

In the article below, the authors report that the pending DOJ Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative will call upon local cops to act as intelligence gatherers on terrorism.

Currently there are neither enough government-certified instructors to train the cops nor are there clear state and local certification guidelines for would-be instructors, but there are ample federal funds for self-styled experts to rush into the lucrative anti-terrorism training industry.

The article tracks how guys like Sam Kharoba and other self-made 'Islam experts' cash in on the money by misleading statements about their credentials and training, as well as by hammering law enforcement training sessions with islamophobic stereotypes about the Qur'an, the Prophet, and Muslims in general.

Unfortunately nobody, apart from frontline police officers that is, seems to be paying any attention.

How we Train Our Cops to Fear Islam

There aren't nearly enough counterterrorism experts to instruct all of America's police.

So we got these guys instead.

By Meg Stalcup and Joshua Craze

Reprinted from the [Washington Monthly](#) March/April 2011 issue

On a bright January morning in 2010, at Broward College in Davie, Florida, about sixty police officers and other frontline law enforcement officials gathered in a lecture hall for a course on combating terrorism in the Sunshine State. Some in plain clothes, others in uniform, they drifted in clutching Styrofoam cups of coffee, greeting acquaintances from previous statewide training sessions. The instructor, Sam Kharoba, an olive-skinned man wearing rimless glasses and an ill-fitting white dress shirt, stood apart at the front of the hall reviewing PowerPoint slides on his laptop.

As he got under way, Kharoba described how, over the next three days, he would teach his audience the fundamentals of Islam. "We constantly hear statements," Kharoba began, "that Islam is a religion of peace, and we constantly hear of jihadists who are trying to kill as many non-Muslims as they can." Kharoba's course would establish for his students that one of these narratives speaks to a deep truth about Islam, and the other is a calculated lie.

"How many terror attacks have there been since 9/11? Muslim terror attacks," Kharoba asked the room. Silence. "Let's start the bidding."

“Over a hundred,” someone volunteered.

“I got a hundred,” Kharoba called back. Another audience member, louder now, suggested three hundred.

“Three hundred!” Kharoba declared.

“Over a thousand,” offered another voice in the audience.

Kharoba stopped the bidding. “Over thirteen thousand,” he said. “Over thirteen thousand attacks.” He paused to let the statistic sink in.

Kharoba belongs to a growing profession, one that is ballooning on the spigot of federal and state dollars set aside for counterterrorism efforts since the attacks of September 11, 2001. He is a counterterrorism instructor to America’s beat cops, one of several hundred working the law enforcement training circuit. Some are employed by large security contractors; others, like Kharoba, are independent operators.

Kharoba was born in Jordan, and he likes to intimate that members of his family are important tribal leaders. This lends a veneer of insider credibility to classroom remarks that might otherwise seem like off-color jokes. He showed the class some photographs taken in the Gaza Strip. “This is the Arab version of a line,” Kharoba told the students, gesturing to a photo of Palestinians rushing toward a passport agency. Then he showed a YouTube video of two uniformed men beating a nameless prisoner. “This is what *Miranda* rights are in the Arab world,” he said.

Fortunately for an adept American police officer, Kharoba said, jihadists telegraph their extremist intentions in altogether predictable ways. One only has to learn the signs. Take Mahmoud—Kharoba’s preferred name for a generic Muslim. Kharoba can tell whether Mahmoud is a Wahhabi (a member of a fundamentalist Islamic sect from Saudi Arabia) just by going through Mahmoud’s trash. There will be no pre-approved credit card offers, because interest is forbidden in Islam. There will be no brown wax fried-chicken bags, because fried chicken isn’t halal. For Kharoba, extremist Muslims are as easy to spot as American gang members.

“When you see a bunch of guys in red, what do you know?” Kharoba asked.

“They are Bloods,” responded the audience, many of whom deal with gangs regularly.

“When you have a Muslim that wears a headband, regardless of color or insignia, basically what that is telling you is ‘I am willing to be a martyr.’” There were other signs, too. “From the perspective of operational security, there are two things I am always looking out for: a shaved body and moving lips,” he explained. “Some of the Pakistani hijackers shaved their whole bodies in a ritual of cleanliness. If their lips are moving, these guys are praying. As they are walking through an airport, every second they’re going to be praying.”

America today is too politically correct to acknowledge the reality of Islamic fanaticism, Kharoba said. “Would Islam be tolerated if everyone knew its true message?” he asked the class. “From a Muslim perspective, do you want non-Muslims to know the truth about Islam?”

“No!” came the audience reply.

“So what do Muslims do?” Kharoba demanded.

“Lie!”

Kharoba strode forward to the front of the room, his voice slower now, more measured. “Islam is a highly violent radical religion that mandates that all of the earth must be Muslim.”

The class broke for lunch.

That afternoon, Kharoba offered more tips on how to detect violent Muslims. “You remember the Alligator Alley incident?” he asked.

He was referring to the events of September 13, 2002, when three Middle Eastern men at a Shoney’s restaurant in Calhoun, Georgia—one Jordanian, one Pakistani, and one Egyptian—were overheard talking about “bringing it down” to Miami. A nearby diner, one Eunice Stone, became alarmed and contacted the Georgia highway patrol. In what became a terrorist scare with national coverage, the police pulled the three men over on Alligator Alley, the long section of Interstate 75 that cuts west across Florida. For thirteen hours, the police combed the vehicle for explosives.

Kharoba projected a picture of Ayman Gheith, one of the arrested men, onto the screen. “The first thing is facial hair,” Kharoba said. “Do you see how the moustache is trimmed, and the beard is in a cone shape? It is very common to have this beard, and the moustache will always be the same, just like Muhammad.”

There is only one problem with the Alligator Alley case—a problem Kharoba never mentioned to the class. The incident was a false alarm. The “terrorists” turned out to be medical students on their way to a conference in Miami. They were innocent. After thirteen hours of interrogation, the police released them. Kharoba, however, taught the class that Ayman Gheith was a “textbook case” of Islamic fanaticism.

While his views are entirely his own, the fact that Kharoba is teaching this course at all reflects a sweeping shift in America’s official thinking about law enforcement and intelligence gathering. In recent years, the United States has become more and more committed to the idea of bringing local police forces into the business of sniffing out terrorists. In 2002, the National Joint Terrorism Task Force was set up to coordinate existing collaborative efforts among federal, state, and local law enforcement. And since

2006, the Department of Justice has been developing a program called the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative, through which local cops are meant to act as intelligence gatherers on the ground, feeding reports of suspicious activity to a network of data “fusion centers” spread out across the country. The system is scheduled to be up and running in all seventy-two of the nation’s fusion centers by the end of this year. But in order for the cops to play a role in counterterrorism, the thinking goes, they need to be trained. And that’s where Kharoba and his ilk—counterterrorism trainers for hire—come in.

The very idea of integrating local police into the nation’s counterterror intelligence efforts is a subject of debate among security experts. People at the highest level of law enforcement and intelligence—to say nothing of civil liberties groups—have concerns about the strategy. While the premise is perhaps intuitively appealing—particularly in a place like Florida, where several of the 9/11 hijackers took flying lessons—one danger is that the system will be flooded with bad leads. An increase in incidents like the mistaken arrests on Alligator Alley would only degrade police work, obscure real threats, and spoil relations between America’s cops and America’s Muslims—who have thus far volunteered some of the most fruitful leads in preventing domestic terror attacks.

It might be theoretically possible to ward off such an outcome if police could be provided with impeccable training. But one of the central problems is that the demand for training far exceeds the supply of qualified instructors. Even the CIA and FBI have had trouble finding people with the key skills to fill their ranks. For state and local law enforcement departments, the scarcity is even more acute. Into the void, self-styled experts have rushed in.

While expertise in counterterrorism training may be in short supply, money for it is not. Each year the federal government directs billions of dollars (no one knows exactly how much) in terrorism-related training grants to state and local governments. These funds cascade down into myriad training programs like the one at Broward College, where instructors like Kharoba ply their trade with only minimal supervision.

Sam Kharoba came to the United States from Jordan when he was seventeen to study computing at Louisiana State University. When the 9/11 attacks happened, he was working as a programmer. Noticing that the hijackers used multiple aliases, he became convinced that the American intelligence community was unequipped to deal with the multiplicity of Arab names. Kharoba quit his job and began work on a database of every jihadi website and name that he could find. “For nine months, I worked developing this database, with no income. I knew I could do it,” he told us. “It would be the best thing. I would solve a critical problem for the intelligence community, and then I’d call the Bureau, call the CIA, sell it for five million, and I’m done. I did my patriotic duty, and lived my American dream.”

Neither the CIA nor the FBI showed much interest in the database, though. Ten years later, Kharoba is still working on it. He fell into teaching by chance, in 2002, when the Community Oriented Policing Services Program in Louisiana invited him to give a talk.

Kharoba had no professional experience in law enforcement, no academic training in terrorism or national security, and is not himself a Muslim. But as a Jordanian-born Christian he was able to turn his place of birth into a selling point. When we asked the dean of the Institute of Public Safety why she recruited Kharoba to teach there, her answer was that Kharoba “put the flavor of Middle Eastern culture into it.”

Kharoba is an especially colorful character, but he is in some ways typical of the kinds of people who have migrated into the police counterterrorism training business. Many have limited background in U.S. counterterrorism and domestic law enforcement, and little patience for the rules and conventions that govern both fields.

Quite a few have found their way into the profession by using their military experience to teach courses in how to respond to terrorist attacks. The trainer Joe Bierly, based in Riverside County, California, served twenty-two years in the Marines, “and another ten plus years in the black world, doing operations.” Bierly has a shooting range at his house, and practices every day. Most cops, he said, only go to the range, “what, once a year?” He doesn’t think American law enforcement is ready for the next terrorist attack. At the end of the day, he said, the question is this: “Can you run fifteen yards on a blood-slicked floor, take aim, and still hit the target?”

Richard Hughbank, another counterterrorism trainer, is a fourth-generation combat veteran on his father’s side. “Honestly, I kinda fell into it,” Hughbank told us when we interviewed him in November 2009. “I think most of us did.” The idea that fighting terrorism was a mission that might extend beyond his military career began to sink in when Hughbank was in Afghanistan. “A man I very much respect, with whom I turned the first five hundred people in to Guantanamo Bay, told me, ‘Richard, this is your future, this is your enemy.’” Hughbank went on to found and become president of Extreme Terrorism Consulting, which provides counterterrorism training to law enforcement.

John Giduck was a practicing lawyer in the 1980s. Then, he says, during the late Gorbachev era, the American Bar Foundation dispatched him to Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), where he met the head of the KGB for Leningrad. (“Putin’s boss,” he says.) They became fast friends, and Giduck began traveling frequently to Russia. He claims to have trained with multiple Russian special forces units, and to be certified by the “Vityaz Special Forces Anti-Terror School.” In 2004, Giduck traveled to Russia immediately after the Beslan school massacre and wrote a book called *Terror at Beslan*. It was published in 2005, and it raised Giduck’s profile, earning him a guest appearance on the Glenn Beck show in the fall of 2007. Among the book’s most sensational allegations is that the terrorists at Beslan systematically raped their hostages, a claim that no other primary source account has made. In the meantime, Giduck has also become an in-demand counterterrorism trainer.

Some trainers do have roots in law enforcement. In a major recent report on America’s efforts to use local police to monitor the population for terrorist threats, the *Washington Post*’s Dana Priest and William M. Arkin spoke to a counterterrorism trainer named Ramon Montijo, a former Los Angeles police detective and Army Special Forces sergeant. Like Kharoba, Montijo made sweeping generalizations about Muslims. “They

want to make this world Islamic. The Islamic flag will fly over the White House—not on my watch!” he said. “My job is to wake up the public, and first, the first responders.”

Despite their different backgrounds, the counterterrorism trainers we interviewed have a remarkably similar worldview. It is one of total, civilizational war—a conflict against Islam that involves everyone, without distinction between combatant and noncombatant, law enforcement and military. “Being politically correct inhibits you,” Hughbank said. “I know Islam better than my own religion. Some things need to be called a spade.”

In *Terror at Beslan*, Giduck recounts giving a presentation on the 2002 hostage crisis at the Nord-Ost Theater in Moscow. After most of the terrorists were knocked unconscious by the gas that security forces pumped into the building, Spetsnaz, the Russian special forces, came through, methodically shooting each of the terrorists once in the back of the head. Giduck is convinced that as Americans we could do better: we could shoot them twice. Giduck writes of being alarmed when a policeman came up to him after the talk and said that not one of the cops in the room would ever have considered doing this. “I think the first thing we need to do is pass federal legislation exempting law enforcement from any civil or criminal prosecution, any liability at all, for what they do if there is a terrorist attack on U.S. soil,” Giduck writes. “In attempting to prepare the American psyche for the worst possible terrorist act—the taking and killing of children—we must all shed the veil of civility and luxury in which we conduct our lives.”

“The former military guys [working as trainers] are always looking at this thing from a battlefield perspective,” explains Jack Cloonan, a twenty-five-year veteran of the FBI who worked in the Osama bin Laden special unit from 1996 to 2002. “They are always looking at it as a U.S. military operation. But what does that have to do with sitting in the Bronx? Or trying to blend into society to carry out an attack? It’s just not related.”

And yet these trainers reach a considerable swath of law enforcement personnel. Of the half-dozen instructors we spoke to, most estimated that they had individually trained between 10,000 and 20,000 students over the course of the past five to six years. There are about 800,000 police officers in total in the United States.

When I look at the life of Muhammad, I get a very nasty image,” said Kharoba, pausing to look around the auditorium. The audience was silent. “I am talking about a pedophile, a serial killer, a rapist,” Kharoba said. “And that is just to start off with.

“Anyone who says that Islam is a religion of peace,” he continued, “is either ignorant or flat out lying.”

Frustration seemed to be burning in the air, and a cop—looking grim, anguished—spoke up. “From a law enforcement standpoint, what can we do?” he asked. “What do we do to deal with these people?”

“The best way to handle these people is what I call legal harassment,” Kharoba answered. “Start to identify who is coming into your area.” Go to the DMV and see who has applied

for a driving license. Look at the owners of convenience stores. Corner stores are one of the principal ways Hezbollah launders money in the United States, he said. (The claim is not true.) “You only need one precedent,” Kharoba said. “Health inspectors, alcohol trade officers, these guys can turn a convenience store upside down without a warrant.”

Eventually the discussion turned to Islamic names, a subject in which Kharoba claims a specialty. There are two types of Muslim immigrants, Kharoba told the class: honest ones who Americanize their names, and those who use long Arabic names as a smokescreen. “If I pull someone over at a traffic stop,” said Kharoba, “I’ll ask for a couple of IDs. And if I see different spellings of a name, my Christmas tree is lit up. That’s probable cause to take them in.”

As a law enforcement officer in the audience pointed out, this is hardly true. People have different names for all sorts of reasons. Arabic names often include a long chain of references to ancestors, occupations, places, and relatives, and don’t readily fall into the pattern of first, middle, and last names common in the Christian West. A Muslim name on a passport might be rendered one way by an immigration clerk, and quite another by a desk agent at the local DMV. These differences are not illegal.

Kharoba was undeterred. He pointed out a laminated reference card that he had included in the course materials. With this card, an officer could see if a driver’s name follows the standard naming pattern for the Arabic world. If the police officer remained in doubt, he should call Kharoba, who has an unusual hobby: he collects phone books. Kharoba has a collection of Jordanian phone books right up until 1992. If a cop were to call up with a Jordanian name not shown in the phone book, Kharoba’s advice would be unequivocal. “Fingerprint him. Take him to prison.”

Kharoba reiterated the need to fight ruthlessly, sharing a story about the government of Syria quelling an uprising in Aleppo by shelling the city and killing more than 7,000 people. It’s a terrible story—but no such thing happened in Aleppo. It happened in Hama, a city about ninety miles to the south, in 1982.

Similarly, when we examined his manual, *A Law Enforcement Guide to Understanding Islamist Terrorism*, we found the claim that when the Muslim population of a country exceeds 80 percent, one should expect “state-run ethnic cleansing and genocide.” The examples given were Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Neither state has ever been involved in genocide. In fact, large sections of Kharoba’s guide turned out to be word for word the same as open-source materials found online—everything from publicly available Facebook pages to anonymously authored PDFs.

Though the federal government covers much of the cost of counterterrorism instruction, it has surprisingly little control over who is chosen to conduct the training. Structural problems abound. There is no unified system of expert evaluation or regulatory authority to impose quality control. The Tenth Amendment, which states, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people,” has been interpreted to mean that

police powers, and officer training, are the preserve of the states. By design, state and local law enforcement is not the responsibility of the federal government, and neither is officer training. While the Department of Homeland Security offers certification, this only means that approved courses are eligible for DHS funds. If the course is paid for by other means—by a regional source, or by another federal department—DHS accreditation isn't necessarily required. Even DHS money, once received by a state or local police department, can often be used for trainers without DHS accreditation.

Another theoretical gatekeeper to the world of training is at the state level. In many states, entities called Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) boards determine what should be taught both in basic training and in continuing education courses. However, POST approval does not entail evaluation of the *content* of each course. If an instructor submits a syllabus that lists appropriate topics and concepts, teaching accurate course content is that instructor's job. Approval of the instructor, in turn, is usually done on the basis of a resume.

This is the case even with stricter states. Instructors in California must submit a course description, an expanded outline of the material covered, a budget, and—if the course involves such skills as firing a weapon—a safety plan. Under these criteria, Kharoba was deemed qualified.

There are also private accrediting agencies that supposedly vet trainers for competence and expertise and offer a kind of seal of approval. But many of these organizations sprang up after 9/11, and they often consist of little more than websites and a few names.

One of these accrediting organizations is called the Anti-Terrorism Accreditation Board, or ATAB, founded in 2001. ATAB promises that if you pay \$695 for their certification (or \$495 with a fee waiver), you will receive forty PowerPoints and over eight hundred books. Among ATAB's promotional materials is a PowerPoint slideshow outlining current al-Qaeda tactics. One of the slides features a grainy picture of someone swinging a golf club and warns of "Golf Course Assassinations," and the possibility of grenade attacks on the carts.

Richard Hughbank, of Extreme Terror Consulting, has taken ATAB's more advanced course and become a certified master anti-terrorism specialist (CMAS). He provides ATAB with a glowing reference on its website, as well he might, because although the website doesn't mention it, Hughbank is also the chairman of ATAB's Standards Committee.

The certification chairman for ATAB is a man named Keith Flannigan. Flannigan claims numerous qualifications: a BA from Kent State University in 2008, an MA in psychology from the University of Frankfurt, likewise in 2008, and a PhD in philosophy from Northfield University—once again in 2008. However, the National Student Clearing House, a degree-verification service, was unable to find record of Flannigan at Kent State, nor did the University of Frankfurt find any evidence of attendance. When queried, Flannigan claimed that we couldn't find his records because Keith Flannigan is not his

legal name. Flannigan may well have a doctorate, for what it's worth, from Northfield University, as it is run by the University Degree Program, described by *Chronicle of Higher Education* as "the granddaddy of diploma mill operations."

None of this has stopped ATAB from gaining some important clients. For example, the U.S. Navy pays its personnel to get certified with ATAB. Why? "Any certification agency whose subject matter matches 80 percent or more of what the sailor does becomes eligible," explained Keith Boring at the Navy's credentials office. "Once the learning center and Navy leadership approves it, then we can pay for the exams." To date, more than 2,000 Navy personnel (each presumably at the rate of at least \$495, for a total of nearly \$1 million) have been certified by ATAB.

Another way to gain authority as a counterterrorism expert is to publish a book. Richard Hughbank just published his first, *The Dynamics of Terror and Creation of Homegrown Terrorism*. John Giduck told us that his career got a significant boost from his book *Terror at Beslan*, which purports to be the most "complete and accurate" story of the Beslan school siege. We asked Giduck to clarify the sources for his most sensational charge: that scores of rapes occurred during the siege. Who were the alleged rape victims, and when exactly did these alleged incidents occur? In an email to us, Giduck didn't provide much in the way of clarification but alleged there has been a public cover-up by both the terrorists and the Russian government. He did not explain why no other journalist among the dozens assigned to cover Beslan had managed to unearth such accounts.

"Who was raped? Give me one name and date," said C. J. Chivers, a *New York Times* reporter and former Marine who published an 18,000-word narrative reconstruction of the school siege for *Esquire* magazine and won a 2007 National Magazine Award for his work. Chivers says he interviewed scores of hostages immediately after the event and in the following months and specifically examined Giduck's allegations of rape. "There were no rapes at Beslan," he says.

When we wanted to know more about Giduck's time with the Russian special forces, Giduck wrote back to say that he had done a "series of trainings with *Vityaz* [a unit of Spetsnaz, the Russian special forces] at their special forces compound and training school on the Balashikha Army Base about 30 miles east of Moscow from 1999 to 2004" and had had close access to a series of elite Russian units, including Rus, another Spetsnaz division. When we made inquiries at the Russian Interior Ministry, we were informed that Giduck had not trained with Vityaz. Instead, he took a commercial course in extreme survival skills, with no counterterrorism component. Representatives from Rus said they had never heard of Giduck.

Even organizations cited for their high standards lack an adequate system for screening trainers. The best example is the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, known as FLETC. FLETC has been around since 1970, and it provides training to more than eighty federal law enforcement agencies—all of them, in fact, except for the DEA and the FBI. Its course development process, according to former FLETC curriculum developer Les

Jenson, is stringent. "Subject-matter experts tear apart course proposals," says Jenson. "They look at handouts, lesson plans, textbooks, and then they say to an instructor, We can accredit you if you make these changes." FLETC can readily call on both in-house experts and outside contractors to evaluate course proposals and materials. In short, FLETC represents the gold standard for rigor in curriculum evaluations.

So did Sam Kharoba make the cut? Indeed he did. In 2004, Kharoba says, a FLETC training coordinator happened to hear him speak at a counterterrorism conference and was so impressed she invited him to teach sessions to law enforcement agents at FLETC headquarters in Glynco, Georgia. His courses were so well received that Kharoba was soon invited to teach senior instructors at FLETC. Those instructors then began, on an ad hoc basis, incorporating Kharoba's curriculum into the courses they taught at agency-specific academies at FLETC. Kharoba told us that on March 15, 2005, he received an email from FLETC stating that they wanted to include his materials in the center's basic curriculum.

As things turned out, though, the students of FLETC wound up being more skeptical than the school's course evaluators. The same month that Kharoba was being invited to incorporate his material into the FLETC curriculum, FLETC received a complaint from an Immigration and Customs Enforcement official named Muhammad Rana. Rana had been angered by course materials that included a handout describing "fundamentalist Muslims" as people with "long beards and head coverings" who, while "we call them radicals ... are practicing true Islam." Eleven out of fifteen members of the class submitted a letter in support of Rana's complaint, and Rana took his case to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which ruled in his favor.

Perhaps embarrassed by the Rana incident, FLETC suspended the official incorporation of Kharoba's course into the standard curriculum. However, once core FLETC classes are completed, officers and agents attend additional classes specific to their agencies, and as Les Jenson explained, "If an agency hired someone, it would be up to a specific agency to do the quality control." Via this loophole, Kharoba continued to teach at FLETC for at least a year, from 2005 to 2006. The FLETC website continued to list "Islamic Culture and Names," which is the name of Sam's course, in its Fundamentals of Terrorism Training Program until January 22, 2010. That day, we telephoned to inquire about Sam Kharoba and received no answer. By the next day the information had disappeared from the website. Despite the fact that online archives show "Islamic Culture and Names" as part of the curriculum through 2008, in response to a Freedom of Information Act request about the course, FLETC maintains it has "no records."

Though he is no longer a presence at FLETC, Kharoba continues to teach in other places. In November 2010, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported that the sheriff in Pasco County, Florida, planned to spend \$45,000 of a \$361,000 training budget teaching local officers how "radical Muslims groom their facial hair and wear their pants, as well as a 'behavioral analysis technique to distinguish visually between moderates and radicals.':" Those classes held at Pasco-Hernando Community College will be taught by Sam Kharoba.

In law enforcement training, student feedback is supposed to act as a check on questionable trainers. Positive course evaluations from police officers are central to the steady employment of those who would train them. The trouble is that most of the terror trainers stay in business precisely because their audience members, few of whom have any background in Islam, report favorably on the instruction they're receiving.

Police attend classes like Kharoba's for a variety of reasons. Local and state law enforcement officers must meet annual or biannual training requirements, a certain number of hours of which are slated for maintenance of "perishable skills": things such as driving and shooting. Officers or their departments can generally pick the rest. Often, departments need a "go-to" person, someone who is a source of information on a subject such as counterterrorism. Attendees tend to be self-selected, motivated by an awareness of how little they know about Islam or a heightened concern about Islamic terrorism, and this can make them more inclined to be receptive to an instructor like Kharoba.

It also helps that the terror trainers are often entertaining. They engage their audience with questions, jokes, stories, and visuals. Like other trainers, Kharoba has a useful stage presence. "He kept an audience of police chiefs captivated," said Phil Ludos of the Florida Police Chiefs Association. "That is not an easy thing to do."

When we spoke to students from Kharoba's class in Florida, many were enthusiastic. Olga Gonzalez, who is a TSA officer in Miami, told us she had taken several of Kharoba's courses. "This guy is brilliant," she said. "I can't believe it: just like gang affiliations, you can distinguish between secular and jihadist Muslims."

Such enthusiasm was echoed by dozens of Kharoba's students and former students. On one occasion, we asked a student whether gangs—a more conventional subject of police attention—weren't a more pressing issue for cops than terrorists.

"Yeah, the gangs are a threat," answered the officer. "But they don't have 1.5 billion members."

Sam Kharoba says that in seven years of teaching he has done only one marketing function, because each training session leads to further invitations. Other trainers said similar things. If you are popular with cops, the word spreads; if you are not, you won't last long. "It's a very closed community," Kharoba told us. "Cops are not going to read an advertisement, they are going to listen to friends."

Were any cops skeptical of Kharoba's teachings? Some certainly were. David McKaig, a deputy with the Alameda County Sheriff's Department, enjoyed Kharoba's class but noted that its lessons were not always applicable. "We have to uphold the rights of citizens," McKaig noted. "You can't violate the constitutional rights based on a hunch."

But that doesn't mean that trainers like Kharoba aren't influential. "Now that I know these people might hate 'the infidel,' and be doing whatever they can to undermine the

civilized world, I am somewhat leery of dealing with Muslims,” McKaig told us. “I go into their residences respectful but wary, which is not good in my position.”

When we attended one of Kharoba’s seminars in California, the training coordinator happened to sit in with us on the class. He too had serious reservations about the course, which he expressed to us and in a memo he later sent to his superior. His superior privately contacted some of his peers; to date, Kharoba has not been invited back to teach in California. But for both the coordinator and his superior, complaining to the agency that had provided Kharoba’s class—the Florida Regional Community Policing Institute of St. Petersburg College—was out of the question.

That’s because the course had been provided free of charge, through funding from the Department of Justice to the Florida Regional Community Policing Institute, and training coordinators around the country rely on such free courses to supplement state offerings. “Look, if we decide to say that he is full of shit, it would mean that we’re never going to get another class from those guys, because that is how cops are,” the California coordinator told us. “They’d say, ‘That rotten son of a bitch, after we’ve been so good to him and his friends.’”

How to clean up the mess? Federal control is not the answer. For one thing, federal standards aren’t especially high. For another, constitutionally, law enforcement is the preserve of the states.

Moreover, there is no one-size-fits-all package for training. “What is relevant in a major city like Los Angeles may be entirely different than in Portland, Maine,” says Mike Rolince, who spent more than thirty years at the FBI, some of it working in counterterrorism. “And if you’re from NYPD or a Chicago PD and you have squads of officers and detectives working something, your budget and your training is significantly different than if you’re one of the majority of departments in the country that have less than thirty sworn officers.”

No matter what size the department may be, though, police need clear guidelines. Officers have to make decisions every day about when and how to apply the law, and when guidelines are bad or lacking, officers can go astray. In 2005, for instance, the Homeland Security and Intelligence Division of the Maryland State Police began secretly infiltrating a wide variety of activist groups—death penalty opponents, bicycle lane advocates, even a citizens group protesting utility rate hikes. Though not a single member of these groups was ever found to pose a security threat, troopers labeled dozens of them as “terrorists” and placed their names and files in a database shared by other regional law enforcement agencies. Perhaps worse, a subsequent state investigation found that no one in the Maryland State Police chain of command “gave any thought whatever to the possibility that its covert surveillance of these groups ... was in any way inappropriate.” It is not hard to imagine that under the new Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative, countless innocent Muslim Americans could similarly wind up being questioned, documented, and even arrested by local and state authorities, and their names,

fingerprints, and other personal information entered into FBI databases, where they would sit for years.

This is a civil liberties issue, but it is also a matter of police effectiveness. As Bill Bratton, who headed up the police departments of both New York and Los Angeles, explains, “There is a real risk as you educate people that you do not, in fact, educate—whether it is law enforcement officers or community—to the degree that you misinform or create a fear or bias that should not be there.”

Indeed, having a bunch of ill-trained local cops sleuth around for jihadists could jeopardize the very counterterrorism efforts the government is supposed to be conducting. For one, it is likely to generate a lot of white noise, forcing analysts to spend precious time sifting through useless information. It could also “dry up important sources of information,” warns Matthew Waxman, an associate professor of law at Columbia University, who has written extensively on the role of local and state law enforcement in counterterrorism.

In counterterrorism, as in most areas of intelligence and law enforcement, vital information often comes from those closest to the suspected perpetrators—from neighbors, friends, even family members. It was an anonymous handwritten note from an Arab American in Lackawanna, New York, a small city outside Buffalo, that led the FBI to arrest six men accused of comprising a sleeper terrorist cell in that city in 2002. In another case last fall in Portland, Oregon, a tip from the Muslim community led federal authorities to arrest in a sting operation a nineteen-year-old Somali-born American for intent to set off a bomb at a Christmas tree lighting ceremony. Ham-handed and overly aggressive behavior by local police toward the Muslim community could break the trust necessary for this kind of information to flow.

The demands placed on police will only increase in the coming years. The Nationwide Suspicious Activities Reporting Initiative asks law enforcement to interpret everyday incidents and decide whether they are indicators of terrorist activity. These decisions are then fed into a nationwide system. Merle Manzi, from the Michigan State University Intelligence Program, argues that requiring line officers to specify that a suspicious activity is probably related to terrorism doesn’t make sense: “The thing about checking a box about terrorism is that, is the officer on the street going to know it is about terrorism? Or will they just know that it is a peculiar thing, something out of the ordinary?”

None of this is to say that state and local police and other first responders cannot play a role where terrorism is concerned. It’s crucial that they be well trained to cope with terrorist incidents once they occur—for instance, to detect and cordon off areas that have been hit by radiological weapons. But intelligence gathering is another matter. Paradoxically, the best thing the police can do in the struggle against terrorism may be to *not* do “counterterrorism” but simply perform the duties they are already mandated to perform: serve the communities they live in, keep their eyes open for suspicious activities of all sorts, and build the links that result in tip-offs like the one that led to the arrest of the men in Lackawanna.

But regardless of what role cops on the streets should or should not play in fighting terrorism, the fact is that rivers of federal training dollars are already flowing, many of them straight into the pockets of instructors like Sam Kharoba. The training system clearly needs reform. Again, federal control is not the solution, but a first step would be for the federal government to issue voluntary guidelines on how states can best reform their oversight of counterterrorism training—since the most robust reforms will need to happen at the state level. State accreditation should be made mandatory for counterterrorism training courses—it often isn't—and the accreditation process itself must also be toughened. There should be subject-matter experts who evaluate courses, and they should sit in on classroom sessions anonymously. If such a system of state-based oversight worked properly, then bad trainers would have their state accreditation revoked, and they would no longer be allowed to teach in the state. If states agreed to share lists of bad trainers, then the trainer would effectively be banned nationwide. Time is of the essence. Within the next year, the Department of Justice plans to implement the Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative nationwide, and this will amplify the effects of the bad training being provided—unless the system is reformed quickly. It also behooves us to ask the fundamental question of what role beat cops should play in counterterrorism. But instead of a broader discussion, what we have now is a system that fails to police the ranks of those who train our frontline officers, while no one is paying attention. Apart, that is, from the police.

Original article:

- http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/marchapril_2011/features/how_w_e_train_our_cops_to_fear028364.php

Supporting links:

- <http://antiwar.com/radio/2011/05/01/alex-kane/>
- http://www.publiceye.org/liberty/training/Muslim_Menace_Complete.pdf
- http://www.alternet.org/rights/150648/how_your_tax_dollars_fuel_the_hatred_of_muslims
- http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/your_taxes_fund_anti-muslim_hatred_20110509
- <http://www.npr.org/2011/03/09/134374232/new-concern-about-bias-in-counterterror-training>
- <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/09/fbi-muslims-radical/>