



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 10, 2010

## Pennsylvania Woman Charged with Terrorism Offenses

Colleen R. LaRose, a Pennsylvania woman known to authorities as “JihadJane”, has been charged with recruiting Jihadist fighters via the Internet to commit murders and violent attacks overseas. She is accused of conspiracy to kill in a foreign country, provide material support to terrorists, giving false statements to government officials, and attempted identity theft.



LaRose and five unindicted co-conspirators, located in South Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, and the United States, are charged with recruiting men to engage in jihad and women who had passports enabling them to travel to and around Europe for similar missions. The conspiracies focused on engaging in violent jihad in areas of South Asia and Europe.

In a series of emails between LaRose and an individual in a South Asian country, the individual instructs LaRose to kill an unnamed Swedish resident, who is believed to be Lars Vilks, the Swedish cartoonist who drew one of the controversial Prophet Muhammad cartoons. Since 2007, Al Qaeda offered a \$100,000 bounty for Vilks’ head. According to the indictment, one email read, “Kill him....that is what I say to u,” to which LaRose responded, “I will make this my goal till I achieve it or die trying.”

Authorities have arrested four men and three women in Ireland on Tuesday for conspiring to kill Vilks. The *New York Times* reports that a law enforcement official linked the arrests to LaRose’s case.

The term “JihadJane” was self-coined by LaRose on her Myspace page, which featured a biography that read, “I live in Pennsylvania, originally from Texas. I have recently (a couple months) reverted to Islam and I can safely say that of all the things I have ever done in my lifetime, becoming Muslim is what I am the proudest of.” When asked to state her heroes on the webpage, LaRosa indicated “Sheikh OBL”, referring to Osama Bin Laden, and “The brothers in...Jihad”.

The profile picture for JihadJane’s Myspace page is a photograph of LaRose whose hair is covered by a headscarf. In communications documented in the indictment, LaRose is alleged to have said that her blond hair, light eyed appearance will allow her to “blend in with many people” in Sweden. Michael Levy, US Justice Department attorney, says the case “demonstrates that terrorists are looking for Americans to join them in their cause, and it shatters any lingering thought that we can spot a terrorist based on appearance.”

In June of 2008, JihadJane posted a comment on Myspace remarking that she is “desperate to do something somehow to help” the suffering Muslim people.

SITE, a United States group that monitors extremists, indicated that LaRose was quite active and vocal online, undeterred even after repeatedly being banned from websites like YouTube.



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Court documents show that LaRose was arrested in October 2009 for trying to “transfer” a stolen passport. She is one of the first American females to be charged with a terrorism offense. If convicted, LaRose faces life in prison.

JihadJane’s attempts to recruit jihadists via the Internet emphasizes that we are witnessing a new era of terrorism. Levy adds, “This case shows the use terrorists can and do make of the Internet.”

Cyberterrorism expert Gabriel Weimann explains that terrorists’ use of the Internet has increased dramatically in the past nine years. The number of terrorist organizations using the Internet jumped from 12 in 1998 to approximately 4,800 in 2010. According to Weimann, terrorists are using the Internet for recruitment, mobilization, data mining, networking, fundraising, and for the distribution of terrorist manuals.

Weimann notes that to combat this, the government has a system to investigate millions of emails everyday, as well as a means of recording the keystrokes of a suspect’s computer.

LaRose’s case and the recent arrests highlight the threat of terrorism that continues to linger. Also indicative of this is that the number of people on the no-fly list has nearly doubled from 3,400 to 6,000, since the attempted Christmas Day attack near Detroit, an intelligence official claims.

*Image provided by the SITE Intelligence Group shows Colleen LaRose: AP Images*



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