



Northeast Intelligence Network

Islamic Jihad Training in America?

Part I



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INTRODUCTION

Nearly four years after the attacks of 9/11, many Americans appear to be growing weary of terror alerts and the ever-clanging bell of possible terror strikes within the U.S. Many otherwise sensible and astute Americans are beginning to openly question not only the *effectiveness* of our sworn enemy who stuck us on 9/11 and numerous times previous, but their *future intentions* as well. The dynamics of the asymmetrical warfare in which we are engaged are numerous, and the causes of the general malaise regarding terrorism sweeping across America are equally abundant. This report does not intend to address either aspect of these perilous inclinations, but will be a primer that will effectively illustrate that the United States has been and continues to serve as a training ground for future attacks within this country.

One factor, however, must first be addressed in order to understand how our enemy can be and is operational within our borders, and even facilitated by our open and free society with virtual impunity. That factor is the lack of clearly identifying our enemy in the war against terrorism, a problem that is compounded by the commonly-dubbed “main-stream media” as well as respected members of our own government who are charged with fighting this war. The duplicity exhibited by both our government and media not only confuses a public that, in general, lacks proper historical perspective directly related to current events and current identification of our enemy, but also facilitates our enemy’s ability to be operational in our society by cleverly utilizing our democratic freedoms to shield themselves while they become stronger and more entrenched in our society.

In America, we are granted the ability to practice freedom of religion, although that freedom does not permit anyone or any group of individuals, under the guise of religious freedom, to exploit our laws to create, organize, finance and build a group whose ideology is to attack and destroy the very freedoms and country they currently enjoy. For example, a religious organization is freely able to build and operate a faith-based school in America as long as that school conforms to a liberal set of laws and standards that govern such activity. On the other hand, one cannot operate a religious school whose stated objectives include the overthrow of our government. But what happens when the curriculum of a school consists of a religious doctrine that clearly states that the tenants of their religion and democracy are clearly incompatible and cannot peacefully coexist?

In an effort to appease what has become known as “moderate Islam,” our government and media have created an environment of confusion that is being exploited by the same people who adhere to the ideology of the 19 terrorists who attacked our country on September 11, 2001. They have bent over backwards to keep religious freedom free, only to become enablers of our enemy within.

This environment of social and political correctness run amok has caused many to turn a blind eye to what is actually taking place in this country, or worse, labeling those who dare question certain activities as intolerant or “Islamophobic.”

To understand that the war against terrorism is religious in its roots and ideology, and to recognize that there are individuals and groups of people in this country who are exploiting our religious freedoms and sensitivity to intolerance to promote the tenants of Islamic fundamentalism, is to begin to understand the nature of our enemy.

In that spirit and with that understanding, this report is provided as a mere introduction into what is currently taking place inside the United States by those who are outspokenly on record as being our enemy. Americans must wake from their slumber and realize that aid and assistance is being supplied not just by terrorists abroad, but by those already living and working among us.

AN “ISLAMIC ARMY” IN OUR MIDST

Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum and a columnist for both the *New York Post* and *The Jerusalem Post*, wrote about the “Beltway Sniper” incident in October 2002 that left ten people dead and near paralyzed an area of our country with fear. Writing for the Internet site www.CapMag.com, Mr. Pipes cited a quote reportedly made by a friend of the senior sniper John Muhammad, saying that the attacks on 9/11 "should have happened a long time ago." It was further suggested that “Muhammad might have seen himself as a foot soldier in the jihad (holy war) against the United States, and that he took up arms to terrorize Americans.”

During a time when everyone was questioning the motivation behind Muhammad and Malvo, the media and government officials clearly avoided citing any reason or explanation that had any connection to Islamic terrorism, training or ideology, and the possibility that the sniper incident could be related to religious ideology was quickly dismissed. The term “deranged” was most used to describe the snipers, again dismissing any connection to Islam and making the case of Muhammad’s conversion to Islam irrelevant. Accordingly, no reasonable person would even suggest that either man could have seen himself a warrior in jihad – a term that seems to have more definitions today than a lyric in a rap song.

Mr. Pipes wrote: “...*That Islam is engaged in a titanic battle with the United States, the outcome of which will determine the world's future, is a central idea among Islamists. Significantly, this idea has no parallel among Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists or adherents of any other religion; its closest parallel would be the views of fascists and communists in decades past.*”

The expectation of a cosmic Islamic-American confrontation is a leading theme of all the strains of militant Islam, including bin Ladenism, Wahhabism and Khomeinism. It is present no less in America than in the wilds of Afghanistan or the shopping malls of Saudi Arabia...”

He then noted arrests of American Muslims **engaged in the establishment of training camps in the U.S.**, including the indictment of James UJAAMA of Seattle, Washington. Perhaps most importantly, however, was the reference to the terror cell in Lackawanna, NY, where information was revealed in a U.S. government affidavit that “two of the six Muslims arrested possessed audiotapes calling for jihad and martyrdom, one of which appealed for "fighting the West and invading Europe and America with Islam."

It was also reported that Islamists in Pakistan, according to Arnaud de Borchgrave, expect that *"in the next 10 years, Americans will wake up to the existence of an Islamic army in their midst - an army of jihadis who will force America to abandon imperialism and listen to the voice of Allah."*

MILITANT JIHAD TRAINING – OR JUST RELIGIOUS TRAINING?

Requests to Investigate

In late 2003 and early 2004, the Northeast Intelligence Network received several e-mails urging us to look into the activities at a large, fortress-style building located within the city of Buffalo, New York said to be owned by the **Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)**. We were informed that the complex of buildings located at 485 Best Street, Buffalo, NY was at the center of controversy when, just two months after the 2001 attacks against the U.S. by Islamic fundamentalists, that building was reportedly purchased by the Islamic Society of North America through a local imam of the **Darul Uloom Al Madania** mosque, Imam **Mohammad Ismail MEMON**.

Local residents and some city officials expressed concern over the intended use of the complex of buildings, which was formerly a detention center with “high walls and tight security.” We were informed that public meetings between city officials, representatives of the future Islamic school and the public were conducted but concluded without any important questions being answered to the satisfaction of many of those present.

In the wake of the attacks in 2001 and based on the proximity of the “Lackawanna Six,” or the six Yemeni men arrested and indicted in 2002 for providing material support for a terrorist organization, concerns were understandably high and we felt the request was had merit.

Our findings, in part, are outlined within this report. Whether the complex at 485 Best Street, Buffalo, NY and associated facilities are being used as represented by the owners, we will allow the readers of this report to draw their own conclusions - we will merely present the facts as developed through our independent research and investigation.

INVESTIGATION 485 BEST STREET, BUFFALO, NY

“I have sources - inside sources. These people at Best are armed and dangerous. They are doing paramilitary training there.”

--Buffalo Common Council Member Charley Fisher



Islamic Training Facility: 485 Best Street, Buffalo, NY © 2004 Northeast Intelligence Network

From the outside, it looks like some type of older prison or fortress where there are ten-foot high concrete block walls surrounding a number of stone-built buildings encompassing an entire city block between Timon and Best Streets in an inner city neighborhood in Buffalo, New York. The framework for razor wire is noted on the top of the walls surrounding this “compound,” and entry into the compound is limited to three gated areas – one larger gate for vehicles, while two other gates are more restrictive. Guard shacks, security cameras, portions of razor wire continue to be present on the property.

The six-acre property at 485 Best Street, Buffalo, NY began as a Catholic convent in 1855 and was sold in 1968, becoming the state Division for Youth's "youth detention center and drug treatment facility." After the state of New York left the facility, it remained unoccupied until November 2001 when the Institute of Higher Islamic Education purchased the building under the direction of **Imam Ibrahim (Mohammad) MEMON**, secretary of that organization. MEMON, who operates a similar school on nearby Sobieski Street, said (his) school is certified by the state of New York and enrolls students who are legal residents of Canada or the United States, *although many are not citizens*.

Nearly a year after the property was purchased by MEMON and the Institute of Higher Islamic Education, more than 100 "hostile" residents (as described by *The Buffalo News*) "interrogated MEMON" on his actual plans for the facility in a meeting arranged by Ellicott Council member Brian C. DAVIS between MEMON and area residents¹. During that meeting on Wednesday, September 25th, 2002, MEMON said his Muslim community plans to spend "hundreds of thousands of dollars" to turn the Best Street property into a boarding school, starting with 50 boys in grades 4 to 10. Based on a search of news reports and interviews conducted by Northeast Intelligence Network investigators, some area residents seemed less than convinced about MEMON's intentions.

At the meeting in 2002, area resident Reverend Gregory WASHINGTON, pastor of Church of God Tabernacle was duly concerned about MEMON's intentions and the wall surrounding the compound. Washington stated:

"That's a fortress at Timon and Best. There's a reason we are concerned about the wall. No matter how much we try, we're still under the air of 9/11. We're not for racial profiling, but we shouldn't be stupid, either. We need to be able to see into your property. It's no longer a prison. There's no better reason for that wall to come down."²

In response to the questions about the high wall surrounding the facility, MEMON was vague in his responses, indicating that he would "check with the board about the wall."

At the same meeting, one woman asked of MEMON: "Are you breeding children so they can be born here?" Based on a review of an archived article from *The Buffalo News* dated September 26, 2002, the woman never received an answer. Rather, she was "scolded" by 23 year-old Shabeed ALI, a Black Muslim and attendee of the school for asking such an inciting question.

According to a review of archives from *The Buffalo News*, that meeting ended without much of a resolution, and many people left in frustration for not receiving direct answers to the questions they posed.

On Wednesday, March 12th, 2003, about six-months following the first meeting between MEMON and area residents, another public meeting was held so that residents could pose additional questions. It is interesting to note, however, that “fewer than a dozen residents turned out (for that meeting).³” Based on a review of archived news reports by Northeast Intelligence Network investigators Hagmann and Calahan, it does not appear that many questions were adequately answered at that latter meeting.

In a letter from the Community Action Information Center, Inc. to Mr. Brian HIGGINS, Inspector for the city of Buffalo dated March 25, 2003 and obtained by the Northeast Intelligence Network, Rosa GIBSON, President of the center expressed her dissatisfaction with the meeting and her concerns for the intended use of the complex. GIBSON wrote (excerpted):

“First, many of us were very disappointed with the meeting on 485 Best Street. While attendance was lower than expected, nevertheless, residents are not satisfied with the lack of forthcoming information. There is a lack of credibility as to what the site is going to finally wind up being used for.”

“I do not believe that there is any malicious intent towards this site and its owners, but we are concerned as to its intended use [sic] for a school, now and in the future. There are many unanswered questions and the unavailability of plans and a blueprint for the site obscures credibility.”

Investigation of Ownership

Research and investigation determined and confirmed that the property located at 485 Best Street, Buffalo, NY is owned by the **Islamic Society of America**. The mailing address for ownership, however, is listed as 182 Sobieski Street, Buffalo, NY 14212.⁴ Investigation found that address to be the **Masjid Zakariya**, a former church property purchased in 1993 by **Darul Uloom Al Madania**, an Islamic religious and educational organization founded by Mohammad Ibrahim MEMON. According to their website, Mohammad Ibrahim MEMON is the President and Principal⁵.

It is relevant to note that the Islamic mosque at 182 Sobieski Street, Buffalo, NY was completely destroyed by a fire on 22 October 2001 that was accidentally started by a plumber’s torch. The mosque reopened in October 2004 after a restoration costing more than \$1 million.⁶ MEMON is also the imam of the Masjid Zakariya.

Inspection of 485 Best Street

The following map provides a general overview of the location of the Islamic training facility located at 485 Best Street, Buffalo, NY.



Side of compound 15 May 2004 © Copyright Northeast Intelligence Network

In addition to the high walls and tight security, Northeast Intelligence Network investigators confirmed the existence of underground tunnels or bunker-style rooms below the facility through a source within city hall. These underground areas are lined with several feet of hard-packed glacial till and other composite material that can be used for a number of interesting and diverse purposes.



Mohammad Ibrahim MEMON
a/k/a Mohammed I MEMON

MEMON, whose physician father emigrated from India, said the Institute of Higher Islamic Education will restore the two main buildings on Best Street as offices and a reception area before turning other buildings into classrooms and dormitories. He also added that a Mosque will also be built within the walled property. Northeast Intelligence Network investigators found no other significant information offered by Imam Ibrahim (Mohammad) MEMON to the public in any public venue. The issue pertaining to the high concrete wall surrounding the property was only peripherally addressed, with MEMON stating that “an appropriate matching fence will be added in the final phase.”

Covert Surveillance Findings

Investigation and covert surveillance was performed by the Northeast Intelligence Network over the last several months at this facility. Due to the high wall surrounding the compound, active security cameras affixed to the top of light poles within the property, and “spotters” (individuals living in the area, owned by associates of Memon and the Institute of Higher Islamic Education who act as look-outs for unusual activity in the area), normal covert surveillance operations were difficult at best. Accordingly, surveillance was strategically scheduled and conducted in short segments, limiting such operations to time periods when activity was visible from publicly accessible vantage positions (e.g. walking past the front gate on the sidewalk).

Summary of Observations

Although activity has been documented at various times over the past six months, investigators were ultimately presented with the opportunity to secure limited digital still images and brief videotape clips on **Saturday, 25 September 2004** of activity that could be described as “unusual.” Between 1500 and 1600 hours ET on this date, Northeast Intelligence Network investigators noted that several adult males – all appearing to be Black or of Middle Eastern origin, were instructing at least **two groups** of young males. The males appeared to be between 10-18 years-old and upon closer inspection, appeared to be separated into two groups. All appeared to be attired in normal “street clothes,” although some of the older males were wearing various types of hats or head coverings.

The larger group of young males of approximately 15-20 appeared to be engaged in an adult-supervised game of roller-blade hockey. This activity was taking place in the area most easily visible from the street as one would be able to look through the chain-link fence. In other words, should someone be walking past the fence, that person would see a group of young men playing hockey.

What is most interesting, however, is that a second group of six-(6) young males were in a more remote and less visible area of the compound, although still visible from a publicly accessible vantage position. Direct observation of this group found two older males – one standing on the ground near the side of one of the interior buildings, and the other standing on the roof of the same structure – appearing to “instruct” the group of six young men on how to scale or climb the wall of the building.

The following images are digital copies taken from the surveillance video:



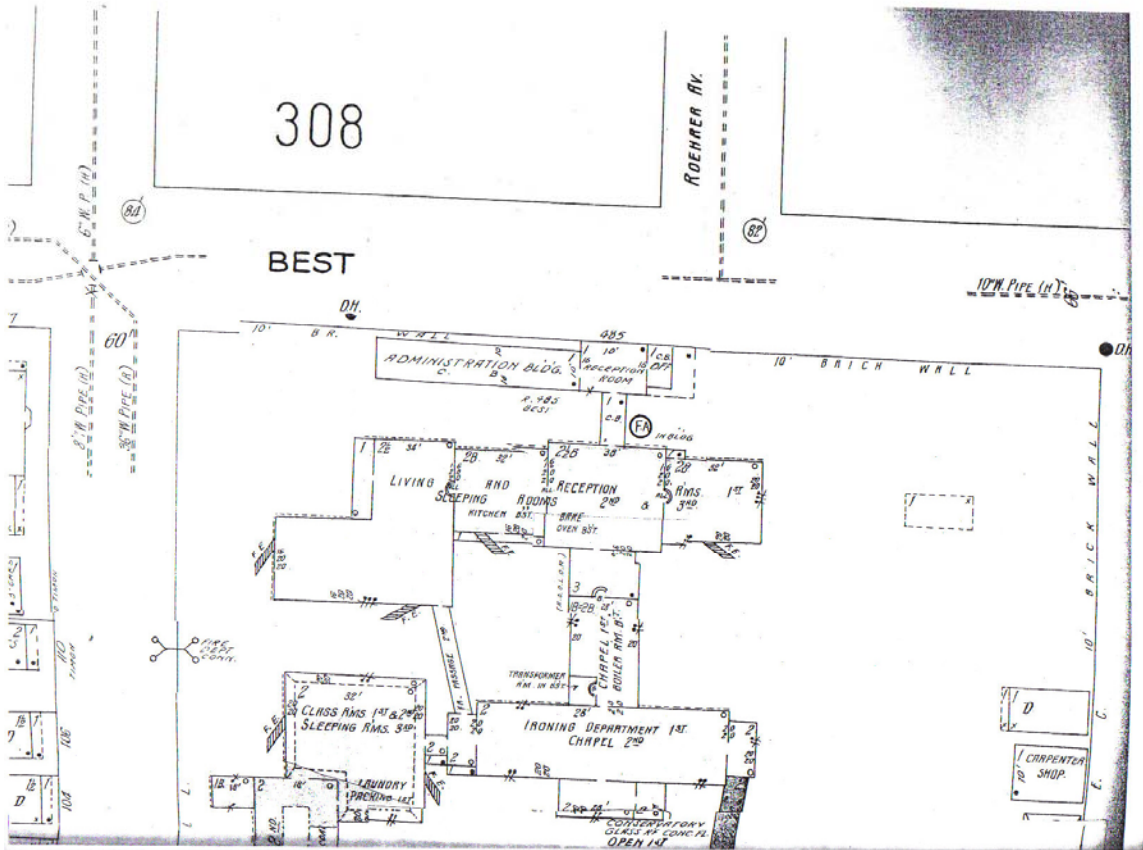




The above images, copied from the videotape taken on the same date, were taken by Northeast Intelligence Network director Douglas Hagmann. As noted above, the images show two of six young men climbing from ground level to the roof of a building inside of the compound. Due to the angle the image was secured and other factors, the adults giving verbal instructions to this male are not visible.

This exact process was repeated with four-(4) other males in the same area who were of the same approximate age. One on top of the structure, they walked to another area of the roof not visible from this surveillance position.

Concurrent with obtaining this limited footage, a number of adult males from nearby houses began calling attention to the surveillance operations, which necessitated an abrupt termination to avoid further compromise or potential altercation.



¹ *The Buffalo News*, September 26, 2004, Page B1 Hostility Clouds Efforts To Create Islamic Mosque, Boarding School

² *ibid*

³ *The Buffalo News*, March 13th, 2003, Page B3 Plans For Muslim School Still Upset Neighbors

⁴ City of Buffalo, Department of Assessment and Taxation, 5 May 2004

⁵ <http://www.madania.org>

⁶ *The Buffalo News*, October 12, 2004 "Mosque hit by fire reopens", Anthony Cardinale, News Staff Reporter