

Case 31: Baltimore

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Antonio Martinez, an American Latino who converted to Islam and became angered by American military operations in the Middle East, took it into his head in 2010 to carry out violent jihad in the United States. He sought out military targets, particularly recruiting stations, and eventually settled on one where he had once tried to enlist—in Catonsville, Maryland, near Baltimore.

As Lauren Brady makes clear, although neither trained nor knowledgeable about explosives or about violent or covert operations, he was determined from the start to commit violence and might eventually have done something, perhaps entering a recruiting station and shooting off a gun as had been done in Fort Hood the year before (Case 25).

Although this could have been done in “lone wolf” style as at Fort Hood or in Little Rock (Case 19)—the only instances since 9/11 in which Islamic terrorist have killed anyone in the United States—he somehow decided he needed help, and came to the remarkable conclusion that he could best enlist recruits in about the most public manner conceivable—through his Facebook page. He posted all sort of jihadist bravado apparently intended to be attractive to the like-minded, such as “Do you really want to spend your entire lives praying for longevity? WE were born in order to die” and “Any 1 who opposes ALLAH and HIS Prophet PEACE.Be.upon.Him I hate you with all my heart.”

This spectacularly amateurish recruitment effort was, none too surprisingly, a fiasco. Two people simply turned him down, another tried to talk him out of it, and the fourth, although apparently congenial to his plans, proved to be an FBI informant.

The informant, working with an FBI agent, supplied Martinez with a fake SUV bomb and both offered him many chances to back down. But Martinez remained determined and adamant about attacking the military: “we are gonna go...to their stations, to their bases...to everywhere a soldier is,” “every soldier that we see in uniform will be killed on the spot,” and “they will be killed until they stop waging war against...Islam.” When Martinez tried to detonate the supplied bomb, he was arrested.

The attack was the first of many he planned to carry out against the American military, but, rather confusingly, he also apparently had a plan to flee to Afghanistan after the detonation.

Although there had been a well-publicized sting-driven arrest in a very similar situation in Oregon (Case 29) even while Martinez was putting his plot together, it generated only momentary pause, and his concerns were quickly mollified by the agile informant.

The case did not generate much press, perhaps because it came so soon after the somewhat more sensational Oregon case in which the (theoretical) target was a colorful Christmas tree lighting ceremony attended by many people rather than a recruiting station populated by few.

Given the intensity Martinez showed in his public displays and in his private behavior with the informer and the agent, Brady sees him as an especially dangerous character who would have done something violent even without the highly convenient aid of his supposed co-conspirators. How much damage he would have done as a lone wolf is a matter of speculation however—as Max Abrahms has observed in, interestingly, the *Baltimore Sun*, lone wolves have carried out only two of the 1,900 most deadly terrorist attacks over the last four decades.¹

¹ Max Abrahms, “Fear of ‘lone wolf’ misplaced,” *Baltimore Sun*, January 5, 2011.

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1. Overview

On December 8, 2010, Antonio Martinez, a 21 year-old Baltimore construction worker and recent convert to Islam, was arrested for attempting to blow up an Armed Forces recruiting station in Catonsville, Maryland.¹ Martinez came to the FBI's attention in October 2010 when an informant contacted them about posts Martinez had made on his Facebook page expressing his interest in recruiting Afghani jihadists to help him attack a military recruiting station.² The FBI undertook a sting operation involving the informant and an undercover FBI agent introduced to Martinez as an Afghani bomb maker, and together they recorded conversations and internet communications with Martinez in which he expressed his hatred for America and his plans for violence.³ In November 2010 when an Oregon man was arrested in an FBI sting for attempting to set off a bomb at a Christmas tree lighting (Case 29), Martinez became concerned that he, too, was being set up, and expressed specific concerns about the identity of the FBI undercover agent.⁴ To quell his fears, the FBI had the informant tell Martinez that the "Afghani" had his doubts about Martinez's identity as well, and the subterfuge worked.⁵ On several occasions, the informant and the FBI undercover agent told Martinez that he did not have to go through with it, and they would understand if he did not, but Martinez insisted.⁶

On December 8, 2010, he drove an SUV which he believed to be rigged with explosives to the targeted recruiting station.⁷ He parked the inert car bomb at the recruiting station and, once he thought there were soldiers inside, he attempted to detonate it with a remote trigger and was immediately arrested.⁸

Martinez was charged in a U.S. District Court with attempted murder of federal officers and employees and attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction; if convicted, he could be sentenced to life in prison.⁹ In January 2011, he appeared at a brief hearing and pled not guilty to the charges, his attorneys argued that he was entrapped in an FBI sting and never could have committed the attack on his own.¹⁰

¹ Maria Glod, Jerry Markon, and Tara Brahmppour, "Md. Man Accused of Attempted Bombing," *Washington Post*, December 9, 2010.

² Charlie Savage and Gary Gately, "Maryland Bomb Plot Foiled, Authorities Say," *New York Times*, December 8, 2010.

³ Savage and Gately, "Maryland."

⁴ Evan Perez, "FBI Holds Man in Bomb-Plot Sting," *Wall Street Journal*, December 9, 2010.

⁵ Perez, "FBI."

⁶ Savage and Gately, "Maryland."

⁷ Savage and Gately, "Maryland."

⁸ Savage and Gately, "Maryland."

⁹ Bob Drogin and Richard Serrano, "Baltimore Man Arrested in Foiled Terrorism Plot," *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 2010.

¹⁰ Drogin and Serrano, "Baltimore."

2. Nature of the adversary

Antonio Martinez, also known as Muhammad Hussain, is a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Nicaragua.¹¹ It is unclear when he came to the U.S., but he attended Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland, and the 2005 Laurel High School yearbook lists him as a member of that year's freshman class, but it is unclear whether he ever graduated. At a court hearing, he claimed to work in construction, but he held a previous job selling children's clothing at a mall in Catonsville, Maryland. Former coworkers reported that he began working at the mall about a year before his arrest, that he seemed just like a typical young adult working a retail job, and that he was polite and hardworking. They also claimed that when he began the job he was a newly baptized Christian, but one day surprised them by announcing he had converted to Islam. He began to bring a prayer rug to work to pray to Mecca.¹²

According to his former coworkers, Martinez converted once he "met some people and started reading the Quran." When they reminded him of Islam's bad publicity in the U.S., Martinez acknowledged that both his mother and girlfriend at the time did not approve, but converting was something he felt he had to do. One of his former colleagues claimed that she never had any inkling that Martinez held any anti-American views—in fact, he once tried to join the Army, something that he also revealed to the FBI informant. Since then, he appeared to have developed a particular hatred towards American servicemen, stating "Every soldier that we see in uniform will be killed on the spot, Insha'Allah." It is unclear when he changed his name to Muhammad Hussain, but his discontent with America seemed cemented by the time he first posted on his public Facebook page in August 2010, writing "When are these crusaders gonna realize they cant win? How many more lives are they willing to sacrafice."¹³

His mother was reportedly concerned with his sudden change of faith and his increasingly fervent Islamic views. She tried to dissuade him from converting to Islam, and told the press that she is a "devout American" and is embarrassed by her son's actions. During the FBI's undercover investigation, Martinez expressed frustration with his mother, claiming that she just wanted him to be like everyone else and she could not understand his passion for Islam. He was recorded as saying that he was "Glad I am not like everyone else my age, 21--going out, having fun, be in college, all that stuff. That's not me...that not what Allah has in mind for me." Little else has been written about his family or upbringing, only that he had a little brother who he would sometimes watch play outside.¹⁴

Martinez married Naimah Ismail-Hussain in the summer of 2010, according to his wife's Facebook page. According to his former coworkers at the clothing store, his girlfriend at the time of his conversion did not approve of his new religion, so Martinez likely met his wife after he became a Muslim. In

¹¹ Mara Gay, "Who Is Accused Baltimore Terrorist Antonio Martinez?" Huffington Post, December 9, 2010.

¹² Scott Calvert, "Baltimore-area Bomb Plot: Co-workers Surprised by Charges," *Baltimore Sun*, December 9, 2010.

¹³ Calvert, "Baltimore."

¹⁴ Calvert, "Baltimore."

December 2010, her Facebook page listed her as a senior majoring in English and education at Pine Manor College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts; Martinez lived in an apartment in Woodlawn, Maryland, so it appears that they had a long-distance relationship but it is unclear how they met. According to court records, Martinez stated that his wife was supportive of his desire to fight jihad, claiming that she said she didn't want to stop him and that "She will support everything I want to do." Martinez's wife appears to have a brother, Kojo Ghana, who describes himself on Facebook as Martinez's brother-in-law and who tried many times to temper Martinez's violent emotions on Facebook. Ghana wrote to Martinez that "There's always balance in Islam" and that Martinez should "Help those who are in need of help, volunteer at a food bank, tutor, or something Constructive."¹⁵ So Martinez appears to have had at least one moderate Islamic influence in his life.

Martinez worshiped at two different mosques, the Faizah-e-Madina Mosque and the Al Madina, located in shopping strips in his hometown of Woodlawn, Maryland. Worshipers at the Faizah-e-Madina Mosque were surprised by his arrest, and said that they only knew Martinez as someone who prayed at the mosques. Naeem Rafiq, a Pakistan native and local grocery store owner, said that he prayed with Martinez two or three times a day at the Faizah-e-Madina Mosque beginning about a year before his arrest, but that Martinez had left to attend the Al Madina and he had not seen him in six months.¹⁶

Neighbors commented that Martinez usually kept to himself, only coming outside to watch his little brother play. It is unclear whether or not he lived alone or with other family members. They say that he usually wore a black-and-white checked head covering, and sometimes would kneel in the grass outside to pray. He seems to have expressed much of his violent jihadist views on Facebook, spending a lot of time glorifying jihad and showing his admiration particularly for Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S.-born cleric linked to the 2009 shooting at Fort Hood (Case 25). He describes himself on Facebook by writing, "IM just a yung brotha from the wrong side of the tracks who embraced Islam."¹⁷

According to state records, Martinez faced criminal charges three times. In 2006, at age 16, he was charged with armed robbery and handgun offenses in Montgomery County, Maryland, though the outcome of those charges is unclear and may have been transferred to juvenile court. In 2008 he was charged with car theft in Prince George's County and theft under \$100 in Montgomery County. According to state records, he was convicted on the lesser theft charge and received a 90-day suspended jail sentence and ordered to pay \$500 in fines and \$160 in restitution.¹⁸ The FBI investigation does not appear to make note of any jail time or possible Islamic influences he may have encountered in prison.

Overall, Martinez appears to have been a troubled young man who was susceptible to radical Islam for a number of possible reasons, such as his trouble with the law, his rejection from the Army, or his atypical lifestyle for a 21 year-

¹⁵ Calvert, "Baltimore."

¹⁶ Calvert, "Baltimore."

¹⁷ Calvert, "Baltimore."

¹⁸ Calvert, "Baltimore."

old American. He was a minority in the United States seemingly without goals or direction, and was drawn to the guidelines of religion, especially one that is not in the mainstream of America. His transformation from a misbehaving youth to a married, radical Islamist appears to have taken place in about a year, and such a readily quick change suggests that his old way of living was unstable and unhappy.

3. Motivation

Martinez was motivated by a devotion to Islam, a desire to commit violent jihad, and a wish to kill members of the American military in retaliation for what he perceived as their war against Islam.¹⁹ Martinez first came to the attention of the FBI when an informant showed authorities a Facebook message in which he expressed an interest in joining jihadists in Afghanistan and tried to get the informant to help him with an attack on a military recruiting center.²⁰ The informant and undercover FBI agent recorded numerous conversations and online communications with Martinez in which he expressed his motivations. According to the complaint filed by the government, Martinez believed that the United States was responsible for the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and had “accused Muslims of committing the attacks as an excuse to fight them.”²¹ The government affidavit stated that Martinez told the informant that it was appropriate to attack the U.S. military because it was killing Muslims overseas.²² He wrote that “Every soldier that we see in uniform will be killed on the spot, Insha’Allah,” and “They will be killed until they stop waging war against...Islam.”²³ The FBI claims to have recorded conversations in which Martinez states that Army Major Nidal Hasan saved the lives of Muslims by killing 13 soldiers in a shooting spree the previous year at Fort Hood.²⁴ In October and November of 2010, he praised Anwar al-Awlaki, a radical Muslim cleric who called for terrorist attacks, and a video of insurgents attacking Western troops.²⁵

It is abundantly clear that his devotion to Islam and his anger about U.S. foreign policy in Islamic majority nations drove his desire to wage jihad, especially against the American military.

4. Goals

The goal of Martinez’s attempted attack was to kill American soldiers by targeting a military recruiting station. On a broader level, by attacking a military target, Martinez hoped to end what he perceived as America’s war on Islam, writing that soldiers “will be killed until they stop waging war against ...

¹⁹ Calvert, “Baltimore.” Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

²⁰ Savage and Gately, “Maryland.”

²¹ Savage and Gately, “Maryland.”

²² Perez, “FBI.”

²³ Calvert, “Baltimore.”

²⁴ Perez, “FBI.”

²⁵ Savage and Gately, “Maryland.”

Islam.”²⁶ He wrote on his Facebook page that “we gotta rise up” and “continue the establishment of Islam on the earth.”²⁷

The affidavit filed by the FBI describes the attempted attack in Catonsville as the first of many that Martinez wanted to commit against the American military. He wrote, “We are gonna go...to their stations, to their bases...to everywhere a soldier is” and “Every soldier that we see in uniform will be killed on the spot.” The affidavit asserted that his goal was to become a martyr for Islam.²⁸ He clearly felt that the U.S. military was attacking his new religion and, as an adherent to violent jihad, he wanted to target and kill members of the American military both in the name of jihad and to expel the U.S. from the Middle East.

5. Plans for violence

Antonio Martinez first came to the attention of the FBI in October 2010 when an informant contacted them about Facebook posts made by Martinez in which he expressed an interest in joining jihadists in Afghanistan and attacking a military recruiting station in the U.S.²⁹ Martinez was trying to recruit others to help with the attack, and the informant was not the only person Martinez had tried to enlist for help—two others refused, another refused and tried to talk him out of it, and the fourth, the informant, turned him in to the FBI.³⁰ According to the affidavit, the plot to attack a recruiting station evolved from Martinez’s idea to get a rifle and shoot everyone in the station into a plan involving a remote detonated car bomb.³¹ The informant introduced Martinez to an undercover FBI agent posing as an Afghani man who would help Martinez with his plot and help him make a car bomb.³²

It does not appear that Martinez was trained or knowledgeable about explosives or any other violent or covert operations, and it does not appear that the undercover FBI agent provided him with any training.

Martinez chose the Catonsville, Maryland, military recruiting station as a target on his own, and was familiar with the station because he had gone there to try to join the military, according to the FBI.³³ As noted, he was adamant about having a military target. He had previously spoken about blowing up Andrews Air Force Base, but determined that it would be more effective to carry out small attacks and ambushes.³⁴ According to the FBI, the Catonsville attack was the first of many he planned on carrying out against the American military.³⁵

As is now common in FBI sting operations, the informant and the undercover FBI agent both gave Martinez many chances to back out of the plan,

²⁶ Calvert, “Baltimore.”

²⁷ Calvert, “Baltimore.”

²⁸ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

²⁹ Savage and Gately, “Maryland.”

³⁰ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

³¹ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

³² Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

³³ Perez, “FBI.”

³⁴ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

³⁵ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

ensuring him that they would understand if he did not want to proceed.³⁶ In one of these cases, Martinez replied, “I came to you about this, brother,” making it clear that Martinez was the leader of the plot and that he had no intention of giving it up.³⁷

He did express misgivings when an Oregon man was arrested as a result of an FBI undercover sting on November 27, 2010 for attempting to detonate a bomb at a Christmas tree lighting ceremony (Case 29). Martinez told the FBI informant that he was unsure about the true identity of his “Afghani brother,” the undercover FBI agent. At the suggestion of the FBI, the informant told Martinez that the “Afghani” had expressed his own doubts about Martinez and was thinking of canceling their operation. This subterfuge was successful, and Martinez was eager to show his “Afghani brother” that he was trustworthy.³⁸

In early December 2010, the undercover FBI agent provided Martinez with an SUV rigged with an inert explosive.³⁹ At this meeting, they discussed where to park the vehicle to cause the most damage and a plan to flee to Afghanistan after the bomb had been detonated.⁴⁰ There does not appear to have ever been talks of a suicide mission, and Martinez’s plan to flee and commit further attacks suggests he was not yet willing to die in the name of jihad. On the morning of Wednesday, December 8, 2010, Martinez met the informant and the undercover FBI agent at a parking lot near the targeted recruiting center and then drove the vehicle carrying the fake explosive device alone to the Catonville recruiting station.⁴¹ He was then picked up by the informant and they drove to a designated vantage point.⁴² Once the undercover FBI agent alerted them that soldiers were in the Catonville recruiting station, Martinez attempted to detonate the device, at which time he was placed under arrest.⁴³

6. Role of informants

Clearly, both the informant and the undercover FBI agent were absolutely vital to this case. The informant, about whom very little is known, was guided by the FBI to go along with Martinez’s plot and continue recording their communications.⁴⁴ This informant appears to have only been an acquaintance of Martinez’s on Facebook, and it is unclear how or if they knew each other prior to their online talks. The informant introduced Martinez to the undercover FBI agent posing as an Afghani brother who could help provide Martinez with a car bomb.⁴⁵ Along with recording crucial evidence and going on many surveillance missions with Martinez, it was the informant who picked him up after he planted the fake

³⁶ Savage and Gately, “Maryland.”

³⁷ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

³⁸ Perez, “FBI.”

³⁹ Savage and Gately, “Maryland.”

⁴⁰ Savage and Gately, “Maryland.”

⁴¹ United States District Court. District of Maryland. United States of America v. Antonio Martinez A/k/a Muhammad Hussain, December 8, 2010, 17.

⁴² U.S. v. Martinez, 18.

⁴³ U.S. v. Martinez, 18.

⁴⁴ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁴⁵ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

bomb in the recruiting station and who sat with him in the car as Martinez attempted to remote detonate the bomb.⁴⁶ It is unclear whether or not he was paid for his services. Nothing is known about his background or identity, but without him this case would not exist and Martinez would remain a dangerous threat.

It is very possible that Martinez could have obtained a gun and accomplished his shooting plan—after all he had handgun and theft charges on his criminal record.⁴⁷ The change in plan from a shooting to a bombing may have developed only after he thought he had enlisted the help of the “Afghani” bomb expert.

Neither the informant nor the undercover FBI agent could be said to have entrapped Martinez. While his defense attorneys have argued that he was not capable of completing the attack on his own,⁴⁸ Martinez developed the plot on his own and only came to the attention of the FBI because he was trying to recruit people to help him carry it out.⁴⁹ The government’s affidavit describes how the attack evolved in Martinez’s mind from a plan to just get a rifle and shoot everyone he could in the recruiting station to a more complicated remote detonation bomb plot.⁵⁰ Also, as is now routine in these FBI sting cases, in order to avoid calls of entrapment⁵¹ both the informant and the undercover agent asked him numerous times if he was sure he wanted to go through with the plan and told him they would understand if he did not.⁵² Each time, Martinez was adamant that he wanted to continue, even chiding them to remember that it was he who came to them about the attack, not the other way around.⁵³ Entrapment is a weak argument in this case.

7. Connections

It does not appear that Martinez ever had connections to al-Qaeda or any other terror network. He is a naturalized U.S. citizen from Nicaragua and also does not appear to have any direct connections with the Middle East. He attended two different mosques, and it is possible that he was influenced there, but if such influences exist, they were never made explicit. His Facebook posts clearly show reverence for Osama bin Laden and Anwar al-Awlaki, who he called his “beloved sheikh,” but while these men may have influenced him, Martinez did not have any direct connections with them or any of their terrorist networks.⁵⁴

The FBI press release for this case states that “there is no evidence that Mr. Martinez received direction or support from any other person.”⁵⁵ Martinez’s desire to attack the U.S. thus seems essentially self-motivated.

⁴⁶ U.S. v. Martinez.

⁴⁷ Calvert, “Baltimore.”

⁴⁸ Maria Glod, “Not Guilty Plea in Md. Bomb Case,” *Washington Post*, January 7, 2011.

⁴⁹ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁵⁰ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁵¹ Perez, “FBI.”

⁵² Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁵³ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁵⁴ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁵⁵ “FBI—Maryland Man Charged in Plot to Attack Armed Forces Recruiting Center”, *FBI—Homepage*, December 8, 2010

8. Relation to the Muslim community

According to his former coworkers, Martinez converted to Islam about a year prior to his arrest and just recently after he had been baptized as a Christian. He attended two mosques located in shopping strips in his hometown of Woodlawn, Maryland, the Faizah-e-Madina and then the Al Madina. Naeem Rafiq, a Pakistani man and local grocery store owner, said that Martinez had prayed with him two or three times a day at the Faizah-e-Madina Mosque, but that he had not seen him in six months because he had switched to the Al Madina mosque. Rafiq stated that “We don’t like these things in my country,” seemingly expressing his and the community’s disapproval of Martinez’s actions.⁵⁶

According to his former coworkers at the children’s clothing store, Martinez would bring a prayer rug into work and pray in the back room. When they asked why he converted, Martinez stated that he met some people and started reading the Quran. It is unclear who those people were and what the level of their influence was over his Islamic interpretations and actions. Martinez’s family was not Muslim, but it appears that his wife and her family shared his Islamic faith. While his wife was supposedly supportive of everything he wanted to do, his brother-in-law offered him a less violent, tempered interpretation of Islam in response to many of Martinez’s jihadist remarks on Facebook.⁵⁷ It thus seems that he did not have direct or indirect support from the Muslim community.

9. Depiction by the authorities

The day after Martinez’s arrest, the Justice Department released a statement expressing that he was never a threat and the plot he attempted to carry out was controlled by the FBI and never involved an actual bomb.⁵⁸ Government officials also “emphasized that Martinez came up with the idea and target for the plot, tried to recruit others and was given numerous chances by agents to back out.”⁵⁹

While Martinez was unlikely to be able to carry out the car bomb plot on his own, his original plan to just go into the recruiting station and start shooting was one he could have easily accomplished. His goal was to kill members of the American military, and he went so far on his own as to choose a target and attempt to recruit help.

It was important for the authorities to emphasize both the lack of actual danger and the clear absence of entrapment, but it was also very important that they take the chance to herald a victory for the war on terror that was truly a significant arrest. In this case, the FBI did arrest someone who was likely to commit a terrorist act if it had not intervened. The FBI press conference reflected this sentiment, with Special-Agent-in-Charge Richard A. McFeely stating “The danger posed by the defendant in this case was very real. The exceptional work of

⁵⁶ Calvert, “Baltimore.”

⁵⁷ Calvert, “Baltimore.”

⁵⁸ Perez, “FBI.”

⁵⁹ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) showed us Martinez was absolutely committed to carrying out an attack which would have cost lives.”⁶⁰

The attempted attack was accurately portrayed as not posing any danger, and Martinez was accurately portrayed as being a truly serious potential threat. Overall, the depiction of this case by authorities was accurate and responsible.

10. Coverage by the media

Like the depiction by the authorities, media coverage focused both on the lack of actual danger posed by the attempted attack and on the numerous reasons why it would be difficult for Martinez to argue entrapment. Each main article also touches on the more interesting facets of the case, such as the hesitation of Martinez after the arrest in the similar Oregon sting and the fact that he tried and failed four times on Facebook to enlist help with his attack.

Another theme that was commonly reported on was the increasing frequency of FBI terror stings happening around the end of 2010. In October, FBI agents posed as Islamic radicals and arrested Farooque Ahmed for plotting to bomb DC Metro stations (Case 28), and in November, FBI agents made the arrest in the Oregon sting (Case 29) that worried Martinez.⁶¹ Journalists reported on this new trend in the fight against terror that seemed to center on undercover operations and allowing plots to proceed to the point of a fake attack to avoid charges of entrapment.⁶² Finally, they extensively quoted Martinez’s Facebook page, as it was available for public viewing and provided an unfettered glimpse into his views and motivations.

Very few reports were given on Martinez’s background, and only the *Baltimore Sun* printed an extensive article that went beyond his self-reported history on Facebook.⁶³ The media, perhaps jaded by the multiple, seemingly non-threatening fake terror plots at that time, failed to truly capture how dangerous Martinez could have been had the FBI not intervened. Overall their reports were competent and responsible, but a perhaps a bit too non-alarmist.

11. Policing costs

The FBI and the Justice Department have not released costs of the investigation, and journalists have not reported specific or generic figures. The investigation began on October 8, 2010 when the informant contacted the FBI about Martinez’s postings on Facebook.⁶⁴ It ended on the morning of December 8, 2010, exactly two months later, when Martinez attempted to blow up the military recruiting center and was subsequently arrested.⁶⁵ A two-month long investigation is relatively short, and therefore probably relatively inexpensive. However, the investigation involved many different bodies at the local, state, and federal levels, including the Baltimore City and Baltimore County Police

⁶⁰ “FBI—Maryland Man Charged in Plot.”

⁶¹ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁶² Glod et al., “Md. Man.” Perez, “FBI.”

⁶³ Calvert, “Baltimore.”

⁶⁴ FBI Press Release, “FBI.”

⁶⁵ FBI Press Release, “FBI.”

Departments, the Maryland State Police, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, Air Force Recruitment Command, Air Force Office of Special Investigations, Army 902nd Military Intelligence Group, the U.S. Marshals, and several levels of the U.S. Justice Department.⁶⁶ Clearly many people were involved, and they likely spent a significant amount of time and energy on the case, which translates into cost.

It does not appear that the FBI directly paid Martinez, and it seems that they only provided him with minor transportation and, of course, the inert car bomb. The two key members of the investigation are the informant and the undercover FBI agent. It is unclear at present whether the informant was paid and whether the undercover agent received additional compensation. Significant direct costs of the case seem limited to the personnel costs involved with such an investigation.

The case is in the U.S. District Court in Baltimore, and because of Martinez's not guilty plea, will likely spend a significant amount of time working its way through the legal channels and therefore be relatively expensive. However, as of May 2011, there appear to have only been two brief hearings, and no trial date has been made public.

12. Relevance of the internet

The informant contacted the FBI based on communications with Martinez on the social networking website, Facebook, making the internet extremely relevant to this case.⁶⁷ Martinez attempted to recruit additional people on Facebook to help carry out his attack. He also used the social networking site to publicly post his jihadist views and violent intentions, writing things like "The sword is cummin the reign of oppression is about 2 cease inshallah"⁶⁸ and "Do you really want to spend your entire lives praying for longevity? WE were born in order to die"⁶⁹ and "Any 1 who opposes ALLAH and HIS Prophet PEACE.Be.upon.Him I hate you with all my heart."⁷⁰ This brought Martinez to the attention of the FBI and provided them with evidence that he was a serious threat. From his internet postings, the FBI enlisted the help of the informant and developed a sting operation. Finally, the FBI used the postings as evidence in their criminal complaint, directly quoting his comments.⁷¹ The internet provided crucial evidence of Martinez's dangerous intentions and without it he would have been unknown to the FBI. It was thus absolutely crucial to this case.

13. Are we safer?

Yes. Martinez clearly expressed his Islamist extremist views on his public Facebook page and made clear his intent to attack and kill military personnel.⁷² He attempted to recruit others, including the informant, to help him with such an

⁶⁶ FBI Press Release, "FBI."

⁶⁷ Glod et al., "Md. Man."

⁶⁸ Perez, "FBI."

⁶⁹ Calvert, "Baltimore."

⁷⁰ U.S. v. Martinez, 3

⁷¹ U.S. v. Martinez, 9-10

⁷² FBI Press Release, "FBI."

attack.⁷³ All of this was done before the FBI was even alerted about the danger Martinez posed.

Had the informant not come forward, Martinez could have committed a terrorist attack. While it may not have been as sophisticated as the remote detonation plan he developed with the help of the undercover agent, it could have been just as deadly. Because he was developing his plans well before FBI involvement, an entrapment argument in this case is quite weak. While Antonio Martinez seemed to be a troubled youth who fell into an extreme religious ideology, this does not negate his dangerousness. The United States is, without a doubt, safer with him in custody.

14. Conclusions

In many ways, Antonio Martinez fits the stereotype of a would-be terrorist. He is a young man with a troubled past, and when he discovered Islam he adopted a very violent interpretation of jihad. His motivations clearly stem from Islamist extremist ideology, and he was intent on killing Americans. He held particular disdain for the American military because of his belief that U.S. military action in the Middle East has caused destruction and the killing of his Muslim brothers. While Martinez is not of Middle Eastern descent like the majority of would-be Islamist terrorists, he is a Latino and this minority status may have made him particularly sympathetic to the plight of Muslims in the U.S. and contributed to his frustrations with America.

The sequence of events in this case is also very similar to other recent cases. The FBI has frequently first determined that the suspect is a legitimate threat, then used undercover agents to monitor and secretly to befriend the suspect, and then provided the means to actually carry out a fake attack that the suspect believes to be real.⁷⁴ While doing this, the agents take particular care to offer suspects the chance to back out and change their mind, which protects against claims of entrapment.⁷⁵ Just months prior to this case, FBI agents in Oregon arrested a young man in a sting operation for attempting to detonate a bomb at a Christmas tree lighting (Case 29), and agents in Northern Virginia arrested another man in a sting for plotting to bomb the DC Metro (Case 28).⁷⁶ Undercover plots, like the one in this case, are frequently allowed to proceed to the point of an attack—a strategy that has worked well for the FBI against claims of entrapment.⁷⁷ The most significant difference between Martinez and the similar sting cases is that Martinez already had a practical plan in motion before FBI involvement—he had attempted to recruit individuals to help him, had chosen a target, and probably could have successfully executed a shooting terror attack.

All evidence suggests that Martinez acted alone and was not part of a terror network.⁷⁸ He did, however, try to build such a group by recruiting his

⁷³ FBI Press Release, “FBI.”

⁷⁴ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁷⁵ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁷⁶ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁷⁷ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁷⁸ FBI Press Release, “FBI.”

friends, and he may have derived some satisfaction by forming the conspiratorial threesome consisting of himself, the informant, and the undercover FBI agent. But he does not appear to have been motivated by the social solidarity of a terrorist network. Martinez makes it abundantly clear that he sought to attack the U.S. military because he believes it his duty as a Muslim to wage jihad, and he wishes to do so by enacting revenge on those he believes have pillaged the Middle East and killed his Muslim brothers. Religious ideology and political payback motivate Martinez, not social connections.

In 2009, the Department of Homeland Security suggested that most terrorist threats in the post-9/11 era are likely to be smaller and focused on less protected targets.⁷⁹ Similarly, expert Brian Jenkins argues that the threat America is most likely to face today are “tiny conspiracies, lone gunmen, one-off attacks rather than sustained terrorist campaigns.”⁸⁰ Martinez’s plans seem to fit these descriptions. While he spoke at times of large attacks like blowing up Andrews Air Force Base with a truck of gasoline, he also often spoke of smaller, more realistic attacks and ambushes that he believed would be more effective.⁸¹ The target that he eventually chose was a suburban Armed Forces recruiting center in the residential Baltimore suburb of Catonville, Maryland, a place that he had visited before when he had considered joining the Army.⁸² Before the possibility of a remotely detonated car bomb was made possible by the undercover FBI agent, Martinez spoke of a much simpler plan that involved just going into the recruiting station and shooting everyone.⁸³ While Martinez’s goal was to kill members of the military rather than go after critical infrastructure and key resources, as suggested by the Department of Homeland Security, he clearly showed an understanding of his capabilities and proved that he understood the effectiveness of small, targeted attacks that can be simple yet deadly.

Antonio Martinez was an Islamist extremist who would have posed serious danger to the U.S. had the FBI not intervened. His threat of actual danger is what separates this case from several similar FBI undercover operations that also took place around this time period. Martinez had a plan to attack a particular military recruiting station and considered doing so by simply going in and shooting everyone inside, an action that would likely have been easy for him to carry out and effective to service his goal to kill members of the U.S. military. He attempted to recruit others to assist him even before FBI involvement. Entrapment is a question that appears frequently in these undercover FBI stings involving immature, frustrated, and irrational young men. While Martinez may have been all of those things, he was also a serious threat with a dangerous religious ideology. In this case, there is no doubt that the FBI prevented terrorist violence.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Department of Homeland Security, *National Infrastructure Protection Plan: Partnering to enhance protection and resiliency*. Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2009.

⁸⁰ Brian M. Jenkins, *Would-be Warriors : Incidents of Jihadist Terrorist Radicalization in the United States since September 11, 2001*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010, 13.

⁸¹ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”

⁸² U.S. v. Martinez, 4

⁸³ U.S. v. Martinez, 10

⁸⁴ Glod et al., “Md. Man.”