



## An Unexpected Patriot

### *Search for terrorists finds a traitor*

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Michael Curtis Reynolds, the Wilkes-Barre drifter who is looking for al-Qaeda funding to help him blow up the trans-Alaska and transcontinental pipelines, is now on Shannen Rossmiller's radar.

Conspicuous as a barroom braggart, Reynolds is writing boldly - and in English - in the all-Arabic Osama bin Laden Crew chat room, making no pretense about his background or his mission: He's an American citizen out to destroy his country.

*Just like Ryan Anderson*, Rossmiller says to herself, recalling another angry American, from 2003. *Oh, please don't let him be another one like that.*

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The 2003 e-mail starts with a typical Arab greeting: *Wa salaam alaykum.*

But the writer is National Guard tank Spec. Ryan Anderson, 27, of the 81st Armor Brigade at Fort Lewis in Washington state. An American.

He's about to be deployed to Iraq. Aside from the opening salutation, he is writing in English on the extremist Web site [bravemuslims.com](http://bravemuslims.com).

Shannen Rossmiller should be in bed, sleeping. But as usual, her racing brain compels her to rise for the radicals.

*This is so exciting*, she thinks, dressing quietly so as not to wake her husband, Randy. Nothing in her life has been this fascinating.

Randy has given up trying to figure out her obsession. But he doesn't stop it, either.

To pay him back, Rossmiller makes sure he has time to pursue his hobby. He goes off for days, flying custom-built, radio-controlled planes with friends in Montana fields.

Balancing plane-making and terrorist-hunting, the Rossmillers achieve marital harmony.

*Neither one of us controls the other, Rossmiller says, which is why we got through the bumpy roads.*

Like the first time Rossmiller crashed the home computer while e-mailing terrorists on the Web. Randy, who sets up computer networks for a living, lost tons of work.

"What the hell is all this Arabic stuff?" he asked. "What have you been doing?"

Rossmiller just wanted her jihadists back. "Can't you find my files?" she said.

Family tensions lasted a while after that.

But now, the house is calm. Rossmiller sips a Diet Coke and reads the Anderson e-mail. It's 4:54 a.m. on Nov. 2, 2003.

"Just curious," the e-mail continues. "Would there be any chance a brother who might be on the wrong side at the present could . . . defect so to speak? I have been touched by the will of Allah . . . [and] may be headed for a great mistake, and I may wish to correct that. . . ."

Fully alert, Rossmiller runs through the cast of jihadist characters she has made up. Which should she be? She decides on Abu Khadija, an Algerian extremist, at [khadija1417@hotmail.com](mailto:khadija1417@hotmail.com).

"Dear brother in Islam," Rossmiller/Khadija begins. "I call my brothers to do your Muslim duty with your brothers in jihad . . . and kill all infidels coming united on fronts in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq."

Rossmiller throws in misspellings and bad English. What she has written works.

"I am due to enter the war zone soon," Anderson replies to Khadija. "Unfortunately, due to my position I will be bearing the arms of the enemy, thus putting not only my soul, but the souls of our brave brothers and sisters in peril. . . . It may be best if I could arrange to meet in person with a contact once I am over there . . . to . . . show that I am a friend and willing to give my life for Allah's glorious will."

While America wept on 9/11, Ryan Anderson converted to Islam and sought acceptance by al-Qaeda.

Rossmiller's Khadija is a careful sort, exhorting Anderson - who sometimes calls himself Amir Abdul-Rashid - to be wary of his e-mail trail.

One of the ironies of Rossmiller's tireless pursuit is how she cautions her prey to cover their tracks on the Internet. Of course, what they're doing is following Rossmiller's cyber road map, making it easier for her to follow them.

Sometimes, she compels people to affix their names to "oaths of allegiance" she makes up. Other times, she'll send self-destructing e-mails, which delete themselves 30 seconds after they're opened. The oaths and suicide e-mails heighten the excitement of the conspirators and increase her credibility, Rossmiller believes.

*This stuff is almost addictive*, Rossmiller admits to herself.

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### ***Passing Through***

Driving from Wilkes-Barre to a job at a semiconductor plant in Pocatello, Idaho, in November 2005, Michael Curtis Reynolds notices something compelling amid the wide-open Western scenery: the Williams facility in Opal, Wyo., one of the three biggest natural-gas plants in the United States.

Apparently excited about his find, Reynolds e-mails Rossmiller, who he still believes is an al-Qaeda terrorist.

Reynolds suggests blowing up gas well heads at Williams before destroying the Alaska pipeline, since it's easier to reach. Maybe the transcontinental pipeline could be next, he says.

Promising to lay out his updated plan in detail, Reynolds says he will provide shopping lists of bomb-making ingredients.

Nearly everything al-Qaeda needs, he says, can be purchased at Wal-Mart or Kmart.

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### ***From Chitchat to Treason***

Happy to comply with Rossmiller's prompts, Anderson suggests that Khadija and Amir sometimes interact as "George" and "Andy," two old schoolmates from Washington State University, from which Anderson graduated in 2002 with a degree in military history.

Writing now as Andy, Anderson is breezy, but includes information about his coming deployment.

Writing as Amir, Anderson sounds serious and grandiose, with the air of a man very much above the frivolous preoccupations of American life. His heart is with Allah, his head in jihad. He believes his fellow American soldiers are "crude" and "immoral."

"I wonder if an American guy like me with strong [Muslim] faith could ever manage to marry a nice Iraqi girl," writes Andy. Anderson is already married to an American woman he says is "sexy but not smart." And apparently dispensable.

"Iraq . . . I hear is a beautiful country . . .," he continues, "a place that I might [find] a home in. . . . Funny how things like that happen."

Playing along, Rossmiller/Khadija/George writes: "You are still same old Andy! Ever one for adventure!" Her English is purposely clumsy, not that of a native speaker. "I haven't taken marriage vows as yet. It is hard to find a nice wholesome woman these days that is true to her faith and willing to submit to her husband."

Rossmiller thinks about Randy asleep in the next room as she writes that. *Like I would ever submit to any guy.*

As Christmas approaches, Anderson is Amir, gloomy and restless. It is a "badly perverted Crusader holiday," he writes.

Over the next weeks, Anderson's melancholy increases. "I am caught in the middle," he confides to Khadija. "Stay where I am, with the wrong side, and risk my eternal soul because I have fought with the Crusader armies, or take the dangerous path into the unknown and forsake people who are relying on me at home in the U.S. . . . not to mention become a criminal in my homeland, never to return."

*Oh, he so wants to be accepted by the extremists,* Rossmiller sees.

Knowledgeable of the law, Rossmiller is careful not to entrap Anderson. She lets him set the agenda.

And sure enough, one day, Anderson tells Khadija how to disable U.S. M1A1 and M1A2 Abrams tanks, and how to kill their crews without destroying the tanks so they could remain useful to al-Qaeda in Iraq.

*My God, Rossmiller realizes, he's even telling me troop locations in Iraq. And all from his commander's computer!*

On Christmas Day, Anderson has decided. "Let's do this," he writes with chilling simplicity. "It will be a fruitful endeavor for all involved."

Rossmiller is amazed at Anderson's determination. She tests his resolve once more.

"Are you prepared to stand behind the prophet when killing is necessary?" she asks him.

"Yes," he answers quickly. "It's right to kill."

Rossmiller alerts federal authorities, who arrest Anderson for treason. He is set for a court-martial, and Rossmiller is summoned to testify.

As she packs for Fort Lewis and says goodbye to Randy and the kids, she has no premonition of the mess that will follow.

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