Religion News Blog

religionnewsblog.com

News about religious cults, sects, alternative religions and related issues

Home
Archives
Categories
News Tracker
About RNB
RNB Shop
Link to RNB
Free Syndication
Free Ticker
Free Toolbar
RNB @ Desktop
Headlines By Email
Apologetics Index

Search:

Exact Match
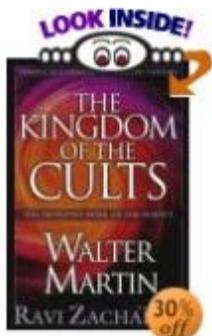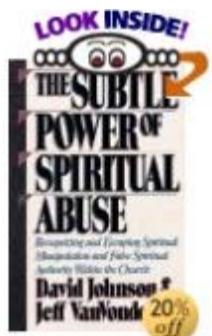
[Islam] Journal explores suicide bomber profile

Item **7241** • Posted: Thu, May. 13 2004 • Weblogged by ReligionNewsBlog.com
Permalink to this article   (Right-click link -> Copy Link Location)

SAVE THIS   EMAIL THIS   PRINT THIS
MOST POPULAR

AFP (France), May 13, 2004
http://afr.com/

Suicide bombers who have sown mayhem from Israel to Iraq and from Chechnya to Sri Lanka are usually far from being the madmen, religious fanatics or impoverished misfits they are often portrayed as, *New Scientist* says.

The British science weekly says that experts who have studied the psychological profiles and backgrounds of suicide bombers find these assailants are often secular, well-educated individuals.

Many of them are born to prosperous families and take a rational decision about the path they chose, says a report in this Saturday's issue.

"What this amounts to is in many ways more alarming than the

Islam / Islamism

Islamism is a totalitarian ideology adhered to by Muslim extremists (e.g. the Taliban, Wahhabis, Hamas and Osama bin Laden). It is considered to be a distortion of Islam. Many Islamists engage in terrorism in pursuit of their goals.

Adherents of Islam are called "Muslims." The term "Arab" describes an ethnic or cultural identity. Not all Arabs are Muslims, and not all Muslims are Arabs. The terms are not interchangeable.

Understanding Islamic Terrorism: Muhammad, Islam and Terrorism
Read up on Islam
Read up on Islamism

Research resources on islam

Research resources on islamism
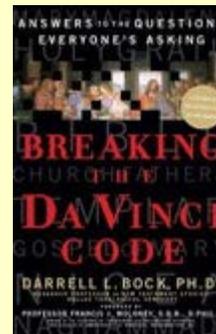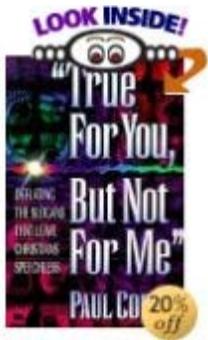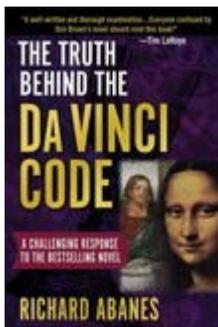
ubiquitous misperception of the suicide bomber as fanatical," New Scientist says. "It means that in the right circumstances, anyone could be one."

A study of Hamas and Palestinian suicide attackers from the 1980s to 2003 by Claude Berrebi, an economist at Princeton University, found that only 13 per cent of them came from a poor background, compared with 32 per cent of the Palestinian population in general.

In addition, more than half the suicide bombers had entered further education, compared with just 15 per cent of the general population.

Similarly, a study into Hezbollah militants who died in action in Lebanon in the 1980s and 1990s showed they were less likely to have come from poor families and likelier to have attended secondary school than others of their age.

As for the idea that suicide bombers are simply suicidal, that is discounted by Israeli psychologist Ariel Merari of Tel Aviv University.

He studied the backgrounds of every suicide bomber in the Middle East since 1983, when the modern era of suicide attacks began with the truck bomb assault on the US embassy in Beirut, killing 63 people.

"In the majority, you find none of the risk factors normally associated with suicide, such as mood disorders or schizophrenia, substance abuse or history of attempted suicide," Merari told New Scientist.

Eyad El Sarraj, chairman of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program, said his own studies of Palestinian "martyrs" found a common source in a traumatic childhood experience.

All had experienced helplessness as a child, particularly the humiliation of their father by Israeli soldiers.

Whatever the individual trigger, suicide bombers are invariably channelled by a disciplined, well-organised group into taking the path of self destruction in the fight against the enemy, the report says.

This group, a result of a "peculiar mix of social, cultural and political ingredients," forges and promotes the cult of the suicide bomber, glorifying his or her acts within the community and indoctrinating him or her, often with promises of divine reward.

This "brotherhood mentality" is typically reinforced at the crucial moment by a farewell testimony in a letter or video - a classic manoeuvre to force the attacker beyond the point of no return.

"If you are in a small cell of suicide terrorists and they are all dying one by one, and you have made this commitment on a videotape saying goodbye to your family and everyone else, the psychological investment is such that it would be almost impossibly humiliating to pull back," Scott Atran, an anthropologist at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, said.

- SAVE THIS   EMAIL THIS   PRINT THIS

  MOST POPULAR
- *More stories* on **Islam**
- **Possibly Related:**
  - » Branch Davidians: Game resurrects Waco tragedy and challenges video game conventions
  - » Interfaith: Religious groups seek common ground
  - » Islam: France warns Muslim activists not to push hard on veil
  - » Islam: Canadian province to introduce Shariah law
  - » Religious Freedom: Muslims win legal fight over prison regulations

  ---

- […more…] means: For the full story, see the link provided above.
- Copyright notice.
- Disclaimer plus information about Religion News Blog.
- **Religion News Blog is a reader-supported service.**

» Item **7241**, posted by: Editor.

▸ Next Item: U.S.: Systemic Abuse of Afghan Prisoners
▸ Previous Item: New abuse photos are 'even worse'

▸ Current News Index   ▸ Archives

Comments and/or Research Resources

» Search for '**Islam**' on apologeticsindex.org

» Read up on '**Islam**'

Home - About RNB - Archives - Contact Us - Apologetics Index
© 2003 Religion News Blog - religionnewsblog.com

Religion News Blog (RNB), published by Apologetics Index, is a weblog that highlights news items and other resources about cults, religious sects, alternative religions and related issues. RNB's non-profit news clipping service