



Ft. Hood Shooter's Spiritual Leader Targeted in Yemen Air Strike

In the twilight of the pre-dawn on Thursday, bombs dropped on the home of Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born, Yemeni-based cleric. Yemeni Air Forces carried out the attack in an effort to kill al-Qaeda militants reportedly gathered there to plan attacks on Western concerns. At the time of this writing, it is unclear whether the controversial imam was actually killed in the early morning air strike.



What is clear is the influence Awlaki exerted over Major Nidal Malik Hasan, the army officer accused of murdering 13 people at a processing center on Fort Hood, Texas, November 5. In an interview with al-Jazeera, Awlaki proudly confirms the email exchange he carried on with Hasan beginning in December 2008, nearly a year prior to the psychiatrist's murderous rampage. Specifically, Awlaki, who once mentored Hasan in his role as prayer leader at the Ft. Hood shooter's mosque in northern Virginia, told the Arab news agency that Hasan asked him whether the killing of U.S. soldiers was justified under Islamic law.

In the interview, Awlaki does not answer the reporter's question as to whether or not he encouraged Hasan to carry out his apparently pre-meditated assassination of soldiers preparing to deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan. However, he does state that in his opinion "the operation had a military target inside America, and there's no dispute about that." He goes on to proclaim that, "working in the U.S. military to kill Muslims is a betrayal to Islam." Curiously, the American expatriate does not comment on whether or not his proven association and advocacy of the terrorism perpetrated by al-Qaeda is faithful to Islamic principles.

In a dramatic display of bravado that in light of the military targeting of his home may seem the haughty spirit that came before the fall, Awlaki bragged to al-Jazeera that the only reason the American government has not released the content of his electronic correspondence with Hasan is that it will confirm their ineptitude and the inability of the intelligence agencies that were monitoring Hasan's communication to perceive his radical bent, predict the violent potential therein, and prevent the murder of twelve soldiers and one civilian last month. "Where was American intelligence that claimed once that it can read any car plate number anywhere in the world?" asked Awlaki with a mocking air. Hasan, whether motivated by the counsel he received from Awlaki or not, has been discharged from



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on December 24, 2009

ICU and now sits paralyzed in a room in a San Antonio hospital awaiting the commencement of the military tribunal that will try him for his crimes. In late breaking news on Christmas Eve, Texas media outlets are reporting that several Lone Star lawmakers have sent a letter to the Secretary of the Army requesting that Hasan be charged with a separate crime for the death of the unborn of child of Army Private Francheska Velez, who was pregnant when Hasan killed her on November 5. According to the petition, the Uniform Code of Military Justice provides for the prosecution of causing the death of a child in utero. The Secretary has not responded.

When asked about his feelings for Hasan, Anwar al-Awlaki claims to have no personal affection for his erstwhile acolyte, but he reckons that Hasan will be executed for the crimes with which he has been charged. While he laments that there is nothing he can do to prevent that administration of earthly justice, Awlaki assures his interviewer that, "I ask God to accept him [Hasan] as a martyr."

Photo of Nidal Malik Hasan: AP Images



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