- **CAIR officials have denied that "jihad" is the motivating ideology underlying Islamic terrorism.**

In an apparent effort to sanitize Islamic fundamentalism, Nihad Awad redefined "jihad" in an August 23, 1998 interview with Liane Hansen on NPR's "Weekend Sunday":

> You know, holy war is like fatwa, it's become a buzz word. And I think they're severely misunderstood. I don't see holy war as a concept in Islam, it is not, it does not exist. There is a word jihad. Jihad is severely misunderstood. Jihad means legitimate struggle.
>
> The United States army, when it goes to defend innocent people, that's a form of jihad. Whenever a conductor (sic) tries to save the life of a baby, is a -- is a jihad. A mother to raise her children is jihad. You know, an honest person who wants to get good life is jihad. And also to struggle against injustice is jihad.
>
> All these things are noble meanings of jihad in Islam. It never means holy war. It does not exist in the Arabic or Islamic literature, it is not in the Koran, it is not in the prophetic tradition. It is a misnomer, it is a mis-translation of a noble concept in Islam which is jihad.[1]

Similarly, Hussam Ayloush, director of CAIR-Southern California, said in a January 2004 talk, "jihad definitely does not mean holy war. Actually, the term 'holy war' does not exist in Islamic terminology."[2] He repeated this view during an April 2005 lecture at Chaffey College in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., saying "Jihad is the Arabic word for strive. Any struggle in a person's life, not just a Muslim's, is a jihad." He added, "Being a student is a jihad because you are striving to learn."[3]

And CAIR New York's Ghazi Khankan commented, "The term 'holy war' is of non-Islamic origin. It was used by the crusaders in the 10th century…There is no such two words in Al-Quraan, the holy book…Some media unfortunately translate the word 'jihad' incorrectly as 'holy war.'"[4]

Those benign definitions are for public consumption. In contrast, when CAIR Chairman Omar Ahmad spoke at the 1999 IAP convention, he defined "jihad" as, in part, "to fight in the Way of Allah. To make war."[5]
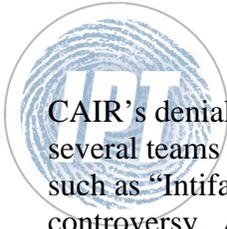
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[1] Interview with Nihad Awad by Liane Hansen, Weekend Sunday, National Public Radio, August 23, 1998.

[2] MSA-UCLA Islamic Awareness Week, Los Angeles, California, January 28, 2004.

[3] Aime Gutierrez, "Lecture addresses misconceptions of jihad," *The Chaffey Breeze*, April 25, 2005, http://www.chaffeybreeze.com/news/2005/04/25/CampusNews/Lecture.Addresses.Misconceptions.Of.Jihad-935226.shtml (accessed April 29, 2005).

[4] Interview with Ghazi Khankan, Washington Post online discussion, September 18, 2001.

[5] IAP Convention, Chicago, Illinois, November, 26, 1999.

CAIR's denial of jihad's militant meaning has continued as recently as early 2004, when several teams participating in a Muslim football tournament in California chose names such as "Intifada," "Mujahedeen" and "Soldiers of Allah," creating considerable controversy. As an article in *The Washington Post* described the teams' uniforms: "Intifada featured a man wearing a military helmet, his face -- save his eyes -- covered by a bandana. The Soldiers of Allah emblem showed a masked man in the act of firing a slingshot, and Mujahedeen's depicted a horse-borne figure in flowing robes, bearing a weapon on his shoulder."[6]

Despite community protests that the names were offensive, Sabiha Khan, communications director of the Southern California chapter of CAIR, asserted:

> These terms are basically very positive terms within the Muslim community and historically speaking…The popular definitions . . . are twisted. They're no longer what they mean, Islamically speaking.[7]

- **CAIR officials protested the use of the term "Islamist" terrorism in the 9/11 Commission Report.**

Following the release of the 9/11 Commission Report, Ibrahim Hooper criticized the use of the term "Islamist" terrorism, arguing that it appears to unfairly attack Islam as a whole. Hooper remarked, "'Islamist' is one of those hot-button terms that are ill-defined or not defined at all…They're basically saying this is a label for Muslims we don't like or agree with."[8]

Arsalan Iftikhar, CAIR Legal Director, said the commission "seems to stigmatize anyone with ties to Islam."[9] In a guest column published by the *Dallas Morning News*, Iftikhar said "the term 'Islamist terrorism' is nothing more than an oversimplification of our complex and kaleidoscopic national security paradigm."[10]

- **CAIR spokesman Ibrahim Hooper has said that Wahhabism is a term "invented to scare people about Muslim bogeymen."**

When asked about Wahhabism in July 2003, Hooper said, "It's one of those terms which is invented to scare people about Muslim bogeymen. It's just all part of the extremely powerful right wing and their agenda right now to demonize Saudi Arabia and demonize anything associated with Saudi Arabia."[11]

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[6] David Neiman, "Flag Football in a Political Arena," *The Washington Post*, January 12, 2004.
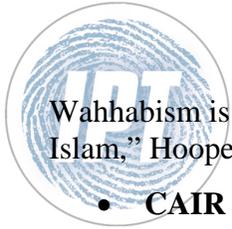
[7] David Neiman, "Flag Football in a Political Arena," *The Washington Post*, January 12, 2004.

[8] Hope Yen, "US Muslim Groups Decry Sept. 11 Report Input," *Associated Press*, July 28, 2004.

[9] Arsalan Iftikhar, "Constant Use of 'Islamist' Overlooks Real Threats," *Dallas Morning News*, August 3, 2004.

[10] Arsalan Iftikhar, "Constant Use of 'Islamist' Overlooks Real Threats," *Dallas Morning News*, August 3, 2004.

[11] David Staples, "Local Mosque Denies Links with Controversial Group," *Edmonton Journal*, July 28, 2003.

Wahhabism is "a made-up word by those who don't want to appear to be attacking Islam," Hooper said in a separate interview two months later.[12]

- **CAIR officials downplayed the significance of a report documenting the presence of Saudi hate literature in U.S. mosques and a Saudi school in Virginia.**

A Freedom House report issued in January 2005 exposed the Saudi government's dissemination of hate literature in the United States. Many of the documents cited by Freedom House advocated jihad, taught hatred of Jews and Shiite Muslims, or condemned democratic societies.[13]

After arguing that most American Muslims could not read the documents because they do not understand Arabic, Hooper told *The Christian Science Monitor*, "we can rely on the good judgment and common sense of Muslims to reject such thinking if they come across it."[14]

CAIR board member Nabil Sadoun also challenged the Freedom House report in a *Dallas Morning News* op-ed. Sadoun, a member of the Dallas Central Mosque -- where Freedom House had found a document declaring, "We consider ourselves to be in a continuous war against the Zionist enemy in every way until we achieve the hopes of the Arab nation driving the occupier out"[15] -- condemned the researchers' methodology. He wrote, "The study has a sample size of 15, too low in my estimation…Moreover, the study does not cite how the materials were obtained…The authors did not offer any process by which independent verification could be made of the materials and the translation's accuracy of those materials from Arabic…The Freedom House report fails to rise to the level of an objective, unbiased and academically worthy study.[16]

In the same *Dallas Morning News* issue, Legal Director Iftikhar wrote, "there may be more hysteria than substance in what Freedom House would want us to believe." Instead of addressing the radicalism within the American Muslim community, Iftikhar changed the topic, urging Freedom House to "write a report on hate speech levied against Islam and Muslims by some of America's most notable evangelical leaders."[17]

Similarly, CAIR downplayed the July 2004 revelation that textbooks at the Islamic Saudi Academy in Virginia were teaching first graders that Judaism and Christianity were false

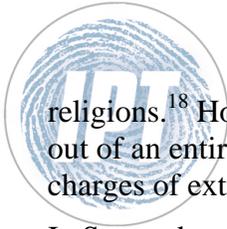[12] Jeff Johnson, "Investigation of 'Terrorist Recruitment' Concerns Muslims," *CNSNews.com*, September 29, 2003.

[13] "Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques," Freedom House, http://www.freedomhouse.org/religion/pdfdocs/FINAL%20FINAL%20Saudi.pdf (accessed February 25, 2005).

[14] Jane Lampman, "Matters of Faith," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 10, 2005.

[15] "Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques," Freedom House, http://www.freedomhouse.org/religion/pdfdocs/FINAL%20FINAL%20Saudi.pdf (accessed February 25, 2005).

[16] Nabil M. Sadoun, "Visit Dallas Central Mosque, and You'll Find Tolerance and Faith," *Dallas Morning News*, February 20, 2005.

[17] Arsalan Iftikhar, "Think Tank's Report is Built on Flawed Thinking and Hypocrisy," *Dallas Morning News,* February 20, 2005.

religions.[18] Hooper told the Associated Press, "The fact that one sentence in one book, out of an entire curriculum, needs to be changed or clarified hardly justifies sweeping charges of extremism."[19]

In September 2005, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes, while on an official visit to Saudi Arabia, told a group of Saudi journalists that the Bush administration was concerned about a study (Freedom House) that identified anti-Christian and anti-Semitic literature, connected to Saudi religious organizations, found in American mosques. She told the reporters, "We are concerned that literature has been found in American mosques that has a message that is not tolerant, and we hope the people of Saudi Arabia will work with us as we try to deal with this issue." CAIR attacked both her comments and the initial Freedom House report, charging that her remarks were based on a faulty study with an "inherent bias." Hooper said, "We don't agree that there is widespread literature of that kind in mosques in America[20]

Most recently, Hooper has tried to downplay the May 2007 Pew Research Center survey showing 26 percent of American Muslims under age 30 justify suicide bombings in defense of Islam. Appearing on MSNBC with host Tucker Carlson May 23, 2007, Hooper dismissed questions about suicide bombing and the 60 percent of respondents who didn't believe Muslims carried out the 9/11 attacks.[21]

"They're not against al Qaeda in the numbers that most people are, judging by these numbers. And they don't believe that Muslims were behind 9/11," Carlson said. "You know what, objectively, that is a problem. But you don't see it as one."[22]

Muslim American attitudes in general "mirrored the views of people of all faiths in America," Hooper said. "Work hard to get ahead, send your kids to school." He accused Carlson of "cherry picking" a handful of negative responses from among hundreds of questions.[23]

That seemed to set Carlson off, prompting this exchange:

CARLSON: I have the—some of the questions right here. They are not hundreds. And I thought those were the most telling and you are not concerned, but I am. But I appreciate your coming on.

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[18] "REPORT: Saudi School in Virginia Disparages Christianity and Judaism," July 13, 2004, http://www.saudiinstitute.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=136&Itemid=28 (accessed February 25, 2005).
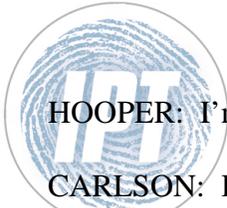
[19] Mathew Barakat, "Islamic Group Says Saudi Academy Teachings Breed Hatred," *Associated Press*, August 3, 2004. Note: The previous day in *The Washington Times* Hooper had struck a different tone: "I would suggest either removing the textbook or inserting a notation that something is being changed in the textbook." See: Christina Bellantoni, "Islamic Groups Hit Curriculum at Saudi School," *The Washington Times*, August 2, 2005.

[20] Holly Lebowitz Rossi, "US Envoy Raises Alarm on Inflammatory Literature in Mosques," Religion News Service, September 28, 2005, http://www.beliefnet.com/story/175/story_17595_1.html (accessed September 29, 2005).

[21] "Tucker," MSNBC, May 23, 2007

[22] "Tucker," MSNBC, May 23, 2007

[23] "Tucker," MSNBC, May 23, 2007

HOOPER: I'm concerned that you would pick on only negative.

CARLSON: Right! You're a victim! Of course! I totally forgot! It's always the media's fault, right. … no one in the community is unreasonable. It is always the media. I'm sorry, I forgot my talking points.[24]

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[24] "Tucker," MSNBC, May 23, 2007