

NEFA Backgrounder: Marcus Robertson (“Abu Taubah”)



January 2012

Overview: Current Criminal Charges

- Marcus Dwayne Robertson (“Abu Taubah” “Mukhlis Robertson” “Mukhlis bin Lonzo” “Joseph Hashim”), originally from Brooklyn, NY, and who served most recently the imam of Masjid Al-Ihsaan in Orlando, Florida., is a rising celebrity internet imam.
- Robertson was arrested by the FBI in Orlando on August 23, 2011 for unlawful possession of a firearm, transported by interstate or foreign commerce.
- The arrest was made after agents recovered a loaded .45 caliber Springfield Armory 1911 handgun, manufactured in Croatia, from a dresser drawer, during a search of Robertson’s home.
- On August 24, 2011, the U.S. attorney filed a notice of intent to use Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act information (FISA) in its prosecution of Robertson.



Overview: Current Criminal Charges



- On January 5, 2012, Robertson pleaded guilty to the gun charge and is awaiting sentencing in the John Polk Correctional Facility in Sanford, FL.
- Robertson claims to have received the gun and ammunition from a friend in 2010. In June 2011, he loaned the weapon to someone in his Florida neighborhood when they went to investigate a suspicious individual. The weapon was returned to Robertson that night.
- Sentencing is scheduled for March 26, 2012, at U.S. District Court, in Orlando, FL.
- The maximum sentence is 10 years.

INMATE INFORMATION

Booking #: 201100011051
Name: MARCUS ROBERTSON
Date of Birth: 09/03/1968
Location: H
Arrested by: US Marshall Orlando Office
Arrest Date: 08/23/2011 06:19:00 PM

Overview

- Prior to his August 2011 arrest, Robertson was traveling around the country and the world lecturing to large audiences, mostly comprised of young people. His popularity has soared, particularly since 2010.
- Robertson's popularity and credibility with audiences is founded upon his stories about his life experiences and years of study of Arabic and Islam:
 - He claims to have served in the United States Marine Corps for 9 years, including as a member of the elite 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company.
 - He claims to have served in Japan in a Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) unit, and that he learned to speak Arabic in a mosque located near the base.
 - He claims to have lived in Mauritania for 6 years, where he learned about Islamic jurisprudence.
 - He claims to have lived in Egypt for 4 years, where he memorized the Koran.
- While there are elements of truth in his claims, his own contradictions, criminal arrest records and other public records indicate exaggeration and fabrication.

Social Media: Exponential Exposure

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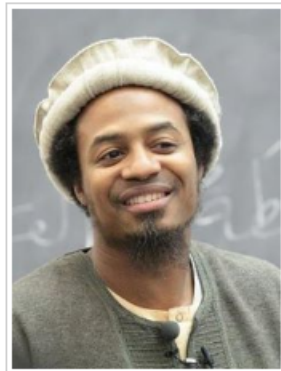
Islam21c

**** Another one of our Ummah's Teachers has been Imprisoned****
This message is very important please read!!!

As-salaamu 'alaykum, Al-hamdulillahi Rabbil-aalameen and salaatuha was-salaamu on the Prophet Muhammad.

...

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My F.I.K.S

As Salaamu alaykum,

Please let me clarify the situation with the court case and the results of 1/5/12. The FBI used the gun involved in the case in order to obtain a search warrant of the Ustadh's homes. Once in, they were able to arrest the Ustadh on a gun charge. Once he was arrested they had to (by U.S. law) officially charge him with possession of a weapon by a felon. However, the gun has not been the main issue with this case, but the terrorism charges have. The time limit on being held without a trial for the gun charge started to run out so they officially charged him. However, this gives them ample time to trump up charges on a terrorist case. on 1/5/12 the Ustadh plead guilty to the gun charge. The letters you all are writing will go towards two things insha Allah: 1. The sentencing phase for the gun in either March or May, as he is facing up to 10 years (we need letters describing the non violent, and good nature of the Ustadh); 2. The pending terrorism charge (these letters would be used to describe the reality of the lessons and dawah Abu Taubah has given us.). Thank you all for your patience and constant du'a and support.

Barakallahu feekum,

Like · Comment · Share · 13 hours ago ·

Social media has boosted Robertson's popularity worldwide. Facebook users from such places as the U.S., U.K., Indonesia, Canada, Malaysia, UAE, and Tanzania post Robertson's videos and statements. Robertson's updates from prison and pleas for letters of support have appeared on Facebook pages in the U.S., Nigeria, and the Philippines.

In one example (shown top left), a UK-based Islamic organization, Islam21C, which has more than 50,000 followers, posted one of Robertson's statements from prison.

Robertson's Popularity on YouTube

Why the Former US Marine Force Recon Abu Tawba Accepted Islam? T

khalifahklothing 2,461 videos



0:31:01 / 1:03:54 360p

36,257

Uploaded by khalifahklothing on Feb 10, 2011
Find out why this Former Marine force recon member accepted Islam on this 328 likes, 17 dislikes

Making the most of our Time - Abu Taubah

khalifahklothing 2,459 videos



01:41 / 26:21 240p

20,639

Guest Challenges Eddie to a fight on TheDeenShow

khalifahklothing 2,459 videos



07:43 / 28:56 360p

46,377

Abu Taubah - Emotional Lecture on ignorance and the blessings of bein

TheMostGenerous 74 videos



3:42 / 8:47 360p

61,748

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has said that the Hellfire is forbidden to touch the eyes of the one who shed tears at the remembrance of Allah. WWW.THEFIKS.ORG

Many videos featuring Robertson have been viewed by tens of thousands

The FIKS Site Statistics



Myfiks.org [Go to site >>](#)

Myfiks is ranked 29,822 in the United Kingdom. 'The FIKS | Each One Teach One.'

Analysis

Visitors

Links

Server



29,822

Rank in United Kingdom

Monthly pages viewed **99,792**

Monthly visits **45,360**



616,708

Worldwide Rank

Value per visitor **£0.04**

Estimated worth **£15,514.86 ***

External links **29**

Number of pages **72**

Statistics from urlspy.co.uk on Robertson's Fundamental Islamic Knowledge Seminary (FIKS) web site.

Background

- Marcus Dwayne Robertson (9/3/1968) was raised in Brooklyn, New York.
- He is one of three sons.
- His mother was a high school principal, and his father worked for the Kings County (Brooklyn) District Attorney, and continues to be active in Brooklyn historical preservation.
- According to interviews and his autobiography, Robertson attended Baptist church in Brooklyn until he decided to become a Muslim in his teens.
- He states he attended al Taqwa mosque in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn. The mosque is led by Imam Siraj Wahaj.
- Robertson explained in an interview, while he called himself a Muslim at the time and did not eat pork, he still did not understand much about the religion. He described the extent of his involvement as attending prayers, then playing basketball with the other teens.



Masjid al Taqwa [source: Google Maps, June 2011 image]

Service in the U.S. Marine Corps

- By his account, Robertson joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1985 at the age of 17 and served until 1994 in Special Operations units, such as the 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company; this constitutes a total of nine years.
- In fact, however, Robertson was apprehended for bank robbery in 1991 and was incarcerated for four years. (Robertson characterizes the time he spent in the U.S. after leaving the Marine Corps and before moving to Africa as a time “to teach and build the foundations for further study”). Five years is the longest time possible he could have been a Marine.
- A biography that appears on Robertson’s web site explains he served “in 2nd Force Recon, a member of the elite counterterrorism unit Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC).”
- In fact, the 2nd Force Recon Company has never been part of JSOC.
- Robertson claims to have sought reassignment because he was “uncomfortable with the prospect of being a Muslim deployed in the Operation Desert Storm arena,” and was sent for “special duty in Japan.” It is in Japan, he claims, he learned about Islam and where he learned to speak Arabic at a mosque.
- To become a Force Recon Marine can take more than a year of screening, vetting, and training. Robertson may have partially participated in that process, or may have been assigned to the 2nd Force Recon Company, or an adjacent unit, in a support capacity. However, there is no available documentation to confirm he was ever a fully qualified 2nd Force Recon Marine. In addition, it is unlikely he would have been reassigned to a Special Operations unit after having refused to deploy to the Gulf for religious reasons.
- He claims to have left the Marines for good, at the rank of Sergeant, as a conscientious objector. (Siraj Wahaj instructs Muslims serving in the U.S. military cannot obey orders that are “unjust” from their commanders.)
- It is unlikely, given the length of his service in the Marines, he was discharged as a sergeant.

SSI Patrol Services

- For most of the period Robertson claims to have been in Japan with the Marine Corps, he was in New York, involved with the al Taqwa mosque.
- In late 1990 or early 1991, Robertson was recruited out of al Taqwa by Sehmerier Security Inc. (SSI), a private patrol company owned by Herschel Weber, a Hasidic rabbi from Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Rabbi Weber is also credited as the founder of the Hatzolah Emergency Medical Response Services.
- SSI recruited Black Muslims from al Taqwa, many of whom had converted to Islam in prison, to secure New York City housing complexes that were blighted by drug dealers.
- Working for approximately \$10/hour, Robertson was assigned by SSI to rid the Noble Drew Ali apartments in Brownsville, Brooklyn of drug dealers, who had taken over vacated apartments in the 385-unit complex.
- According to *The New York Times*, the SSI patrol guards succeeded in scaring drug dealers off through intimidation and violence, and occasionally by killing them.
- “If they spill one pin drop of our blood, we spill a gallon of theirs,” one Muslim guard interviewed for the *Times* said.



Noble Drew Ali apartment complex. [source: Google Maps, June 2011 image].

“Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves”

- In early 1991, Robertson joined with other former Muslim SSI security guards to form a robbery gang they called the “Forty Thieves.” Robertson, the leader, was known as “Ali Baba.”
- The “Forty Thieves” robbed more than 10 banks, private homes, and post offices at gun point, and members shot three police officers, attacking one officer after he was shot with an improvised explosive device constructed from PVC.
- According to the book The Cell, Robertson (referred to as Marcus Robinson), then 22, provided the gang with guns and training, based on his experience in the Marines.
- Most of the gang members attended al Taqwa and another mosque located around the corner, which was then called “Masjid al Muminin.”
- The founder and imam at al Muminin is Al Amin Adul-Latif, whose son-in-law was one of the convicted members of the “Forty Thieves.”
- Abdul-Latif is an adherent of the Darul Islam movement.
- The spiritual leader of the Darul Islam movement is Jamil Abdullah al-Amin (formerly known as H. Rap Brown). When he was in New York, al-Amin prayed at al Muminin.
- In October 1971, Al-Amin and other members of the “Black Liberators” shot two NYPD police officers after their failed attempt to rob the “Red Carpet Lounge” in Manhattan. In 2002, he was convicted of murdering a Fulton County, Georgia sheriff’s deputy and seriously wounding another. He is in prison for life.
- Robertson described himself to investigators, at the time of his arrest in June 1991, as a soldier in the global jihad. The gang’s crimes, he explained, were against “nonbelievers” as “appropriation of funds.”

“Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves”



Surveillance photo of Robertson robbing a bank in June 1991

“Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves”

“I heard about the Fuqra [referring to Jamat al Fuqra].....So coming from New York we have this militant type Islam, we called it the Dar ul Islam... and [it] was a lot of the afro-centric brothers who started to practice Islam but it was really heavily militant at the time. This was our fathers and our father-in-laws.”

- Marcus Robertson, “The Deen Show,” 2011

“Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves”

- The authors of The Cell assert Robertson supplied Rodney Clement Hampton El (“Dr. Rashid”) with guns, and Hampton El attempted to recruit Robertson for jihad in Bosnia.
- Hampton El, who was a respected fixture in Brooklyn’s al Farooq (which was a primary base for Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman) and al Taqwa mosques, was sentenced to life in prison in 1995 for conspiring to attack New York City landmarks.
- Most of the members of the “Forty Thieves” were arrested in October 1991.
- Robertson became a witness for the government prosecution against the rest of the gang. He was eventually convicted in only one bank robbery, for which he served four years. He was released from prison in 1994.



Abdullah Rashid (aka Clement Hampton El) pictured in a video in which he discusses jihad. The talk was taped from his bed in Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn, NY, soon after he stepped on a land mine while fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. The interview was filmed by El Sayyid Nosair, who was arrested in 1990 for assassinating radical Jewish leader Meir Kahane.



1989 surveillance photo of 1993 World Trade Center bombing conspirators, including Hampton El, training at the Calverton Shooting Range in Long Island, NY. These individuals, all devotees of “the Blind Sheikh” Omar-Abdel Rahman, worshipped at the same Brooklyn mosques as Robertson and the “Forty Thieves.”

Travel To Mauritania and Egypt

- It is unclear the exact year Robertson left the United States for Africa. By August 1999, it was evident he was missing, violating the terms of his release from prison in 1994. The Assistant U.S. Attorney then filed a warrant for Robertson's arrest.
- Robertson reappeared in the U.S. in August 2001, when he arrived at John F. Kennedy Airport with his young daughter, who was sick with malaria. He was arrested and taken into custody of the Bureau of Prisons at that time.
- He was released on \$10,000 bond on September 5, 2001, and was ordered to report to probation in New York for two years. He was given permission to return to Africa with his daughter after the terms of his probation were satisfied, which would have been in the fall of 2003.
- Robertson claims in his interviews to have lived in Mauritania for six years and in Egypt for four. Ten years abroad in total. He has also said he spent time in Morocco.
- Public records indicate Robertson was residing in California by early 2006.
- These circumstances also make it unlikely Robertson could have spent a total of ten years overseas.

Link to Mauritania

- After his return to the U.S. from Africa, Robertson promoted travel to Mauritania to study Islam in his videos, lectures, and via his web site.
- Robertson's Fundamental Islamic Knowledge Seminary (FIKS) website provided a link to the website of a school in Nouakchott, Mauritania called The Darul Arqam Institute. As of December 2011, the link from the FIKS website to the Darul Arqam Institute website was no longer active.



Top, image from FIKS site. Bottom, image from The Darul Arqam site.



Return to U.S.

- In an interview on “The Deen Show,” a Muslim talk show taped in the U.S. and broadcast on cable stations in the U.S. and U.K., Robertson stated he returned to the U.S. because his son was ill and required brain surgery. In the same interview, taped in February 2011, he claimed he had returned to the U.S. only three years earlier, in 2008.
- In fact, Robertson returned to the U.S. in 2005 or 2006.
- In 2006, he was working in the LA area for an organization called Unity T.W.O., which had a substantial contract with the City of Los Angeles to help reduce gang-related violence by liaising between gang members and the LAPD. Unity T.W.O., founded by former gang member Kevin Mustapha Fletcher, lost its contract with the city in 2009 after accusations of financial mismanagement.
- Also in 2006, he completed a emergency response certification course in Culver City, CA.
- He relocated to New York in 2008.



Members of the March 2006 Culvert City “Mega Cert class” swearing in. [Source: Culvert City Cert Newsletter, May 2006]

Return to New York

- In 2008, Robertson established FIKS as a summer program for Muslim children at the Baitus Salaam Jame Masjid on Decatur Avenue in the Bronx.



New York

MAKEEN ABDUS-SALAAM
2705 BAINBRIDGE AVE.
SUITE #4H
BRONX, NEW YORK
10458

00:19 / 10:05

21,032

87 likes, 7 dislikes

Uploaded by [MAKEEN104](#) on Jan 4, 2009

INFORMATION ABOUT STUDYING IN MAURATANIA FOR THOSE WHO ARE INQUIRING OR HAVE QUESTIONS.

In a in January 2009 video in which Robertson describes life and study in Mauritania, there is a request for donations to FIKS to be be sent to Makeen Adbus-Salaam.

The Bainbridge Avenue address was used to register the FIKS web site in 2010.

As of January 2012, the FIKS site asks that donations for Robertson's current defense be sent to Makeen Adbus-Salaam:

jp morgan chase bank
new york, ny
acct name: Makeen Abdu-
Salaam
swift : chasus33
aba : 267084131
acct: 996614038

New York



- This screenshot from a video uploaded to Robertson's YouTube channel on September 18, 2008, shows Robertson leading children in the FIKS program through Manhattan's Bowling Green subway station with a military-style cadence call. They were their way to the Staten Island Ferry.

Florida, Domestic and Overseas Travel

Through 2010 and 2011, Robertson traveled the country and the world speaking in front of large audiences. He took trips to Canada, the U.K., and Sri Lanka. He visited Seattle, Washington, Chicago, IL, and New York City from his base in Orlando, FL.

According to “Google Trends” data, most searches for “Abu Taubah” come from Canada.



Robertson (far right) spoke at a conference at the Green Lane Masjid in Birmingham, England in the summer of 2010. Sitting to Robertson’s right is American Abu Usamah adh-Dhahabi, who was the imam at Masjid alihssan before Robertson took over. Adh-Dhahabi is originally from Passaic, NJ and attended the University of Medina. He is now an imam at the Green Lane Masjid.

Public Statements

- Speaking to a predominantly Somali audience at Foster High School in affiliation with Highpoint Masjid in Seattle, WA in March 2011:
 - “Boys who wear their pants around the butts are gay. This is not manly.”
 - “Don’t mix with Kuffar! They are not even potty trained. These people do not even know how to go to the bathroom properly!”
 - “Standing for the Star Spangled Banner is *haram* [forbidden].”
 - “Don’t imitate Black Americans...Islam is the only solution. It only works if you commit wholeheartedly. Don’t mix with any kind of nationalism. Black nationalists mixed with pseudo-Islam and it didn’t work.” (In another lecture, Robertson says, “Afro-centricity without Islam makes no sense, as 90% of Africa is Muslim.”)



Public Statements

- “I spilled blood in the right mud to have the choice as an American to choose whatever religion I want to. It’s the Muslims who should be fearing the Christians [In reference to the August 2010 knife attack, motivated by hate, on a NYC cab driver]. They did the same thing to the Japanese and locked them up in all these concentration camps, they had the same thing about Jews- no Jews, no dogs, no niggers. You know they do the same thing with the Blacks—don’t drink at the same water fountain and don’t use the same urinal—and now they’re doing it with the Muslims. There’s the constant mentality, but our thing is we don’t have anything to prove to them.”

Statements Regarding 9/11

- Robertson claims to have come to Ground Zero on September 11, 2001 to assist in the recovery effort.

“It’s never been proven [who was responsible for the attacks of 9/11].”My cousin was there, she had to jump out on a barge and get out of the City. I was there. I went downtown and helped out in everything that was going on.....clearing debris, pulling people out. I was there on the day it happened. I had come in from out of the country with my daughter...she had malaria. So I went downtown and did my part as a human being to help out in the situation at hand.....

However this thing about Usama bin Laden and George Bush and all this other stuff. This seems to be a problem they have. And the rich people are doing their thing and we, all us other people, have to suffer from behind it.

Most of the guys they told us who did it were either from Egypt or Saudi Arabia. The two places that are allies with America. We’re not in Saudi Arabia or Egypt fighting. We’re fighting over in Afghanistan and this type of thing and like that.

I was there, we saw what happened. We saw the plane. That wasn’t no civilian plane.”

Statements from John Polk Correctional Facility

- Since his arrest in August 2011, Robertson has been issuing statements from the John Polk Correctional Facility, where has been held without bail:

“They’re [the non-Muslims] looking for us, they’re out to get us”

“Some by some, Muslim people were talking about me and slandering me [used as an excuse] to break into my house. The *kuffar* used the slander as probable cause to arrest me.”

“Of course you didn’t know I was an ex-felon;that’s why my name is Abu Taubah, because twenty years ago I did some things that were not honorable.”

Statements from John Polk Correctional Facility

- “I am still a member of the Special-Operations Community, and on more than one occasion during the past 20 years, at the behest of the Government, I have been in the physical and constructive possession of firearms. This, in and of itself, should have been enough to prevent my arrest, but as we are Muslim, our contributions are marginalized and our actions are looked upon with suspicion.”

Implications

- In August 2011, The White House published its strategy to prevent violent radicalization in the United States by leveraging programs and relationships already established by local law enforcement agencies.
- While larger police departments have the capacity to practice community policing techniques that would enable engagement and possibly preempt radicalization, many departments responsible for vulnerable communities simply do not have the resources.
- Debunking frauds is an important element in a strategy to protect susceptible young people.

Implications

- Robertson is an entertainer who has learned Arabic and has managed to establish enough credibility to receive invitations to conferences, to give lectures, and win support world wide.
- While there have been allegations of financial mismanagement of the FIKS business made against Robertson by other Muslims, there has not been a public effort to discredit him, particularly not by the young people who find his affable manner and heroic stories appealing.
- He promotes hatred and distrust of non-Muslims, and advocates the isolation of Muslims from the rest of society.

Implications

- Robertson used the experience and training he received in the Marine Corps to train others to commit violent crimes in the name of religion.
- He also used his knowledge, based on his probable contact with Marines who trained for special operations, to invent a personal history that would help him gain admiration and respect. That respect and admiration enhanced his credibility as a religious instructor, and furthered his ability to potentially radicalize young people.

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