



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on June 14, 2016

## Sons of Middle Eastern Immigrants Recruited by Terrorist Groups

Omar Mateen, who pledged his allegiance to ISIS before killing 49 people and wounding 53 others in a shooting in an Orlando, Florida gay bar on June 12, was but the latest of several terrorism assailants who was the son of immigrants from the Middle East.



Before waging the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history, Mateen was investigated by the FBI on at least two occasions in 2013 and 2014 due to his suspected ties to the al-Qaeda and Al Nusra Front terrorist groups.

A June 14 report in the *Washington Times* drew attention to the fact that foreign jihadist groups have been very successful in recruiting American-born children of immigrants from the Middle East into their network. This has been made evident by several high-profile attacks in recent years.

Mateen was born in New Hyde Park, New York, to Afghan parents, moving with them to Florida as a young boy. His sympathies to terrorists surfaced at a young age, as revealed by the *Washington Post*, which interviewed three separate classmates who claimed Mateen cheered in support of the hijackers during the September 11, 2001 attacks, when he was just 14.

Mateen first attracted the FBI's attention in May 2013, after telling coworkers at a contract security job that he had family connections to al-Qaeda and that he was a member of the Lebanon-based terrorist group Hezbollah.

However, during an FBI interview, Mateen admitted making the statements but "explained that he said them in anger because his co-workers were teasing him." The FBI then closed the investigation.

The FBI once again investigated Mateen in July 2014, after he was linked to Moner Mohammad Abu Salha, an American radical who died in a suicide bombing in Syria. Mateen and Salha had met each other when attending the same mosque.

At 2:22 a.m. the morning of his shooting attack, Mateen called 911 from the club and during that call he pledged allegiance to ISIS. The attack ended at approximately 5:00 a.m. when police shot and killed Mateen.

Among other American-born sons of Middle Eastern immigrants involved in terrorist attacks was Syed Rizwan Farook, who, with his Pakistani wife Tashfeen Malik, killed 14 people at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California, on December 2, 2015. Farook's parents had immigrated from Pakistan.

An FBI investigation indicated that Farook and Malik had independently become radicalized before becoming engaged and that much of that process had occurred by means of "consuming poison on the Internet."



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Yet another such terrorist attack was conducted by American-born Nadir Soofi, who (along with his American-born Muslim roommate) attacked officers with gunfire at an exhibit featuring cartoon images of Muhammad at the Curtis Culwell Center in Garland, Texas, on May 3, 2015. (Producing images of Mohammed is forbidden by Islam.)

Soofi's father immigrated from Pakistan. He and his brother moved to Pakistan with their father and stepmother after their parents were divorced in the 1990s. During his time there, he attended the International School of Islamabad.

ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, which was the first time the terrorist group did so for an attack in the United States.

And finally, there was Major Nidal Malik Hasan, an American born in Virginia to Palestinian parents who immigrated to the United States from the West Bank. Hasan was convicted of fatally shooting 13 people and injuring more than 30 others at Fort Hood, Texas, on November 5, 2009.

Prior to the shootings, Hasan, who was an Army psychiatrist, had engaged in extensive e-mail communications with Anwar al-Awlaki, the imam of the Dar al-Hijrah mosque in Falls Church, Virginia.

Al-Awlaki had preached to three of the 9/11 hijackers, who were al-Qaeda members. He was also involved in planning terrorist operations for al-Qaeda and he became the first U.S. citizen to be targeted and killed in a U.S. drone strike. Awlaki also fits the profile of American-born terrorists who were the sons of Middle Eastern immigrants. He was born in New Mexico in 1971 to parents from Yemen. Awlaki, it must be noted, was killed without due process of law, a blatant violation of the U.S. Constitution.

So what does this "pattern" of the children of immigrants from Islamic countries being recruited and/or carrying out terrorist activities suggest? It certainly does not mean that all children of Muslim immigrants should be eyed with suspicion or be placed under unconstitutional surveillance. Nor does it suggest that immigration from Muslim countries should be banned outright. It does, however, suggest there are concerted attempts to target such persons in this country for radicalization in order to carry out terrorist attacks right here on U.S. soil, and law enforcement needs to be cognizant of this fact and use whatever tools they have at their disposal, without violating individuals' rights, to prevent such attacks from occurring.

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