

EZRA LEVANT

Bestselling author of **SHAKEDOWN** and **ETHICAL OIL**

**THE ENEMY
WITHIN**

**TERROR, LIES
AND THE WHITEWASHING OF
OMAR KHADR**

Shakedown: How Our Government Is Undermining Democracy in the Name of Human Rights

Ethical Oil: The Case for Canada's Oil Sands

Ezra Levant

THE ENEMY WITHIN

*Terror, Lies, and the Whitewashing
of Omar Khadr*



MCCLELLAND & STEWART

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WHO IS OMAR KHADR

“Omar Khadr stated in an interview with U.S. officials that a Jihad is occurring in Afghanistan and if non-believers enter a Muslim country then every Muslim in the world should fight the non-believers.”

Confession of Omar Ahmed Khadr, October 13, 2010

Millions of Canadians know who Omar Khadr is. He's that handsome schoolboy with the peach fuzz and the black polo shirt we've seen innocently looking back at us from our morning paper for nearly a decade now. He seems so harmless. So young. So Canadian.

And that is what the morning papers, and the nightly news, and the left-wing websites, and Khadr's lawyers, political opportunists, and his family wanted you to see.

That famous photo, which appears to have come from his school yearbook, has been at the forefront of the Omar Khadr propaganda effort. It features large on the front cover of *Guantanamo's Child: The Untold Story of Omar Khadr*, a book whose very title frames the memoir biography by Khadr's most ardent spin doctor, Michelle Shephard, a *Toronto Star* correspondent, who admits in the opening pages that far from being objective about the case – even though she was the *Star's* reporter covering the Khadr case since 2003 – she considers Khadr a “victim” of the injustice of the U.S. government that arrested and tried him for murdering an army medic, a victim of “retribution.”¹ She also describes him as “an awkward puppy whose body hasn't yet caught up with its paws.”² How adorable. How pitiful.

That wholesome-looking photo has become iconic. But there are other photos of Omar Khadr out there that you probably haven't seen, more recent ones than that shot taken when he was just twelve or thirteen years old. Other photos that weren't given to the press by his mother.³ Seriously: that photograph, showing Khadr years younger than he really was when he joined al Qaeda, began building bombs, and then killed U.S. army medic Christopher Speer, was given to journalists like Shephard, and every other news outlet in the country, by Maha Khadr, his vile, hateful, terrorist-supporting mother. And they all accepted it and they all reprinted it, over and over again, deliberately passing over the far more recent – and far less innocent-looking – photographs.

There's the photo of Khadr posing next to an AK-47 assault rifle, dressed in the traditional *kameez* tunic and *kufi* hat preferred by Afghanistan's al Qaeda fighters. There's another one in which Omar is building bombs – improvised explosive devices (IEDs) – the same bombs that have killed nearly one hundred Canadian soldiers and *Calgary Herald* reporter Michelle Lang.

Those photos somehow never make it into the press coverage. Strangely, no matter what shocking and terrible facts have emerged over the years about Omar Khadr's commitment to terrorism, his deep dedication to killing Christians and Jews, and his passion for murdering editors across Canada have made the decision, time and time again, to run the photo of him in which he looks like an average Toronto pre-teen, the one handed to them directly from his mom. Some journalism.

From almost the moment Khadr was captured, Canada's liberal journalists have worked overtime to spin his story into something entirely detached from reality. No doubt it began as part of a media campaign to discredit the U.S. president at the time, George W. Bush, and the allied War on Terror, a journalistic instinct so visceral and overpowering that it resulted in the editor of the United Kingdom's *Daily Mirror* – Piers Morgan – being fired after printing fake photographs of allied soldiers supposedly abusing Muslim inmates. To the end, Morgan (now a primetime talk-show host on CNN, proving that crimes of leftist bias do pay in journalism) defended his fraud, insisting that the photos were sufficiently valid since he was sure soldiers were abusing Muslims somewhere.⁴ That same journalistic crusade to undermine

the War on Terror using false claims of “abuse” had *Newsweek* publish a fictional report about interrogators at Guantanamo Bay (Gitmo), the U.S. military’s Cuban detention camp where Omar Khadr was detained, flushing a Koran down the toilet, supposedly to cause anguish to inmates. Fifteen people were killed, and dozens more injured, by the riots that false story set off in the Muslim world.⁵

The hatred that journalists have for America’s – and Canada’s – War on Terror, coupled with their insecure need to seem progressive and morally nuanced and, thus, sympathetic to Islamist terrorists, especially Omar Khadr, is what coloured their coverage of his imprisonment and trial as well. Every allegation of torture or abuse, no matter how baseless, was reported as if it had grounds; every threadbare claim by his family and lawyers about his innocence was given maximum play, while every solid piece of evidence proving the depth of Khadr’s depravity and the convictions of his terrorism was buried – that’s if it got reported at all. As you’ll see in this book, there are scores of details about what Omar Khadr was really all about that never made it into the media.

This book will reveal the *actual* untold story of Omar Khadr – untold because it was so wantonly ignored by journalists across Canada. It will show you, with proof – not accusations, allegations, sob stories, or fabrications – that Khadr is anything but the immature, exploited little wayward lamb that his cheerleaders and propagandists have tried to portray him as. And it will show you why those corrupted portrayals have been every bit as dangerous as *Newsweek*’s fake Koran story, ensuring that Khadr was given a sweetheart deal so he could return to Canada even more radicalized than he was when he made the very conscious and deliberate decision to commit himself to jihad, to fight a holy war on the infidels. Khadr’s own defence lawyers acknowledge that their client has yet to be derailed or radicalized; he will return to Canada, after serving just a year of his sentence in Gitmo, and devoted to his bastardized, bloodthirsty interpretation of Islam as ever.

And even Omar Khadr himself admits things that the media won’t. Forget the farrago of nonsense his lawyers have spread, with the media’s eager complicity, about abuse at Guantanamo: Khadr has admitted that he’s been treated gently by his American guards and interrogators, and evidence shows that far from being abused, he was actually coddled there. He confessed that he trained as an elite terrorist, and his study of poisons and political assassinations were clearly part of his plan to become a high-ranking international terrorist. He acknowledged that he supported and joined the worldwide terror campaign of al Qaeda and that he did so on his own, not because his father wanted him to. Khadr admitted to leaping at the chance to kill Americans when it was offered to him, even when he could have just as easily opted out, and boasted that the proudest moments of his life were when he was building explosives to murder NATO soldiers. And he admitted that he was glad he got to kill an American and that, whenever he feels a bit gloomy, he cheers himself up by reminiscing about the joy he feels about that murder.

That is the deranged mind of Omar Khadr, every bit as demented as Paul Bernardo, Canada’s infamous schoolgirl serial killer. When journalists covered the capture and detention of Bernardo, though, they were horrified. They had no sympathy for someone who could so casually and gleefully snuff out the life of another living, breathing human being for his own sick pleasure. But then, there was no grand political drama playing out as there is in the case of Omar Khadr. At least Khadr, finally, confessed to the depravity of his crimes, disappointing

his fan club back home who had done all they could to have him exonerated; Canadian journalists will never admit to the crime of deceit they committed in so irresponsibly twisting the real story about Khadr into something so fictitious.

In the end, all those news stories weren't really about Omar Khadr – not in the same way that the Bernardo coverage was actually about Paul Bernardo and his victims. That's why the victims in this case – U.S. Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Speer, his widowed wife, and two fatherless kids and the permanently wounded U.S. Sgt. 1st Class Layne Morris and his devastated family – have been virtually absent from the media's coverage of the Khadr case. This wasn't about terror or murder. Not to them. In the end, this was about denormalizing the War on Terror, Guantanamo Bay, the American military, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, and, above all, U.S. president George W. Bush and, later, Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper.

In the newsrooms of the nation, the Omar Khadr story was actually about turning our defenders into war criminals and Khadr and his al Qaeda comrades, who commit real war crimes, into victims. Khadr is an enemy of Canada because he has dedicated himself to prosecuting al Qaeda's war of terror against Western countries, including ours; but his gang of Canadian supporters, propagandists, and apologists are also guilty of undermining Canadian security. They, too, have proven themselves enemies in our midst. This is what Richard Fadden, the head of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), meant when he lamented that “those accused of terrorist offenses [are] often portrayed in the media as quasi folk heroes” and that a “loose partnership of single-issues NGOs, advocacy journalists and lawyers had succeeded “in forging a positive public image for anyone accused of terrorist links or charges.”⁶ Fadden understands the importance of national security. He also understands how it can be insidiously subverted from within.

Before long, Khadr will be back in Canada, and may well be released, thanks to a lenient system that will likely credit him for the time he's served awaiting trial in Gitmo. And when Omar Khadr is back on Canadian streets, as radical, unrepentant, and dangerous as he's ever been, the journalists and activists who worked so hard to get him freed can give themselves a well-earned pat on the back.

It will be the rest of us who will be left to deal with it.

TERRORISM: THE KHADR FAMILY BUSINESS

“Omar Khadr indicated that following September 11, 2001, he was told about a \$1,500 reward placed on each American killed. Omar Khadr indicated that when he heard about the reward, he wanted to kill a lot of American[s] to get lots of money.”

Confession of Omar Ahmed Khadr, October 13, 2010

When America first met Omar Khadr, on July 27, 2002, he had a simple message for the Special Forces soldiers who found him, heavily wounded and bleeding, among the rubble of a bombed-out al Qaeda compound in Khost, Afghanistan.

“Fuck you, Americans,” he said. “Shoot me.”¹

The troops had, in fact, already shot Khadr twice. They had come upon him in an al Qaeda run compound in Khost, southeast of Kabul, after a bloody four-hour firefight with Khadr and his al Qaeda comrades. U.S. forces had spent an entire morning raking the compound with bullets while F-18s clobbered it with massive five-hundred-pound bombs. They had repeatedly urged those inside to get out, and many people took advantage of that offer, including the women and children, and were provided cover by American soldiers as they fled. When the return fire stopped and U.S. troops approached the compound to look in on the dead and wounded, Khadr ambushed them, lobbing a grenade, mortally wounding U.S. Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Speer. Lucky for Khadr, when U.S. soldiers fired back on the fifteen-year-old Canadian to disable him, they stopped short of killing him.

But Omar Khadr wanted to die anyway.

“Fuck you, Americans,” he said. “Shoot me.”

He wanted to die a martyr.

This is the kind of death that Islamist terrorists dream of – going out in a blaze of glory after murdering as many Christians or Jews as they are able to. “That wasn’t a panicked teenager we encountered that day,” said U.S. Sgt. 1st Class Layne Morris, who lost his right eye in the four-hour battle with Khadr and his comrades. “That was a trained al Qaeda agent who wanted to make his last act on Earth the killing of an American.”²

Omar Khadr had spent much time with his father discussing their wish to die fighting jihad and the wonderful rewards that Allah would provide them in the afterlife.³ There would probably be the standard seventy-two virgins. Omar would be very interested in those, of course. But they had fun imagining what other rewards awaited them for their earthly work of slaughtering infidels. Beautiful waterfalls. Elephants. A swimming pool filled with Jell-O. Omar’s favourite dessert. Terrorism was the Khadr family business, and Omar was enthusiastic about reaping its rewards.

No one in the Khadr family was pushed into making themselves into enemies of Canada. They did it by choice. In fact, Ahmed Said and Maha Khadr, Omar’s parents, had the kinds of opportunities that millions of people all over the world can only hope for. Ahmed was born in Egypt, but the Canadian government allowed him to immigrate to Ontario in 1977; Maha was born a Palestinian but was given the same gift: the privilege to move to one of the healthiest, wealthiest, freest countries on Earth. Her parents opened a bakery in Toronto that became very popular and they made something of themselves. Maha’s opportunities were bright.

Ahmed got to attend the University of Ottawa, where he studied computer engineering, the cost of his education offset by the generous subsidies of Canadian taxpayers. He landed a job consulting for Bell Northern Research, a top-notch telecommunications firm owned jointly by Bell Canada and Northern Telecom, the company that would eventually become known as Nortel and one of the most dynamic and successful stock market darlings of the dot-com era. In the late 1970s, Ahmed was well placed for the dawn of the high-tech age, thanks to the

enviable opportunities offered in his new Canadian home. A year before Ahmed arrived in North America, a man named Bill Gates had incorporated a firm he called Microsoft, and another man named Steve Jobs incorporated a company called Apple Inc. For computer engineers, the opportunities were about to become limitless.

But Ahmed Khadr wasn't interested in following the path of his in-laws: building a good career, providing for his family, and being a responsible Canadian. The family hardly spent time in Canada, moving instead between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Occasionally they'd send the kids to stay with their grandparents in Toronto, or return to Canada for a vacation, or when Ahmed had some business to take care of, or when they needed access to sophisticated and free health care (one of the Khadr sons had a serious heart defect and the family readily availed themselves of the top-flight surgeons at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children), or when things got dicey and they needed a safe haven. Mother Maha Khadr was revolted by Canada and despised the thought of raising a son here, where "by the time he's 12 or 13 he'll be on drugs or having some homosexual relation or this and that."⁴ The Khadr family hated Canada. They wanted their citizenship for just one thing: as a convenient tool they could exploit to promote criminal Islamic jihad.

By any definition, the Khadr family is a crime family – the Scarfaces of Scarborough, the Jihad Mafia. "I admit it that we are an al Qaeda family," Omar's older brother told the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in 2005. No, they didn't bootleg liquor, smuggle drugs, run gambling dens, or traffic prostitutes like Tony Soprano or Vito Corleone. Such things were beneath Godfather Ahmed Khadr, who considered himself too pious, too good a Muslim to dirty his hands with anything *haram* (forbidden by the Muslim faith), like liquor or casinos. The Khadr family had a different racket: defrauding Canadian donors using a charity front group and then funnelling the money to jihadists overseas so they could build bombs and buy guns to murder infidels. In the Khadr family's version of piety, there was nothing wrong with that at all.

Whenever the Khadr family would find themselves reluctantly having to visit Canada, Ahmed would hit the mosque circuit, raising money for charities. At first, it all seemed legitimate enough. For a few years in the early 1980s, Ahmed at least looked like he was raising funds to support the families of Afghanistan that had been devastated by the Soviet invasion. Money raised in Canada, he'd claim, would buy shares of sheep or cows so that families left fatherless might eat; it might buy artificial limbs for children disfigured by landmines.

By 1986, however, it was clear that Ahmed wasn't simply helping the orphans of Afghanistan that had been maimed by Soviet landmines. Suddenly, he was hanging around with a man by the name of Ayman al-Zawahiri. If you recognize that name, it's for good reason: Zawahiri would go on to become the second-in-command to Osama bin Laden in the al Qaeda organization.

When he connected with Ahmed Khadr, Zawahiri was already highly radicalized, a senior member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, one of the militant Muslim groups working to overthrow the Western-friendly Egyptian government and replace it with an Islamic theocracy. One of Zawahiri's collaborators at the time, Omar Abdel-Rahman, or the Blind Sheik as he's popularly known, is one of the world's arch terrorists, behind the deaths of more than a thousand people, including the massacre of fifty-eight tourists in Luxor, Egypt, in 1997. Rahman is also credited with being the man who ordered the fatwa on Egyptian

president Anwar Sadat, who dared to make peace with the Jews in Israel, inspiring a group of army officers to assassinate Sadat in 1981. After the assassination, both Rahman and Zawahiri were rounded up by government agents and put on trial. During the hearing, Zawahiri announced to the world's media, in fluent English, his crusade to turn Egypt into an Islamic state, while all around him his fellow prisoners shouted, "We will not sacrifice the blood of Muslims for the Americans and the Jews."⁵ After serving three years, Zawahiri was released. Being a surgeon, he then travelled to Peshawar to operate on the wounded Mujahideen, the Islamist fighters rebelling against the Soviet occupation. It was there that he met Ahmed Khadr and discovered their mutual interest: their desire to see Islam become the one and only authority in the world.⁶ It was a vision that they knew would demand copious violence.

By the late 1980s, with their "holy war" against the U.S.S.R. nearly finished, Islamists were readying for somewhere new to direct their jihad, to build on their success in Afghanistan and to leverage the infrastructure they had built to battle the infidel Soviets. Ahmed Khadr had by then become a well-respected figure in Osama bin Laden's organization, a group that would soon begin to call itself al Qaeda.

For years, Ahmed had represented himself in Canada as a man of mercy: he toured the mosques of Toronto pleading for help for the pitiable children of Afghanistan, the poor souls who had been made collateral damage by the invasion of an aggressive imperialist force. On more than one occasion, he waxed forlorn to the *Toronto Star*, which covered his fundraising tours with earnest sympathy. As the war ended, the true character of Khadr's mission began to reveal itself. Anyone truly concerned about the suffering of children in a war-torn country would desire an end to war. But that's not quite what Ahmed wanted. Peace wasn't enough for the godfather of the Jihadi Mafia. He wanted there to be more conflict. He wanted more fighting, until he won the prize that he dreamed of: the supremacy of Islam. This was no longer about widows and orphans; it had become clear that Ahmed's racket wasn't really about the war in Afghanistan. "Afghanistan's cause is not an Afghan cause," he declared in a speech he gave to a crowd at the Markham Islamic Centre, north of Toronto. "It's your cause. It's my cause too. It's every Muslim's cause."⁷ For Ahmed Khadr, the battle would not be won until Muslims had established a truly Islamic government, like the terrorist-supporting Taliban he was fighting for.

The Canadian government was suspicious about the stories suggesting that Human Concern International (HCI), the supposed aid organization started by a pair of Calgary Muslims that Ahmed Khadr worked for, was really all about supporting the wounded kids of Afghanistan. The Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) had prepared a report on HCI for the federal government's foreign aid arm. Stewart Bell, a reporter at Canada's *National Post* newspaper, saw a copy of it, though, he reported, it was too heavily censored to reveal any information specifically about Ahmed Khadr. But it did detail how alleged Islamic aid organizations like HCI had been misrepresenting their work and were actually used as a critical "means of channeling ostensibly humanitarian relief funds to the Arab Mujahedin [rebels] in Afghanistan and Pakistan."⁸ The United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), meanwhile, had come to much the same conclusion about HCI's dodgy nature. In a 1996 report, the CIA disclosed that the entire branch of HCI that was run by Khadr in Peshawar, Pakistan, was the nerve centre of Islamist militants, while HCI's Swedish branch was involved in smuggling

weapons to Bosnia. In an interview with an Egyptian journalist, it was none other than Osama bin Laden who identified Human Concern International as a significant supporter of Qaeda.⁹

So, Canadians who had read in the *Toronto Star* the tearful pleas of Ahmed Khadr and others like him, asking for help for the most vulnerable people caught in the crossfire of brutal war, and sent money to groups like HCI were being used. Unwittingly, good-natured Canadians appear to have ended up buying guns, and ammunition, and bombs, and anti-aircraft weapons, and landmines for jihadist guerrillas. The Canadian government, which awarded international aid grants to HCI for a time, was presumably hoodwinked too. Men like Ahmed Khadr, who claimed to be interested only in helping the innocent victims of war and terrorism, were actually perpetuating it.

According to Khadr family lore, in 1992, with the Soviets gone, Ahmed was fighting in a civil war to control who would get to run Afghanistan – the communist government of Mohammad Najibullah, the warlords, or the Islamists – when he was hit by a bomb and seriously wounded. Naturally, the doctors in Pakistan weren't good enough for an elite family of terrorists like the Khadrs. They flew back to Toronto so that Ahmed could have his arm saved by top Canadian surgeons. Friends urged him to stay in Toronto; the Soviets were gone after all, and he had, so they believed, done more than enough for the people of Afghanistan. After his brush with death, he should take it easy and enjoy a more comfortable life in Ontario. But he didn't want to stay. He didn't like it. A biography praising Khadr on a Qaeda website said the patriarch didn't like the "dirty swamp" that was Canada.¹⁰ Instead, he raced back to Pakistan. Once there, he sent his sons off to training camps in Afghanistan. A spy for the British and French intelligence services had infiltrated the training camp, and the spy remembers the Khadr father coming to visit the camp on one occasion.¹¹ He didn't come to visit his sons, though: he was seen disappearing into the explosives laboratory. What he was up to would become vividly and violently clear very soon.

That was in 1994, when Ayman al-Zawahiri was planning to begin his next phase of terrorism having now allied himself with Osama bin Laden. At 9:30 a.m. on November 19, 1995, the plan went into action.¹² Two men approached the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. One attacked the guards with machine-gun fire and grenades, murdering them. The other careened a pickup truck loaded up with 250 pounds of explosives toward the gates and detonated the bomb, blowing open the barriers. Then came a jeep, with even more explosives. It pulled up alongside the building and exploded, destroying the side of the embassy. Fourteen people were murdered that day, and sixty were wounded. The two bombers also died.

Investigators were able to use the engine block of one of the vehicles employed in the terrorist attack to trace the perpetrators. One of the men the trail led to was Khalid Abdullah. Abdullah was the fiancé of Zaynab Khadr, Ahmed's eldest daughter. The Khadr patriarch had arranged the marriage when Zaynab was just fifteen years old.¹³ Abdullah had been behind the purchase of one of the vehicles used in the terrorist operation. He had been living with Ahmed and was a part of the Khadr crime family business. But police couldn't arrest him. Abdullah had skipped town after the embassy bombing. They did try arresting his accomplice Ahmed Khadr. When they showed up, Maha tried to block the door and Zaynab pulled a gun on them. Authorities would find \$40,000 in cold, hard U.S. cash in the Khadr house.¹⁴ The

Khadrs claimed it was for charity.

The Khadrs were prepared to face down Pakistani security forces at gunpoint, dying as martyrs for their Islamic cause. They just weren't prepared to serve jail time. Ahmed was once quoted in an article in *Rolling Stone* magazine telling his family "if you love me, pray that I will get martyred."¹⁵ He didn't say anything about what they should do if he was arrested on terrorism charges. But they had an idea.

Once again, they would exploit their Canadian citizenship as a tool to preserve the terrorist enterprise. After he was taken into Pakistani custody, Ahmed Khadr declared he would go on a hunger strike. "I'm Canadian. I am 100 per cent innocent person," he told reporters who visited him while he was under guard at an Islamabad hospital.¹⁶

By sheer luck, in early 1996, while Pakistani authorities were holding and interrogating Ahmed Khadr about his role in the embassy bombing, the prime minister of Canada happened to be visiting Islamabad. Jean Chrétien had come to Pakistan on a Team Canada trade mission, along with provincial premiers, professors, top Canadian business leaders, and, of course, a pack of journalists hungry for good stories. The Khadrs knew exactly how to play this opportunity. Even before Chrétien had left Canadian soil, Ahmed Khadr was spinning a sob story for the Canadian press. The always credulous *Toronto Star* ran a sympathetic story on Khadr's detention and his hunger strike. He wanted, more than anything, to go back to Canada, he pleaded, not mentioning how little interest he'd had in living there before. "The last hope I have is Mr. Chrétien coming," he said.

Then he cannily pointed out that Canada was a major aid donor to Pakistan – one of the biggest, actually. "We have leverage," he said.¹⁷ Did they ever.

And so Mother Khadr dragged her doe-eyed children to the hotel where Chrétien was staying to plead with him, to confront him in the presence of all those watchful journalists. The prime minister should have been suspicious. He certainly had legitimate grounds to tell her politely there was nothing he could do. By then, the Canadian government was already wise to the corrupt dealings of Ahmed Khadr. As early as the late 1980s, federal officials were informed by Chinese diplomats that their fellow Canadian had been smuggling cash from Saudi Arabia, home of Osama bin Laden's family fortune, into Afghanistan, and Khadr had gotten tripped up in a border incident while passing through the Pakistani province of Balochistan. This was "not the first time that Khadr had been involved in money running," the Chinese informed Canadian officials. The prime minister's handlers knew that Canadian authorities had also got reports from Pakistan's intelligence services revealing the burgeoning partnership between Khadr and the notorious terrorist and head of Egyptian Islamic Jihad Ayman al-Zawahiri.¹⁸

And there was all that intel on Khadr's supposed charity work. After the Soviets had been driven out of Afghanistan, Ottawa wasn't certain it could prove that Human Concern International was funnelling money to extremist Muslims still fighting to establish a theocratic Islamic state that would provide safe haven to terrorists like Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri – something that would eventually come to pass once the Taliban had prevailed – but its suspicions were serious enough that it cut all funding to HCI. The "aid" organization tried suing the government to get its federal subsidies restored. The Canadian government fought fiercely through the courts to distance itself from HCI.¹⁹ And the government won.

But Jean Chrétien was a softer touch. Already, the prime minister was being widely criticized and was under pressure from Canadian conservatives for his stubborn refusal when travelling to countries like China and Arab nations to bring up human rights abuses. When Maha Khadr came barging in with all those little kids sobbing about the plight of her poor victimized husband at the hands of Pakistan's cruel interrogators – they had pulled his hair and beard, Khadr had claimed – Chrétien invited her to share her concerns. He fed them children candy. He posed for photographs with them. He told them, “Once, I was the son of a farmer and I became prime minister. Maybe one day you will become one.”²⁰

Back home, the newspapers, naive and ignorant of what federal intelligence officials – and even Chrétien's own staff – knew about the Khadr family's links to terror, painted a sympathetic picture of a man made victim of a terrible injustice. As James Bartleman, one of the prime minister's political advisors who would later become the lieutenant governor of Ontario, recalled in his memoir, journalists travelling with the Team Canada mission were “tired” of reporting on the daily grip-and-grin meetings between business and political leaders. “All hungered for a good juicy scandal to enliven their reporting.” The Khadr had given it to them, he wrote, “complete with photogenic wife, cute children, and brave Canadian husband suffering in a prison hospital.”²¹

Despite all the red flags the Canadian government had thrown up over the Khadr family, Chrétien went ahead and personally took up the cause of the al Qaeda family: during a meeting with the prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, Chrétien took the time to raise his concerns about Ahmed Khadr. He wanted assurances that the Pakistani government was behaving fairly, that they were treating him according to the standards Canada expected prisoners should be treated. “I wanted to make very clear that due process is followed in this case,” Chrétien told reporters.²²

Of course, the high standards that Canada adheres to for due process are uncommon in the world, and particularly unusual in a place like Pakistan, where the worst criminals aren't just murderers but incorrigible mass murderers: terrorists who will shoot up a mosque without feeling a pang of guilt, who will blow up a school, with pride, and be glorified for it. They work in secretive terrorist cells; they are trained to resist interrogation, trained to comply with fictional torture. It's easy to criticize the abuses of the Pakistani justice system, and there are surely abuses. But it's not so easy to imagine a system like Canada's effectively dealing with the kind, and sheer number, of terrorists that Pakistan's must deal with. The South Asian Intelligence Group has identified no fewer than forty-seven different terrorist groups operating in Pakistan.²³ In 2008, the U.S. State Department counted 1,839 terrorist incidents in Pakistan.²⁴

For police to detain a suspect in Canada without sufficient evidence of their crime is intolerable: we know that the risks to our society of that kind of practice outweigh the risk that a car thief or a marijuana dealer or even a murderer might pose if he or she were let go. The way they see things in Pakistan, when police release a suspected terrorist because they haven't yet built an airtight case against him, it could very well mean hundreds of people would be dead or wounded by the end of the week. This is, after all, exactly what the entire debate around Guantanamo Bay and Omar Khadr is about: how the law should deal with avowed enemies who play by different rules than normal criminals.

But this was 1996. In the pre-9/11 era, Jean Chrétien, like many North Americans, perhaps

was blissfully unfamiliar with the duplicity and menace posed by jihadis like Ahmed Khadr and with the special challenge they posed to prosecutors. And so, Chrétien pressed Pakistani prime minister Bhutto, wanting to be sure they had proof positive that Ahmed Khadr was one of the terrorists behind the Egyptian Embassy bombing. Bhutto, like the Khadr family, knew her country relied heavily on Canadian aid. She knew Canadians had “leverage,” as Ahmed Khadr put it. Shortly after she met Chrétien, Ahmed Khadr was released.

Khadr did not, however, retire to Canada, as he had claimed he so badly wanted to do. In fact, it wasn't long before he moved the whole family to Jalalabad, Afghanistan, to a compound run by none other than Osama bin Laden.²⁵

The Pakistanis and the Egyptians never stopped believing Ahmed Khadr was one of the terrorist organizers behind that bloody attack in Islamabad.

“They were terrorists, confirmed terrorists,” Major-Gen. Shaukat Sultan Khan, spokesperson for the Pakistan army, revealed to the *National Post* years later. “The involvement in terrorist activities was proved beyond doubt.”²⁶

In fact, when the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and Khadr was forced to flee back into Pakistan, he would die in a gun battle with police, who had been sent, again, to arrest him. Pakistan knew all along that Ahmed Khadr was a man with blood all over his hands. Canadian intelligence officials had a pretty good idea too. If it hadn't been for the naïveté of the Canadian press and a PR-sensitive Canadian prime minister, he might have been stopped before he was able to bloody his hands even more. Instead, Ahmed Khadr and his family became one of the most valuable crews inside Osama bin Laden's multinational terrorist organization.

After Ahmed Khadr died in 2003, the Canadian public finally began learning the ugly truth about the Khadr crime family. They learned that all the charity work that the Khadr family had been supposedly running was a scam. In Afghanistan and Pakistan throughout the 1980s, a man named Mohamed Fadil worked for Khadr at the group that would later call itself Human Concern International.²⁷ After Khadr's death, Fadil went public about the fraud Khadr was running: the charity was registered as Canadian, but the main funding – as much as \$3 million every single month – came from the Kuwaiti group Lajnat Al-Da'wa al Islamia, which was identified in a 2001 U.S. presidential Executive Order as supporting terrorists.²⁸

Fadil finally exposed what really went on in the Khadr's charity, which included paying salaries to Egyptian terrorists – among them a man named Abu Khabab, one of al Qaeda's top weapons experts, who was working on building chemical and biological bombs²⁹ – and providing advice to Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda's number-two man, Ayman al-Zawahiri. Fadil revealed that Khadr used his charity office, and the money raised for it, to provide a haven for dozens of Egyptian jihadis transiting to Afghanistan. One of the men who passed through Khadr's office was Khalid Sheik Mohamed, considered al Qaeda's chief architect behind the 9/11 attacks.

Intelligence by CSIS backs Fadil up: a report by the spy agency examined by a federal court judge in 2005 detailed how Khadr – the “head of a family of Islamic extremists” – “provided references” to al Qaeda for jihadis “wishing to partake in extremist training in Afghanistan” and “was the director of an aid agency known as Human Concern International, which worked closely with al Qaeda in Afghanistan.”³⁰

“Khadr was really a jihadi,” Fadil told the *National Post* in 2010. “Khadr was not a charity

worker.” In fact, he says, even the Kuwaiti funders grew tired of Khadr’s single-minded obsession with fighting jihad: they fired him in 1986 because he was neglecting the other duties they needed him to work on. It’s little wonder that in its *Book of 120 Martyrs of Afghanistan*, the al-Fajr Media Centre, a pro-terrorist propaganda office, portrayed Ahmed Khadr as always bored in Canada because “his soul was accustomed to calamities and fighting infidels.”³¹ For Khadr, jihad was a “full-time” preoccupation, Fadil told the *National Post*, adding that Khadr was indeed part of the embassy bombing plot. Khadr’s charity work was also linked to Benevolence International, a North American charity that also claimed to be raising money for widows and orphans but whose founder pleaded guilty in 2003 to funnelling money to al Qaeda-connected Islamic fighters in Bosnia and Chechnya.³²

And Khadr didn’t just provide money, advice, and safe houses to terrorists. It appears he actually ran a terrorist unit of his own. In 2006, Islamist websites began boasting of the successes of the Mahdi Army’s rocket attacks against coalition forces. “Ahmed Said Khadr,” they wrote, “used to be in charge of it.”³³

That is certainly consistent with what the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has revealed about Ahmed Khadr’s last years on the run, in Afghanistan and Taliban-friendly Pakistan, from U.S.-backed forces. The RCMP has said that Khadr was ordered by Osama bin Laden to form a militia force and organize “attacks against U.S. and coalition forces” near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.³⁴

In fact, the RCMP didn’t suspect that just Ahmed Khadr was a key part of Osama bin Laden’s growing terror network, they observed the whole Khadr gang getting involved. “I believe that the entire family is affiliated with al-Qaeda and has participated in some form or another with these criminal extremist elements,” RCMP Sgt. Konrad Shourie, one of Canada’s top terror investigators, declared in an affidavit in 2005.³⁵

Ahmed’s oldest son, Abdullah Khadr, admitted to buying weapons for al Qaeda – \$20,000 worth of explosives, rocket-propelled grenades, machine-gun ammunition, and mortars³⁶ and even bought a black market passport so he could hide out in China or Iran (two countries that do not have extradition treaties with the United States) after the fall of Afghanistan, though he was reportedly “too afraid to use it.”³⁷ The FBI got Abdullah to admit he channelled hydrogen peroxide (used to make landmines), C-4 explosives, surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank missiles, and AK-47s to al Qaeda.³⁸ RCMP and FBI officers have also produced Abdullah’s confession that he was working on a plot to kill Pakistan’s pro-Western prime minister. Abdullah has reportedly told a journalist in Pakistan he wanted to die a “martyr” for his religion,³⁹ but the Khadr crime family wasn’t just in it for Allah – they were out to make a profit in the bloody business of terror too. When Abdullah was arrested in Pakistan in 2004, he was buying missiles from an ex-member of a Pakistani terror group for \$1,000 each. He was planning to resell them to an al Qaeda buyer for \$5,000 a pop.⁴⁰ Like his dad, Ahmed Khadr, Abdullah turned terror into a money-making enterprise.

Then there’s the oldest Khadr daughter, Zaynab. She, along with Abdullah and her mother Maha, acted as a courier by delivering money to her father to “fund and supply al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan,” according to the RCMP.⁴¹ (After her brother Omar’s capture by U.S. forces, she dismissed his murder of Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Speer as “no big deal.”⁴²) Zaynab “willingly participated and contributed both directly and indirectly toward enhancing

the ability of al-Qaeda to facilitate its criminal activities,” the police force determined. Meanwhile, another son, Kareem Khadr, who was partly paralyzed in the gun battle with Pakistani security forces that killed his father in 2003, appears to be into criminal activities that’s a whole different kind of seedy: in 2010, he was arrested in Toronto for the alleged sexual exploitation of a minor.⁴³

And then there’s Omar, the favoured son of the Khadr crime family,⁴⁴ the Michael Corleone of Ahmed’s Don Corleone. By 2004, nearly two years after having rescued him from the demolished al Qaeda compound, the U.S. military had already got details out of Omar about his own role in the Canadian-run branch plant of al Qaeda’s terrorist enterprise. Omar had admitted that he was trained as an al Qaeda terrorist, acted as a translator for al Qaeda because he spoke English and Pashto, the main language in Afghanistan – and was actively working to “blow up” American soldiers.⁴⁵ He conducted surveillance missions for al Qaeda planners to prepare attacks on NATO military convoys.

Omar was climbing the ladder in his father’s dirty business. He knew all about what his dear old dad was up to: he “provided U.S. officials with significant details regarding the operation of the training camps, including the fact that his father was responsible for providing financing for these camps, other al Qaeda sponsored camps, and other sponsored activities,” as he states in his very own confession.⁴⁶

And the young man was certainly preparing to become one of the best in his field. He took individual tutoring to become a terrorist from an al Qaeda guru who gave him “training in the use of rocket propelled grenades, various assault rifles, pistols, grenades, and explosives.” He joined an al Qaeda terrorist cell, where he worked to convert Italian landmines into improvised explosive devices (IEDS). He called building these bombs “the proudest moment of his life” because they would “cause as much death and destruction as possible.” He was told there was a \$1,500 reward for every American he killed. He told his captors that when he heard that, “he wanted to kill a lot of American[s], to get lots of money.”⁴⁷

Ahmed Khadr, Zaynab Khadr, Omar Khadr, and others of the Khadr clan talked a lot about martyrdom and wanting to die for Islam while fighting a jihad against the Jews and the infidels. Every crime family has its Old World codes of honour; in the mafia they take “blood oaths”; in this gang, it’s martyrdom oaths. And that, ultimately, is what the Khadr family proved itself to be: a criminal dynasty making a living through the family business of money laundering, fraud, arms trafficking, and, of course, murder. It wasn’t something any of them needed to do: one of Omar’s brothers, Abdurahman Khadr, wasn’t as interested as the rest of his siblings and ended up turning his back on the enterprise. He preferred Toronto to the dusty mud compounds of Peshawar and Kabul, was uninterested in the terrorist training camps his father kept sending him off to, wasn’t impressed by Osama bin Laden, and didn’t buy into the rotten business promoted by the rest of his family.⁴⁸ He didn’t aspire to become a productive member of Khadr Murder Inc.

Not like his brother Omar.

THE ECSTATIC MURDERE

“Khadr and the other operatives in the cell targeted U.S. forces with the specific intent of killing Americans, and as many as possible. Over the course of multiple interviews with U.S. personnel, Omar Khadr described in great detail the making and planting of the IEDs and the destruction that he and the other cell members hoped would be caused by the explosions. When asked why he and the other cell members were constructing IEDs, Khadr stated ‘to kill U.S. forces.’ Omar Khadr stated to a U.S. official that the proudest moment of his life was constructing and planting IEDs.”

Confession of Omar Ahmed Khadr, October 13, 2010

What's the proudest moment of your life? Ask most Canadians that question and you're bound to hear about a lot of great things people have done. Maybe getting a diploma or a degree of some sort, or seeing a son or daughter get one. Finishing a marathon, perhaps. Getting that dream job. Taking the oath of citizenship. Helping someone in trouble get his or her life back on the right track. Beating cancer. Walking your daughter down the aisle at her wedding. Even from teenagers, you'd probably hear about the day they made the basketball team or the cheerleading squad, or performed the lead in the school play, or when they brought home a really great report card, or got into the college they really wanted to attend.

And if you asked Omar Khadr what the proudest moment in his life was? Well, that we already know. We know from his eventual confession of his crimes, the agreed facts he signed as part of his plea deal with U.S. military prosecutors in 2010, that he told U.S. officials all about it.¹ Khadr said that "the proudest moment of his life was constructing and planting IEDs," or improvised explosive devices, which he and his fellow terrorists planted on the ground "to kill U.S. forces." He was proud, he said, of the opportunity to kill "as many as possible" to "maximize the opportunity for death and destruction."

Meet the real Omar Khadr. No, this isn't the poor, wayward little lamb dragooned by his father into the al Qaeda racket as portrayed by his sympathizers in the media. This is Omar Khadr, the bloodthirsty warrior, the enthusiastic criminal, the eager terrorist, the ecstatic murderer.

By the time Omar Khadr finally came clean about his crimes, the Canadian media had already worked up their own, preferred version of who they thought he was – or at least who they wanted him to be. Nothing – not even the eventual black-and-white proof of Khadr's viciousness – would change their minds. Khadr would inevitably fess up about his lust for blood and chaos, though, in his detailed confession to the court at Guantanamo, signing his name to a document that provided the true, full picture of how depraved his thinking was and what his actual, sadistic ambitions really were.

Omar Khadr, after all, was different than most of the young men who turned up at al Qaeda training camps to join the army of jihad. The average Pakistani or Yemeni villager doesn't have the blessings that come with a Canadian passport, for one thing, and so they can hardly dare to imagine the kind of fortunate life packed with opportunities that is there for the taking for a Canadian citizen like Omar Khadr. There aren't a lot of good jobs in Amritsar or Waziristan, no top-tier universities offering heavily subsidized spots to anyone ready to put in a little effort like they do in Canada. For a lot of al Qaeda fighters, the choice to join jihad may at least have been partly understandable in that it might look to them like the best of an awfully lousy lot of choices.

It's also possible to understand why, if you've never actually met a Westerner in your life or seen a Jewish person, or been exposed to the reality of Christianity, you might believe the monstrous tales your village imam tells you. There aren't actual Jewish people living in Afghanistan or Pakistan. With nothing more than a third-grade education, the average poor farmer probably is open to believing that Jews murder babies for their matzo and conspire to manipulate the world for its gold; it's a lot easier to convince someone who doesn't know much about the contemporary world or its history that Christians really are savage crusaders.

out to conquer Muslim lands and convert Mohammedans to Christianity by force. In 2011 the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Survey measured how Muslims in the Middle East perceived Jews.² Not surprisingly, in the lands where Jewish people haven't lived for generations – exiled as they were by Muslim governments – negative feeling toward Jews was the highest. In Judenrein (“Jewish-free”) Jordan, 97 per cent of people thought badly of Jews, in Judenrein Egypt, it was 95 per cent. The only Middle Eastern Muslims who thought positively of Jews, of course, were Israeli Arabs, where a majority of people surveyed had positive views about Jews. That's because Israeli Arabs actually live among Jews and so don't imagine them as rat-faced monsters with blood dripping from their fangs, which is the way they're typically portrayed in the Arab press.

These are the huge advantages Omar Khadr had over his fellow jihadis. He'd grown up in Toronto. He knew the truth about Westerners. He was raised in a city with the eleventh largest population of Jewish people in the world outside of Israel.³ He saw hundreds of Jewish and Christian and Hindu and Buddhist people every day and witnessed their normalcy and, no doubt, their natural friendliness, peacefulness, and kindness. And he knew that in Canada, different religions and races get along just fine. The Toronto bakery owned by his grandparents was next to a Jamaican restaurant and an optical shop owned by a pair of brothers from Guyana;⁴ Eglinton Avenue, where the bakery sat, must easily be one of the most ethnically diverse strips of commerce in North America. And those grandparents, Mohamed and Fatmah Elsannah, with whom Omar spent parts of his childhood as his father was busy building terror networks abroad, were, it certainly seems, happy immigrants contented with their adopted home of Canada and very much against the idea of the daughter and her kids relocating to Pakistan when Canada had so much peace, security, and prosperity to offer.⁵

Omar Khadr, in other words, wasn't ignorant. He wasn't the victim of propaganda. He knew the truth about how the world worked, the kind of people that non-Muslim Westerners really are, and the peaceful, just world that they seek. And he dedicated his life to killing them anyway.

In fact, based on what he finally confessed about his plans and his crimes, it certainly seems that Omar Khadr was preparing to become a top dog of terror. His father was reportedly already the fourth-in-command in the al Qaeda organization;⁶ Omar can only have imagined himself rising to even greater, more murderous criminal heights.

Omar admitted that already as he was growing up, he spent a great deal of time meeting “senior al Qaeda leaders, including Usama bin Laden, Dr. [Ayman al-] Zawahiri, Muhammed Atef [al Qaeda's military chief], and Saif al Adel,” the explosives expert rumoured to be bin Laden's successor as the leader of al Qaeda, following bin Laden's death.⁷ Omar “visited various al Qaeda training camps, guest houses, and safe houses,” where he must have been impressed by these characters, finding them the perfect role models for an aspiring young terrorist. While an average Canadian boy might have looked at these murderous men squatted in their mud huts, spewing hatred and misogyny and plotting the death of innocents on a grand scale, and easily preferred the options on offer in Canada – the good schools, the career opportunities, the healthy and serene lifestyle, the love of peace – Omar Khadr, it seems, was enamoured with joining their criminal death cult. Smart, educated, worldly, and with all the right family connections, he had to have envisioned himself rising to the very top

of the world's most racist, most brutal criminal organization.

And he couldn't wait.

It's certainly clear from his confession that Omar Khadr wasn't planning to become just another low-level foot soldier in the al Qaeda organization. Not with the kind of training he was getting. In his confession, Khadr details the al Qaeda training camps that he visited and the tactics being taught there. This wasn't only about how to handle an AK-47 or detonate a landmine on some Afghan dirt road. This was much, much bigger stuff.

When he was at the Derunta camp, for instance, men were trained in "explosives and poisons." At the Khaldan camp where Khadr spent time, he explained how they trained al Qaeda recruits in "poisons, sabotage, target selection, urban warfare and assassination tactics." Now, it's probably safe to say that poisons wouldn't be of much use in the Afghan theatre of war: there just aren't that many opportunities for a Taliban soldier to spike a crusading U.S. soldier's water bottle with strychnine or sprinkle rat poison on his or her meals. But U.S. intelligence officials did reveal in late 2010 that al Qaeda operatives have been working on a potential attack in North America that would kill innocent civilians by contaminating public salad bars and buffets at hotels and restaurants with ricin or cyanide. The intelligence official who confirmed the plan to CBS News called the threat "credible" and said it came from the same al Qaeda unit that was behind the group's attempted bombing of a UPS plane, with bombs hidden inside printer toner cartridges, in October 2010.⁹ "We're aware that terrorists have been interested in doing this kind of thing for a long time," a U.S. official told CNN, of the poisoning plots.¹⁰ A raid of an al Qaeda cell in London in 2003 turned up quantities of ricin.¹¹

So why would someone like Omar Khadr – who, according to the contemporary media portrayals, was merely a dutiful son taking up arms in Afghanistan to defend Muslim lands from invading foreigners – need to learn about such things as poisons and assassination unless he were training to become an international terrorist – another Khalid Sheikh Mohammed or Osama bin Laden? Of course, al Qaeda has been big into assassinations, far outside Afghanistan, for years too: in 2003, al Qaeda agents assassinated U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley outside his home in Amman, Jordan. That same year, it bombed a United Nations building in Iraq, killing the special UN envoy, Sérgio Vieira de Mello.¹² Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, an al Qaeda commander in Afghanistan, was the man who claimed responsibility for organizing, with the Khadr's close family friend Ayman al-Zawahiri, the assassination of former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, in 2007. Intelligence has uncovered al Qaeda plots in the past to assassinate former U.S. president Bill Clinton, Pope John Paul II, former Philippine president Fidel Ramos, and Indonesian president Megawati Sukarnoputri.¹⁴

Khadr was training to become a serious terrorist leader – the James Bond of jihad. This was someone who already, at his age, knew "where he could get false documentation to travel around Afghanistan," as one doctor who interviewed Khadr reported.¹⁵ He was, as that same expert noted in observing a videotape the U.S. military recovered in Afghanistan that showed Khadr helping to build landmines, assembling high-powered, deadly explosives virtually unsupervised while his fellow terrorists milled around in the same room. He was evidently expert enough in his explosives training for them to trust him to build bombs powerful enough to overturn an armoured vehicle without worrying that he might inadvertently blow

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