

The social networks: Group dynamics and accelerating radicalization of homegrown terrorists

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The Social Networks: Group Dynamics and Accelerating Radicalization of Homegrown Terrorists

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RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the effects of group dynamics and social interactions on how quickly an individual self-identifies with and adopts radical Islamic ideology?

THEORIES & INDICATORS OF RADICALIZATION

Social-psychological theories evident in group radicalization:

- “In-group” love, “out-group” hate
- Collective identity subordinating individual identity
- Isolation from groups that could offer competing values
- Conformity, compliance, or dependence
- Group solidarity
- Conveying ideology through a group narrative

Examples of Indicators of Radicalization:

- Attendance at a radical mosque
- Adopting a legalistic interpretation of Islam
- Expressing outrage at perceived injustices against Muslims
- Inclinations toward violence in the name of religion or ideology

Examples of Indicators of Socialization:

- Family or friendship connections
- School, religious, community associations
- Online communication

Additional photo credits: The Guardian, Al Jazeera, ABC News, The Telegraph, New York Daily News

THE GROUPS

LONDON: July 7, 2005



Mohammad Sidique Khan



Shehzad Tanweer



Hasib Hussein

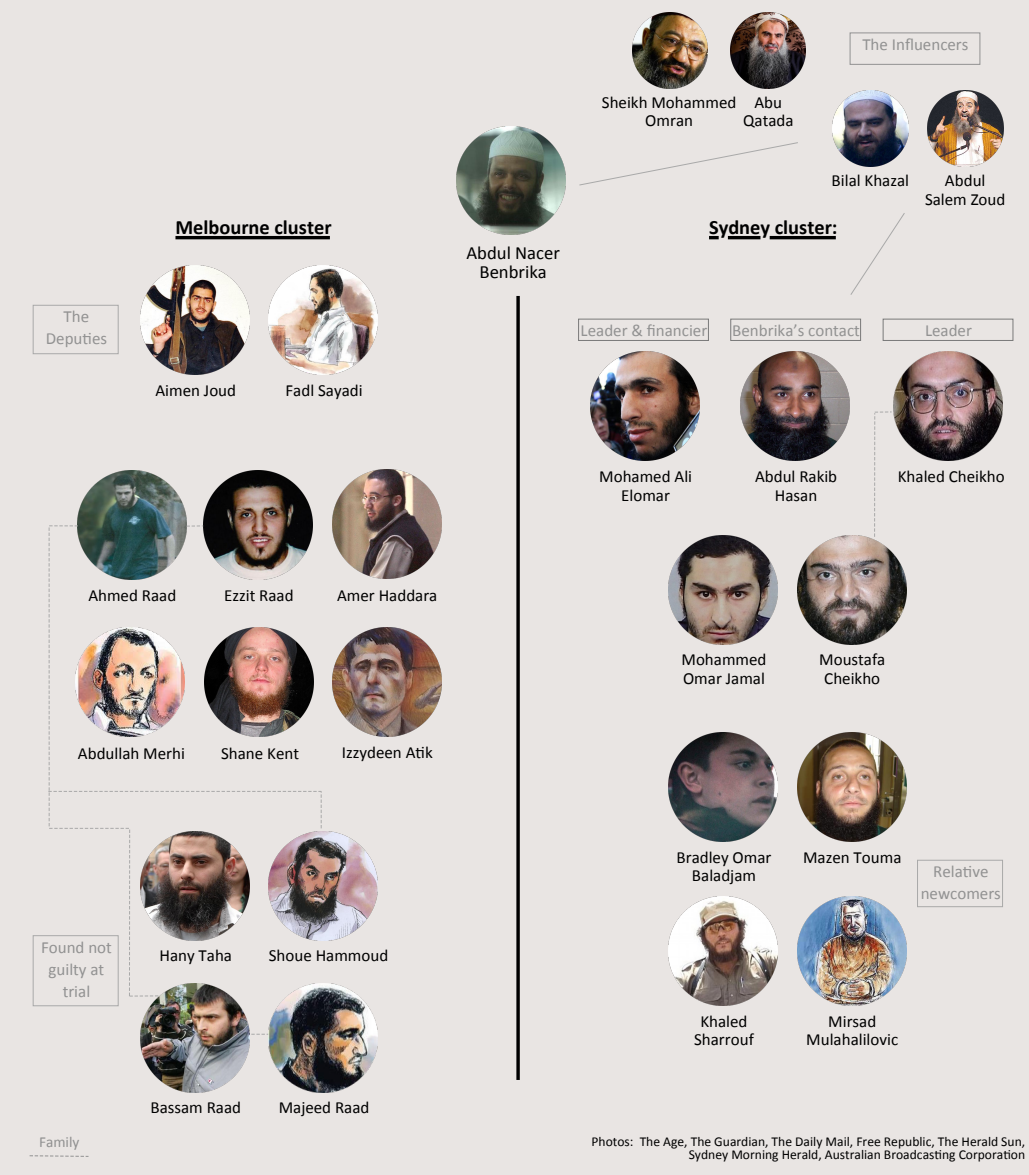


Germaine Lindsay

Photos: The Sun

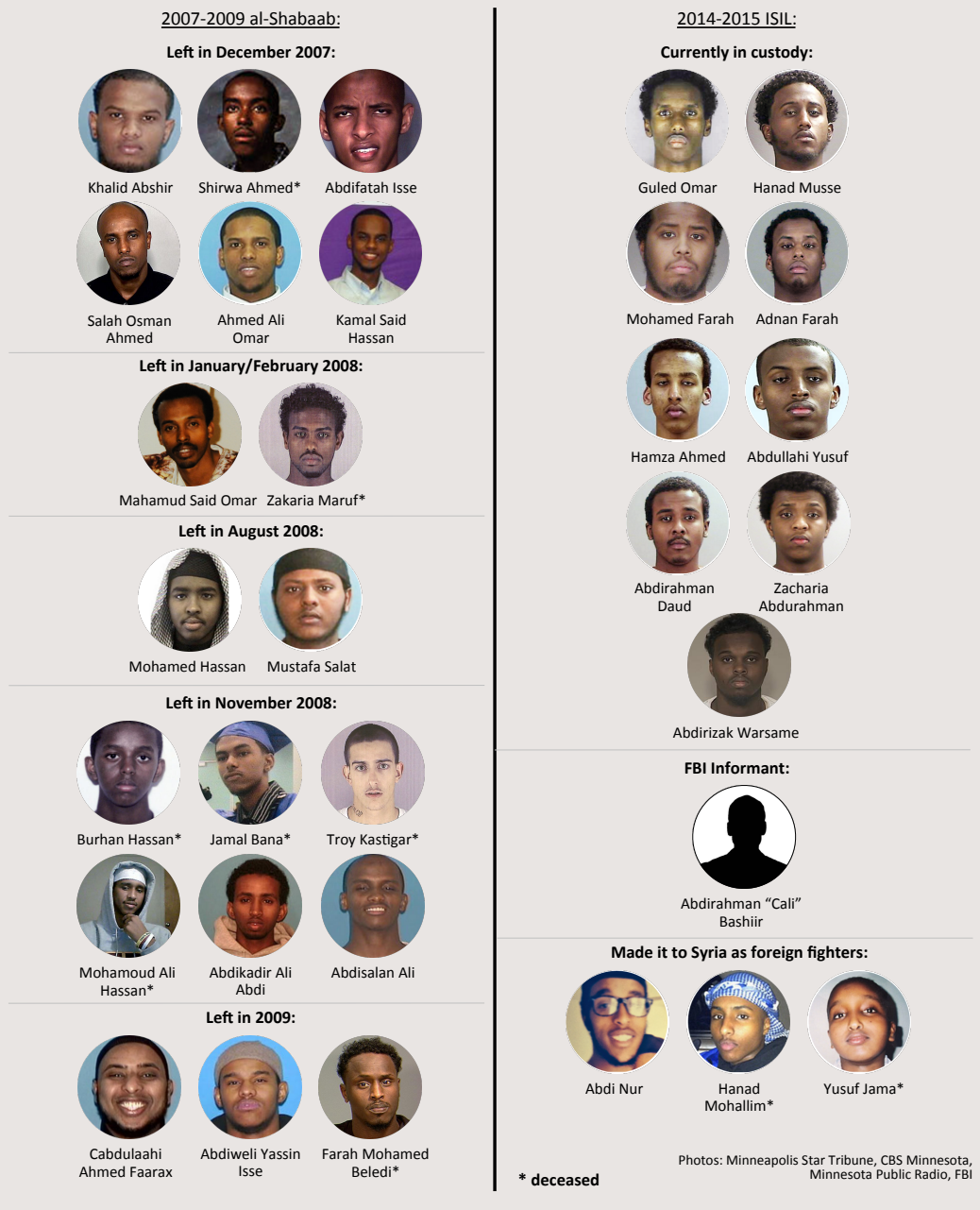


AUSTRALIA: November 2005



Plots against the targets such as the Sydney Opera House, Australian Stock Exchange, and Sydney Harbor Bridge foiled by 16-month Operation Penderennis investigation

MINNESOTA: 2007-09, 2014-15



THE LONE WOLVES

FORT HOOD: November 5, 2009



U.S. Army Major Nidal Malik Hasan opens fire at a deployment center at Fort Hood, Texas, killing 13 people and injuring more than 30 others

ENGLAND: April 2008



British citizen Andrew “Isa” Ibrahim is arrested on terrorism-related charges with explosive chemicals and plans for a suicide bomb at a shopping mall

LITTLE ROCK: June 1, 2009



Abdulhakim Muhammad opens fire at a U.S. Army-Navy recruiting station in Little Rock, Arkansas, killing one soldier and injuring another

RADICALIZATION TIMELINES: BY THE NUMBERS

4-5 years for Mohammad Sidique Khan to radicalize
2.5-3 years for Shehzad Tanweer
1.5-2 years for Hasib Hussain
2 years for Germaine Lindsay

6 years it took for Nidal Hasan to radicalize
5 years for the Melbourne cluster
7 years, the approximate length of Isa Ibrahim’s radicalization
4 years or more it took for Abdulhakim Muhammad to radicalize

No more than one year passed between the ideological radicalization and thoughts of jihadization for the Minnesota recruits to al-Shabaab in 2007-2009 and ISIL in 2014-2015

CONCLUSIONS

Radicalization to Islamic extremism is not an activity often undertaken quickly in isolation. With the influence of online propaganda and information, individuals are never truly isolated as they begin to adhere to more fundamentalist strands of Islam and turn against modern, secular communities. Even more influential than online socialization are in-person, immediate social connections, often ties that are based on families, friendships, and mentors. When individuals are welcomed into a radicalizing group, or begin down a path to radicalization and violence with a group of people who are already close to them, a collective identity, camaraderie, and group loyalty drives them to continue. They move through the process of ideological radicalization confirming one another’s newfound thoughts, providing the community that each member needs to feel a purpose and sense of belonging. This community stands outside the mainstream, often harboring political and social opposition to mainstream, secular ideals. To prevent radicalization, we must bridge the divides between these two communities, seeking to better understand the one that is not our own in order to build more mutual respect and, ultimately, global security.