



UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

21st Century

Programme : Second Chance for Saudi Terrorist
Duration : 14.45
Producer : Francis Mead

Intro:

In the past two decades, Saudi Arabia realised it was a breeding-ground for young terrorists. 15 of the 19 hijackers involved in the 9/11 attacks were Saudi citizens – and since then terror groups have been active on home soil. The Saudis have had to think of creative ways to defuse the threat. Here's our story.

Tease:

He made bombs for Osama Bin Laden "I get special training for bombs and electronic circuits for bombs." Should he get a second chance?

VIDEO

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE
JIHADI VIDEOS

KHALID SHOPPING

AUDIO

NARRATION:

He trained at an Al Qaeda camp in Afghanistan. After 9/11, he fled to a mountain hide-out with Osama Bin Laden. At one time Khalid Al-Jhani was a bomb-maker for the world's best-known terrorist.

KHALID:

"I get special training for bombs and electronic circuits of the bombs."

ARCHIVE SAUDI TERROR
ATTACKS AND ARRESTS

NARRATION:

Khalid isn't alone – in recent years many other young Saudis have been drawn to extremist violence – committing terror attacks both on home soil and overseas.

GUANTANAMO ARCHIVE

The Saudi authorities responded by arresting hundreds, while Americans imprisoned alleged Saudis terrorists at Guantanamo, Cuba.

KHALID IN STREET

In time, the Saudi government faced a decision: should they lock all these young men away for life? Or should they attempt to reclaim them - and show that reconciliation with society is possible?

KHALID WATCHES VIDEOS
(REPRESENTATIONAL)

Khalid was to become a test case. A well-educated young man, he'd thought hard before joining extremist groups in the mid 1990s. He says he decided to act after watching videos showing conflicts in which Muslims had become victims.

KHALID:

You feel that you want to be with them, to be helpful. And you think that you are going to change the situation. I start thinking of going to practice jihad at that time.

NARRATION:

KHALID DRIVING

As he saw it, he was joining a liberation struggle for Muslims. He left for

(REPRESENTATIONAL)

Afghanistan, without telling anyone.

KHALID:

I studied these cases before I go. It's not something that is random or I decide because someone told me a nice story. I know this would be hard.

ARCHIVE JIHADI VIDEOS

NARRATION:

In 1996 he enlisted at a camp run by Al Qaeda in eastern Afghanistan – and learned about machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and explosives. There were many accidents.

KHALID:

They were taking explosive training and one guy one foot and two hands was cut. But I said okay, this is how it should be. May I be hurt, may I be killed - but this is what I choose to continue.

KANDAHAR ARCHIVE

NARRATION:

In the spring of 2001 in Kandahar, he had his first personal meeting with Osama Bin Laden. It was a kind of job interview

KHALID

I met him in a place that is – in the places that he lives there isn't no electricity, no fans, nothing, no air condition/
His desk he's like he sit on the floor, his desk was fixed to be on the floor.

SAUDI STREETS

NARRATION:

But Khalid says he was not impressed.

KHALID:

In 97 he was known for us as a fighter. But in 2001 he become as a president or something like leader of the world or something like that. I wasn't feeling good about being with him.

I know that even his speech is written for him by someone.

ARCHIVE KENYA EMBASSY
ATTACK

NARRATION:

But by this time Khalid was a wanted man back in Saudi Arabia – and, despite his doubts about Bin Laden, he decided to accept the offer of work.

KHALID:

I said I will not be thrown in jail. I will continue what I start even if I don't believe as before in this, but I have to continue.

NARRATION:

Khalid knew that Al Qaeda had carried out murderous attacks on civilians – like the bombing of the US embassy in Kenya. Nevertheless, he agreed to become a trainer – his speciality: remote control circuits for explosives.

BIN LADEN ARCHIVE

9/11 ARCHIVE

TORA BORA ARCHIVE

KHALID:

It's not something I am proud of. So I don't know how - I cannot change this, but I hope that these people they don't use this against any innocent people.

NARRATION:

During this period he heard Bin Laden talking about a new operation against the United States.

KHALID:

He was laughing and he said it will be far away from what they are thinking.

NARRATION:

Bin Laden was talking about the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. After that, Al Qaeda came under heavy bombardment by American bombers. Khalid fled to Tora Bora, on the mountainous border with Pakistan. It wasn't long before the Americans' chief target – Bin Laden arrived there as well

KHALID:

And we have in that night the most wanted guy Osama Bin Laden. So the situation get worse now.

NARRATION:

After a month of bombing, Bin Laden fled to Pakistan a day ahead of everyone else.

PRISON
(REPRESENTATIONAL)

Today a disillusioned Khalid regards him as a coward.

KHALID:

He bring us to Tora Bora and he said okay we'll fight here until the end, then he left the first one. For me it was coward.

NARRATION:

GUANTANAMO ARCHIVE

Khalid was captured by the Pakistani military and handed over to the Americans in Kandahar.

KHALID:

In Kandahar the treatment it was really bad. Hitting, beating, make us naked. I get hallucinated and I don't know where I am. Sometimes I feel that I am in a dream.

NARRATION:

Then a plane journey – destination unknown – it took more than twenty hours. He remembers feeling warmth and sunshine as he left the plane, still blindfolded. He had arrived at the American detention facility at Guantanamo. It was January 17, 2002. He would be held there for the next 4 and half years.

KHALID:

9/11 ARCHIVE

I said to myself, according to this treatment, if I go back to Saudi Arabia I will kidnap American. Of course you are mad and you

SAUDI FLIGHT FROM
GUANTANAMO ARCHIVE

RIYADH CARE CENTRE

are saying many things.

NARRATION:

But his hatred began to dissipate. He says a key moment in Guantanamo was when he was shown a film of 9/11 – before this he had only heard radio reports.

KHALID:

I remember when the 11 Sep attacks happened the first plane hit, the second hit we are cheering we are happy. Then when start seeing the picture, you feel sure that this is not right, this is not the war. We fight as a fighter, soldier. We don't accept that our civilian being killed by American or by anyone so why we accept that for the civilian? And honestly, when I saw this, the people they jump from the tower centres, I put myself on their place. I put my brothers in that place. If my brother how am I going to react?

NARRATION:

At the end of 2005, Khalid was one of a group of inmates released from Guantanamo and flown back to Saudi Arabia. He was surprised at what happened next. He feared harsh punishment. This is what he found.

Not locked prison cells, but inmates playing sports, doing craft activities and going to

class.

This was part of, for some, a controversial experiment by the Saudi Authorities – its goal was to reclaim Khalid for society.

PROF SHAYGI

We want to change the culture of death with the culture of life.

NARRATION:

RELIGIOUS LECTURES, OTHER
CLASSES ETC

Hamed Al Shaygi, a Professor of Sociology, helps run the Saudi rehabilitation programme for young men accused of involvement in extremist violence. Instead of further punishment, education is key to the new approach.

PROF SHAYGI

They are human beings so we have to treat them as human beings for them to have dignity.

NARRATION:

The programme brings in respected religious authorities to stress a central message: that killing innocent people of any faith is totally against Islam.

RELIGIOUS SCHOLAR:

Do actions show mercy or do they show violence – if they are violent then they are not justified any more.

NARRATION:

This is backed up with psychological counselling and job training. One aim is to create a sense of obligation.

Shaygi

They will be with us in society. And we treated him well, he has to pay back for that. Otherwise we will lose.

ALOLAIMI IN CENTRE

NARRATION:

Included in the treatment: art therapy.
Many could argue - including victims of terrorism - - is this program too lenient?"

SHAYGI

We have sometimes comments that: oh you are spoiling them you are doing this and this and this. We said yes we want to spoil them, to make them indulge in real life. They taste the life of freedom that will help them to rehabilitate very quickly.

NARRATION:

Osama Alolaimi has spent more than 7 years in jail. He was arrested after his own father turned him in to the police.

OSAMA (ARABIC):

It is one of the best things my father gave me.

SAUDI TERROR ATTACKS
ARCHIVE

NARRATION:

He had planned on fighting in Iraq with Al Qaeda.

OSAMA (ARABIC):

Of course I have regrets; seven years were lost from my life.

NARRATION:

During six months in the programme he completed training as a sound engineer and he's now about to be released. He's getting engaged next week. He says all this has helped change his perspective.

OSAMA (ARABIC):

Why shouldn't I make the day they arrested me a positive turning point in my life... instead of it being a day when I joined a suicide operation and blew myself up.

NARRATION:

Osama is one of 370 Saudi men who've graduated from the programme in the last four years.

But after the recent terror attacks on Saudi soil, how can the country's citizens accept the redemption of terrorists? The answer is perhaps, surprising.

PROF EL-SAID

Forgiveness is part of the culture.

NARRATION:

Professor Hamed El-Said, is a consultant to the UN's Terrorism Monitoring group, which is promoting a global deradicalisation effort. Not only does Islam have a strong tradition of forgiveness, he says, but Saudi Arabia's tightly-knit tribal ties mean that the young men on the programme are seen as family.

SAUDI TERROR ATTACKS
ARCHIVE

PROF EL-SAID

These individuals are looked at as our sons, that's what the Saudis tell you – despite what they committed, despite what they did – they are still looked at as individuals who have been misled by more radical individuals like Al Qaeda to do what they did, and therefore they are really looked at as our sons they need help they need assistance and we are here to assist them.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH
OFFICE

NARRATION:

But some former terrorists – those directly involved in atrocities - are not considered for the programme and others refuse to join. Many remain behind bars for long sentences. So far, fewer than one in ten Saudis accused of terrorism have passed through the rehab centre.

And some question whether those in the programme should be there at all.

The watchdog group, Human Rights Watch.

SARAH LEAH WHITSON

People are being forcibly detained, without trial and without charge and that's the fundamental problem.

NARRATION:

Human Rights Watch's middle east director, Sarah Leah Whitson, says the programme is tainted by being part of a system in which people can be imprisoned indefinitely without a proper judicial process.

SARAH LEAH WHITSON

Why are these people in prison in the first place? You know, I don't care if they're giving me ice cream with cherries on top in prison if I haven't been charged and I haven't been detained, and I haven't been prosecuted. Then I shouldn't be in prison.

NARRATION:

In response, Professor Shaygi says 99 per cent of the inmates who are transferred from regular prison to the rehab centre are set free.

ESCAPEES IN YEMEN ARCHIVE

SHAYGI

They've already been to court. They've already been to prison and now they are ready to be released. They have finished their sentence. We can't add to their

sentence.

NARRATION:

KHALID SHOWS PHOTOS

Professor Shaygi says that very few rejoin terror groups after release, although the programme suffered a serious setback in 2007 when several inmates fled to Yemen and declared they were continuing violent jihad. Overall however, Saudi authorities say fewer than ten percent return to violence – a figure that compares favourably with most prisons worldwide.

KHALID: (4116)

Now it was time to think about the decision, about the mistakes. And I have time now.

NARRATION:

KHALID SHOPPING

During his time in prison and rehabilitation Khalid was sustained by his family – he received pictures from them and he wrote messages back – often censored. He says it was these family ties that finally helped him alter his thinking.

KHALID:

I said okay now I'm going to change. I'm going to care about my family. I'm going to focus on my life. Kind of retire. I retire from all these things.

NARRATION:

Assessing that he no longer posed a

KHALID DRIVES OUT TO DUNES

danger to society, the Saudi government released him after one year, bought him a house, found him a job – and even helped him with a dowry so he could marry –

KHALID:

Now I have a good life. I have a new daughter and I have a new baby on the way. I have a stable life. And I appreciate everything that has been done for us - that they give us a second chance

NARRATION:

Khalid is still monitored and he's not free to travel abroad. But he says he finds a sense of freedom driving out into the dunes in the desert. Reflecting on his own life, he knows that, unlike him, many others never had a second chance to escape the trap of violence.