

# Abu Talhah Al-Amrikee

## An Extensive Online Footprint

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### Introduction

A Virginia man who targeted the creators of South Park for satirizing issues surrounding the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad has been sentenced to 25 years in prison for attempting to travel to Somalia and join an Al Qaeda-linked terrorist group.

On October 20, 2010, Zachary Adam Chesser (a.k.a. Abu Talhah Al-Amrikee), 20, pleaded guilty to providing material support to [Al Shabaab](#), an Al Qaeda-linked terrorist organization based in Somalia, soliciting crimes of violence and communicating threats. He was sentenced on February 24, 2011.



Source: Revolution Muslim Web site  
Abu Talhah Al-Amrikee (a.k.a. Zachary Chesser).

Chesser, a U.S. citizen from Virginia, was arrested and charged on July 21, 2010, two weeks after he was originally apprehended as he attempted to board a plane to Uganda, en route to Somalia to join Al Shabaab. He later told federal authorities that he had also attempted to travel to Somalia several months before.

Chesser explained to authorities that he expected to receive firearms and basic training with Al Shabaab, according to the affidavit. He expected to be placed in Al Shabaab's media branch, similar to the role held by [Omar Hammami](#), an American citizen from Alabama who has become a primary recruiter for Al Shabaab. Chesser also told officials that Al Shabaab members asked him to bring laptops and cameras, to be used for high quality film productions to bolster the terrorist group's propaganda campaign.

Prior to his arrest, Chesser admitted that he posted videos and other propaganda materials on behalf of individuals in Al Shabaab on extremist message boards, according to the affidavit.

Chesser expressed his desire to train with Al Shabaab in email communications with [Anwar al-Awlaki](#), an American-born Muslim cleric living in Yemen who was designated by the U.S. Treasury in July 2010 for being a "key leader" in [Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula](#) (AQAP). Chesser also posted comments on Awlaki's blog in which he discussed the importance of fighting with the mujahideen, or Muslim warriors, overseas.

More than a year and a half before he was arrested, Chesser posted a message on Awlaki's blog that read: "Living in this world with modern technology the possibility of travel feesabilillah [in the way of Allah] is virtually a non-issue for those of us in the West. There are airplanes that have made it so Washington, D.C. is closer to Somalia in our era than Makkah and Madinah were in the time of the Rasoolu Allah sal Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam [the Prophet Muhammad]." The post also encouraged others to travel to Somalia.

Chesser distributed a wide range of terrorist propaganda endorsing suicide attacks and espousing hatred against Jews, Israel and Shi'a Muslims through a variety of Web sites, blogs and social networking sites for

more than a year. He also distributed original content, including a [25-page report](#) on how to teach Western children the values of Jihad. The report, one of his more comprehensive pieces, suggested creating a "normalization of the notion of dying for the sake of Allah" in the "masaajid [mosques], the schools and the homes."

His prolific online activity received national attention shortly after he began running the Web site of [Revolution Muslim](#) (RM), a New York-based fringe anti-Semitic Muslim organization that justifies terrorist attacks and other forms of violence against non-Muslims. In April 2010, four months after he started posting to the RM site, Chesser threatened the creators of *South Park* for satirizing issues surrounding the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad. On another extremist Web site the following month, Chesser posted the personal contact information of individuals who joined the Facebook group "Everybody Draw Muhammad Day," which was part of a campaign that opposed Chesser's threats against the South Park creators. "Just a place to start," Chesser wrote.

Chesser's affiliation with RM went beyond its Web site. Chesser indicated that he was seeking people to help him start an RM chapter in Washington, D.C., close to his home in Virginia, and he attended an RM protest in the area. In March 2010, Chesser attended an RM protest in front of the White House, which coincided with an antiwar rally. During the protest, Chesser read a statement that called Obama "an enemy of our religion and a tyrant." Another individual at the rally, who also attended a number of other RM protests in New York, was Mohamed Mahmood Alessa. Like Chesser, Alessa was arrested and [charged](#) with planning to kill American soldiers overseas and fight with Al Shabaab.



Revolution Muslim video: Zachary Chesser and Mohamed Mahmood Alessa protesting with Revolution Muslim in front of the White House on March 20, 2010.

In addition to Alessa, Chesser also claims that he knew [Ramy Zamzam](#), an American student from Virginia who was sentenced in June to ten years in prison by Pakistan's anti-terrorism court with planning terrorist attacks in Pakistan and on Afghan and U.S. territory. "I met the brother Ramy Zamzam at a feed the homeless drive that he organized," Chesser wrote on the RM Web site after Zamzam's arrest.

Chesser, a former student at George Mason University, reportedly converted to Islam in the summer of 2008. According to one of his posts on RM's Web site, he converted at the house of a member of [Hizb ut-Tahrir](#), an international organization that seeks to establish a worldwide Islamic theocracy. HT has an American branch that has become increasingly active over the last few years.

In November 2010, Chesser's wife, [Proscovia Nzabanita](#), pleaded guilty to making a false statement to federal authorities. Nzabanita has also distributed propaganda and commentary on Islamic message boards and, like Chesser, has encouraged women to support their husbands' efforts to fight with the mujahideen, or Muslim warriors.

### South Park Controversy

Chesser was the focus of national attention in April 2010 after he threatened the creators of *South Park* on a number of online platforms for satirizing issues surrounding the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad in an episode.

On April 15, the morning after the episode of *South Park* aired, Chesser made his first comment about the program on his Twitter feed. "May Allah kill Matt Stone and Trey Parker and burn them in Hell for all eternity. They insult our prophets Muhammad, Jesus, and Moses..."

Chesser posted a similar entry to his Mujahid Blog on the same day (the post was later added to the RM Web site). The post included a picture of the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh by a Muslim extremist in 2004 with the caption: "Theo Van Gogh – Have Matt Stone And Trey Parker Forgotten This?" In the post, Chesser provided the address to Stone and Parker's offices, telling readers to "contact them" or "pay Comedy Central...a visit." Chesser also noted: "We have to warn Matt and Trey that what they are doing is stupid and they will probably wind up like Theo Van Gogh if they do air this show. This is not a threat, but a warning of the reality of what will likely happen to them."

On April 18, Chesser posted a comment to RM's Web site, calling on supporters to help in the "defense of the Prophet campaign." The post included a purported lecture of [Anwar al-Awlaki](#), a U.S. born Muslim cleric living in Yemen who distributes radical sermons online, retelling a story about a Jewish leader who was assassinated for defaming the Prophet during the 7th century. The post ends with the message by Revolution Muslim: "Join us in this campaign to let Matt Stone & Trey Parker know that...the dust will never settle down."

Reader comments in response to Chesser's recent posts included threatening language. For example, "I wish i [sic] could slit their throats with a rusty knife,so [sic] it be more painful...." and, "So the options we have to deal with these two kafirs... Killing and annihilating them... Crucifying them... Cutting off from opposite sides their hands and feet with axes."

In May 2011, RM leader Younes Abdullah Muhammad (a.k.a. Jesse Curtis Morton), was also charged with communicating threats against the creators of "South Park." Abdullah Muhammad helped Chesser draft a statement containing language justifying "the death of those who insult Islam or defame its prophet, and for Muslims to bring about such deaths," according to the FBI affidavit.

The statement, titled "Clarifying the South Park Response and Calling on Others to Join in the Defense of the prophet Muhammad," was issued on April 21 on behalf of Revolution Muslim in response to the national attention garnered by Chesser for his threats.

Chesser's wife [Proscovia Nzabanita](#) helped distribute Chesser's online materials about *South Park* by reposting them on various social networking sites and forums. In addition, she posted her own commentary on the controversy, including one post on Facebook saying "may Allah awj humiliate them THE SOUTH PARK CREATURES..."

On another extremist Web site the following month, Chesser posted the personal contact information of individuals who joined the Facebook group "Everybody Draw Muhammad Day," which was part of a campaign that opposed Chesser's threats against the South Park creators. "Just a place to start," Chesser wrote.

### Online Activity

Chesser's online history includes numerous posts to a variety of blogs, forums, Web sites and social networking sites. Some of his earlier posts were long essays where he contemplated the meaning of jihad and asked for feedback from other viewers. Chesser later discovered that spreading terrorist materials online was crucial to supporting the global terrorist movement. "The jihad movement has moved from the mountains and caves to the bedrooms of every major city around the world," Chesser wrote in a March 2010 post to the [Revolution Muslim](#) (RM) Web site, which Chesser administered for a period of time.

Some of Chesser's earliest posts were made to Anwar al-Awlaki now-defunct blog. Al-Awlaki was designated by the U.S. Treasury in July 2010 for being a "key leader" in [Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula](#) (AQAP). In addition to responses to Awlaki's posts, Chesser also used the blog to introduce readers to his YouTube channel, asking readers to watch videos that he found "very inspirational."

Chesser's online activity and subsequent effort to travel abroad is similar to the path taken by [Samir Khan](#), a former North Carolina resident who distributed terrorist propaganda through various blogs for several years before moving to Yemen in October 2009 to help AQAP spread its message. In fact, Khan introduced Chesser on his blog in September 2009 (Chesser contributions to Khan's blog were limited).

In addition to extremist sites, Chesser used mainstream social networking sites, like Facebook and YouTube, to post many of his comments and materials. In April 2010, administrators disabled his Facebook account, according to his wife.

The following is a sampling of Chesser's posts on a variety of sites:

#### 7th Century Generation Forum

Chesser's posts to the 7th Century Generation forum, an Islamic message board dedicated to various topics relating to Islam, included various terrorist videos and comments about current events. Chesser described the May 2010 attack carried out against Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks as "Correcting an evil with your hand..." Vilks had been targeted for his depictions of the Prophet Muhammad as a dog in a Swedish newspaper in 2007. In another post on February 28, 2010, Chesser expressed support for the mujahideen, saying "Allah grant them a quick and obvious victory over the munafiqeen [hypocrites] and the innovators. Allah provide for the families of the martyrs... Guide us to be among the mujahideen and grant us martyrdom in Your Path."

#### Al Faloja Forum

Chesser posted to Al Faloja forum, an Islamic message board that contains terrorist propaganda, including various terrorist videos and user comments expressing support for terrorist groups and their activity. In a June 2010 post, Chesser encouraged a campaign of fake attacks, for instance leaving an abandoned car in Times Square or a bag near the White House, which would desensitize the public and law enforcement and "would be of great help to the mujahidiin." He ended his post by saying, "A cop might walk up to a bag that someone thought might be a bomb, so he assumes it is not. Then he bends over to open it rolling his eyes at this waste of his time. Boom! No more kaafir [non-Muslim]."

#### Al Qimmah Forum

Chesser frequently contributed to the English section of Al Qimmah forum, a predominantly Somali and Arabic message board that Chesser has claimed is Al Shabaab's official forum. In June 2010, Chesser wrote and recorded an English song which he posted on the forum. In the song, titled "So Work Hard O Soldier,"

he sings, "Our goals are only two... Victory or death, from the first drop of life's blood, until the final breath. They call me 'irhaabi,' [terrorist] for supporting mujahidun. So if jihad is irhaab [terrorism], then nahnu irhaabiyun [we are terrorists]."

### **Anwar al-Awlaki's Blog**

Chesser frequently posted on the blog of Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born Muslim cleric living in Yemen who was designated by the U.S. Treasury in July 2010 for being a "key leader" in Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). In January 2009, in response to Awlaki's post about determining the difference between "suicide or martyrdom", Chesser wrote that "Jihad is mandatory" for all Muslims. "Living in this world with modern technology the possibility of travel feesabilillah is virtually a non-issue for those of us in the West. There are airplanes that have made it so Washington, D.C. is closer to Somalia in our era than Makkah and Madinah were in the time of the Rasoolu Allah sal Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam," Chesser wrote more than a year and a half before he was arrested for trying to travel to Somalia and join Al Shabaab. In the same post, Chesser also encouraged women to support their husbands and other men in their effort to join jihad. "Encourage your husbands to pay there way. Tell your brothers you will hope for them to be shaheed and not for them to return home. Pray for them to pass by the Grave. Pray that they lose their lives for the sake of Allah," he said. Among his other posts on Awlaki's blog were comments looking for an English madrasa and a post directing readers to his Youtube account.

### **Facebook**

Chesser's Facebook profile, which was disabled in April 2010, included many of the same videos, sermons and other materials that he had posted on his blogs. For example, Chesser posted dozens of sermons by Anwar al-Awlaki. His wife reposted the majority of these materials on her Facebook profile as well.

### **Islamic Awakening Forum**

Chesser has used several accounts on the Islamic Awakening forum, an Islamic forum dedicated to various topics relating to Islam. In a December 2009 post, Chesser expressed support for the September 11 hijackers, saying "Why does every Muslim desire that 9-11 be an inside job, when if it is not it means that 20+ Muslims will get the reward for fighting jihad." In another post in the same thread, Chesser justified the attack, saying "Collateral damage is allowed. The WTC, the Pentagon, and the White House are all military targets regardless of whether or not they had civilians in them."

### **Islamic Emirate Forum**

Chesser's contributions to the Islamic Emirate forum, a message board for Muslims to "serve Allah by uniting," included an April 2010 post calling several countries "clear enemies," including America, Israel and the United Kingdom. He also posted an entry arguing that "The issue of killing someone without going to a Qadee [judge] is correct in the situation of one who insults the Messenger of Allah." This entry was posted on April 13, 2010, the day before an episode aired on South Park that satirized issues surrounding the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad.

### **Mujahid Blog**

Chesser's Mujahid Blog, "dedicated to those who give their lives for this religion," included both original materials as well as reposts of various terrorist propaganda. In a March 21, 2010, post titled "Counter Counter Terrorism #1," Chesser gave instructions on how to counter counterterrorism efforts and proposed advertising the successes of the mujahideen with a "clear bias." He suggested using terms like "5 Western pigs sent to Hellfire in sha'a Allah," when talking about non-Muslims who have been killed. The Mujahid blog, operated by wordpress, also had a forum that allowed others to post materials. In a January

25, 2010, post to this forum, he identified his full name as "Zachary A Chesser." He also said, "I am a revert to Islam and I was a student at George Mason University. Feel free to go to GMU's [Muslim Student Association] page on facebook and ask them about me if you are seriously worried about that." The Mujahid blog was suspended by wordpress on April 22 for violation of terms of service.

### **Revolution Muslim**

In January 2010, Chesser began running the Web site of [Revolution Muslim](#) (RM), a New York-based fringe anti-Semitic Muslim organization that justifies terrorist attacks and other forms of violence against non-Muslims. He posted entries on the blog daily, which included explanations on how to use the Internet to spread terrorist propaganda as well as a series of essays about how to counter counterterrorism tactics. Chesser's posts also explicitly expressed support for terrorism. After the March 2010 subway bombings in Moscow, which killed at least 40 people and wounded 60 others, Chesser praised the two female suicide bombers. And during an online discussion run by RM in February 2010, Chesser wrote: "May Allah blow up the Jews and the Rawaafidh [shi'a]."

### **Scribd**

Chesser's scribd account was filled with various extremist documents. One document that he wrote in conjunction with Younus Abdullah Muhammad, a spokesperson for Revolution Muslim, was an article that refutes a West Point study claiming that Al Qaeda kills mostly Muslims. The Scribd account has been deactivated.

### **Twitter**

Chesser had two Twitter accounts, one under the name Mujahid Blog and the other under his alias Abu Talhah. He used his accounts to direct followers to the materials he posts elsewhere online and to make other statements. On March 22, 2010 he tweeted: "United States still the slave of Israel. Hillary Clinton declares relationship with the genocidal regime 'Rock solid.'" Both Twitter accounts have been deactivated.

### **YouTube - AQWAHProductions Channel**

Chesser maintained a YouTube channel under the name "AQWAHProductions," where he posted numerous terrorist videos praising the mujahideen who have been killed around the world. Chesser's former YouTube channel, "Al Quran wa al-Ahadeeth," which was suspended in May 2010, contained similar videos, including English translations of Arabic sermons. One of these sermons, titled "The Permissibility of Self-Sacrificial Operations" by Shaykh Yousuf Al-Uyayri, told Muslims that in order to expel Jews from Israel, "the best treatment and the greatest medicine that we apply to the brothers of monkeys and pigs (i.e. the Jews) is that we perform these martyrdom operations." Chesser also posted comments to other YouTube channels. In April 2009, in response to a video of a speech by Israeli diplomat Mark Regev, he commented: "Ya Allaah! Destroy this vile nation... we will crush these vile devils like bugs."

### **Youtube Jihad Blog**

The Youtube Jihad Blog consisted of Chesser and five other contributors. The contributors – who posted videos containing fatwas, lectures, nasheeds (Islamic songs) and other materials – also operated YouTube channels that include the same videos. One video posted by Chesser on February 22, 2010, titled "America Tuta Fika," which translates into English as "America We Are Coming," showed several militants pointing their guns at the screen as Chesser sings "America, America, America here we come, we come to please our lord, and jihad is all we know."