

## **Chapter 11 – PRISON AND COMMUNITY-BASED DISENGAGEMENT AND DE-RADICALIZATION PROGRAMS FOR EXTREMIST INVOLVED IN MILITANT JIHADI TERRORISM IDEOLOGIES AND ACTIVITIES**

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The last two decades have witnessed an explosive and dramatic leap in the growth of violent terror groups working in behalf of the global militant “jihad”. The tactics employed include kidnappings; beheadings; assassinations; bombings in civilian areas and the use of suicide missions labeled by the perpetrators as “martyrdom missions”. Whereas in the past terror groups were less “religious” in their espoused ideology, more nationalistic in their membership, and local in their goals, we have seen in the past two decades that the ideology of al Qaeda and related militant jihadist groups is religious, and the groups are also global in reach and not limited to addressing local grievances (although they often make use of these issues to draw in and motivate new recruits).

As we increasingly begin to understand the processes of and threats from violent radicalization, governments in Western, as well as Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian societies, have begun to understand that it is necessary to mount an equally and as comprehensive a fight against violent radicalization. This fight should include four main areas:

- 1) Preventing radicalization, particularly among vulnerable populations;
- 2) Immunizing society against violent ideologies;
- 3) Identifying and disengaging (by arrest, amnesty programs or simple intimidation); and
- 4) Attempting de-radicalization of those who are on the brink of or already have committed violent acts in behalf of the militant groups.

### **11.1 DE-RADICALIZATION AND DISENGAGEMENT FROM TERRORISM**

To truly win against terrorism it is necessary to delegitimize it as a tactic. We must always keep in mind that terrorist groups exist because they have some political goal, some desire for power that drives them to violent action. Some groups exist as a result of serious grievances, real and perceived, and should, wherever possible, be channelled into laying down arms and achieving their goals through the legitimate political process. Individuals who engage in terrorism do so because somehow their individual vulnerabilities and desires have meshed with those of a group and they become engaged in the terrorism trajectory.

De-radicalization is a complex process and involves addressing the psychological state and makeup of the individuals involved in terrorism and those who are moving along the terrorist trajectory. Disengagement from terrorism is also an option but unlike de-radicalization it is behavioural only. Disengagement involves either the abandonment of violence, or abandonment of a group that is advocating or actively involved in violence, but entails no real and enduring change of mind and heart [1],[2],[3].

Disengagement sometimes occurs through intimidation. For those who are afraid of law enforcement the thrill of being involved in a terror cell can fade in the face of potential incarceration. These individuals may disengage from the group simply as a result of intimidation while continuing to hold extremist views and

continuing to be vulnerable to easy reactivation for a terrorist attack – by virtue of continued contact with, but minimal activity within a terrorist cell. For some disengagement occurs with arrest and imprisonment although the actors may still be highly extremist in their mindset and even “infect” many others while in prison: recruiting for the group and perhaps even directing terrorist activities on the outside from prison as they wait out their sentence. This was the case for many Palestinian terrorists who were arrested and held for years in Israeli prisons. Some smuggled in phones and directed militant activities from inside the prisons while others recruited new members. Ahmed Sadat the leader of the PFLP commented to me in 2004, “The prison became our best university for finding and teaching recruits. The Israelis did us a favour in that regard.” [4]

There are ways to disengage individuals and groups from terrorism and even to de-radicalize/change their belief that terrorism is a legitimate activity. These include:

- 1) Delegitimizing the ideologies themselves;
- 2) Understanding and tailoring strategies to address the various conduits used for persuading and motivating recruits (in the case of the militant jihad these conduits are through face-to-face recruitment, media glorification or terrorism and the Internet);
- 3) Disengaging recruits from active roles through intimidation, imprisonment, amnesty programs;
- 4) Providing activities that attract them away from violence and into non-violent solutions;
- 5) De-radicalizing/rehabilitating those who have been imprisoned through prison programs; and
- 6) Prevention of radicalization on a societal wide level with special emphasis on vulnerable prison inmates, gangs, military members, and youth.

Disengagement from terrorism is certainly a worthy goal. However, without an ideological shift de-radicalization does not occur and those who have disengaged from terrorism appear to just as easily re-engage. And those that reengage can be the most lethal of all actors volunteering for suicide missions in order to avoid what some have termed “another kind of death” meaning enduring imprisonment, torture or living with extreme posttraumatic stress responses [4]. Furthermore disengagement is simple to assess whereas the profound and long-term attitudinal, belief and behavioural changes involved in de-radicalization are both far more difficult to achieve and to assess.

The remainder of this paper will focus on all of the above. Two types of disengagement/de-radicalization programs will be described. The first deals with community-based models, while the second set of approaches deals with prison-based programs. Since much has been written in this volume on the role of the media and internet in recruiting [5] and space is limited, community-based models will focus only on recruiting in the military and on the street and omit media and internet approaches.

## **11.2 COUNTERING RECRUITMENT/RADICALIZATION IN THE MILITARY**

One of the calls to the militant jihad includes the seeking out and recruiting of key individuals who are inside militaries or soon will be, to convert them to extremism and to use their training and insider position to fight against their own countries and to fight against others as well. Following the identification of Zarkawi as the leader of AQ in Iraq, the Jordanian government understood that it needed to institute prevention programs within its military to find and work with those military recruits who may be influenced by and act upon militant jihadi ideologies. They developed a program for special forces recruits with psychological and ideological components to help detect those with doubts about being in the military, and to prevent their recruitment into militant jihadi groups through awareness and an understanding of the

validity (or lack thereof) of the associated persuasive religious arguments. It is run by a military psychologist and cleric who gives lectures to the new recruits and invites them to consider those family members, friends and colleagues who consider their military commitments as “Takfir” or apostate activities. The psychologist and cleric engage heavily with the military recruits to teach them that their military service to the state is indeed legitimate under Islam and that militant jihadi violence is illegitimate.

Western Muslims as well are vulnerable to both recruitment and retaliation. Those who consider or actually join the military in countries involved in missions in Iraq and Afghanistan may find themselves attacked by other Muslims for taking part in military missions in Islamic countries. Several Muslim military members in the UK told the author in June 2008 that they do not admit even to their own families, that they are in the military, in order to avoid harassment and prevent harm to themselves and their families [6]. European militaries need to take these concerns seriously by appointing Muslim imams as chaplains to support and protect their charges from becoming radicalized or suffering from harassment.

### **11.3 THE STREETS – COMMUNITY-BASED MODELS OF INTERVENTION**

While surveillance and infiltration of terrorist groups is necessary, it is possible to use parallel efforts for positive intervention when authorities identify young people that are becoming involved in militant jihadi activities. Youth workers (psychologists, social workers, imams and education specialists) can be sent to talk with those at risk and help them with the problems that make turning to such groups and ideologies attractive in the first place. Youth workers can be mentored and trained to staff youth centers and to work on the streets, engaging with extremists and those vulnerable to extremism to turn them back from belief in, and engaging in militant jihad. By these efforts, it may be possible to thwart or reverse radicalisation of young Muslims, who have not yet been arrested, but are known to hold extremist views or to support violent activities and have the potential, audacity and determination to become personally engaged in or critically supportive of political violence/terrorism.

Community-based counter-radicalization programs are active in both the Netherlands and the UK. The Dutch police understand that community policing is crucial and have instituted a program that mobilizes social services (housing, schooling, welfare benefits, etc.) as a means of prevention for those identified by the police as dangerously close to committing themselves to violence in behalf of the militant jihad.

The UK built a program modeled after the Dutch and also developed community-based programs for dialogue and outreach to prevent the spread of militant jihadist ideologies as well as to directly address extremists themselves. In the UK initiative, when a potential extremist is identified by policing initiatives, they are either marked for security surveillance, or if they have not gone too far down the terrorist trajectory, moved through a process in which they are warned that, while they have not yet broken any laws, they appear to need monitoring and assistance. Social services are then mobilized to deal with any social needs such as housing, educational services, social work, etc.

Just as deconstructing Internet militant jihadi materials is potentially a powerful method for countering its power to radicalize, deconstruction of the militant jihadi ideology is also a useful prevention activity in schools and mosques to protect vulnerable and young populations who are likely viewers of such materials by helping them to see the emotional manipulation and to provide a better path to take in response to the call to militant jihad. Just as we have anti-AIDs campaigns for young people, such materials could be widely used in schools to inoculate youth against the call to militant jihad [3].

It is important for countries to identify their “hotspots” and communities vulnerable to militant jihadi ideologies and consider programs that go well beyond simple criminal surveillance. The few Somali immigrant youth that went on “jihad” in Somalia after living in the US are an example of a population that some experts, including this author, had expressed concerns for years before they ever activated [7],[8].

## **11.4 PRISON REHABILITATION PROGRAMS**

Prison authorities in many countries are struggling with how to best address militant jihadi prisoners and those vulnerable to their aggressive recruitment tactics. Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Malaysia, Jordan, the United States, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Qatar, Netherlands, the UK and many other countries have all begun to address the need for prison rehabilitation and prevention programs to address and remediate the spread of militant jihadi activities within prisons. The author designed and pilot tested one of these rehabilitation programs in Iraq.

The spectrum of extremism in prisons ranges from those who entered prison as dedicated militant jihadists, having been imprisoned for some terrorist related act, to those who merely supported such groups for opportunist reasons. Those who have “blood on their hands” or who are already seriously indoctrinated and committed violence on behalf of the militant jihad can be called “hard core” extremists. The “hard core” also include those who actively propagate the ideology and have been intimately involved in terror operations: as strategists, recruiters, and actual operatives.

Next to these “hardcore” prisoners are those who have fallen under their influence. These usually include Muslims who reverted to Islam while in prison and new converts to Islam, both of whom were imprisoned for other reasons (i.e., non-terrorism related criminal acts). If left under the influence of militant jihadi leaders inside prison, they have a strong chance of becoming indoctrinated by militant jihadists and leaving prison as future “hard core” militant jihadis. Richard Reid, the infamous shoe bomber is a good example of this group.

Somewhere between the “hard core” and those under their influence are the opportunists – a group imprisoned for security related crimes who may have served militant jihadi groups but who were not motivated by the militant jihadi ideology. They are the ones that will lay an IED, run guns, or carry out other criminal activities for money but they are not particularly interested in the “cause”. This latter group is criminal in nature and motivated by money, involved with drugs, gun running, gang and criminal activities in general. Their motivations for assisting terrorists are mercenary rather than ideological, although once in prison they, too, are vulnerable to becoming more ideologically committed to militant jihadi ideas.

Lastly, in some countries, individuals are imprisoned for having militant jihadi materials in their possession. These prisoners have not actually acted on or been involved in terrorist acts and are often not seriously dedicated to militant jihadi ideologies.

One of the greatest challenges the author found when designing the detainee rehabilitation program in Iraq was sorting the prisoners and assessing the factors that served as catalysts for starting and staying on the terrorist trajectory, the level of commitment, and the motivations at each stage in the process. This understanding is necessary to successfully derail the person from engaging in terrorism. The rehabilitation needs vary: those who are ideologically indoctrinated need to have their world view addressed, whereas those for whom trauma was a primary catalyst for engaging in terrorism are in need of posttraumatic stress therapy. Those who have purely mercenary motives are unlikely to disengage from terrorism and might even be drawn further into the militant jihad by a program that addresses only ideology. These individuals may need skills training and psychological assistance to reorient to a different, non-violent means of earning an income.

The major aspects of nine programs for countering militant jihadi extremist ideologies and their followers inside prisons are briefly described. These programs are specifically designed as rehabilitation or “treatment” programs for extremist prisoners and also function to prevent the spread of militant jihadist ideologies inside the prison population. In the latter case, they may target prisoners who have converted or “reverted” to Islam and endorse militant jihadi ideologies. They were developed primarily with local issues in mind to combat the militant jihadist threat inside their own countries.

### **11.4.1 Saudi Arabia**

The Saudi program is the most well-known and longest standing. It was developed in response to increasing Saudi concern over “jihadists” who received military training and were ideologically indoctrinated in Afghanistan and returned to the kingdom disgruntled and advocating for it to be overthrown. In response to this societal challenge, a group of well-known clerics began a prison-based de-radicalization program. These clerics visited the prisoners individually to engage militant jihadis in discussions about their beliefs.

Saudi clerics, some of the most respected Islamic scholars in the world, engaged in respectful discussion with extremist prisoners and carefully challenged them in instances where the militants’ views did not coincide with authentic teachings of Islam. The Saudi clerics were often able to win these debates and move them to a more moderate stance of no longer endorsing terrorism. The credibility of the clerics involved is paramount and may not translate to other locations. As a matter of fact, when clerics from the Saudi program were invited to speak with Saudi prisoners in Guantanamo and in Iraq they found that, when they were up against the “hard core” al Qaeda (AQ) prisoner, their program was far less effective and often not effective at all. The prisoners in Guantanamo and Iraq took the ideological stance that the Saudi clerics had been co-opted by the Saudi royal family, who they view as apostates (or “Takfeer”), not true Muslims. However, the Saudi clerics were able to reach a few less “hard core” prisoners at Guantanamo and, as a result, gained important intelligence from them that led to further arrests of terrorist operatives.

The Saudis have the resources to offer substantial incentives to their prisoners for positive participation in the “reform” process. These include arranging marriages for single disadvantaged prisoners (no small thing in Saudi where failing to find a wife can be a serious frustration), offering new cars and jobs upon release – all things to help ex-prisoners settle down and start a family – and also making financial provisions for the wives and families of the married extremists prisoners. This enables the Saudi clerics to be able to offer material incentives as genuine expressions of their concern. Likewise, the Saudi system is able to keep close tabs on prisoners who are released, monitoring their communication and movements to ensure they do not resume their extremist memberships and activities. This is a disincentive for the groups as well, as they can be discovered and arrested for try to recruit a released militant inside Saudi.

An important point to note about the Saudi program is that it began solely with the involvement of clerics but, as time went on, the clerics understood that a purely ideological (in this case Islamic) approach was not sufficient. As a result, they invited psychiatric and psychological professionals to help assess the prisoners throughout the treatment program and have in the last years added many psychological aspects to their program including art therapy [9]. The Saudi program also has a prevention component and aftercare with a halfway house (that includes art therapy, play station, religious lectures that aids in the transition from prison, including for those released from Guantanamo [10]. The head of the family members and graduates of the program also must sign a pledge renouncing terrorism, with the head of the family stating he will be responsible for the prisoner once released into their care [11].

At present prisoners complete the program in eight to twelve weeks [11]. The prison-based program started in 2004 and has graduated more than three thousand prisoners, The current claim made by the Saudi prison program is for 80 to 90 percent effectiveness with recidivism of only thirty-five of these as of 2008 [12]. One must keep in mind however that this figure is based on a prison population that aims mainly at moderate extremists – that is those who were arrested for having connections to extremist militant groups or having militant jihadi materials in their possession and makes little to no inroads with “hard core” operatives. Indeed the thirty five reported by Boucek were all for security related offences, but another nine prisoners graduating from the program were rearrested for returning to the militant jihad [11]. One infamous case, Said Ali al-Shihri (otherwise known as Abu Sayyaf al-Shihri) was released from Guantanamo to Saudi Arabia in 2007 and passed through the Saudi rehabilitation program before resurfacing in Yemen as the deputy leader of al Qaeda’s Yemeni branch, where he is suspected

of involvement in the deadly bombing of the United States Embassy in Sana, Yemen in September 2008 [13].

#### **11.4.2 Singapore**

The Singaporeans have a rehabilitation program similar to the Saudis, having modeled it after theirs. It was begun in 2002 in response to thwarted suicide bombing attacks on four key positions inside Singapore including the US embassy involving 15 Jamaya Islamiya Singaporeans in their mid to late twenties. The existence of home grown militant jihadis on home soil came as a great shock to the Singaporean government. Singaporean system also involves incentives such as providing financial provisions for the wives and families of the prisoners, offering the wives jobs while the prisoner was still in prison and providing when necessary employment for prisoners upon release. The prisoners are also strongly encouraged to continue meeting with the prison clerics weekly for the year after their release to ensure that they do not revert back to any militant jihadi ideas [14]. It also provides prisoners with a library and academic courses [11]. The Singaporean program also claims huge success, with thirty two of fifty-five prisoners released [11]; however, their program works only with thwarted terrorists not those who had engaged in violence. Also, Singapore is a society in which it is easy to monitor prisoners (including their communications and movements) after their release.

#### **11.4.3 Malaysia**

The Malaysians claim their prison program is based on the Singapore system. The Malay prison system is a long-term, 2 – 3 year treatment program. “Treatment” in the Malay system is based upon group lectures, individual counseling sessions with one or multiple clerics, and perhaps most importantly, physical “discipline” (beatings) of prisoners who do not comply with the state sponsored Islamic teachings against militant jihad. The Malaysian prisoners generally comply with treatment, if only to simply avoid being beaten for any overt resistance to it. It is unclear if the program has truly been successful.

#### **11.4.4 Indonesia**

Indonesia’s program, started in 2002, involves the participation of former Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members who work to convince suspected terrorists that Islam does not support terrorism in return for incentives such as reduced sentences or assistance for their families. The most famous of these is a former high ranking militant, Nasir Abas, allegedly involved in the Bali bombing and a former mujahedeen in Afghanistan who “de-radicalized” on his own as a result of his disgust with the wholesale attacks and killing of civilians that he never endorsed [11]. Abas et al. uses three arguments to convince militant jihadis to give up their allegiance to the movement: that militant jihad and attacking civilians is not Islamic; that all westerners are not bad, and that militant jihad has given a bad face to Islam, doing it a disservice. He admits many militants dismiss him but that he can make an impact in some cases [15].

The Indonesian program is based on two key tenets: one that only radicals can de-radicalize militant jihadi prisoners because they have credibility; and that the state must re-establish trust and legitimacy (through incentives, etc.) to foster the cooperation of former militants/terrorists. For that reason the program gives considerable support, medical care and education to prisoners’ family members and to the prisoners themselves. Abas and his group of former militant jihadis argue against the need for an Islamic state, stating that the government is not apostate [16]. According to Sidney Jones, an Indonesia-based analyst for the International Crisis Group only of a few of the “hard core” have been reached, the rest are not responsive to this program [9].

#### **11.4.5 Egypt**

In 1997, leaders of the Egyptian Islamic Group (EIG) started a massive de-radicalization program in which they declared a unilateral ceasefire, and from which sprang twenty-five volumes containing Islamic

arguments of why the use of violence against the state, society and others was illegitimate and not based in Islam. The Egyptian prison authorities allowed the leaders to organize large study groups inside the prison where they could gather their followers to tell them that what they had originally been taught about the militant jihad was no longer considered legitimate, nor Islamic. Following in the footsteps of EIG, the imprisoned leaders of the al-Jihad organization also started a massive movement in 2007 renouncing violence [1]. This shook al Qaeda to its core. The recanting and subsequent writings of Sayyid Imam al-Sharif in particular created a furor within the global militant jihadi movement. This was because he was known previously for having authored what some refer to as the “bible” of jihad, and many of those involved in the formation of al Qaeda previously had strong ties with the al-Jihad group. Indeed Zawahiri, the main current ideologue of al Qaeda was so concerned that he wrote an entire volume to answer al-Sharif’s recantation of the militant jihad, questioning the piece and asking if perhaps its author was hooked up to the torture machine to have written it.

The Egyptians are well known for their frequent use of torture to elicit information from and to “turn” militant jihadi prisoners. One man, imprisoned for teaching the Salafi version of Islam, told the author, “I was arrested and held for five years. They would take us in up on the roof and douse us with freezing cold water and leave us there in the cold, along with many other ways of torturing us.” [17]. The Islamist movement in Egypt, many whose members spent considerable time in prison and were tortured spawned two distinct paths. Those who were released from prison or evaded arrest fled Egypt and some of them became the basis of the modern day AQ movement.

For both of the Egyptian groups recanting from terrorism there were two important reasons for giving up political violence: torture and imprisonment (strong state repression) and the realization, gained from extensive study in prison, that violent militant jihadi ideas were not only counterproductive (i.e., often resulting in torture and death) but also were not justified by Islam. When interviewed, leaders of the Egyptian Islamic Group recall feeling horrified as their followers moved from attacking political leaders, regarded as legitimate targets, to indiscriminate attacks against civilians, which they believed to be inconsistent with the teachings of Islam.

According to Egyptian authorities this prison program has reached hundreds successfully. Their success is likely due to the scholarship of the leaders and the fact that they are respected leaders and insiders to the movement as well as charismatic. The success of the Egyptian model unfortunately highlights the potential power resulting from the coupling of imprisonment, torture and heavy state repression with self education and charismatic leaders dispersing their new found wisdom to their followers. It is unlikely any Western state would want to emulate all aspects of this program, especially the repression, even with the high success rates. As an Egyptian ex-prisoner who was tortured in prison told this author, “I did not believe in terrorism and never preached it and I still do not, it is not Islamic.” Asked if he continues to preach non-violent Salafi views after his release he answered, “No, I am too afraid to preach anything, I never want to return to prison” [17]. We can hope most tortured prisoners are like him, but we know from actual research that is not the case – some become even more hardened and dedicate themselves to suicide missions rather than to risk recapture [18].

#### **11.4.6 Yemen**

Yemen boasts great success from a prison system that is very similar to the Saudis in that it engages militant jihadi prisoners in respectful dialogue with imminent clerics who, like the Saudis, have the authority, education and experience to debate Islamic issues. In the case of Yemen success is reported even with the “hard core” who are claimed to have reverted to a moderate stance of Islam [19]. Intelligence data however reveals that in fact many of these “hard core” militants simply left Yemen upon release and turned up in Iraq and other jihadi hotspots. It appears that the Yemeni government turned a blind eye to this, pleased to have the militants out of the country and engaged elsewhere.

#### **11.4.7 United Kingdom**

The UK began its program to combat militant jihadi ideologies inside the prisons in 2005 – 2006. The UK program currently focuses on new Islamic converts who have endorsed militant jihadi ideologies. These prisoners meet individually with prison imams who ask them about their beliefs and present them with Salafi-based critical analysis methods to judge the authenticity of Islamic teachings and whether they are consistent with the Qur’ān and the verified teachings (Hadiths) of the companion of the Prophets. Likewise, militant jihadi teachings are challenged carefully by presenting the context in which the Quranic verses and Hadiths used by terror groups are appropriately applied and highlighting where they have been misapplied. The goal is to empower the convert to think for himself and drop his mistaken commitment to militant jihadi beliefs. The UK program imams admit that in all cases they are able to identify psycho-social factors and vulnerabilities that create a “hook” for the militant jihadi teachings but that they themselves do not address these factors other than to identify them, discuss them briefly with the prisoners and refer them for state sponsored social work assistance. The UK program is completely non-coercive and voluntary and operates for the most part as individual religious counseling/mentoring but also includes sermons and group discussions where appropriate.

#### **11.4.8 United States**

In Fall of 2006 the United States Department of Defense, under the initiative of General Garner, committed to investigate existing prison de-radicalization programs and to model one for use with the 20,000 + security detainees in Iraq. The US program was designed by the author, with the help of UK imams involved in the Scotland Yard project, and pilot tested in summer 2007. The four to six week intensive program was the first of its kind to incorporate a comprehensive religious and psychological approach from the start – combining religious challenge by Muslim imams with psychological counseling to inmates to help address the many psychological traumas and vulnerabilities that led them to involvement with terrorism and insurgency. The goal of the program is to challenge and move the detainees to make a profound shift from embracing violence to adopting a non-violent stance. Changes are assessed relative to pre-treatment assessments by both psychologists and imams. Due to the huge numbers of detainees involved, most sessions occur in groups of no more than ten detainees and individual sessions only occur on an “as needed” basis. Treatment is full day; half religious, half psychological. The program is completely voluntary, but detainees are motivated by the potential of accelerated release from detention and amnesty. The program also has an economic and educational component designed by the military to improve detainees’ literacy (in Arabic) and to train them in useful skills for employment upon release. While the desire was to include family and tribal members in the treatment, the distances involved, particularly for those detainees housed in Camp Bucca, precluded doing so.

The challenges of designing and carrying out a large scale rehabilitation program inside an active conflict zone are many. All those released will be going back into an environment where the original catalysts for activating into terrorism and political violence may still be present.

Of the 20,000 + detainees held by the US at that time it was estimated between five to fifteen percent were “hard core”, i.e., dedicated to militant jihadi ideologies and the rest were engaged in sectarian violence (including Shia militants) and economic opportunists. Likewise 800 juveniles were among the detainees. Thus the program was tailored for three populations: hard core, moderates and juveniles.

The eight hundred juvenile detainees, ages 13 – 18, were a huge concern as they were separated from family and school for a considerable period of time during a critical period in their development. The program for juveniles included continuing their education, along with psychological and religious counseling. Classrooms and sports were organized for the juveniles including math, science, social sciences, language, and soccer. The juveniles were given group counseling treatment by clerics. Psychological counseling was provided to address traumas, psycho-social needs and vulnerabilities, sense of identity and future purpose and plans for exiting prison. The juveniles responded well to the program.

The program for the “hard core” prisoners was similar to the juveniles including both Islamic lessons and psychological treatment of their traumas. They were taken in groups through a series of lessons organized around themes relating to militant jihad and Islamic teachings that were designed to engage them in discussions, challenge militant jihadi ideologies and turn them to relinquishing sectarian and militant jihadi violence. Some of the imams that worked with them were respected Salafi scholars with years of Islamic study and also prior involvement in the militant jihad, thus they had an insider position to work from. The psychological track addressed the multitude of traumas that may have given rise to their willingness to commit to violence, as well as the traumas that occurred during arrest and incarceration, grief and loss issues, their desires for revenge, their sense of identity, meaningfulness, life mission, and future purpose. The psychology track worked to create positive identity and future alignments, to reorient them to non-violent problem solving and to empower the militant jihadis to consider alternative non-violent pathways to changing their society and to address injustices.

The “moderate” prisoners were provided with a shorter program that addressed Islamic values and provided psychological counseling to create a sense of identity and self empowerment that precluded commitment to violence. This group was given only a limited Islamic challenge because they were not ideologically committed to the militant jihad and there was no point to needlessly expose them to this ideology.

The program was designed to operate on the highest levels of human rights standards with no violence or coercion involved and full disclosure of the programs’ goals and contents, voluntary participation, informed consent and the ability to opt out at any time. Likewise careful precautions were taken to warn detainees who were receiving counseling that given prison surveillance admitting to crimes they hadn’t already admitted to in previous interrogation sessions might be problematic for them, that it was better to work on these issues without directly admitting to criminal involvement.

Initial results were very promising, with 6,000 detainees released nine months after program commencement, although most of these were low security risks rather than “hard core”. Of the original group released, only 12 of these inmates were rearrested – much lower than the usual recidivism rate from previous years of close to 200. Major General Douglas Stone, commander of detention facilities in Iraq, reported that improved security in the areas of the country many inmates were returning to also helped in keeping the recidivism rate lower [9]. Overall, the program appeared to work for releasing low security risk detainees and inside the prison also showed some success for reaching “hard core”.

#### **11.4.9 Turkey**

Turkey also has a prison program. One of its distinctive features is the use of family members to effect changes in the prisoners. Mothers, in particular, are brought into sessions to “talk sense” to their sons. Since the mother-son bond is so strong in Turkish culture a mother’s strong emotional pleas to her son to give up commitment to the militant jihadi ideology can be quite persuasive, especially if she shows the suffering his imprisonment has caused her and their family.

### **11.5 FEATURES OF PRISON REHABILITATION PROGRAMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESS**

Prison de-radicalization programs are a great challenge and the ingredients of a successful prison rehabilitation program are many and varied. There are features common to all programs – building rapport and challenging the Islamic basis of the militant jihadi ideology, but there are also distinctive features that can be used to increase the success of a program. Table 11-1 gives a list of the potential ingredients of a successful prison rehabilitation program.

**Table 11-1: Features of Some Prison Rehabilitation Programs for Militant Jihadis.**

Country	Re-Education	Incentives	Re-Integration	Other Features
Saudi Arabia	Use of highly respected clerics	Arranged marriages Financial support	New car/job upon release Halfway houses Lectures to aid transition	Includes input from psychologists and psychiatrists Monitor movements and comms
Singapore	Individual discussions with clerics	Family assistance Jobs for wives	Jobs upon release Ongoing education	Monitor movements and comms
Malaysia	Up to 3 yrs. Counseling with clerics Group lectures			Brutal treatment of non-compliant prisoners
Indonesia	Uses former radicals (such as Nasir Abas)	Reduced sentences Family assistance Medical care Education		Few successes to date
Egypt	Study groups, led by Egyptian Islamic Group			Brutal tactics including torture Mixed results (including contributing to the formation of AQ)
Yemen	Discussions with clerics			Some success but “hard core” tend to leave country
UK	Individual meetings with Imams Salafi-based Sermons and groups sessions		State sponsored social work	Conducted by imams from the same communities as the radicalized prisoners
USA	Religious sessions with Imam Psychological counseling	Accelerated release Potential amnesty Education Participation in sports (juveniles)	Job training Literacy training (Arabic)	Three different programs: - Hard Core - Moderates - Juveniles
Turkey	Use of family members, especially mothers			

A prison program must first of all be voluntary and involve informed consent as well as give profound respect to human rights. While some may argue the “ticking bomb” reason for torture or advocate “soft torture”, serious al Qaeda participants are usually prepared for both. There is evidence that many al Qaeda operatives are trained to endure interrogation and even torture and to organize themselves into functioning recruitment cells inside prison walls. Physical abuse, isolation and coercion may work to elicit confessions but they may also harden prisoners and drive them to suicide or “martyrdom” roles if they return to terrorism upon release. Likewise, photos and video footage from Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib

give clear evidence that any mistreatment of prisoners can easily become a lightning rod for further global radicalization.

Detainees in Iraq who told the author about being mistreated (hit, held in stress positions, not allowed to clean themselves according to Islamic rules or pray, locked in small spaces, photographed naked among mixed gender groups, mocked while naked, etc.) made clear that such mistreatment can push some but not all prisoners into further radicalization and can do the same for their relatives and others who learn of it. The same was true in our Chechen sample – a group of suicide bombers volunteered for their missions either after being tortured or having a family member tortured in prison. Conversely, three former al Qaeda operatives who spoke with the author in Iraq shared that the decency, respect and extension of human care by their interrogators in prison turned them away from the movement [20].

A successful program must find a way to successfully sort through and identify prisoners or detainees according to their level of radicalization. This requires an assessment tool which should be used pre, post and during treatment. The program must be tailored to address the process of engagement in the movement; original and current motivators; and the level or current engagement and find ways to activate potential motivations for disengagement/de-radicalization. For the program to work well the militant jihadis must be approached contextually, addressing the issues that are important to them (anger over occupation, violation of sacred values, trauma, desire for revenge, search for meaning, need for belonging, need for a father figure, marginalization, discrimination, etc.). Motivational incentives that address their needs and motivations for having become involved work the best.

A common element of all of the programs is that they rely upon a relationship built with the prisoner, often by a cleric or imam brought in specifically for this purpose, but at times also involving a psychologist or an entire team of mentors. These individuals first build rapport in group or individual sessions which takes place anywhere from daily to weekly. Many programs at present are religious only and use imams solely to challenge the militant jihadi worldview. This is a serious limitation as the road to radicalization involves many group dynamics and individual vulnerabilities that are best addressed using psychological methods in conjunction with imam involvement. Many psychological tools (cognitive therapy, guided imagery, etc.) can be used to help militant jihadi prisoners envision restoring themselves to a non-violent stance, rebuilding to engage with their social environment positively.

A program is also only as good as the quality of the people that carry it out. Charismatic persons, those with maternal or paternal streaks, and a sense of personal authority and maturity are also likely to have better success as prisoners are often drawn to such persons. Respect for age and strong family ties are often a cultural feature of those who join the militant jihad, thus experience and age can be serious asset. In the case of religious challenge it is important to realize that hard core militant jihadis who know their Koran well will likely demand a very highly trained imam to speak with them and are unlikely to respect anyone other than a Salafi scholar. Likewise when sectarian violence is a huge issue as it has been with al Qaeda in Iraq it may be difficult to use Shia staff for Sunni prisoners because they may be rejected or threatened.

A few programs make use of family members and tribal leaders both in the treatment and in the release process, releasing the prisoner into the hands of the tribe or family who pledged to keep watch over the released prisoner and prevent him from further involvement. In Iraq it was very clear that the prisoners were very worried about loved ones at home, particularly female relatives that were perhaps living without male protection while the inmate was imprisoned. Making use of this concern through family involvement and monitored phone calls and making use of the strong desire to return home puts a strong motivation to good use.

The roles that a militant jihadi will hopefully move into once disengaged/de-radicalized are also important to consider. Amnesty, jobs programs and continued mentoring upon release are all important considerations.

Economic incentives for taking part in some programs such as the Saudis include providing jobs and even a car upon release which help make the transition from prison. Likewise skills training in computers, language, and literacy or a trade all provide increased likelihood of being gainfully employed upon release. A few programs include after release mentoring programs and frequent check-ins to ensure the changes occurring inside prison continue after release. All of these measures are likely to secure long-term compliance.

Lastly, a good program may not do well if the prison authorities are not behind the program. Guards that are disrespectful or abusive can easily undo positive movement in treatment sessions. Likewise isolating prisoners taking part in the program, surveillance, getting medical care and training for those who need extra care, getting the proper space to carry out the program, prison access and protection for staff, etc., all require close alliance with the prison authorities as does assessing who should be taking part in the program.

Sabotage of prisoner reform is also a serious factor to consider. In Iraq those who were suspected of turning against the other Takfiri prisoners were subjected to sharia courts and had their arms broken or worse. It is wise to isolate those taking part in a program from those who are not in order to avoid such punishments and to keep them from being harassed and re-indoctrinated while going through the program.

Assessing success in any prison program is extremely difficult. Prisoners are highly motivated to lie especially if they believe that they can gain amnesty and early release. Probably the best measure of a reformed jihadi is observation over time to see if there has been a real change of behavior, mind and heart. This may be easier to detect in group sessions and with clandestine surveillance than in individual sessions where the prisoner may learn to manipulate his mentor.

Likewise a successful program cannot be condemned by some level of recidivism. Thousands of prisoners in Iraq were released after going through the Detainee Rehabilitation Program; however, release alone is not signify success and release does not mean that they did not return to terrorism – only that they were not detected. Previously incarcerated terrorists are likely to be very careful to avoid arrest again. Detainees released from the Saudi and Yemen programs have been found to have returned to the militant jihad, just as detainees released without treatment from Guantanamo and other programs returned to their former roles.

## **11.6 CHALLENGES**

The challenges to counter-radicalization programs whether they be prison or community based are multiple. First of all women are rarely addressed in either venue and women are increasingly playing a role in militant jihad: as motivators of men (even offering themselves as marital/sexual prizes to those who commit to self “martyrdom”), trainers of children, interpreters and teachers of militant jihad and as “martyrs” and operatives themselves. In Iraq arresting and detaining even clearly guilty women as prisoners was a highly radicalizing event and one that made it difficult for the women to return to society as it was assumed they had been sexually molested while in prison.

Another challenge with counter-radicalization programs is that the ideology and recruitment strategies that governments are confronting are highly fluid and difficult to address with static programs. The programs must constantly keep up with the changeable nature of the threat they are addressing. The militant jihadi discourse and their tactics change by the month. For instance when the Egyptian al-Sharif disavowed jihad a great debate broke out among militant jihadis into which even Zawahiri stepped to weigh in. These are things that practitioners must be aware of in order to take full advantage of them.

There is much concern as well among Western countries for making use of the Salafi clerics who are probably most able to engage seriously indoctrinated militant jihadis in meaningful discourse since the Salafi stream so closely runs alongside the Takfiri ideologies that allow the killing of Muslims, civilians, women and children. While Western governments often fear Salafists we may find that fear handicaps us from using our best allies in fighting militant jihadi ideologies. Another concern is that no matter what the

de-radicalization program, if it is true to Islamic scriptures there are calls to jihad when Islam, Islamic lands and Islamic peoples are under attack, so it is hard to put all of these ideas to rest when dealing with truly occupied Muslim lands. In these cases the best Islamic arguments for giving up violence is that it is against Islamic scriptures to fight a losing battle with an overwhelming enemy when great losses will be sustained; in these cases Muslims are instructed to make peace until their strength is regained (or the issue becomes moot if the occupation is ended).

There are also serious concerns about the spread of militant jihadi ideologies inside prisons. Often prisoners ingeniously find the means to pass tapes, lectures, phones, and other means of communicating their virulent ideologies within and outside of prison walls. Prison officials can respond by moving prisoners although unless they are all successfully identified this strategy may leave untraced ideologues in place and as a result exposes two new prisoner group to experienced ideologues. Or they can isolate militant jihadi prisoners in cells and prisons dedicated only to them but this may lead to human rights outcry by society at large as it did in the Netherlands. Without active measures to counter in prison recruitment it is likely that some prisoners will emerge more dangerous than they went in.

Certainly there is a strong need for prevention, inoculation and de-radicalization programs to attract and work with militant jihadis on the street, over the Internet, in prisons, in militaries, on the Internet and wherever else they may be active in order to try to turn them back from terrorism and political violence. Let us have the courage to try and the hope that we succeed in these efforts to protect our citizens from militant jihadi terrorism.

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