The role of social media in recent developments in the jihadist scene is central, but in some cases it is matched or even exceeded by important real-world dynamics.

These sympathizers did not begin their radicalization trajectories alone in front of a computer screen, but rather via face-to-face interactions through preexisting social contacts who already embraced jihadist ideology.

Over time, these individuals tend to form a cluster: a small informal group of like-minded individuals whose internal dynamics reinforce the beliefs of its members.

**KEY INDIVIDUAL**
Abdi Nur, a Somali American who joined ISIS in 2014 and then offered fake passports and contact information to his friends back in Minnesota

**BACKGROUND**
From 2007–2009, nearly two dozen individuals, mostly ethnic Somalis, left the U.S. to join the terrorist group al Shabaab.

**CLUSTER FORMATION**
In 2014, a number of Somali Americans shifted their focus from Somalia to Syria. Since then, at least 15 individuals have joined or tried to join ISIS on the ground, relying on the established network of al Shabaab supporters. Many grew up in the same community, attended the same schools, and worshiped at the same mosque. Several had family or friends connected to al Shabaab.

**ARREST**
By the spring of 2015, the group had cemented their plans to join ISIS, unaware that they had been under FBI surveillance for months. Nader successfully traveled to Amman but was arrested by Jordanian authorities. In the wake of his capture, the FBI arrested the cluster’s four remaining members in the New York area.

**ISIS IN AMERICA**
**REAL-WORLD CLUSTERS**
**ST. LOUIS**

**NEW YORK CITY/NEW JERSEY**

**MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL**

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