

Detroit, MI

-Al Gama'at al Islamiyya

-Muslim Brotherhood

-Hizballah

-Hammas

Philadelphia, PA

-Al Gama'at al Islamiyya

-Hammas

-Hizballah

-Al Muhajiroun

Boston,

-Al Qaeda

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# HAMAS

## The Original Infiltrator

TO UNDERSTAND HOW the jihad movement has made full use of American hospitality, it helps to examine a single chain of organizations with as much unity of purpose and operations as possible. Searching for a source of terror in America, many people have pointed fingers at al Qaeda, whose first outposts here were set up in the late 1980s. Yet there is another organization, familiar from countless headlines stemming from terrorism in the Middle East, that has flown under the media's radar in the wake of September 11, 2001: Hamas. Hamas's aims may seem more modest; no international Hamas celebrity has reached the status of Osama bin Laden, let alone declared that all U.S. citizens are legitimate targets. Yet Hamas is extremely well entrenched in the United States, and the interlocking operations with which it is associated are extraordinary in their reach.



## AMERICAN JIHAD

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Hamas is world famous as the main Islamist organization in the Palestinian territories. Yet it is a relatively recent organization, formed immediately after the *intifada* of 1987. Hamas not only opposes the Middle East peace process, it seeks Israel's destruction. It has a political and a military wing; the former builds schools and hospitals in Palestinian territories. Graduates from its political wing earn the right to carry out terrorist attacks against Israeli targets.

Of all the Islamic militant groups, Hamas has developed the most sophisticated American infrastructure. The story of how a young man named Nasser Issa Jalal Hidmi was recruited and trained by Hamas illustrates just how central is the American role in Hamas's network. I have been able to reconstruct Hidmi's story by studying documents retrieved by Israeli investigators and confessions to Israeli courts by various Hamas operatives and the recordings of Hamas conferences in the U.S.

As a student in a Jerusalem preparatory college, Hidmi joined an Islamic religious group that served as a nursery for future military operatives. Motivated by a strong antipathy to the Israeli occupation, he was introduced to a cleric who went by the *nom de guerre* of Abu 'Ubaada and who supervised a wing of Hamas terror squads. In a short time, Hidmi showed promise as a rising Hamas star. The organization's leaders needed a safe place to send him for training. Rather than Lebanon or Syria, he was sent to the United States.

In June 1990, only months after arriving in the United States and settling in Manhattan, Kansas, Hidmi received a

phone call from Mohammed Salah, the Chicago-based used-car dealer who was subsequently imprisoned by the Israelis. Per Salah's instruction, Hidmi flew to Chicago where he was one of twenty-five other Palestinian youths selected for a week-end of terrorist training at a campground on the outskirts of the city.

In their Hamas "basic training" course, the recruits were given instruction in Islamic religious issues—but also in the planting of car bombs. The car-bomb instructor identified himself as a Libyan-American man who had previously served in the Marines and was married to an American woman. Using charts and diagrams, the instructor showed how to place a bomb in a car's engine and how to insure its detonation at the point of ignition. The first stage of the training completed, the students returned home.

Later that year, Hidmi and the other Hamas inductees were told to attend an Islamic convention in Kansas City. For these young militants, the presence of so many Hamas leaders in one place—let alone the United States—was startling. During the next three days, numerous top officials exulted in the operations of Hamas, reveling in the glory of the burgeoning international Islamic movement and railing against the crusader-Zionist-infidel conspiracy being carried out by the perfidious Jews.

Though the gathering was in America, and many of the speakers lived in this country, their targets were international. Musa abu Marzook, a resident of Falls Church, Virginia (and separately, Louisiana), was one major Hamas leader who spoke there.

Furniture is subject to natural wear and tear, so we can only accept it for return within 14 days of the date of receipt. Custom-ordered and custom-assembled furniture is

## AMERICAN JIHAD

He called upon Muslims to destroy the "outpost of Western influence" that was created with the "purpose of being a spearhead in the heart of the Muslim world"—i.e., Israel.

During the conference, Mohammed Salah organized a series of smaller workshops for Hidmi and other Hamas recruits at a nearby Ramada Inn. At the front of a room, a burly man introduced himself as Ibrahim Mahmoud Muzayyin, director of an organization called the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, which officially raises money for "charity" in the West Bank and Gaza. Muzayyin told the group: "You have been assembled here because you are all residents of the occupied territories. And you have been chosen to carry out operations to escalate the *intifada* on behalf of the Hamas movement."<sup>1</sup>

One noted Islamic militant at this session was Jordanian parliamentarian Ishaq al-Farhan, who gave the students a pep talk. Al-Farhan had been found by Jordanian security forces to have collaborated with a Hamas leader in Jordan in acquiring weapons for the group in Gaza. Another was Najib al-Ghosh, editor-in-chief of the Muslim Arab Youth Association's flagship magazine, *Al-Amal*, published out of Plainfield, Indiana.

After a series of pep talks, the group was divided into smaller clusters for their car-bomb lessons. They also learned how to handle improvised explosives and hand grenades. In other parts of the conference, the youths were segmented into areas of specialized training, including interrogation and execution of collaborators, surveillance, and political organizing.

Six months later, the group met again in Kansas City. Mohammed Salah introduced Najib al-Ghosh, who lectured on the

methods of interrogation of Israeli intelligence as well as on the different types of hand grenades and bombs. "The purpose of all this," Salah interjected, "is so that everyone will go home and plant explosives in the area where he lives."<sup>2</sup>

Before Hidmi had a chance to plant explosives, he was arrested on his return to Israel. More than a dozen of the original twenty-five from Hidmi's class still remain in the United States. In early 1993, chief organizer Salah was arrested by Israeli authorities on a visit to Israel while arranging Hamas terror operations. When news of his arrest was first reported, including the fact that he was a military commander of Hamas, the FBI (as well as American media) dismissed the allegations skeptically. "We were wrong," says former FBI Director of Counterterrorism Oliver "Buck" Revell. "We didn't know what was going on in our own backyard." During his interrogation—conducted in Arabic—Salah confessed to making several surreptitious trips to Israel, where he directed Hamas terror operations, organized military cells, and transferred more than \$1 million for the purchase of weapons. Other information obtained by Israeli authorities confirmed that since 1987, Salah had recruited hundreds of Hamas operatives, trained them, and personally built fourteen time bombs. Salah kept a map showing where two kidnapped Israeli soldiers had been buried by Hamas death squads.

Hamas's success in planting some of its most senior military officials in the United States provides some of the most compelling evidence of the deep roots of radical Islamic networks on American soil. One of those officials, Musa abu Marzook, provided Salah's instructions for his incursions into Israel to provide