

A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY MARK CLAYWELL & JODY JENKINS

AMERICAN JIHADIST

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ISA ABDULLAH ALI

PRESS KIT 2010

A HYPE MEDIA PRODUCTION PRESENTS "AMERICAN JIHADIST" THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ISA ABDULLAH ALI
MUSIC BY AARON ROBERTSON AND JACK KELEHEAR EDITED BY MARK CLAYWELL DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MARK CLAYWELL AND FRANCOIS BRINGER

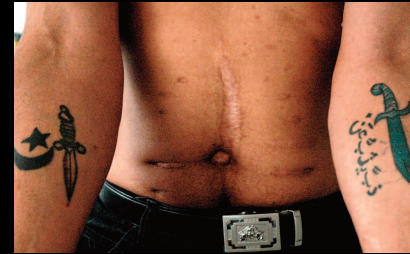


PRODUCED BY MARK CLAYWELL AND JODY JENKINS STORY BY JODY JENKINS DIRECTED BY MARK CLAYWELL

RUNNING TIME 72 MINUTES

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AMERICAN
JIHADIST
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What makes a person willing to kill and die for their religion ?

What social, economic and political environments create the mindset of a Jihadist, especially an American one?

American Jihadist is a look at militant Islam through the eyes of an American who fought for it.

Isa Abdullah Ali, aka Clevin Raphael Holt, is intriguing because he grew up in the ghettos of America's capitol and was surrounded by physical and psychological violence from the very beginning. American Jihadist looks at what role violence and a lack of hope for the future play in the development of radicalism. The film reaches beyond easy labels to grasp the nuances behind one man's decision to fight for his religion.

synopsis

American Jihadist is the story of Isa Abdullah Ali, an African-American Muslim from the ghettos of Washington, DC, labeled a “known terrorist” by the U.S. Defense Department though he’s never been charged with any crime. Ali fought for six years in Lebanon and Bosnia and was shot multiple times for, as he puts it, “the pleasure of God by taking a stand to help the ill treated and oppressed.”

What makes a person willing to pick up a gun for their religion? Are the underlying causes purely religious? Or might religious militancy be a means of addressing chronic social, economic and political issues? And what do the answers mean for the wider Islamic World? These questions underlie *American Jihadist*.

Ali turned his personal quest for justice into an international struggle: He briefly joined the Jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviets and then, seeing reflections of his own struggles in the plight of the Lebanese Shiites, he became the only American Muslim known to have fought in Lebanon’s bloody civil war. He served for five years with the Amal militia as a sniper and street fighter. In 1986, he barely survived an assassination attempt when he was gunned down on a Beirut street.

By the time Ali was wounded he had grown disillusioned with the infighting that ripped Lebanon apart, but his war years had been the most meaningful of his life. Back in DC, he was confronted anew with the racism and poverty he had struggled so hard to

overcome. He worked menial jobs as a groundskeeper and trash man for a nightclub.

Suffering from post-traumatic stress and depression, he felt as though he were simply waiting to die.

In 1995, after seeing Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic proclaim on CNN that the Serbs were doing Europe a favor by eliminating Muslims, Ali found a new cause. He volunteered to fight with the Muslim-led Bosnian government and helped liberate much of the country from Serb occupation. In 1996, he briefly became a *cause célèbre* when his face appeared on wanted posters throughout Bosnia after being labeled a “known terrorist” by the Pentagon. He later turned himself in and was cleared of any wrongdoing.

Despite Ali’s checkered past, he regularly travels to Washington, DC, with his current American passport. Many suspect he is working for the U.S. Government. Ali works odd jobs during the day and as security in the blues nightclub “Madam’s Organ” to make money to support his wife and three kids back in Bosnia. He has vowed to fight on the behalf of the Muslim majority in Kosovo should hostilities break out in the wake of Kosovo’s recent declaration of independence from Serbia. ■

principle interviews

Lisa Long, Isa Ali's sister, on Isa Ali's personality, spirituality and outlook, as well as stories of their life growing up in the inner city of Washington, DC.

Rev. Nathan Butler, Isa Ali's uncle, on the role of God in Isa Ali's life growing up and the life-shaping power of religion as a bulwark against desperation.

Jessica Stern, Harvard lecturer formerly of the National Security Council in the Clinton Administration, foremost US expert on terrorism and author of *Terror In The Name of God, Why Religious Militants Kill*, on the forces that drive religious militants and terrorists.

Jerrold Post, psychiatrist and author of *The Mind of The Terrorist*, formerly of the CIA where he profiled Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin for President Jimmy Carter before Camp David, on the psychological profile of militants as it applies to Isa Ali.

Fawaz Gerges, Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at Sarah Lawrence College and author of *Journey of the Jihadist*, who has interviewed hundreds of jihadis worldwide, on the nature and origins of the contemporary jihadi movement.

Dawud Salahuddin, aka David Belfield, an African-American Muslim wanted for the 1980 murder of a former Iranian press attaché in Washington, DC, on his friendship with Ali, their role in the Islamic Guerillas of America and the motivations behind Black Muslim militancy of the 1970s.

Robert Baer, former CIA agent stationed in Beirut and author of *See No Evil*, on which the film *Syriana* is based, on Isa Ali's role as an Islamic soldier in Beirut and his potential role in the CIA.

Louis Mizell, Jr., former Special Agent for the Diplomatic Security Services who spied on Ali in Beirut and author of *Target USA*, on Ali's potential involvement with terrorist groups.

Tod Robberson, formerly of the Washington Post, who was kidnapped in Beirut on the orders of Ali and has done in-depth research on Ali for *The Washington Post*.

Hamza akl Hamieh, former military head of the Amal militia now with Hezbollah, who hijacked 6 airliners in the 1980s and has a \$5 million bounty on his head, on Isa Ali's role as a foot soldier in Amal.

Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, the Grand Ayatollah of Lebanon who has been called the spiritual head of Hezbollah, on Isa Ali's role as Fadlallah's bodyguard and on nature of Islam's resurgence.

General Fikrit Cuskic, former Bosnian Army Brigadier, on Ali's role in liberating Bosnia from Serb occupation.

about the director

Mark Claywell (Director), founder and CEO of the New York production company Hype Media, Inc., has over 20 years of experience as an award-winning director. Claywell has directed and created various national and international advertising campaigns for fortune 500 companies including Nike, AT&T, Sony, the United Way, Sears Craftsman, Pfizer and Wyeth. He has also directed the well-known spots for New York tourism's "I Love NY" campaign which was the first filming permitted in NYC just a few days after 9/11. The spots have gone on to garner much praise and recognition for their honest and heartfelt approach. This is his first feature documentary.

project staff

Francois Bringer (Cameraman) has 20 years of experience as a director, producer and reporter covering events in the Middle East, Africa and Europe for CNN, CNNFN (Financial News), NBC, CBS, the History Channel, the BBC and Al Jazeera. As a director for CNN based in New York, he produced over 200 reports for news magazines and was part of an Emmy-Award winning team for its coverage of 9/11 and its impact on American Society. He has covered the conflicts in Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, Northern Turkey and Iraq as well as Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Christina Lowery (Consulting Producer), is vice president of development & business affairs for The Documentary Group. She has written, directed and produced multiple one-hour

documentaries for A&E Television and The History Channel. She produced a *Peter Jennings Reporting* project on the Guantanamo Bay detainees that aired on ABC News and has been a field producer, coordinating producer, associate producer and researcher on documentaries for *Martin Scorsese Presents*, *Bill Moyers NOW* and *Peter Jennings Reporting*. In the last two years, she has also written and produced multiple educational videos for the Smithsonian Museum for their *America On The Move* and *Brown v. Board of Education* exhibits.

Jody Jenkins (Writer/Producer), is an editor at France 24, a twenty-four-hour news network in Paris. He has covered the Czechoslovakian and Romanian revolutions, the Kurdish refugee crisis in the wake of the first Gulf War, and the Serbo-Croatian and Bosnian wars. For the past ten years he has been researching American Muslims who fight as jihadis. His work has appeared in Salon, The Spectator Magazine and Fodor's. He is currently researching the life of Larimer Mellon for Claywell's next documentary "A Spark In The Darkness."

Jessica Stern (Project Advisor), America's foremost expert on terrorism, is a lecturer at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. From 1998-99 she was the Superterrorism Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. And from 1994-95 she served as director for Russian, Ukrainian and Eurasian Affairs at the National Security Council under the Clinton Administration. She is the author of *Terror In The Name Of God, Why Religious Militants Kill* and *The Ultimate Terrorist*.



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notes

Filming has taken place in Bosnia, Lebanon, Iran, England, Washington, DC, Boston and New York City.

Claywell and Jenkins own the story rights and are developing a narrative feature film based on Isa Abdullah Ali's life.

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rights

Story rights are available.

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