

First picture of film-maker who has enraged the Muslim world with a controversial movie – and the terrified actress he duped into taking a starring role

- **FBI named Nakoula Basseley Nakoula as the film-maker behind movie**
- **Actress Anna Gurji, 21, says she was misled by the director**

By Caroline Graham and Peter Sheridan

Seen with a young actress who is now living in fear for her life, this is the first picture of the man said to be behind the anti-Islam movie that has triggered violence across the Middle East.

Nakoula Basseley Nakoula – also known as Sam Bacile – was last week named by the FBI as the film-maker responsible for *Innocence Of Muslims*, which ridicules the prophet Muhammad.

The Mail on Sunday has exclusively obtained this on-set image of him with the film's star Anna Gurji, who says she was duped by the 55-year-old director.

Conman: Nakoula Basseley Nakoula on the set of the film with Ms Gurji in a red wig

Nakoula is an Egyptian-born Coptic Christian. Now living in California, he is a convicted drug dealer and conman who was last released from jail in June last year.

The film has ignited anti-US clashes from Morocco to Malaysia. Seven people have been killed, thousands injured and last night the rioting had spread to Sydney, Australia. It was also reported that Sudan had rejected a US request to be allowed to send in Marines to protect its embassy.

In California, 21-year-old Ms Gurji, who plays Muhammad's child bride, spoke yesterday of her fear of reprisals and how she was 'betrayed' by Nakoula. 'I was playing the youngest bride of a character named George,' she said. 'I had no idea George would be changed to Muhammad. I'm locked up in my house. I'm terrified people in the Middle East will blame me.'

'I'm Catholic so they might think I have something against Muslims. I'm taking pills to sleep. I've been crying for days. I feel betrayed. My face is stuck on the movie clip. People see that awful film and they see me.'

'Betrayed': Anna Gurji said she was misled over the film's true contents

Nakoula Basseley Nakoula is escorted out of his home by Los Angeles County Sheriff's officers in Cerritos, California

Ms Gurji said she and her fellow actors believed they were making an action film called *Desert Warrior* and that Nakoula, or 'Sam' as she knew him, never discussed religion.

'I was told I was to be Hilary, the young bride of a character called George,' she said. 'The

film was about a comet that falls to Earth in the ancient Middle East. There are different tribes who think the comet is somehow holy and fight over it. There were supposed to be lots of special effects so a lot of the filming was in front of a green screen. It was super low-budget. I was getting \$75 [£50] a day and all my scenes were shot with George against the green screen. I had no idea how it would be twisted.

'Maybe I'm naive but no warning bells went off. I auditioned, showed up and did my lines. None of us involved in it had any idea there was a secret agenda.'

Chaos: Smoke rises from the US embassy building in Tunis during a protest against Nakalou's film

A protester holding his rifle during the assault on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya on 11th September

The crudely made 13-minute English-language film, filmed in California and circulated on the Internet under several titles including 'Innocence of Muslims', mocks the Prophet Mohammad.

The film sparked a violent protest at the U.S. consulate in the Libyan city of Benghazi during which the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans were killed on Tuesday. Protests have spread to other countries across the Muslim world.

For many Muslims, any depiction of the prophet is blasphemous. Caricatures deemed insulting in the past have provoked protests and drawn condemnations from officials, preachers, ordinary Muslims and many Christians.

U.S. officials have said authorities were not investigating the film project itself, and that even if it was inflammatory or led to violence, simply producing it cannot be considered a crime in the United States, which has strong free speech laws.

Two attorneys visited Nakoula's home hours before he was taken in for questioning. They said they were there to consult with him.

The violent protests over the film in Libya caused mob attacks in Benghazi that killed U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other American officials.

A TV reporter is pictured outside the home of Nakoula Basseley Nakoula in Cerritos, California

The U.S. Embassy in Cairo was attacked by protesters yesterday and demonstrations against American consulates spread to Yemen on Thursday and on Friday to several other countries across the Middle East.

Nakoula, whose name has been widely linked to the film in media reports, pleaded guilty to bank fraud in 2010 and was sentenced to 21 months in prison, to be followed by five years on supervised probation, court documents showed.

He was accused of fraudulently opening bank and credit card accounts using Social Security numbers that did not match the names on the applications, a criminal complaint showed. He was released in June 2011, and at least some production on the video was done later that summer.

But the terms of Nakoula's prison release contain behavior stipulations that bar him from

accessing the Internet or assuming aliases without the approval of his probation officer.

A senior law enforcement official in Washington has indicated the probation investigation relates to whether he broke one or both of these conditions. Violations could result in him being sent back to prison, court records show.

The man who set the Middle East ablaze hides his face in shame: Californian filmmaker behind Mohammed movie interviewed by police

- **Nakoula Basseley Nakoula, 55 was escorted to the sheriff's station in Cerritos for interview over alleged probation violation**
- **Nakoula made inflammatory film 'Innocence of Muslims', sparking deadly protests across world and leading to the death of U.S. ambassador in Libya**
- **In 2010 he was convicted of \$800,000 worth of bank fraud**
- **Suspected of using the alias Sam Bassil during film production but released on condition he didn't access the internet or use aliases**
- **Nakoula has reportedly denied involvement in the film**

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

The Californian man behind the anti-Islamic movie that has caused outrage across the Muslim world emerged from hiding this morning to be interviewed by federal probation officers.

With his face obscured behind a hat, glasses and a scarf, Nakoula Basseley Nakoula, 55 was taken to a sheriff's station in his hometown of Cerritos by deputies of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's department.

Convicted fraudster Nakoula is under investigation by probation officers to determine whether his inflammatory film 'Innocence of Muslims' has violated the terms of his release, which could land him back in prison.

And one of the film's actresses has spoken out, insisting she had no idea about the movie's content when she agreed to act in it.



Not under arrest: Nakoula Basseley Nakoula is escorted from his home by Los Angeles County Sheriff's officers in Cerritos, California on Saturday morning



The man behind it all: Nakoula Basseley Nakoula is escorted out of his home by Los Angeles County Sheriff's officers in Cerritos, California



'Betrayed': This unnamed actress who starred in the film said she was misled over its true contents

After arriving at his home just after midnight deputies escorted Nakoula to an awaiting car and he was taken to the station where he was questioned over his involvement in the film production which has been blamed for the mass protests across the Middle East which resulted in the death of four American citizens on Wednesday.

Convicted of \$800,000 worth of bank fraud in 2010, Nakoula, who is suspected of using the alias Sam Bassil during the production of the controversial film was released on the condition that he did not access the internet or use aliases.

Violent protests around the Arab world have sprung up because of the film, which portrays the Prophet Mohammed as a womaniser, buffon, ruthlesskiller and child molester and led to the death of seven people alone yesterday.

Nakoula voluntarily left his home in the early hours of Saturday morning for the meeting in a sheriff's station Los Angeles County Sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore said.

'He will be interviewed by federal probation officers,' said Whitmore.

He said Nakoula had not been placed under arrest but would not be returning home immediately. 'He was never put in handcuffs... It was all voluntary.'



Chaos: Smoke rises from the US embassy building in Tunis during a protest against Nakalou's film



A protester holding his rifle during the assault on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya on 11th September

Nakoula, who has denied involvement in the film in a phone call to his Coptic Christian bishop, was ushered out of his home and into a waiting car by several sheriff's deputies, his face shielded by a scarf, hat and sunglasses.

The crudely made 13-minute English-language film, filmed in California and circulated on the Internet under several titles including 'Innocence of Muslims', mocks the Prophet Mohammad.

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A TV reporter is pictured outside the home of Nakoula Basseley Nakoula in Cerritos, California

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A note is seen on the door step of the home of Nakoula Basseley Nakoula - the California man convicted of bank fraud who is under investigation for possible probation violations stemming from the making of an anti-Islam video

Clips of the film posted on the Internet since July have been attributed to a man by the name of Sam Bacile, which two people linked to the film have said was likely an alias.

A telephone number said to belong to Bacile, given to Reuters by U.S.-based Coptic Christian activist Morris Sadek who said he had promoted the film, was later traced back to a person who shares the Nakoula residence.

Stan Goldman, a Loyola Law School professor, said whether Nakoula is sent back to jail over potential probation violations linked to the film, such as accessing the Internet, was a subjective decision up to an individual judge.

'Federal judges are gods in their own courtrooms, it varies so much in who they are,' he said, noting such a move would be based on his conduct not on the content of the film.

As well as the fraud conviction, Nakoula also pleaded guilty in 1997 to possession with intent to manufacture methamphetamine and was sentenced to a year in jail, said Sandi Gibbons, a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office.



Where is he? News media gather outside the home of Nakoula Basseley Nakoula in Cerritos, California

AO 91
Rev. 11/82

ORIGINAL

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT			
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT		CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA	
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA v.		DOCKET NO.	
NAKOULA BASSELEY NAKOULA,		09-1256M	
Complaint for violations of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1344(1).			
NAME OF MAGISTRATE JUDGE		UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE	LOCATION
HONORABLE ROSALYN M. CHAPMAN			Los Angeles, CA
DATE OF OFFENSE	PLACE OF OFFENSE	ADDRESS OF ACCUSED (IF KNOWN)	FILED CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT
SEE BELOW	Los Angeles County		JUN 16 2009
COMPLAINANT'S STATEMENT OF FACTS CONSTITUTING THE OFFENSE OR VIOLATION:			CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT DEPUTY
Beginning in on or about March 2008, and continuing through in or about November 2008 in Los Angeles and Orange Counties within the Central District of California, defendant NAKOULA BASSELEY NAKOULA, knowingly and with intent to defraud, executed a scheme to defraud a federally-insured financial institution, namely, Wells Fargo Bank, as to material matters, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1344(1), in connection with the deposit of Capital One convenience checks exceeding \$1,000 into Wells Fargo Bank account XXXXXX9869, which had previously been opened in the name of "T.T."			

Fraudster: A criminal complaint in 2009 shows charges against Nakoula - of which he was later found guilty. He used a string of aliases, including Mark Basseley and Nicola Bacily - similar to Sam Bacile

The probation department is reviewing the case of Nakoula, who was previously convicted on bank fraud charges and was banned from using computers or the Internet as part of his sentence. The review is aimed at learning whether Nakoula violated the terms of his five-year probation.

Karen Redmond, a spokeswoman for the administrative office of the U.S. courts, confirmed Friday the review is under way.

Federal authorities have identified Nakoula, a self-described Coptic Christian, as the key figure behind 'Innocence of Muslims', a film denigrating Islam and the Prophet Muhammad that ignited mob violence against U.S. embassies across the Middle East.

A federal law enforcement official told The Associated Press on Thursday that authorities had connected Nakoula to a man using the pseudonym of Sam Bacile who claimed earlier to be writer and director of the film.

Nakoula pleaded no contest in 2010 to federal bank fraud charges in California and was ordered to pay more than \$790,000 in restitution.

He was also sentenced to 21 months in federal prison and was ordered not to use computers or the Internet for five years without approval from his probation officer.

His attorney cited Nakoula's poor health in a bid for leniency and home detention, stating his client suffered from Hepatitis C, diabetes that require twice-daily insulin shots, and other ailments that required more than 10 medications a day, according to a transcript of the sentencing obtained by the AP.



Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies stand down the street from the suburban Los Angeles home of filmmaker Nakoula Basseley Nakoula

Many records in case remain sealed, but prosecutors sought a longer prison term and noted that he misused some of his own relatives' identities to open 600 fraudulent credit accounts.

Nakoula apologized during the proceedings and his attorney James D. Henderson Sr. said Nakoula had learned his lesson.

'He's clearly gotten the message,' Henderson said. 'I can't imagine him doing anything stupider than what he did here, but what's done is done.'

Henderson said during the hearing that his client had been enlisted by another man to open the accounts and had only received \$60,000 to \$70,000 from the fraudulent transactions.

He got involved in the scheme after losing his job in the gas station industry and had been forced to work for a few dollars a weekend at swap meets to try to support his children and an ailing father, Henderson said, according to the transcript.

It could be difficult to establish a probation violation case against Nakoula. In the federal court system, the conditions of supervised release are geared toward the offense for which a defendant was found guilty and imprisoned.



Media microphones are pictured outside the home of Nakoula Basseley Nakoula yesterday in anticipation of a statement from the filmmaker

In Nakoula's case, the offense was bank fraud. His no contest plea was to charges of setting up fraudulent bank accounts using stolen identities and Social Security numbers, depositing checks from those accounts into other phony accounts and then withdrawing the illicit funds from ATM machines.

While it was unclear what might have provoked authorities' interest, the filmmaker's use of a false identity and his access to the Internet through computers could be at issue, according to experts in cyber law and the federal probation system.



Outrage: Cindy Lee Garcia was in the film that was re-cut to be anti-Islamic but she said she knew nothing about the producer's hateful intentions

Nakoula, who told the AP that he was logistics manager for the film, was under requirements to provide authorities with records of all his bank and business accounts.

The probation order authorized in June 2010 warned Nakoula against using false identities. Nakoula was told not to 'use, for any purpose or in any manner, any name other than his/her true legal name or names without the prior written approval of the Probation Officer.'

Federal prosecutors had charged that Nakoula used multiple false identities in creating his fraudulent accounts. Several, Nicola Bacily and Erwin Salameh, were similar to the Sam Bacile pseudonym used to set up the YouTube account for the anti-Islamic film. Other pseudonyms used in the accounts ranged from Ahmed Hamdy to P.J. Tobacco.

Nakoula was also told he could not have any access to the Internet 'without the prior approval of the probation officer.' Nakoula was ordered to detail any online devices and cellphones to authorities and was told his devices would be monitored and subject to searches.

Jennifer Granick, a criminal defense lawyer who specializes in online crimes, said authorities might not have been aware of Nakoula's online activity even if monitoring devices were placed on his computers. 'That may be very hard for a probation officer to catch ahead of time.'

Granick also noted that Nakoula's conviction for financial crimes might provide a basis for probation officials to review bank and other monetary records. 'Somebody charged with a financial crime might receive some supervision categories where they might re-offend,' she said.

Nakoula was arrested in June 2009, pleaded no contest to the bank fraud charges a year later and was released from federal prison in June 2011 after serving a 21-month prison term, according to federal records.

identity.

[Original Call Cast on site: http://... \(read all...\)](#)

NOW CASTING SAG and NON SAG ACTORS for "DESERT WARRIOR." Director Alan Roberts.

Historical desert drama set in Middle East. Indie Feature film shoots 18 days in L.A. in August. Studio and backlot locations.

Male Roles: DR. MATTHEW (Lead): Middle Eastern Pharmacist, 40-50, intelligent, family man; GEORGE (Lead): 40-50, Middle Eastern warrior leader, romantic, charismatic; YOUNG GEORGE (featured) 18-22; PRIEST (featured): 60-70, bearded; ABDO (featured): 60-70, Elder tribe leader; ISRAELI MEN 30-50 (featured); WARRIORS (featured) 18-50, Various Middle Eastern types, bearded.

Female Roles: CONDALISA (featured) 40, attractive, successful, strong wiled; HILLARY (featured) 18 but must look younger, petite, innocent; YOUSINA (featured) 16-18, Daughter of doctor; MIDDLE EASTERN WOMEN (Various Featured Roles) 18-40, attractive, exotic; OLDER WOMAN (featured) 60-70, feisty.

Please place Role desired in SUBJECT line of email.

Indicate SAG or NON-SAG

Require phone contact for immediate interview in Beverly/LaCienega area.

- Location: Los Angeles
- It's ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests
- Compensation: no pay
- [OK to contact me about appearing in CI documentary series](#)

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Plea: A casting call shows directors were looking for actors to appear in historical drama 'Desert Warrior'

An initial report about the federal probation review appeared in The Wall Street Journal.

There are indications that 'Innocence of Muslims' may have already been under way as a film project when Nakoula was arrested. A casting call for actors and crew for a film called 'Desert Warrior' ran in Backstage magazine, based in Los Angeles and New York, in May and June 2009. The casting call described the film project as a 'historical Arabian Desert adventure' and listed a 'Sam Bassiel' as producer.

One notice identified 'Pharaoh Voice Inc.' as the film's production company. California state records show Pharaoh Voice was incorporated in September 2007 by a 'Youssef M. Basseley' The principal address for Pharaoh Voice in Hawaiian Gardens, a southern California community, is the same location where Nakoula lived until 2008, according to state records.

During an interview with AP, Nakoula denied that he was Sam Bacile, but acknowledged knowing him.



Fury: The US ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, right, died amid violent protests against the film

As interest in Nakoula intensifies, an actress who starred in his anti-Islamic film has said that she feels 'awful' about her role in the movie.

Declining to identify herself, the woman claimed that she was misled about her appearance in 'Innocence of Muslims' and was told it was a historical drama.

'I feel awful, and I didn't do anything. But I feel awful,' said the girl to CBS's Inside Edition.

'I was betrayed. I was Hilary, and the main character was George. I had no idea George turned into somebody else.'

An advertisement for actors to appear in the film was posted on trade magazine Backstage and filmmakers detailed the role of Hilary as '18 but looks much younger, petite, innocent.'

The same casting call wanted lead character George to be '20-40, a strong leader, romantic tyrant, a killer with no remorse, LEAD.'

That role was transformed from George to the Prophet Mohammed, who was portrayed as a child molesting warmonger in the controversial film.

Paid \$671.66 for her time on the film, the emotional woman broke down in tears during her interview with Inside Edition.



Defiant: Steve Klein has defended his role in the anti-Islamic film and said he wants to open the world's eyes to the dangers of Islam

Californian behind Mohammed movie that has Middle East in flames is a meth-making federal informer... and the director made soft porn films

- **Jailed for bank fraud in 2009**
- **Charged with intent to make methamphetamine in 1997**
- **Film prompted protests across Egypt and Libya that led to four U.S. deaths**
- **Producer claimed he was an Israeli Jew living in California named Sam Bacile but there is no record of that being a real name**
- **Man named Nakoula Basseley Nakoula found at address where phone number was listed - but denied he was Bacile**
- **Nakoula was jailed for fraud convictions and has used multiple aliases**
- **Director Alan Roberts has background in making soft porn movies**
- **Cast and crew distanced themselves from film saying they were 'misled'**

By Daniel Bates and Lydia Warren

The California man who produced the anti-Islam video that has caused outrage across the Middle East is a federal informant who avoided spending longer in jail by telling investigators about an elaborate bank fraud scheme he was involved in.

Nakoula Basseley Nakoula opened a string of bank accounts under assumed names, transferring money between them with bogus cheques and withdrawing cash before they bounced.

He was jailed for 21 months for the scheme after being caught by the FBI in 2009. The sentence was a year less than the punishment sought by prosecutors, and was handed down after Nakoulou gave investigators information about the ring leader of the \$800,000 scam, according to the Smoking Gun.

It has also been revealed that Alan Roberts, the film's director, is an experienced editor who has directed a number of low-budget soft porn movies



Elusive: A Coptic Christian has said he managed the blasphemous Mohammad film, but has denied he is the producer. The film sparked riots across the Middle East including Egypt, pictured

The father-of-three explained how Eiad Salameh, a notorious fraudster on the run from authorities for more than a decade ran the scheme and recruited Nakoula as a 'runner'.

Fraud is not his only brush with the law. The Daily Beast reports that in 1997, he was charged with intent to manufacture methamphetamine.

Roberts, the film's director, is a respected Hollywood film editor - but his previous forays into directing have been limited to schlock movies with titles such The Happy Hooker Goes Hollywood, according to Gawker.

However, cast members said that that the director may not have known the true purpose of Nakoula's anti-Muslim film, as he was 'non-political' and seemed to believe he was making a historical movie.



Earlier times: Steven Klein, pictured in 1968, after enlisting in the U.S. Army. Klein is an insurance agent and a Christian activist involved in the film project that has sparked outrage in the Middle East

Police have been sent to Nakoula's home as he hides in fear of retaliation, ABC reported.

A neighbour who lives opposite the home which Nakoula shares with his wife and three children confirmed to MailOnline that at least six police cars went to the house last night and left after three hours.

Speaking outside the home, Steve Whitmore, sheriff spokesman for LA County, would not confirm the identity of the family but said police had received a call at 7pm about a possible disturbance.

'I'm not going to get into specifics of the call but yes, there was some need for our presence to be here to provide safety,' he said.

The protection came as Nakoula was revealed as the movie's elusive producer, who had previously claimed his name was 'Sam Bacile'.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Nakoula had denied he was Bacile, but the phone number the news service used for Bacile earlier this week traced to the address where Nakoula was found.

Court papers said Nakoula, who served 21 months in prison and paid out \$794,700 for bank fraud in 2010, has used aliases including Mark Basseley, Yousseff M. Basseley, Nicola Bacily and Erwin Salameh in the past.

He pleaded guilty to the charge of felony bank fraud in June 2009, was sentenced in June 2010 and from there went on to spend portions of his 21-month sentence in three different Bureau of Prisons facilities.

The Smoking Gun said he was released from a federal facility in September of that year, and from there went to the halfway house.

After leaving the house in December, he violated his parole and went back into the house until June 2011.

Production of the film started two months later, meaning that he worked on much or all of the script while in both prison and the halfway house.



Where is he? News media gather outside the home of Nakoula Basseley Nakoula in Cerritos, California

AO 91
Rev. 11/82

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

ORIGINAL

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT		CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA	
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA v.		DOCKET NO.	
NAKOULA BASSELEY NAKOULA,		MAGISTRATE CASE NO. 09-1256M	
Complaint for violations of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1344(1).			
NAME OF MAGISTRATE JUDGE HONORABLE ROSALYN M. CHAPMAN		UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE	LOCATION Los Angeles, CA
DATE OF OFFENSE SEE BELOW	PLACE OF OFFENSE Los Angeles County	ADDRESS OF ACCUSED (IF KNOWN)	FILED CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT JUN 16 2009
COMPLAINANT'S STATEMENT OF FACTS CONSTITUTING THE OFFENSE OR VIOLATION: Beginning in on or about March 2008, and continuing through in or about November 2008 in Los Angeles and Orange Counties within the Central District of California, defendant NAKOULA BASSELEY NAKOULA, knowingly and with intent to defraud, executed a scheme to defraud a federally-insured financial institution, namely, Wells Fargo Bank, as to material matters, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1344(1), in connection with the deposit of Capital One convenience checks exceeding \$1,000 into Wells Fargo Bank account XXXXXX9869, which had previously been opened in the name of "T.T."			

Fraudster: A criminal complaint in 2009 shows charges against Nakoula - of which he was later found guilty. He used a string of aliases, including Mark Basseley and Nicola Bacily - similar to Sam Bacile

In a sign of further aliases, a casting call for the film lists Sam Bassiel as producer, and Alan Roberts as director. The trailer's costume designer lists Abanob Nakoula and Sam Basselley as co-producer.

And when reporters visited the man's home, he showed his driver's license as proof of his identity - but kept his thumb over his middle name, Basseley.

He added that he was a Coptic Christian - followers of the faith from Egypt - and said the film's director supported the concerns of Copts and their treatment by Muslims.

On Thursday, he was believed to still be inside his two-storey home at the end of a quiet suburban cul-de-sac in Cerritos, on the outskirts of Los Angeles.

A 47-year-old neighbour told MailOnline she had seen a heavy police presence around the home on Wednesday night.

She said: 'The police were here, they were all outside and then they went in - six or more police cars I would say [at] about 7pm last night... I think the police left before 10pm.'



Outrage: Cindy Lee Garcia was in the film that was re-cut to be anti-Islamic but she said she knew nothing about the producer's hateful intentions

She added that Nakoula lives inside the home with his wife and their three children – a boy and a girl who are at California colleges– and a 14-year-old son.

'I usually talk to the wife, her name is Olivia,' she said. 'They have three kids, [two] in college and one in middle school,' adding that two of the children had Egyptian names.

'All I know is they're Christian but very nice people,' she said.

By the doorway of the home stands a 2-ft statue of the Virgin Mary holding Christ, while other smaller Virgin Mary statues have carelessly fallen off the doorstep and into the flower bed.

But family friends claim the media has the wrong man and it is a case of mistaken identity. He said the family were actually 'all laughing about this' - but are still fearful of reprisals.

Speaking to MailOnline, the friend said that he was a good friend of Mr Nakoula's son Abanoub and that he knew his mother, brother and sister too.

The idea that his father was a convicted drug dealer and fraudster was 'ridiculous', he said.

The friend, who is a 21-year-old engineering student, said: 'It is the right name but the wrong family.

Somebody who was involved in the film has the same name as the father. It's a case of mistaken identity.



The screenshot shows a casting call on the MoonCasting website. The title is "CASTING feature: Desert Warrior (Los Angeles)". It includes details about the film, such as it being a historical desert drama set in the Middle East, and lists various roles for male and female actors. The site also provides contact information and a list of terms and conditions, including location (Los Angeles), compensation (no pay), and a link to contact the poster about appearing in a documentary series. The MoonCasting logo is visible at the bottom left of the page.

Plea: A casting call shows directors were looking for actors to appear in historical drama 'Desert Warrior'

'They have a lot of Muslim friends and the one time I met the dad he seemed very kind. He doesn't even speak English that well, it's like he's straight off the boat.

'I spoke with a family member who told me they are all laughing about how this has happened, but at the same time they are afraid for their lives.

'They are worried that extremists will come after them so they are sitting inside just watching TV thinking: 'What the hell?''

The claims contradict law enforcement sources quotes by the Associated Press who said that Nakoula was the man behind the film, although they did not specify where he lived.

A search of public records however showed only one person with the name 'Nakoula Basseley Nakoula' - and he was registered to the home of the family the friend knows.



Fury: The US ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, right, died amid violent protests against the film

The suspicions swirling around the filmmaker's identity came as actors who took part in the movie spoke out about how they were deceived about its religious message.

When they signed on to make the film, it was called Desert Warrior and was billed as a 'historical desert drama set in Middle East'. Because of post-production editing, it is now an inflammatory hate-filled video that prompted global protests.

The actors involved have issued a joint statement denying that they had any idea about the anti-Islamic sentiments expressed in the final product.

'The entire cast and crew are extremely upset and feel taken advantage of by the producer. We are 100% not behind this film and were grossly misled about its intent and purpose,' the 80-person cast said via joint statement released to CNN.

What started as Desert Warrior turned into Innocence of Muslims, the nearly 14-minute trailer of which was posted on YouTube by the producer, Bacile.

Gawker spoke with Cindy Lee Garcia, one of the actresses from the film who said that she called Bacile in a panic on Wednesday after news of the protests in the Middle East.



Violence: A vehicle sits smoldering in flames after being set on fire inside the US consulate compound in Benghazi late yesterday

'I called Sam and said, "Why did you do this?" and he said, "I'm tired of radical Islamists killing each other. Let other actors know it's not their fault," Garcia said.

She is furious about the changes that were made after filming, including some very low-quality dubbing that inserted all references to Muhammed.



Unapologetic: Steve Klein was a consultant on the film that sparked outrage in Libya and Egypt - but said the filmmaker worked under a pseudonym

'I had nothing to do really with anything. Now we have people dead because of a movie I was in. It makes me sick,' she said.

Libyan officials U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other embassy employees were killed during mob violence over the film, but U.S. officials are now investigating whether the assault was a planned terrorist strike linked to the eleventh anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks.

Reporters had spoken to the man who identified himself as 'Sam Bacile' earlier this week. In interviews, he said: "Islam is a cancer, period.'

Bacile told them that he was an Israeli Jew who financed the project with \$5million from 100 Jewish donors. None of those statements were proven to be true, and Israeli officials later confirmed that there is no citizen of their country with that name.

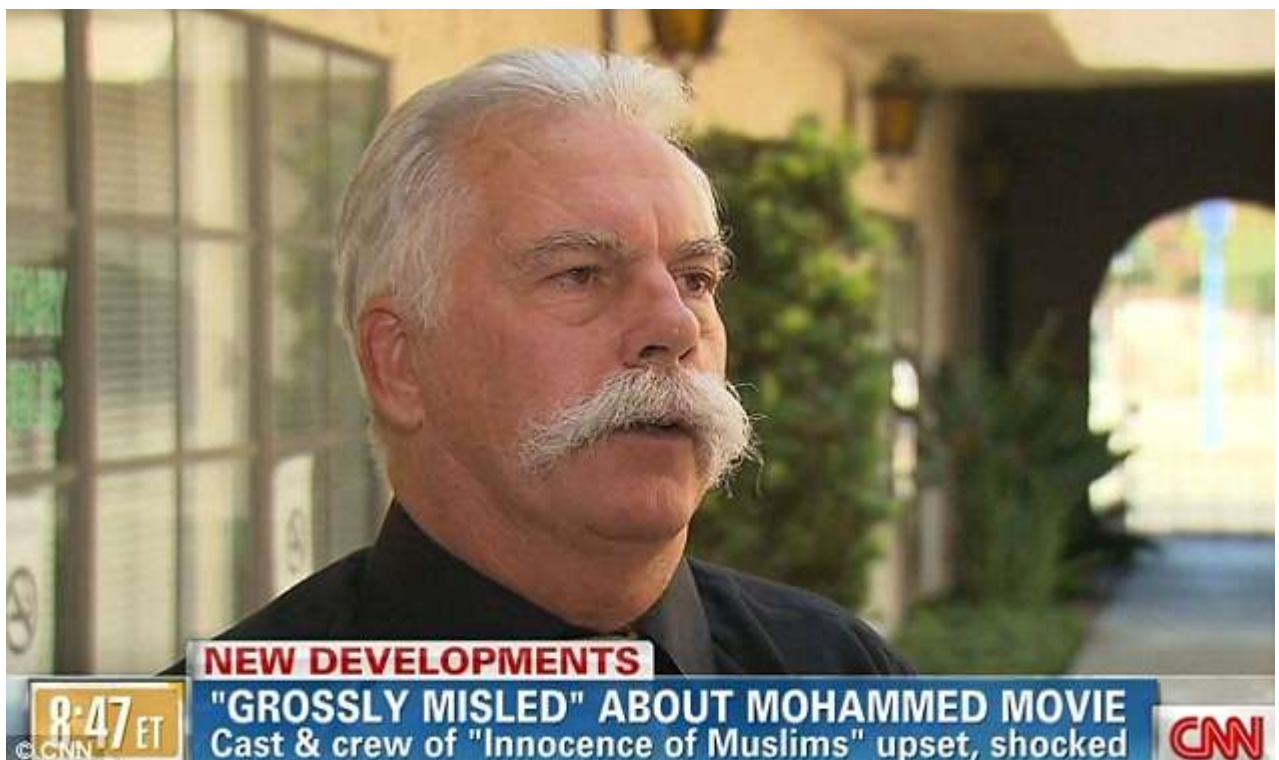
Another identified member of the team was Steve Klein, an active Christian activist who was involved in the film as a 'consultant'.

Speaking to MailOnline, Klein said of the American deaths in Libya: 'It is not our fault, we told the truth'.

He said that he did not feel guilty for the murder of Ambassador to Libya John Christopher Stevens after protests about the film. Instead, he said that the mob who carried it out were to blame as they were following Mohammed's violent teachings.

Klein said that the film was designed to stop the Muslim population in America reaching 10 per cent as they would then 'work together and attack their host country'.

He said: 'I feel bad for the death of the ambassador - he didn't do anything to anybody - but it's not our fault. We didn't want anybody to get killed but on the other hand the truth had to come out.



Defiant: Klein, speaking to CNN on Thursday, said he wants to open the world's eyes to the dangers of Islam



Fury: The U.S. Consulate in Benghazi is seen in flames after a mob attacked the base

'We told the truth and these people reacted the way that Mohammed wanted to them to react - by killing people.'

'Do I feel guilt? Yes, but not for me, I feel it for those that did this. Do I feel shame? Yes, but not for me. Killing this man fits in with their legal and ethical standpoint.'

There was also speculation that Bacile was in fact be Morris Sadek, a Coptic lawyer who has strong anti-Islamic views and fled Egypt in 1969. Last year, he was stripped of Egyptian citizenship after he called on the US to intervene in the country to protect its Christians.

Sadek said he was promoting the video on his website and on certain TV stations, which he did not identify.

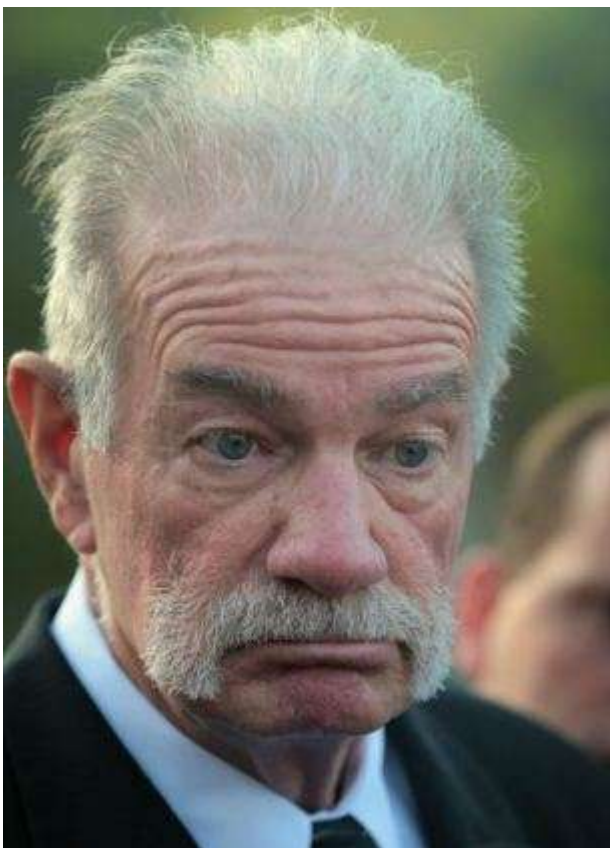
Asked if he felt sorry about the deaths, Sadek said: 'Of course, of course, of course. Thought should be answered by thought,' adding that he did not think the film was offensive to Islam.



An Egyptian protester yells slogans in front of United States Embassy , the morning after it was vandalised. Protests are continuing in front of the US Embassy in Cairo, one day after thousands of Egyptians demonstrated at the Embassy compound

What did the cast think of the film?

The original casting call was discovered and shows that it was originally described as a 'historical Arabian Desert adventure film' backed by producer Sam Bassiel. Aside from his name- which is spelled differently than the user name for the YouTube trailer version- no other information is given about his background.



Outrage: U.S. pastor Terry Jones, who had inflamed anger in the Muslim world in 2010 with plans to burn the Koran, said he had promoted Innocence of Muslims

In the wake of the uproar and the Middle Eastern protests, an unnamed representative for the 80-person cast released a statement to CNN, condemning the incendiary changes made in post-production that portrayed the prophet Muhammed as a pedophile and child molester.

'We are shocked by the drastic re-writes of the script and lies that were told to all involved. We are deeply saddened by the tragedies that have occurred,' the cast said in their statement.

So far one of the female actresses, Cindy Lee Garcia from Bakersville, California, has come out publicly saying that she had no idea about the producer's intentions and is distraught over her involvement with the project.

'It was going to be a film based on how things were 2,000 years ago. It wasn't based on anything to do with religion, it was just on how things were run in Egypt. There wasn't anything about Muhammed or Muslims or anything,' she told Gawker.

Though she spoke to 'Sam' and he acknowledged that none of the actors knew what was going on, that is not enough for her.

'I'm going to sue his butt off,' she said.

Who supports the film?

U.S. pastor Terry Jones, who had inflamed anger in the Muslim world in 2010 with plans to burn the Koran, said he had also promoted 'Innocence of Muslims'.

On his website, he stated: 'Tonight after International Judge Mohammad Day we will be showing the Mohammad Movie Trailer, a video promoting the movie, Innocence of Muslims.



Protest: Jones, right, is pictured on an anti-Islam march in Washington D.C. in 2011. He is in support of the film



Spreading the message: Jones preaches at the Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville, Florida

'It is an American production, not designed to attack Muslims but to show the destructive ideology of Islam. The movie further reveals in a satirical fashion the life of Muhammad.'

The pastor, from Gainesville, Florida said he spoke with the movie's director on the phone on Wednesday and prayed for him.

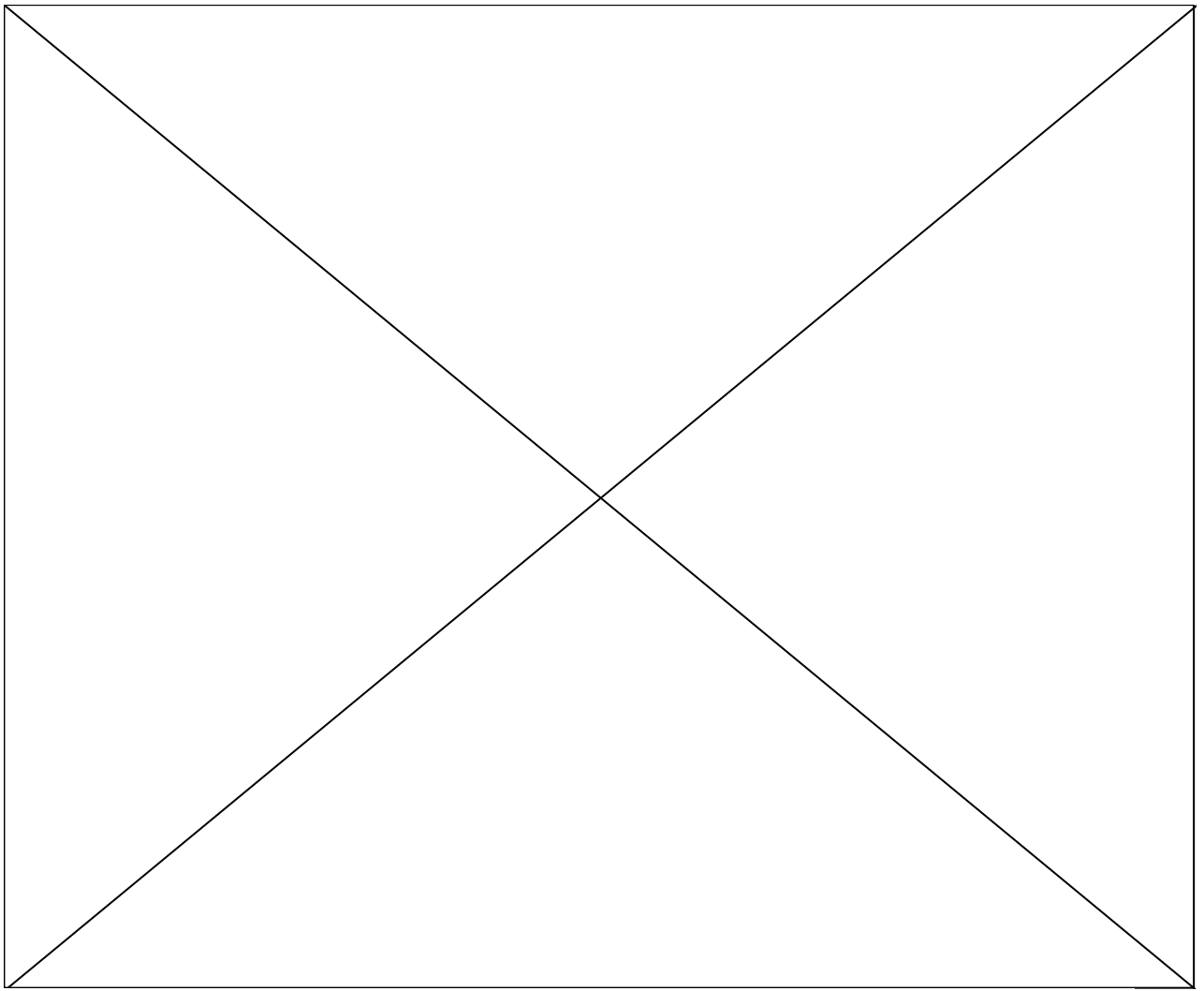
'I have not met him. Sam Bacile, that is not his real name,' Jones said. 'I just talked to him on the phone. He is definitely in hiding and does not reveal his identity. He was quite honestly fairly shook up concerning the events and what is happening. A lot of people are not supporting him.'

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey, asked Jones to withdraw his support of the anti-Muslim film on Wednesday.

He called the pastor to express his concerns about the film, saying it could inflame tensions and trigger violence - but Dempsey's spokesperson did not say whether Jones agreed to limit his support.

Do you know 'Sam Bacile'? Let us know at nynews@mailonline.com

VIDEO: Gunmen attack U.S. consulate in Benghazi



VIDEO: Clinton condemns attack that killed Chris Stevens