

# Online Jihadi Instructional Content: The Role of Magazines

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**Abstract.** This chapter focuses on the instructional content, both text and images, published in 26 issues of three jihadi magazines: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's *Inspire*, *Inspire*'s forerunner *Jihad Recollections*, and Somali Al-Shabab's *Gaidi M'taani*. Instruction was found to be a core component of *Inspire* as distinct from the varying types and levels of instruction appearing in *Jihad Recollections* and *Gaidi M'taani*. Noticeable too was that the text and images composing bomb-making instructional guides were not only the commonest, but also the most detailed types of guides contained in *Inspire*, with both a high number of images and lengthy supporting text. A clear finding is thus that the purpose of AQAP's *Inspire* was not just to inspire readers, in the sense of infusing them with some thought or feeling, but also to supply them with instructions on how these thoughts or feelings could be violently actuated.

**Keywords.** Instructions, bomb-making, AQAP, al-Shabab.

## 1. Introduction

It has become common for terrorist organisations to publish magazines, often in multiple languages, for online circulation. Perhaps the most well-known of these is the English language version of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) *Inspire*, which has received wide media coverage and was described by prominent terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman as the “*Vanity Fair* of jihadi publications” [1]. The bomb-making instructions included in the latter received the most such attention, but this is not the only type of instruction contained in *Inspire* or any jihadi magazine. This chapter therefore focuses on the instructional content, both text and images, published in the available issues of three jihadi magazines: AQAP's *Inspire*, *Inspire*'s forerunner *Jihad Recollections*, and Somali Al-Shabab's *Gaidi M'taani*, in order to determine the prevalence of such instruction, the nature of these, and their potential impacts. The chapter is divided into seven sections. Section two discusses the scholarly literature on jihadi online magazines, particularly arguments around the utility or otherwise of their instructional content. The third section describes our methodology. Section four supplies a description and analysis of the text-based portions of the guides, identifying 12 discrete categories or types of content, five of which are then analysed in more

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detail. The images accompanying the text are described and analysed in section five. Section six considers the ‘real world’ impacts of the guides, particularly those contained in *Inspire*. A clear finding, addressed in our Conclusion, is that the purpose of AQAP’s *Inspire* was not just to inspire readers, in the sense of infusing them with some thought or feeling, but also to supply them with instructions on how these thoughts or feelings could be violently actuated. To that end, instruction was found to be a core component of *Inspire* as distinct from the varying types and levels of instruction appearing in *Jihad Recollections* and *Gaidi M’taani*.

## 2. Literature review

Early research on the content and purposes of terrorist websites by Tsfaty and Weimann [2] and Conway [3] found that groups’ violent activism was played down and while some sites sought to mobilise supporters for non-violent action, no direct calls to violence were found. It is unsurprising then that almost no instructional material of any type was supplied, excepting of an ideological sort, but certainly no instructions regarding, for example, attack methods or targets were posted. Circulation of material of the latter type has a long history among extremists and terrorists in ‘real world’ settings however. Standalone training or instructional manuals, such as *The Mini-manual of the Urban Guerrilla* (1969), *The Anarchist Cookbook* (1971), and *Military Studies in the Jihad Against the Tyrants* or the so-called ‘al-Qaeda Manual’ (n.d.) were produced and in circulation long prior to widespread Internet access. The instructional guides described and analysed in this chapter therefore mark an interesting departure in at least two respects: first, they are not standalone manuals or guides, but instead integrated into magazines that treat a wide range of other topics too; and, second, the magazines, including the guides, are produced first-and-foremost for online ‘publication’ and circulation (i.e. it is possible to print them out, if one wishes, but they are not print publications *per se*, despite their traditional ‘magazine’ formatting).

Jihadi online magazines are generating a growing literature, with AQAP’s *Inspire* probably having received the most attention to-date, and certainly of those analysed in this chapter [1, 4, 5, 6]. Comparative research, similar to that described and reported upon herein, is also increasing in volume [7, 8]. One of the more prominent discussions in this literature is precisely the utility of online jihadi magazines in effecting attacks by lone actor terrorists. The purpose of *Inspire* is clearly to inspire readers to, at a minimum, buy into jihadi ideology and for some readers, ultimately, to be inspired to carry out terrorist attacks. Numerous academic authors endorse a role for online magazines in what was referred to in *Inspire* as ‘open source jihad’ (Iss. 1 and 2). Others are sceptical of their utility, however.

Those voicing scepticism of a role for online instructional guides generally point out that certain terrorist skills, particularly bomb-making, can only be reliably developed through hands-on training [9]. The observation by a counter terrorism official from the London Metropolitan Police that “the practical knowledge of actually putting together bombs often goes beyond the Internet” is typical [9]. The unreliable nature of much of the instructional information available online is also frequently cited. Bomb-making ‘recipes,’ in particular, are said to contain a lot of incorrect information [10]. This led Stenersen to conclude that the Internet more closely resembled a “pre-school of jihad rather than a university” [10] and Kenney to argue that bomb-making guides are “more aspirational than operational” [9]. Those arguing for a role for online

instructions in the perpetration of ‘real world’ terrorism generally, on the other hand, point to instances of plots and attacks in which online guides have been utilised.

### 3. Methodology

Our dataset was composed of a total of 26 issues of three jihadi magazines as follows: the 15 issues of *Inspire* published by AQAP between 2010 and Spring 2016 (but not any of the three so-called ‘*Inspire Guides*’ or ‘special issues’ published in the wake of the June 2016 Orlando shooting, July 2016 Nice attack, and September 2016 arrests in France of a number of female jihadi plotters respectively); all four issues of *Jihad Recollections* produced by AQAP in 2009; and the seven issues of Al-Shabab’s *Gaidi M’tanni* published between 2012 and 2015 (see Table 1). Each individual issue was analysed to determine whether it contained instructional information in the form of text and/or images, with each individual package of such information referred to herein as an ‘instructional guide.’ Once all 43 such guides had been identified, they were analysed further and categorised according to their types. The images within each guide were then analysed and categorised as either instructional or non-instructional. Instructional images were those that illustrated some aspect of the instructional text (e.g. a picture of an iPhone screen in a technology guide focused on the use of iPhones). Non-instructional images were those unrelated to the instructional text, such as a landscape image in a bomb-making guide.

### 4. Instructional guides: Text

Instructional guides are generally a combination of text and images. The focus in this section is on the textual content of the guides. Table 1 shows that *Inspire* had the highest number of instructional guides at 34, with *Jihad Recollections* having a significantly lower number at seven, and *Gaidi M’tanni* containing just two guides.

**Table 1.** Overview of Magazine Data

Magazine	Issue Number	Publication Date	Number of Pages	Number of Instructional Guides
<i>Inspire</i>	1	Summer 2010	63	2
	2	Autumn 2010	70	3
	3	Nov - 2010	23	1
	4	Winter 2010	67	4
	5	Spring 2011	70	1
	6	Summer 2011	61	2
	7	Autumn 2011	38	---
	8	Autumn 2011	63	3
	9	Winter 2012	62	3
	10	Spring 2013	62	3
	11	Spring 2013	39	---
	12	Spring 2014	72	1
	13	Winter 2014	112	4
	14	Summer 2015	88	3

	15	Spring 2016	90	4
<b>Totals</b>	N/A	N/A	980	34
<i>Jihad Recollections</i>	1	April 2009	70	2
	2	May 2009	73	4
	3	August 2009	82	1
	4	September 2009	49	---
<b>Totals</b>	N/A	N/A	274	7
<i>Gaidi M'tami</i>	1	Feb./Mar. 2012	15	---
	2	May/Jun. 2012	28	---
	3	Feb./Mar. 2013	42	2
	4	Oct./Nov. 2013	23	---
	5	Nov./Dec. 2014	16	---
	6	Dec./Jan. 2014	30	---
	7	Feb./Mar. 2015	34	---
<b>Totals</b>	N/A	N/A	188	2
<b>Overall Totals</b>	<b>26</b>	-----	<b>1,442</b>	<b>43</b>

The three magazines published 43 instructional guides in total, which were analysed and sorted into twelve distinct categories: bomb-making, information technology, enemy targeting, gun training, exercise, car destruction, military tactics, building destruction, security, travel, prosecution avoidance, and Q&A. Table 2 shows *Inspire* had the highest number of instructional guides of the three magazines with a total of 34, representing 75% of all the instructional guides. Clearly AQAP believes instructional content is an important component of their online magazines and a potentially useful resource for, especially, potential lone actor terrorists. Not only does *Inspire* have the greatest number of instructional guides, but it has the largest amount of variation in terms of types of guides too. Each of the five most common guide types identified in Table 2 is analysed below.

**Table 2.** Types of Guide by Magazine

	Bomb-making	Information technology	Enemy targeting	Gun training	Exercise	Car destruction	Military tactics	Building destruction	Security	Travel	Prosecution avoidance	Q & A	Total
<i>Inspire</i>	12	4	5	4	---	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	34
<i>Jihad Recollections</i>	---	2	---	---	4	---	1	---	---	---	---	---	7
<i>Gaidi M'taani</i>	1	1	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>43</b>

#### 4.1 Bomb-making

Table 2 shows that 13, or 30%, of all the instructional guides analysed were bomb-making guides. Twelve of these appeared in *Inspire* and one in *Gaidi M'taani*. In fact, bomb-making guides were the most popular form of instructional guide within *Inspire* overall. What explains the popularity of bomb-making instructions? Perhaps the realisation that bombings, while both attention-getting and having the potential for high

casualties, are not as straightforward as some other types of attacks (e.g. gun and/or vehicle attacks) and so potential lone bombers will need guidance, especially as regards manufacturing the device.

The language used in the instructional guides downplays the complexity of some of the activities readers are encouraged to undertake, particularly bomb-making. Instructions are pitched very much at beginners. In issue six of *Inspire*, for example, it is pointed out that:

Hydrogen peroxide...is sold over the counter in pharmacies and drug stores as an antiseptic for wounds.  $H_2O_2$  is also used as a bleach for hair and is thus found in every hair salon and beauty shop. It is available over the counter in beauty shops and hardware stores. Acetone is also widely available in hardware stores. In the US for example, it could be found at places such as Home Depot, Sears and Wal-Mart. Acetone is also available at paint shops since it is an important ingredient in many paints (p.41)

Listing places where a bomb's components or 'ingredients' can be purchased emphasises the ease of making a bomb as, although bomb-making is illegal, all of its 'ingredients' are essentially legal. It thus seems to be suggesting the likelihood of detection for at least purchasing these items is negligible. Elsewhere similar ingredients are described as being "easily disposed of if the enemy searches your home" (Iss. 1, p.33). This emphasis on simplicity is reiterated on page 37 of the same issue, where it is stated that "we have chosen for you the timed circuit as it is simple."

An anomalous bomb-making guide is 'Making the Hidden Bomb' contained in issue 13 of *Inspire* (pp.71-107). It is a very lengthy guide, extending to 15 pages, in comparison to the others, which average 2.5 pages per guide. This guide thus contains much greater detail in comparison to other guides. There are many more stages in the bomb-making process identified, each of which is detailed in greater length than otherwise. All of the other, shorter, bomb-making instructions are narrowed to the preparation process. However, this lengthier guide is split into seventeen stages or sections, illustrating the components, how to mix the materials, preparation, how to make the detonator, preparation of the detonator, instructions relating to the fuse and the explosion, covering the bomb, and the experimenting stage. It can be assumed from this new level of detail that AQAP were trying to make the instructions easier to follow. It could be hypothesised further that AQAP were seeking for their supporters to conduct bigger and 'better' attacks and were therefore providing more information in an effort to make this possible.

#### 4.2 Information technology use and security

Table 2 shows that seven, or just over 16%, of all the instructional guides identified were information technology guides, which make these the second most popular type of instruction after bomb-making guides. In fact, technology guides are the only type of guides that appear in all three of the magazines, with four appearing in *Inspire*, two in *Jihad Recollections*, and one in *Gaidi M'taani*.

Although the activities described in the technology guides are lawful, they generally have some terrorist purpose. The information technology guide included in issue two of *Jihad Recollections* is explained as part of the "relentless efforts of the media jihadi's in getting the word out" (p.55). Surveillance and infiltration, including of online spaces [11], is a pre-occupation of all types of violent extremists, which

explains the warning in issue three of *Gaidi M'taani* regarding how some 'Mujahideen' were tracked by intelligence agencies by careless use of mobile devices and thus guidance is supplied on simple security measures (e.g. "NEVER USE the same phone/sim-card for two or more different purposes") (p.31). Similar concerns no doubt animate the inclusion in *Inspire* of guides on how to send and receive encrypted messages (Iss. 1, pp.41-44) and how to encrypt and decrypt computer files (Iss. 2, pp.58-59).

Anomalous in this respect perhaps is 'Eight Great Previews of iPhone 3.0' (*Jihadi Recollections*, Iss.2, pp.27-28), which has no obvious or stated terrorist purpose. This technology guide appears to be simply a lawful guide to the iPhone 3G—launched around one month after the May 2009 publication of issue two of *Jihadi Recollections*—with information regarding updates to the phone's cut, copy, and paste functions; spotlight; keyboard; multimedia messaging; Safari browser; maps; push notifications; and, voice communication. It is difficult to determine the reasons for inclusion of such mundane information in the magazine, particularly given it can be found so easily online, has no distinct terrorist purpose, and accessing it would not therefore arouse any suspicion. Having said this, the importance for jihadis of keeping up-to-date with technology may be reason enough for inclusion of the updated iPhone information as was underlined in the technology guide entitled 'Revisiting the Global Jihad Media Effect' (pp.55-58) in issue two of *Jihad Recollections*: "the lesson learned from this is educating oneself on the constants and variables of America's strategy by staying updated".

#### 4.3 Target choice

While gun training was initially the third most common type of guide found in *Inspire*, it was supplanted in 2015 – 2016 by guides instructing readers on how to target and attack enemies of the 'mujahidin.' These guides range from general instructions on the priority of enemies and Jihadi military organisation to encouraging readers to attack specific Western economic figures in order to bring economic ruin upon the West. The guide "Convoy of Martyrs", in *Inspire's* issue 9 (pp.28-29), for example, lists economic targets as the second most important target after "personalities who are at war with Islam and Muslims." The guide then provides a qualifying list of which nationalities are a priority: "Targets according to priority: American targets – Israeli targets – French targets – British targets – Apostate regimes targets in the Muslims' lands" (p.28).

As already mentioned, guides addressing target choice supplanted those on gun training with the release of issues 14 and 15 of *Inspire*. The three guides appearing in these issues focused on assassinations, including a step-by-step guide on planning and executing an assassination (Iss. 14, pp. 64-71). The latter holds the reader's hand through specifying a target, collecting information, generating a plan, preparing for the operation, and executing the attack. The section of the guide on specifying a target again prioritises the targeting of America's economy, stating "our war with America will be prioritized by targeting its economy; and we will select targets by prioritizing economic personalities" (p.66). The section ends by linking to another article in the magazine on what targets would be the most impactful. The article 'Assassinations: Field Tactics' (Iss. 14, pp. 82-87) comprises a list of targets with a profile photo, name, and explanatory blurb. The list is divided into two categories: 'Economic Personalities' and 'Wealthy Entrepreneurs and Company Owners.' The two showcased economic

personalities are former president of the US Federal Reserve Bank Ben Shalom Bernanke (misspelled as “Bernanek”) and American economist Robert James Shiller. The other section is much larger and identified wealthy individuals ranging from Microsoft’s Bill Gates to the Koch brothers and former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Two somewhat anomalous pieces of advice regarding targeting are also worth mentioning here as they are each contained in instructional guides. In issue nine of *Inspire*, it is observed that “one should avoid targeting places of worship for any religion or faith, regardless whether they are Christian, Jewish, or other” (p.24). In the same issue, it is also requested that “the lands of Muslims are not targeted at all even if their hireling ruling regimes are participating and are in alliance against the Muslims” (p.35). Unwillingness on the part of AQAP to target fellow Muslims is perhaps understandable, but their warning against targeting other faiths’ places of worship strikes us as somewhat peculiar although both may be efforts at underlining their religiosity in the face of criticisms such as that they are not ‘true’ Muslims.

#### 4.4. Gun training and exercising

Like the instructions on enemy targeting, gun training instructions appear only in *Inspire* albeit far less frequently (i.e. Issues four, six and eight) than bomb-making instructions. *Inspire* nonetheless explains the correct use of guns in some detail. In issue six, for example, the advice is to “a. Point your gun at the target by resting the butt stock of the rifle on your right shoulder (if you’re a righty of course); b. Lean your back forward slightly; c. Your feet should form a somewhat L-formation but a 45 degree angle. The back foot is sticking out while the front is pointing at the target; d. Bend the knees slightly” (p.37). *Jihad Recollections*, on the other hand, is the only magazine in our dataset to contain exercise guides.

Physical exercise is something that can undoubtedly be taught online and through magazines; fitness magazines are widely available in shops, allowing people to learn how to keep fit in the comfort of their own homes. The exercises described in *Jihad Recollections* are similar to those contained in the pages of the latter. An example contained in issue one is the correct way to do V-sits: “you lift up your legs from a sitting position, touch your toes, and then bring your legs down without touching the ground. This process should be repeated numerous times” (p.24). This focus on exercise allows us to contend that the core purpose of *Jihad Recollections* was general physical preparation for jihad rather than operational instruction: “the pure intentions [*sic*] is to train as hard as possible in order to damage the enemies of Allah as much as possible” (Iss. 1, p.22).

## 5. Instructional Guides: Images

The magazines are quite image-heavy. Table 3 shows that *Inspire* had the highest total number of images at 2,018. Considerably more issues of *Inspire* were published and therefore analysed compared to the other magazines however. Averaging the number of images per issue shows that whilst *Inspire* does indeed have the highest number of images at 133.9 per issue, this is not much higher than *Jihad Recollections* at 127.5. *Gaidi Mtanni*’s level of images appears markedly lower, averaging just 55.1 images per

issue, but is in fact similar to *Jihad Recollections* when its fewer pages per issue (Table 1) are taken into account.

**Table 3.** Number of images per issue

Issue Number	<i>Inspire</i>	<i>Jihad Recollections</i>	<i>Gaidi M'tanni</i>
1	208	113	32
2	154	112	34
3	53	128	72
4	146	157	82
5	130	---	32
6	137	---	74
7	45	---	60
8	167	---	---
9	111	---	---
10	136	---	---
11	67	---	---
12	84	---	---
13	281	---	---
14	144	---	---
15	146	---	---
<b>Average No. Images per Issue</b>	133.9	127.5	55.1
<b>Totals</b>	2,018	510	386
<b>Overall Total</b>	2,914		

*Inspire* was the magazine with the greatest fluctuation in the number of images per issue, with a substantial drop in the number of images within issues three, seven, eleven and twelve, particularly when compared with issues one, eight, and thirteen. Issue 13, which appeared in December 2014, had a particularly high number of images, with a striking number of these (143/281 – just over 50%) contained within the instructional guides. Also worth noting is that *Inspire* includes many small pictures on each page. There are 21 small images appearing on page 66 of issue one, for example, and again 18 small images across a double page spread on pages 43-44 of Issue six. This is a feature of all issues of *Inspire*.

In terms of the types of images appearing in the magazines, those showing individual jihadis and groups of jihadis were the most overwhelmingly common, with 1,265 such images appearing in total across all issues of all magazines. The next most popular image-type was those showing enemies, but of which there were considerably fewer at just 593 in total. Instructional guide images were the third most common type of image, with 457 appearing in total. Other image categories included landscape (227), civilians (188), corpses (156), buildings and landmarks (147), vehicles (138), flags



(129), and weaponry (125). The emphasis in this chapter is on instructional guides, the focus of the next section is therefore on the images found in these.

### 5.1 Instructional images

As already stated, images accompanying instructional text, which together compose our instructional guides, were the third most common type of images contained in the magazines overall. It is useful to disaggregate this category of images further however, into instructional and non-instructional images. For our purposes here, instructional images are those that show readers exactly what to do and/or actually demonstrate some action that has to be performed. For example, images that show the ingredients needed to build a bomb or ‘print screen’ images showing how to download certain software tools. Non-instructional images are those that do not actually contribute anything useful to a guide in practical terms, but have been included for aesthetic or design reasons; for example, an image of a flag or a nature image in a guide supplying instructions about assassination. Table 4 shows the breakdown of instructional versus non-instructional images within the instructional guides in *Inspire*, *Jihad Recollections* and *Gaidi M’taani*.

**Table 4.** Nature of Images Appearing in Instructional Guides

	<b>Instructional</b>	<b>Non-instructional</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Inspire</i>	441 (75.25%)	145 (24.74%)	<b>586 (94.51%)</b>
<i>Jihad Recollections</i>	13 (43.33%)	17 (56.66%)	<b>30 (4.83%)</b>
<i>Gaidi M’taani</i>	3 (75.00%)	1 (25.00%)	<b>4 (0.64%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>457 (73.71%)</b>	<b>163 (26.29%)</b>	<b>620</b>

It is clear from the table that *Inspire* is heavily reliant on instructional images within its guides, totalling 75.25% of all the images within these guides. Heavy use of images is not always necessary for guides to be understandable however. Well over half of the images (56.66%) in *Jihad Recollections’* instructional guides are non-instructional, for example. *Jihad Recollections* does, on the other hand, contain quite different types of guides to *Inspire* and the legal activity that is contained within the former’s guides may not require detailed instruction in order to be successfully carried out. Text-based instructions about exercising are almost certainly more easily followed than text-based instructions on complex bomb-making tasks, for example. The likelihood of successfully completing the latter can surely only be increased by the provision of multiple images to aid the reader to fully understand the process. And, indeed, *Inspire’s* bomb-making guides contain the most plentiful images, which at 378 represent over 82% of all the instructional images in our dataset and average just under 32 images per guide (as compared to, for example, gun training guides, which average 10 images).

## 6. Discussion

Some scholars, as mentioned earlier, believe online instructional guides have negligible ‘real world’ impacts whilst others argue the contrary. What does analysis of the instructional guides tell us? What can be discerned from analysis of terrorist plots and

attacks? Is there any apparent correlation between the publication of these guides and 'real world' terrorist incidents?

There are many lines and passages throughout *Inspire*, in particular, which make explicit the operational purposes of its instructional guides. In issue one, it is stated "my Muslim brother: we are conveying to you our military training right into your kitchen to relieve you of the difficulty of traveling to us" (p.33), recognising that travel to training camps became increasingly difficult post-9/11 and that the creation of 'lone actors' in the comfort of their own home is feasible in our highly Internet-connected world. It is explained in issue two of *Inspire* that "we give our readers suggestions on how to wage their individual jihad" (p.54). This is followed-up in issue 12 with the assertion that "*Inspire Magazine's* goal is to empower Muslim youth. And what is empowerment without being strong, powerful and intelligent? In this section, we give you strength, power and intelligence. Believe me, using car bombs gives you all that" (p.33). The purpose of *Inspire* is therefore indicated to be to strengthen Muslim youth through providing them actionable operational knowledge via instructional content.

AQAP certainly also believes that *Inspire* has been an inspiration, in the sense of instructional content contained within it having been acted upon by readers. It is claimed in issue 11 with respect to the 2013 Boston bombing that "Yes, the brothers have been inspired by *Inspire*. This is not only because *Inspire* offers bomb recipes, but also because of the contents of the magazine as a whole" (p.19). Most analysts and commentators agree that the instructional guide entitled 'How to Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom' (Iss. 1, pp. 33-40) was the basis of the devices used in Boston. The role of *Inspire* in the Boston bombing is reiterated in issue 12 where another author opines:

As the British journalist, Iona Craig, and the American journalist, Jeremy Scahill, were discussing ways of spreading the reality of Obama's orders that brought about my imprisonment in a solitary cell for three years, there were two brothers in the historic city of Boston preparing bombs in the kitchen of their mom. They used instructions from the English magazine, *Inspire*. They had the same motives and reasons: adherence to the bond of Imān and Islamic brotherhood that exists among Muslims through supporting each other against an enemy assaulting them, their land and wealth and killing their women and children in different parts of the world (p.16)

The Boston attack is not the only incident that is claimed in *Inspire* to have been motivated by it. In the same article as above, entitled 'City Wolves', the author lauds José Pimentel—whom he mistakenly names as "José Mante":

...a New Yorker at the spring of his youth, 27, prepared three bombs in the kitchen of his mom. He followed instructions from a hand bomb making manual which turn rudimentary materials into high explosive ones. The manual could cause thousands of deaths and injuries. It was published by an English magazine produced by a Muslim Ummah's youth vanguard supervised by Sheikh Anwar Al-'Awlaki [*sic*] and spread through the internet (p.30)

With regard to the January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris in which 12 people were killed, *Inspire* had this to say in issue 14:

They achieved this by placing the targeted persons on a wanted list, distributed to Lone Mujahideen. This had no direct connection with the Jihadi Organization except by

means of inspiring and guiding Lone Mujahideen. *Inspire* magazine was used as the medium to distribute this list. One of the wanted criminals on the list was Stéphane Charbonnier (p.40)

Stéphane ‘Charb’ Charbonnier was a cartoonist, columnist, and the editor of the satirical weekly; the author is thus claiming that the attack target choice was influenced by *Inspire*.

*Inspire*’s authors are not alone in believing that the magazine’s content has had ‘real world’ impacts. In 2014, the UK’s MI5 stated that *Inspire* was “read by those involved in at last seven out of the ten attacks planned within the UK since its first issue [in 2010]” and had “significantly enhanced the capability of individuals in four of these ten attack plots” [12]. More recently, the US Department of Justice implicated *Inspire* in the December 2015 San Bernardino attack [13], whilst in August 2012 a former US soldier, Naser Jason Abdo, was sentenced to life imprisonment for possession of the *Inspire* article ‘How to Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom’ along with explosive device components [14].

## 7. Conclusion

Just two findings held constant across our comparison of the three magazines. The first of these was not with regard to instructions, but the most popular category of image, which was overwhelmingly that of individual or groups of jihadis [15]. The only finding regarding instructional content that held constant was the appearance of technology guides in select issues of all three magazines. Our study of the instructions contained in the magazines show these vary significantly in all other respects, including by group and over time. Al-Shabab’s magazine, *Gaidi M’taani*, contained very little instruction versus that contained in AQAP’s magazines, for example; however, AQAP’s earlier magazine, *Jihad Recollections*, differs in the type of instruction contained in it versus that contained in their follow-up publication, *Inspire*.

Despite the assertion in *Inspire* that the magazine is inspirational not only because it “offers bomb recipes, but also because of the contents of the magazine as a whole” (Iss.11, p.19), it is noticeable that the text and images composing bomb-making instructional guides are not only the commonest, but also the most detailed types of guides contained in the magazine, with both a high number of images and lengthy supporting text. Having said this, an aspect of “the magazine as a whole” that should not be obscured by our focus on instruction herein is the religious language and motives emphasised in all of the magazines, including liberally throughout their instructional content. The very first issue of *Inspire* explains, for example, that to “Put your trust in Allah and pray for the success of your operation...is the most important rule” (Iss.1, p.40).

Explanations for *Inspire*’s ‘popularity’, among not just jihadis, but also the Western media, include its ‘slick’ appearance, use of idiomatic English, targeting of UK and US youth, multiple volumes, and the notoriety of some of its contributors (e.g. Samir Khan, Anwar al-Awlaki). The nature of its instructional content also distinguishes it, however. *Inspire* places particular importance on equipping its readers with the skills needed to make bombs. Bomb-making instructions are contained in over 50% of all issues of *Inspire* (i.e. issues 1, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, and 15), appearing more frequently in the later issues. This contrasts with *Jihad Recollections*, which included

no bomb-making instruction. So whilst AQAP's *Jihad Recollections* includes the second highest number of instructional guides overall, these were concerned largely with legal activities, with exercise guides and the use of technology together comprising almost 80% of the total guidance supplied. The purposes of *Inspire* are much more explicitly terrorism-related than those of *Gaidi M'taani*, but also of its own precursor publication *Jihad Recollections*, in other words.

In terms of next steps, we suggest a much larger scale comparative study or studies of jihadi magazines' instructional content. This could include treatment of a larger range of magazines, including so-called 'Islamic State's (IS) *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, the Taliban's *Azan*, etc.; of magazines prepared for non-English language audiences (e.g. IS' French-language publication, *Dar al-Islam* and/or its Turkish-language magazine, *Constantinople*); and new issues and special issues of the magazines treated herein. This would be useful in determining, at a minimum, similarities and differences in instructional emphasis amongst groups (e.g. AQAP vs. al-Shabab vs. IS vs. Taliban); identifying strategic, operational, and tactical innovations and tracing their emergence over time; and potentially also, by dating the latter, more robustly evidencing links between these and subsequent 'real world' activity.

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