

STEVEN EMERSON

IMPACT: Steven Emerson is a national security and terrorism journalist and pundit. He is the founder of the Investigative Project on Terrorism and has a history of promoting falsified information and conspiracy theories about Islam and Muslims. These include claims that there are “no-go zones” in the United Kingdom, that the Oklahoma City Bombing was carried out by an Arab because it had “a Middle Eastern trait,” and that American Muslim civil rights organizations are “infiltrating” Congress and the media.

- Steven Emerson is the **founder and current executive director of the Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT), a nonprofit research group founded in 1995 and focused on “radical Islamic terrorism.”** According to IPT’s [website](#), its research has been a “principal source of critical evidence to a wide variety of government offices and law enforcement agencies, as well as the U.S. Congress and numerous public policy forums.” A 2007 [article](#) in Brown University’s alumni magazine noted that, **following the September 11th attacks, “reporters and policy makers couldn’t get enough of Emerson,” and he briefed the National Security Council, FBI, and Justice Department.** Emerson has also briefed Congress and intelligence agencies. He is frequently called on to [testify](#) before Congress, and the C-Span [website](#) showcases thirty-three appearances.
- According to a 2011 [report](#) by the Center for American Progress, **Steven Emerson is a “misinformation expert” who “generate[s] false facts and materials used by political leaders, grassroots groups, and the media.”** Emerson is the author or co-author of a number of books on terrorism and national security, including *The American House of Saud: The Secret Petrodollar Connection* (1985), *Secret Warriors: Inside the Covert Military Operations of the Reagan Era* (1988), *The Fall of Pan Am 103: Inside the Lockerbie Investigation* (1990), *Terrorist: The Inside Story of the Highest-Ranking Iraqi Terrorist Ever to Defect to the West* (1991), and *Jihad Incorporated: A Guide to Militant Islam in the U.S.*, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (2006).
- Emerson had played a role in a number of cases involving Muslim individuals and charity organizations accused of involvement with terrorism. **During the 1990s, Emerson along with other organizations “lobbied the U.S. government to take action against HLF [Holy Land Foundation], claiming that HLF and its officers were connected to “terrorism.”** In 1996, Emerson [testified](#) before the Senate Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia that the [Holy Land Foundation](#) was the “the main fund-raising arm for Hamas in the United States.” HLF was the largest Muslim charity in the U.S. before it was selectively targeted by the Bush administration less than three months after the 9/11 attacks.
- Emerson was also involved in the prosecution of Sami Al-Arian, a University of South Florida professor [accused](#) by the FBI of being involved in a terrorist organization. In 2003, Al-Arian was “indicted on fifty-three counts of supporting the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which had been designated by the government as a terrorist group.” Following Al-Arian’s arrest, Emerson [stated](#), “The indictment shows an elaborate, sophisticated, comprehensive campaign, going back to 1984, and explicitly how Al-Arian and others were serving as actual leaders of a militant Islamic group within the U.S.” In a June 2012 article, journalist and daughter of Al-Arian, Laila Al-Arian [stated](#), “The conspiracy case, which involved three other Palestinian men, was based largely on my father’s charitable contributions, associations, speeches and other First Amendment-protected activities.”

STEVEN EMERSON

- Emerson's **interest in Al-Arian has continued beyond the case—demonstrated in a March 2017 piece he published on IPT website where he refers to Al-Arian as a “terrorist.”** In a November 2010 article, the U.S.-based Charity & Security Network reported that **Emerson had a “close relationship to Gordon Kromberg, a federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of Virginia,” and that the HLF prosecution “relied on evidence produced by Emerson’s Investigative Project and two groups with ties to Emerson, the NEFA Foundation and the International Assessment & Strategy Center (IASC).”** In late 2006, **Kromberg refused to delay Al-Arian’s transfer to a prison in Virginia until after the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, stating the request was “part of the attempted Islamization of the American Justice System.”** In September 2008, when the *Washington Post* published a piece on Kromberg including criticisms pointing to the judge’s anti-Muslim bias, Emerson responded with a piece in IPT stating the *Post* journalists had “carelessly bought in to an Islamist propaganda campaign against one of America’s finest and bravest prosecutors [Kromberg.” In the piece, Emerson also alleged that Al-Arian had a “violent and *jihadist* nature.”
- In 1994, Emerson produced a PBS documentary *Jihad in America*, which “argued that Islamic militants, supported by prominent Arab- American and Muslim groups, were exploiting constitutionally protected civil liberties to train and organize and to plot acts of terror.” Emerson received numerous awards for this documentary including the George Polk Award for best television documentary. The film was featured on *60 Minutes*. In 2001, **New Jersey congressman Christopher Smith stated the movie, which was distributed to members of Congress after 9/11, “played a real role’ in the House passage of the Patriot Act antiterrorism legislation.”**
- In a 1995 interview with CBS in the aftermath of the **Oklahoma City bombing, Emerson falsely claimed was carried out by an Arab, Muslim person (it was perpetrated by Timothy McVeigh).** He stated it “was done with the attempt to inflict as many casualties as possible. **That is a Middle Eastern trait.**” In another segment on the same day on *CBS Evening News*, Emerson stated, “Oklahoma City, I can tell you, is probably considered as one of the largest centers of Islamic radical activity outside the Middle East.”
- In 1997, **Emerson was accused of forging a dossier of what was “supposed to be FBI documents” describing American Muslim organizations with alleged “terrorist sympathies,” to be given to the Associated Press.** An AP reporter uncovered an earlier, almost identical document by Emerson, indicating that the purported FBI dossier “was really his.” Another **AP reporter stated that Emerson “could never back up what he said. We couldn’t believe that document was from the FBI files.”**
- Emerson has repeatedly promoted the false notion that the Islamic faith is inherently antisemitic. In 1995 in *Jewish Monthly*, Emerson stated, “The level of vitriol against Jews and Christianity within contemporary Islam, unfortunately, is something that we are not totally cognizant of, or that we don’t want to accept. We don’t want to accept it because to do so would be to acknowledge that one of the world’s great religions — which has more than 1.4 billion adherents — somehow sanctions genocide, planned genocide, as part of its religious doctrine.”
- In February 1998 Emerson testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the growing threat of extremists that “In the five years since the [1993 World Trade Center] bombing, intelligence officials and law enforcement agents have discovered that militant Islamic extremists have

STEVEN EMERSON

established extensive networks throughout the United States.”

- In a June 2007 [article](#) for the *National Review*, **Emerson stated that then-President George W. Bush “coddles American apologists for radical Islam” following the president’s re-dedication ceremony of the Saudi-funded Islamic Center of Washington, D.C.** and appointment of a special envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), calling his outreach “wrongheaded” with a “lack of awareness.”
- In October 2007, **Emerson was featured as a guest speaker at David Horowitz Freedom Center’s Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week**, a “national effort to oppose [the] lies [that] George Bush created the war on terror and that Global Warming is a greater danger to Americans than the terrorist threat” and to “rally American students to defend their country.”
- In a June 2009 *MSNBC* interview, **Emerson claimed that then-President Barack Obama’s outreach to Muslims would “cater to [extremists] in terms of reversing some of the anti-terrorism policies.”** He further stated that extremists will “think there is going to be free reign for them with influence of the administration” and that “they are going to have influence over the policies of financial constraints over terrorist activities.” His interviewer, Norah O’Donnell, stated that his suggestions were “ridiculous.”
- In November 2009, **Emerson wrote an article titled “It’s Radical Islam, Stupid” for Stonegate Institute, which later changed its name to Gatestone Institute, claiming that “the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) was created to serve as a front group for Hamas.”** He claimed that “for 14 years, CAIR got away with the lying to us about who they are, justifying Islamic terrorist attacks, legitimizing suicide bombings, presenting speakers who had been Holocaust deniers, making incendiary presentations about the United States and urging Muslims not to talk to the FBI.” Despite failing to substantiate his accusations, Emerson has repeatedly [described CAIR](#), a Muslim civil rights organizations as a “Muslim Brotherhood front group.” In the same article, Emerson also described the [Goldstone Report](#), a United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict in 2009, as “the existence of a powerful Islamic lobby at the United Nations.” He [pointed](#) to other examples of what he describes as an “inverted focus when it comes to radical Islam” such as claims that Random House and Yale University Press’s refusal to “publish books that are “critical” of, or potentially offensive to, Muslim extremists.”
- A 2010 [piece](#) in *Lobe Log* discovered the **existence of “suspicious financial arrangements between private companies” connected to Emerson.** In November 2010 the *Tennessean* [investigated](#) the relationship between IPT and SAE Productions, Emerson’s for-profit company. The [investigation found that Emerson used IPT to channel funds to SAE Productions—of which he is the sole employee. In 2008, IPT paid SAE Productions \\$3.33 million, using its tax exempt status to avoid additional fees.](#) Between 2001 and 2007 the [Counterterrorism & Security Education and Research Foundation \(CSTERF\)](#), a nonprofit “founded in 1999 because of the increasing rise of terrorism and the lack of private resources to deal with the problem,” also contributed \$1.6 million to IPT. Similarly, CSTERF tax forms list transfers of grant revenues to a for-profit entity, the [International Association of Counterterrorism and Security Professionals \(IACSP\)](#), an organization with a stated goal of creating “a center of information and educational services for those concerned about the challenges now facing all free societies, and promoting professional ethics in the counterterrorism field.” Neither CSTERF, IACSP, nor IPT [mention](#) any relationship between the three. Daniel Borochoff, president of the watchdog group [American](#)

Last updated October 14, 2020

STEVEN EMERSON

[Institute of Philanthropy](#), [commented](#) that the relationship was a “convenient arrangement for avoiding disclosure and allowing tax deductions.” In a November 2010 article in *Lobe Log*, IPT managing director Ray Locker [stated](#) that a relationship “exists” between IPT and CSTERF and that they do not discuss their funding due to the “nature of the work we do” and to “protect [Emerson’s] security.”

- In **March 2011, Emerson pushed misleading statistics on terrorism committed by individuals identified as Muslim on the day before Congressman Peter King convened the first round of his “controversial hearings on the radicalization of American Muslims.”** The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) [discovered](#) an Emerson [article](#) claiming that “more than 80 percent of all convictions tied to international terrorist groups and homegrown terrorism since 9/11 involved defendants driven by a radical Islamist agenda. Though Muslims represent about 1 percent of the American population, they constitute defendants in 186 of the 228 cases DOJ lists.” Later, on the *FOX Business* program “Follow the Money,” [Pamela Geller cited](#) Emerson’s claim. SPLC [noted](#) that Emerson’s article “mischaracterized the source material it analyzed from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)” in order to draw a “meaningless conclusion from its own flawed analysis.”
- A 2011 [report](#) by the Center for American Progress [found](#) that **between 2010–2012, the Investigative Project on Terrorism received \$1,409,585 in funding from Daniel Pipes, founder and president of the right-wing anti-Islam think-tank, Middle East Forum.** Emerson is frequently featured on both Daniel Pipes’ [website](#) and the [Middle East Forum](#).
- **Emerson has a history of slandering politicians on both sides of the aisle by accusing them of “extremist” ties.** In March 2011, Emerson [stated](#) that a hearing on the civil rights of American Muslims [held](#) by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), was “consistent with his [Durbin’s] whole entire policy of the last seven years of protecting radical Islamic groups.” Emerson further alleged that one of Durbin’s staff members, Reema Dodin, had “extremist ties” simply for having worked with Muslim legal and civil rights organizations. In May 2012, Emerson and [Daniel Pipes](#) co-authored an [article](#) on then-governor of New Jersey Chris Christie’s supposed “Islam problem” in which they stated Christie had “hugged a terrorist-organization member, abridged free-speech rights, scorned concern over Islamization, and opposed law-enforcement counterterrorism efforts.”
- In 2013, **Emerson produced a documentary with the IPT called “Jihad in America: The Grand Deception”** which claims to investigate “the covert structure and growing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist groups, masquerading under the false moniker of being apolitical religious groups or civil rights groups in the United States, specifically how they are infiltrating or intimidating major societal institutions from Congress to Hollywood, from the mainstream news media to federal law enforcement, from the publishing industry to museums.”
- In February 2013, Emerson [participated](#) alongside others, including anti-Muslim commentator [Zuhdi Jasser](#), in a virtual press conference sponsored by the [Center for Security Policy](#) to oppose John Brennan’s confirmation as the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. At the event, **Emerson claimed Brennan “was the man who opened the dialogue with radical Islamic groups as evidenced by his speeches to groups at NYU, including the Muslim Students Association, the NYU Muslim Student, law student group,”** and that his “open embrace of radical Islam...not only makes him disqualified to be the CIA director, it disqualifies him from the position he currently occupies on the National Security Council as counter-terrorism director.”

STEVEN EMERSON

- In August 2013, Steven Emerson [commented](#) on the Mimi Geerges Show that the Muslim Brotherhood was the “parent of Al-Qaeda as it is the parent of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and every Sunni terrorist group” and the “ideological origin of all these violent groups” with a “supremacist view of the world—they want to establish a caliphate.” He claimed that “behind closed doors” they talk about “jihad, they talk about martyrdom operations, they talk about taking over the United States.” He further **stated that “the people in charge, or the leadership...to the Al Azhar University, to Al Jazeera... the imams in many of the madrasas, the Islamist schools, are part of the Islamist Brotherhood**, and maybe not the Muslim Brotherhood formally, but there are a constellation of values and interests” such as a caliphate. **On Islamophobia, he stated that “Islamophobia is a contrived term... [it] is fake, [it] is used as a way of intimidating, smearing anyone who criticizes radical Islam.”**
- In an August 2014 *Fox News* [interview](#), Emerson stated that there are “more jihadists” who can be “mobilized on a moment’s notice” and this “problem is exacerbated by the fact that we have an administration that’s in bed with these radical Islamic groups who pretend to be moderate or civil rights groups that have basically curtailed the ability of the FBI, ICE agents, to monitor, do investigations, or even prosecutors.” He stated that the Obama administration “embraced and legitimized the Muslim Brotherhood, which is the godfather and parent of all Sunni terrorist groups, including Hamas, including Islamic Jihad, and Al Qaeda. And for the administration to make a distinction between Al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood is simply murderous.” **He likened then-Secretary of State John Kerry’s call for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, to negotiating with Hitler**, saying that “there is no underlying grievance of these groups other than destruction of the Jewish state and ultimately establishment of the Islamic caliphate.”
- During a January 2015 *Fox News* interview, **Emerson referred to Birmingham, a city in the U.K., as a “Muslim-only city” where non-Muslims “don’t go in.”** He [defined](#) these “no-go zones” as “zones where sharia courts are set up, where Muslim density is very intense, where the police don’t go in, and where it’s basically a separate country almost,” likening it to a “caliphate.” **He claimed that in parts of London “there are actually Muslim religious beliefs that actually beat and actually wound seriously anyone who doesn’t dress according to religious Muslim attire.”** He further stated that “Europe is finished because if you extrapolate the number of Muslims... the problem is that the leadership of the Muslim communities in Europe deliberately don’t want to integrate and so they establish these zones which refuse to integrate and use them as leverage against the host country as a political reaction by the population” which “fosters the perpetuation of radical Islamic generations to come.” **In response to Emerson’s claims, then-U.K. Prime Minister, David Cameron, told *ITV News* that he “choked on my porridge” and that “this guy [Emerson] is clearly a complete idiot.”** *Fox News* and Emerson later [apologized](#), with Emerson [attributing](#) his claims to “sloppy research that had not been fact-checked.” Anti-Muslim blogger [Pamela Geller admitted](#) in an interview with *Fox News* that Steven Emerson “did misspeak” but confirmed the existence of [no-go zones](#) and called the network’s apology for the mistake “egregious.”
- During the same January 2015 *Fox News* segment, Emerson discussed female terrorists in Europe and the Middle East, where women wear burkas to “hide their identities” and [claimed](#) “there are many of them,” and “in certain airports, believe it or not, they don’t require the burkas to be removed to identify them to see who they are on their passports.”

STEVEN EMERSON

- A February 2017 *Washington Post* [article](#) reported that **Steve Bannon listed Emerson as an executive producer in his proposal for a film titled “Destroying the Great Satan: The Rise of Islamic Facism [sic] in America.”** The article states that upon “hearing about Emerson’s research,” Tim Watkins, a producer involved in discussions with Bannon about the project, came up with the opening scene portraying a “flag fluttering above the U.S. Capitol is emblazoned with a crescent and star” and “chants of ‘Allahu Akbar’ ris[ing] from inside the building.”

Bridge Initiative Factsheet