However, one must admit that for Wahhabis like al-Jubeir and other Saudis, dissenters like Nawash are not necessarily to be considered Muslims at all, and therefore are fair game for all sorts of accusations and threats.

In an interview with *The Washington Times*, Al-Jubeir accused Nawash of taking his inspiration from Michael Moore's Saudi-bashing. But a Muslim like Nawash needs no lessons in the reality of Saudi corruption from the incompetent, opportunistic, and just plain stupid Moore. Every Muslim in the world who has not been brainwashed or bought off by the Saudis knows what a threat Wahhabism poses to global peace, and to their religion.

CAIR, and two other Wahhabi lobby groups known for their extreme ideology, further surprised most of the American Muslim community recently by adding their signatures to a "unity statement" calling for action against the brutal and massive attacks on dark-skinned Muslims in the Darfur region of Sudan by an Arab militia known as the Janjaweed. The statement was issued by a "Save Darfur Coalition" that happened to include the three most important Jewish groups in the United States, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Committee.

CAIR had previously claimed they did not know enough about the situation in Sudan to comment on it. Nevertheless, they added their names to the coalition statement, along with the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), the American arm of the violent Jama'at-i-Islami in Pakistan, and the less-than-reputable Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation. Not long ago, ICNA called for all-out defense of the Sudanese Islamist regime by American Muslims, against all criticism. But obviously, weeks of reportage on the Sudan atrocities, like the horrific news of beheadings, have made some elements in the Wahhabi lobby lose their nerve. Still, CAIR Communications Director Ibrahim Hooper summoned up the brass to warn against "exploitation of the [Sudan] suffering to promote... political agendas," though it is clear that was exactly what CAIR intended to do: use Sudan to improve its own credibility.

Meanwhile, some of the Jewish groups in the Save Darfur Coalition must have asked themselves, the morning after the statement was issued, why they allowed CAIR into the tent. These fascinating, if obscure vignettes of intra-Islamic life in America reveal a great deal. More and more American Muslims want the Saudi-financed terror *jihad*,

and the Wahhabi lobby that speaks for it in this country, off their backs. Organizations like CAIR have been enabled by American media, and even by some government organizations, to monopolize the Muslim side in the American debate over terrorism. Now, the Wahhabi lobby may be cracking up.

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