

Prisoner Radicalization and Sacred Terrorism

Mark S. Hamm

Prisoner Radicalization

- The process by which prisoners adopt extreme views, including beliefs that violent measures must be taken for political or religious purposes. (U.S. Dept. of Justice)

Trends in Prisoner Conversions to Islam

- Islam is the fastest growing religion in Western prisons
- 80% of all US prison conversions are to Islam
- Includes African-Americans, Hispanics and Whites
- Annual prisoner conversions to Islam: 35,000
- Percent Muslims in major prison systems: 18%
- Prison conversions to Islam since 9/11: 420,000

Clashing Viewpoints on Radicalization

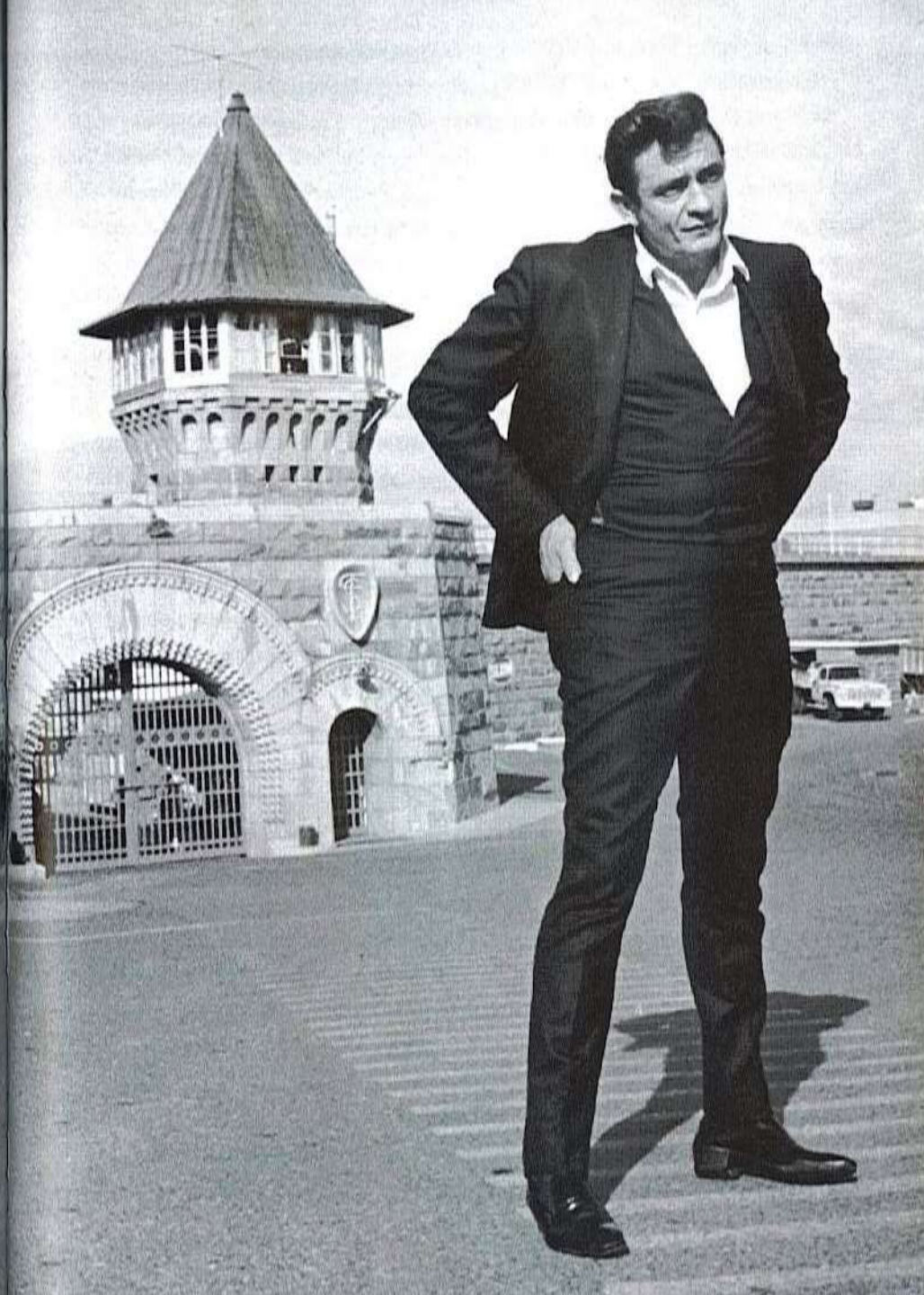
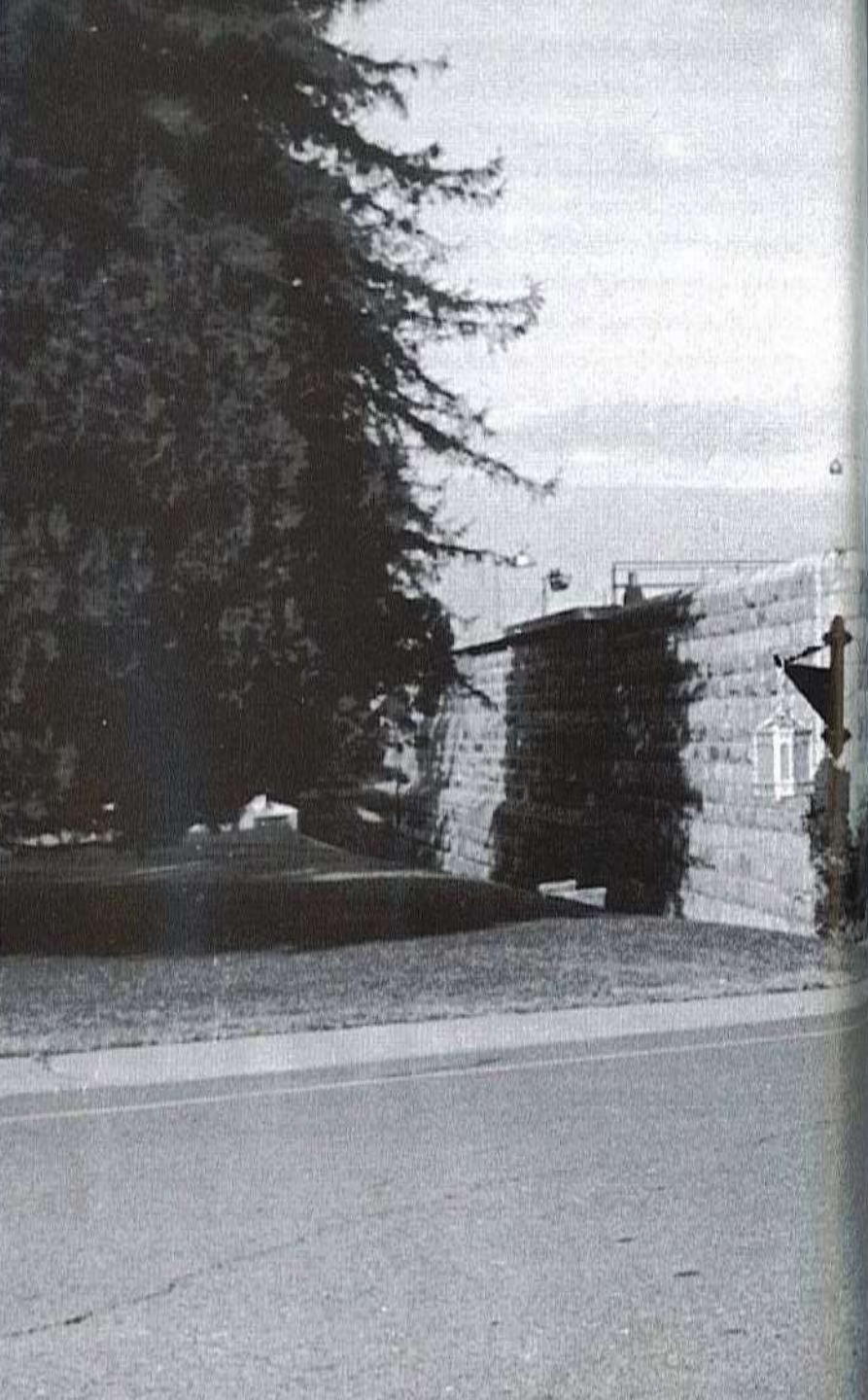
- 1) Western prisons are incubators for radical Islam and terrorist ideology
- 2) Prisoner radicalization is non-existent; if anything, Islam contributes to rehabilitation
- 3) Radicalization occurs only under specific conditions of confinement

The Study: Interviews

- 15 Chaplains
 - 9 Gang Intelligence Officials
 - 30 Prisoners
 - Native American, Islam, Black Hebrew, Buddhist, Hindu, Identity, Odin, Wicca
- New Folsom Prison
- Folsom Prison
- Franklin Correctional Institution









The California Crisis

- Severely overcrowded
- Two-thirds African American or Latino
- 70% read below 9th grade level
- Double/triple bunked by race
- 20 serious assaults per week/per institution
- More than half have HIV or Hepatitis C
- Highest suicide rate in US/rampant drugs
- 70% recidivism rate





Jam'iyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheed (the Assembly Authentic Islam) JIS

- Founder: Kevin James, 29
- 76th Street Crips
- "Prison Islam"
- Cut-and-paste interpretations of the Koran
- Gang loyalties
- Waged plot to bomb Los Angeles targets, 9/11 2005



Findings

1. Inmate religious conversions happen through friend and kinship networks
2. Primary motivation for conversion is spiritual searching
3. Most conversions have positive effect on inmate behavior

The Dominant Narrative

- Malcolm X (1925-1965)
- Nation of Islam
- Age of conversion: 23 (Concord Reformatory, Mass.)
- Influence: Brother



The Other Narrative

- Eldridge Cleaver (1935-1998), 33
- Nation of Islam
- Age of conversion: 23 (San Quentin)
- Influence: Cellmate
- Black Panthers, attempted murder of police officers, 1968
- Lag: 2 years



Findings

4. Radical inmates are radicalized by other inmates, not by outside influences
5. Organizationally, radicalization is based on a prison gang model
6. Individually, radicalization occurs through one-on-one proselytizing by charismatic leaders

Findings

7. Maximum security is more likely to produce radicalized prisoners
 - little rehabilitation
 - yards are more politically charged
 - more overcrowded
 - more gang infested and violent
8. Conditions of confinement matter

Petri Dish for Terrorism



Prisoner Radicalization/Terrorism Database

- Based on open sources
- 51 domestic/international cases (1968-2011)
- Criteria: Inmates who were radicalized in prison and then involved in terrorist act, either upon release or from prison

Focus of Database

- Specific *incidents* where prisoner radicalization linked to terrorist event
- Incident: a definite, distinct event that occurs anywhere and at any time
- Temporal ordering between release from prison and terrorist event (lag)
- Seeks to uncover “turning points” along the way

Background Data

- Average age at attack/plan: 31 years
- Ethnicity:
 - African-American=35%
 - African=28%
 - Caucasian=24%
 - Arab=10%

Country of Incarceration

- United States: 33 cases (65%)
- Britain: 6 cases (12%)
- Spain: 5 cases (10%)
- France: 4 cases (8%)
- Jordan/Egypt: 2 cases (4%)
- Yemen: 1 case (2%)

Radicalization Characteristics

■ *Prison Religious Conversion*

– Islam	8 cases (15%)
– Sunni/Salafi Jihad	13 cases (28%)
– Nation of Islam	1 case (2%)
– Moorish Science	2 cases (4%)
– Prison Islam	6 cases (12%)
– Christian Identity	5 cases (10%)
– Odin/Asatru	4 cases (8%)
– No conversion (Salafi)	10 cases (20%)

Radicalized by Other Means

- Ayman al-Zawahiri, 47
- Radicalized through torture: Egyptian prisons
- Al-Qaeda
- Terrorist acts: multiple, 1998-present (including 9/11)



Age at Conversion (estimated)

- “Jihadi Cool”
- Under 20: 5 cases
- 20-24: 10
- 25-29: 10
- Other
- 30-34: 4
- 35-39: 1
- Unknown: 8
- N/A: 8
- Average age at conversion: 24.7 years

Organizational Type

	International	Homegrown
U.S. (34 cases)	7	27
U.K. (6)	4	2
Spain (5)	5	0
France (4)	4	0
Jordan/Egypt (2)	2	0

Nature of Terrorist Plots

	Executed	Operational	Aspirational
U.S. (34)	23	4	7
U.K. (6)	0	4	2
Spain (5)	3	0	2
France (4)	4	0	0
Jordan/Egypt (2)	2	0	0

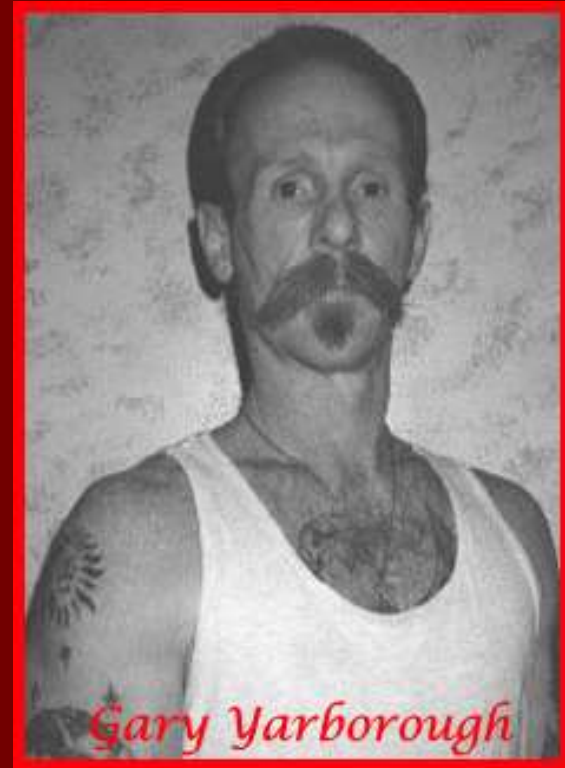
Executed Plot: U.S.

- Donald DeFreeze, 31
- No Conversion:
Marxism
- Symbianese
Liberation Army after
escaping from
Soledad, 1973
- Assassination,
bombing, Hearst
kidnapping
- Lag: 0



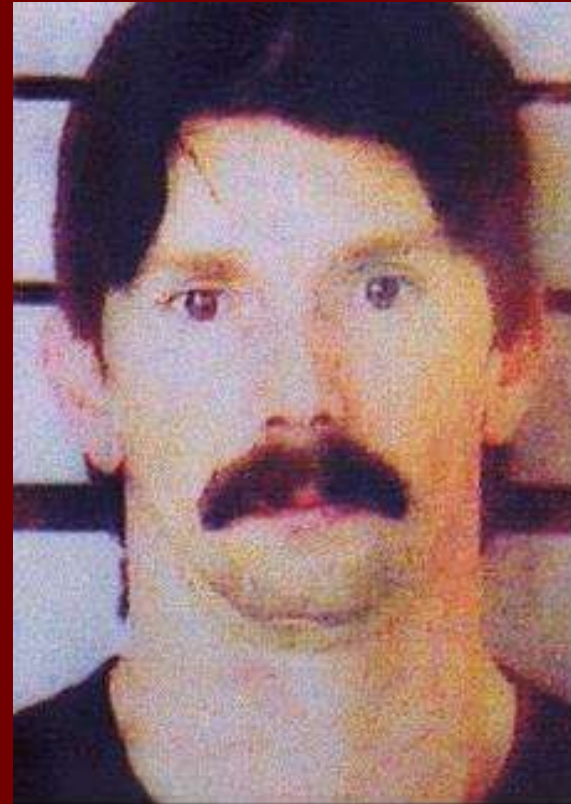
Executed Plot: U.S.

- Gary Yarbrough, 27
- Age at conversion
Christian Identity: 23
(Arizona State Prison)
- The Order
- Counterfeiting,
Murder, Bank
Robbery, 1983-84
- Lag: 4 years



Executed Plot: U.S.

- Peter Langan, 33
- Age at conversion, Christian Identity: 19 (Raiford Prison, Florida)
- Aryan Republican Army
- Bank robberies, attempted assassination, G.H.W. Bush, 1992-1996
- Lag: 13 years



Executed Plot: U.S.

- John William King, 24
- Age at conversion: 20 (Identity)
- Aryan Circle
- Murder of James Byrd, Jasper, TX, 1998
- Lag: 9 months



Executed Plot: U.S.

- Dennis Clem (1983-2007) Tonya Smith, 23
- Aryan Circle (Odin)
- Multiple homicides; 2 police officers, 2007
- Lags: U/K



Aryan Circle members Dennis Clem and Tonya Smith in Houston a week before the Bastrop murders.

Executed Plot: U.S.

- Marc Ramsey, 39
- Age at conversion:
24, Moorish
Science
- Anthrax hoax
against John
McCain, 2008
- From Denver jail



Executed Plot: U.S.

- Howard Cain, 33 (1975-2008)
- Age at conversion: 29 (Prison Islam)
- Bank robbery; murder of police officer, 2008
- Lag: 2 years



Executed Plot: U.S.

- Carlos Bledsoe
- Radicalized:
Yemeni prison
jihadists/torture
- Arkansas
recruitment center
shooting, 2009
- Lag: 1 year



Operational Plot: U.S.

- Shawn Adolf, 33
- Age of conversion, Odin/Asatru: 22 (Colorado Prison)
- Sons of Silence/Aryan Nations
- Plot to assassinate Barack Obama, 2008
- Lag: 11 yrs



Aspirational Plot

- James Cromitie, 45
- Age at conversion, Islam: 39 (Fishkill, New York)
- Bomb attack on NY synagogues and shooting down military aircraft, 2009
- Lag: 5 years



Average Time Lags: Release/Violence

U.S.	2.6 years
U.K.	7.4 years
Spain	2.4 years
France	1 year

Social Networks: Place of Radicalization

- Four cases illustrate the connection between specific institutions, prisoner radicalization, and subsequent terrorism.

Suwaqah Prison: Jordan

- Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (1966-2006)
- Age at regeneration: 26
- Al-Qaeda in Iraq, recruited from Suwaqah population
- Terrorism: multiple, 2003-2006
- Lag: 0



Spanish Detention

- Jamal Ahmidan
(1969-2004), 34
- Age at conversion: 31
- Takfir wal
Hijra/Morrocan
Salafist
- Madrid train
bombings, 2004
- Lag: 3 years



Spanish Detention

- Jose Trashorrras, 28
- Age at conversion: 25
- Takfir wal Hijra
- Madrid train bombings, 2004
- Lag: 3 years



Topas Prison: Spain

- Mohamed Achraf, 30
- No conversion
(already Salafi
jihadist)
- Plus 4 ex-prisoners
- Plot to bomb Spain's
National Court, 2004
- Lag: 2 years



Topas Prison: Spain

- Abdel Benesmail (age unknown)
- No conversion (already Salafi)
- Plot to bomb Spain's National Court, 2004
- Lag: 2 years



Linked to Topas Prison Network

- Allekema Lamari (age unknown)
- No conversion (already Salafi-Jihadist; GIA French prison 1997-2002)
- Madrid train bombing, 2004
- Lag: 2 years



Feltham Young Offenders Institution: UK

- Richard Reid, 29
- Age at conversion: 20
- International: al-Qaeda
- "Shoe-bombing" plot, 2001
- Lag: 9 years



Feltham Young Offenders Institution

- Martin Mubanga, 28
- Age at conversion: 19
- Terrorist-related activities (found innocent)
- International (possible): Taliban
- Lag: 6 years



Feltham Young Offenders Institution

- Muktar Ibrahim, 27
- Age at regeneration: 19 (British adult institution), former Feltham inmate
- International: possible al-Qaeda trained
- London bombers, July 21 cell, 2005
- Lag: 8 years



Feltham Prisoner Network

- Mohammad al-Figari, 42
- Age at conversion: 33
(Wandsworth Prison, UK)
- Radicalized by
Mohammed Hamid,
former Feltham inmate
- Attending terrorist
training camps, UK
- Lag: 4 years



Other Young Offender Institutions: UK

- Sulayman Keeler, 35
- Age at conversion: 19 (Young Offenders Institution, UK)
- International: al-Muhajiroun
- Supporting terrorism
- Lag: 12 years
- Kevin Gardner, 23
- Age at conversion: 20 (Stoke Heath Young Offenders, UK)
- Bomb plot, UK military
- Lag: 2 years



Guantanamo Bay, Cuba: United States

- Abdullah Rasoul, 34
- Age at incarceration, 28
- Released 2007 to Afghan government
- Re-joined Taliban
- Roadside bombings against British troops
- Lag: 2 months



Guantanamo: U.S.

- Abdullah Mehsud (1974-2007)
- Age at incarceration, 26
- Released to Pakistan, 2004
- Re-joined Taliban
- Kidnapping
- Lag: 6 months



Guantanamo: U.S.

- Said Ali al-Shihri, 33
- Age at incarceration, 26
- Released 2007 to Saudi rehabilitation program
- Al-Qaeda in Yemen
- Bombing US Embassy, Yemen, 2008; 2009 Christmas airline bombing plot, Detroit
- Lag: 1 year



Guantanamo Protégé



Conclusions

- 1) Conditions of incarceration produce radicalization networks.
- 2) What do New Folsom, Topas Prison, Feltham and Guantanamo share in common?
- 3) Prisoner radicalization is conceived as one of *several* turning points leading to terrorism.

Executed Plot: U.S.

- Age of conversion, Islam: 25 (Monroe State Prison, Washington). Re-incarcerated 2005-06
- Ruben Shumpert (1977-2007), 30
- Al-Shabaab, Somalia, 2006-2007
- Lag: 6 months



Shumpert's Turning Points

- Prison conversion to Islam
- Employment in Islamic barbershop (meets informant)
- Seattle Jail: Meets Somalis w/ties to Al-Shabaab

