

# DID AN INTELLIGENCE ASSET PERSUADE ABDULRAHMAN AL-AWLAKI TO SEARCH FOR HIS FATHER?

There's an inconclusive – but nevertheless intriguing – detail in Jeremy Scahill's *Dirty Wars* that might explain why Abdulrahman al-Awlaki decided, in September 2011, to go search for his father. After the boy ran away from home, the family tried to figure out why, having expressed no plans to go search for his father, he would up and leave like he did.

The family called around to Abdulrahman's friends. Someone told [Awlaki's father] Nasser that a teacher at the school had recently gotten close to Abdulrahman, and Nasser believed the teacher had been encouraging Abdulrahman to find his father and to reconnect with him, that it would be good for the boy. "He had influence on him, and they used to go to a pizza parlour to eat pizza." Nasser said. When Nasser tried to find the teacher to ask him if he had any information about Abdulrahman's whereabouts, the teacher had "vanished."

Granted, this amounts to no more than an observation that someone who had become influential on the boy disappeared right as the family started looking for answers; there's no affirmative evidence there was a connection.

That said, the CIA had already twice tried to use family ties to get to Awlaki by this point. As the Danish agent Morten Storm has described, he arranged a marriage between a Croatian convert to Islam and Awlaki in a failed attempt to track the cleric.

In addition, as Scahill laid out in his book and excerpted in the Nation, a CIA officer unsuccessfully approached Awlaki's brother, Ammar, in February 2011 to help them find Awlaki.

Chris made it clear that he worked for the CIA. He told Ammar that the United States had a task force dedicated to "killing or capturing your brother"—and that while everyone preferred to bring Anwar in alive, time was running out. "He's going to be killed, so why don't you help in saving his life by helping us capture him?" Chris said. Then he added, "You know, there's a \$5 million bounty on your brother's head. You won't be helping us for free."

Ammar told Chris that he didn't want the money, that he hadn't seen Anwar since 2004 and had no idea where he was. The American countered, "That \$5 million would help raise [Anwar's] kids."

"I don't think there's any need for me to meet you again," Ammar told Chris. Even so, the American told Ammar to think it over, perhaps discuss it with his family. "We can meet when you go to Dubai in two weeks," he said. Ammar was stunned: his tickets for that trip had not yet been purchased, and the details were still being worked out. Chris gave Ammar an e-mail address and said he'd be in touch.

Clearly, by 2011, the CIA was willing to try any scheme that might help them find Awlaki, regardless of the family bounds it abused. So it is conceivable, at least, that they might try to use Abdulrahman as "bait," a word Awlaki's mother used.

I wonder if John Brennan considered this possibility in his review of why the United States assassinated one of its teenaged

citizens?