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Beyond al-Qaeda

PART 1

The Global Jihadist Movement

Angel Rabasa • Peter Chalk • Kim Cragin • Sara A. Daly • Heather S. Gregg
Theodore W. Karasik • Kevin A. O'Brien • William Rosenau

Prepared for the United States Air Force

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Preface

Five years after September 11, 2001, the terrorist attacks and the U.S. response—now called the global war on terrorism—have changed the world, and the terrorist enterprise that we know as al-Qaeda has changed with it. The current status of al-Qaeda's network remains unclear, but it is certain that it and other terrorist groups continue to threaten the lives and well-being of Americans, at home and abroad, and the security of our friends and allies. This continuing danger leads to ongoing U.S. and international efforts to monitor, disrupt, and dismantle terrorist groups before they can cause large-scale destruction to our people or our interests.

The objective of this RAND Corporation study, undertaken as part of a project entitled "Beyond al-Qaeda: Countering Future Terrorist and Other Nontraditional Threats to U.S. Security," is to understand the shape of future threats to the United States and U.S. security interests from terrorist and other extremist organizations. We do this through analyses that draw together the various threat strands that are informing current U.S. thinking in the war on terror. The study looks specifically at four sources of threats:

1. *Al-Qaeda.* We examine how al-Qaeda has changed since September 11, the loss of its operating base in Afghanistan, and the death or capture of key operatives; and we assess what forms the al-Qaeda threat to the United States and U.S. interests takes now and might take in the future.

2. *Terrorist groups that may not be formally part of al-Qaeda but that have assimilated al-Qaeda's worldview and concept of mass-casualty terrorist attacks.* This, we believe, is where the center of gravity of the current global terrorist threat lies.
3. *Violent Islamist and non-Islamist terrorist and insurgent groups and other nontraditional threats with no known links to al-Qaeda.* These groups threaten U.S. regional interests, friends, and allies.
4. *The nexus between terrorism and organized crime.* In each case, we examine how the presence of these threats affects U.S. security interests, and we identify distinct strategies that the United States and the U.S. Air Force may take to neutralize or mitigate each of these threats.

The results of the study are reported in two volumes. This book is the first of the two; the second, by Angel Rabasa, Peter Chalk, Kim Cragin, Sara A. Daly, Heather S. Gregg, Theodore W. Karasik, Kevin A. O'Brien, and William Rosenau, is entitled *Beyond al-Qaeda: Part 2, The Outer Rings of the Terrorist Universe.*

This research builds on previous RAND Project AIR FORCE work on counterterrorism, notably the following:

- Angel Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Peter Chalk, Christine Fair, Theodore Karasik, Rollie Lal, Ian Lesser, and David Thaler, *The Muslim World After 9/11*, MG-246-AF, 2004
- Nora Bensahel, *The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with Europe, NATO, and the European Union,* MR-1746-AF, 2003
- Kim Cragin and Sara Daly, *The Dynamic Terrorist Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World,* MR-1782-AF, 2004
- Lynn Davis, Steven Hosmer, Sara Daly, and Karl Mueller, *The U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy: A Planning Framework to Facilitate Timely Policy Adjustments,* DB-426-AF, 2004
- David Ochmanek, *Military Operations Against Terrorist Groups Abroad: Implications for the United States Air Force,* MR-1738-AF, 2003.

This research was sponsored by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Air and Space Operations, U.S. Air Force (A3/5), and conducted in the Strategy and Doctrine Program of RAND Project AIR FORCE. Research for this project was completed in September 2004. This book should be of value to the national security community and to interested members of the general public, especially those with an interest in combating the blight of international terrorism.

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Summary

Al-Qaeda

Defeating the global jihadist movement—which we define as al-Qaeda and the universe of jihadist groups that are associated with or inspired by al-Qaeda—is the most pressing security challenge facing the United States today. The global jihadist movement can be distinguished from traditional or local jihads, which are armed campaigns conducted by Islamist groups against local adversaries with usually limited aims as well as geographic scope, in that it targets the United States and its allies across the globe and pursues broad geopolitical aims.

Although the U.S.-led global war on terrorism has had some notable successes—such as the destruction of al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan, the elimination of many of the group's leaders, and the growing resolve of many countries to take action against al-Qaeda and its associates—no informed observers believe that al-Qaeda will be eliminated anytime soon. Indeed, in some respects al-Qaeda has metastasized into an even more formidable adversary, dispersed across the world, largely self-sustaining, and constantly adopting new and innovative terrorism tactics. Despite intense government countermeasures, it seems able to mount devastating operations from the air, land, and sea, such as the USS *Cole* operation in October 2000, the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Madrid railway bombing in March 2004, the Sinai resort bombings of October 2004, and the London bombings of July 2005. The United States itself continues to be threatened

by large-scale attacks. Countering al-Qaeda is thus likely to preoccupy U.S. national security institutions for at least the remainder of the decade, and probably longer.

Although al-Qaeda clearly still exists, as we have seen with the recent discovery of detailed surveillance reports of a multitude of targets in the United States, the group has been substantially transformed. Since September 11, al-Qaeda has gone through several phases: from a well-structured terrorist organization with headquarters in Afghanistan, to the hunted remnants of bin Laden's inner circle during and after Operation Enduring Freedom, to a disaggregated and atomized enterprise with reduced command and control but a continued capability to operate. Moreover, al-Qaeda still serves as the source of motivation and inspiration for regional terrorist groups that are not formally affiliated with it but that share its ideology of global jihad and its concept of operations.

Strategy

Al-Qaeda's strategy flows logically from its ideology. To outsiders, those within the network may appear irrational—motivated by insane hatreds, grossly unrealistic in their goals, and willing to kill innocent men, women, and children to achieve their ends. In reality, al-Qaeda, like other terrorist groups, acts in a largely rational manner in the sense that it weighs ends and means, considers alternative approaches, and calculates costs and benefits. Although the movement may emphasize flawed precepts, it makes logical assumptions on the basis of these precepts.[1] Among the central strategic priorities of al-Qaeda, mobilizing Muslims for a global jihad against the West and toppling "apostate" regimes, particularly Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan, remain paramount objectives.

Other objectives include creating an Islamic government according to its own ultra-orthodox interpretation of Hanbali Sunni Islam and isolating the majority of Sunni Muslims who follow other schools of Islam, not to mention the Shi'ites. For al-Qaeda and the groups that share its ideology, governments in the Middle East primarily exist

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[1] For more on al-Qaeda as a rational actor, see Doran (2002).

because of U.S. support; their destruction thus is contingent on removing that support. Al-Qaeda has sought to achieve this objective by pressuring the United States to withdraw from the Middle East through the perpetration of increasingly costly acts of terror. Al-Qaeda anticipated U.S. retaliation and hoped that this retaliation could be presented in the Muslim world as a war against Islam that would advance its propaganda and recruitment efforts. (See pp. 23–33.)

Ideology

Ideology is central to understanding and prevailing over al-Qaeda and the phenomenon of global jihad. On a purely material level, terrorist organizations are almost always outmatched by the government forces that they oppose. If a terrorist group is to survive, it must at the very least have the ability to replace fallen converts with fresh recruits. To a certain extent, the execution of successful operations helps to serve this purpose, both by building morale within the group and by demonstrating to potential converts that the organization is operationally dynamic.[2] But terrorist attacks, while necessary, are not sufficient to sustain a movement operating against a determined adversary. Militant extremists also require the revolutionary "software" that helps convince militants—whose underground "lifestyle" characteristically tends to be marked by physical danger, isolation from loved ones, and psychological stress—that their mission is worth the sacrifices.

At its core, al-Qaeda's ideology is profoundly internationalist, attempting to contextualize local conflicts as part of a broader global struggle against "apostasy" and "the infidel." In essence, al-Qaeda's ideology is a version of the ideology that a previous RAND study has described as "neo-fundamentalism" or "radical fundamentalism," i.e., an extremist Islamic fundamentalist set of beliefs that borrows many of the characteristics of European fascism and Marxism-Leninism,[3] or

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[2] Crenshaw (1981), p. 387.

[3] See Rabasa et al. (2004).

"jihadist-salafism," described by Gilles Kepel as "respect for the sacred texts in their most literal form [combined with] an absolute commitment to jihad."[4]

Although neither Osama bin Laden nor any other members of his inner circle have articulated a comprehensive vision of the future, bin Laden's pronouncements emphasize certain themes and a selective interpretation of Islamic law, history, and precedent: There is a war of civilizations in which "Jews and Crusaders" are seeking to destroy Islam; armed jihad is the individual obligation of every Muslim; terrorism and other asymmetric strategies are appropriate for defeating even the strongest powers; Islam is under siege by Christians, Jews, secularists, and globalization; and the economy of the United States is its vulnerable "center of gravity." These themes are circulated widely via the Internet; in books, cassette tapes, and pamphlets; and, most notoriously, through videotapes in which bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri (sometimes described as bin Laden's deputy) expound on various subjects. What makes al-Qaeda's propaganda distinctive is the relentlessly global nature of its dissemination and the quality of its production. As a result of this media strategy, al-Qaeda's messages have penetrated deeply into Muslim communities around the world, preying on those Muslims who have a sense of helplessness both in the Arab world and in the Western Muslim diaspora. Al Qaeda appears to have had an impact by offering a sense of empowerment to those uninitiated in Islamic texts and history. (See pp. 7–22.)

Operational and Tactical Evolution

Ever since the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa, al-Qaeda has continuously altered and expanded its target set, making organizational modifications that have resulted in significant changes in the way it conducts operations. Although the network has opted to stick closely to what has worked in the past, such as multiple suicide bombings, the manner and means for carrying out those strikes have evolved. The use of planes as suicide bombs in the September 11 attacks and the small boat packed with explosives that devastated the USS *Cole*

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[4] Kepel (2002), p. 220.

are two of the best examples of al-Qaeda innovation. However, there have been many other instances of operational shift. These include switching from hard to soft targets and from mass casualties to smaller, more frequent attacks; increased focus on economic targets; greater efficiency in the utilization of loose networks and increased recruitment of U.S. and European nationals to evade detection; and moves to create new types of safe haven to maintain critical skills, such as conducting terrorist training in private homes. Each of these modifications, and the circumstances surrounding them, is discussed in more detail in this book. (See pp. 34–55, 63–70.)

Al-Qaeda's efforts to acquire unconventional weapons—chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons—present incalculable dangers to the United States and other potential targets. Bin Laden's effort to acquire CBRN weapons began while he was living in Sudan in 1991–1996 and continued after he relocated to Afghanistan in 1996. Bin Laden reportedly received advice from Pakistani nuclear scientists.[5] However, there is no evidence that he succeeded in fabricating a biological or chemical weapon, let alone a nuclear or radiological weapon, despite operating under near-ideal conditions under Taliban protection in Afghanistan. Again, this is not to say that bin Laden or the broader jihadist movement do not remain committed to acquiring CBRN devices. Al-Qaeda's continued interest in CBRN was confirmed in January 2003 in London, when police discovered precursor agents for producing ricin, a highly toxic poison, during the arrest of North African terrorists associated with al-Qaeda. (See pp. 44–47.)

Al-Qaeda's Finances

Al-Qaeda has also modified the way it moves funds around the globe. Before September 11, many financial institutions were believed to have helped transfer millions of dollars of al-Qaeda's money, wittingly or otherwise. However, given greater scrutiny over any such transactions now and other policies designed to prevent legal transmission of terror-

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[5] Anonymous (pseudonym of former CIA analyst Michael Scheuer) (2002), p. 188; Peter Baker, "Pakistani Scientist Who Met Bin Laden Failed Polygraphs, Renewing Suspicions," *The Washington Post,* March 3, 2002.

ist funds, terrorists are increasingly using the informal hawala transaction system[6] and "mules"—couriers who physically carry large quantities of cash, gemstones, or other valuables to various parts of the globe. There is also evidence that al-Qaeda can and may be willing to expand even further into the criminal world to raise money. These financial dynamics are beginning to shape terrorist activity. Given the weakening of al-Qaeda command and control, local al-Qaeda jihadist groups may now find themselves both compelled to raise funds locally and possibly encouraged to make operational decisions on their own. (See pp. 57–62.)

The "al-Qaeda Nebula"

Al-Qaeda's evolution from a structured terrorist organization into an ideology-based movement presents a complex counterterrorism challenge. The U.S. success in eliminating a substantial part of the pre-9/11 al-Qaeda leadership has greatly reduced the functional ability of al-Qaeda's leadership core, but it clearly has not brought about the end of the al-Qaeda phenomenon. It created a more disaggregated entity that is more difficult to predict and preempt. The emergence of numerous like-minded local organizations that strike at soft targets with deadly force—what this study calls the "al-Qaeda nebula"—presents a substantial new set of challenges for counterterrorism planners and requires a major departure from the strategy that has been pursued against al-Qaeda. (See pp. 73–78.)

Jihadist groups in this category exhibit a dual nature: They are preoccupied with *both* local *and* regional jihads. They thus have a threat potential that goes beyond their immediate tactical environment. The hybrid ideological and operational nature of these organizations stems

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[6] *Hawala* means "transfer" or "trust." It refers to an ancient system of money transfer that existed in South Asia before the advent of Western banking. Customers entrust money to hawala bankers or operators (hawaladars), who facilitate money movement worldwide through personal connections, sometimes using legitimate bank accounts but leaving a minimal paper trail.

from their interaction with the international jihadist movement as currently constituted under the existing umbrella of al-Qaeda's global network.

The scope and dimensions of the al-Qaeda nebula are both broad and complex. Ties among these groups run the gamut from logistical and financial support to combined operations and joint strategy meetings. Frequently, these relationships are the product of contacts that were established in the crucible of the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan and later consolidated in training camps set up in territories under the control of the Taliban.

Some of these organizations have been fully integrated into al-Qaeda (for example, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, or EIJ) or appear to be moving in that direction (for example, the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat or GSPC). A few organizations have clearly fallen into the category of "active and willing supporters," ready to act at al-Qaeda's behest when asked to do so. This has been particularly evident in North Africa, in the Laskar-e-Taiba (LeT) in Pakistan, in al-Itihaad in the Horn of Africa, and arguably in the al-Zarqawi network in Iraq. Most groups, however, seem to give precedence to local agendas. In these instances, decisions to work with outside jihadists are largely pragmatic in nature and undertaken in the expectation that foreign cooperation will be instrumental in furthering the "struggle at home." Indeed, when the expected (local) utility of the outside relationship begins to dissipate, some groups appear to question the wisdom of maintaining the al-Qaeda link. This is true even of networks that are thought to share an intimate organizational relationship with al-Qaeda such as a faction within Southeast Asia's Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).

The major groups in this "al-Qaeda nebula" and their degree of association with al-Qaeda, based on twelve key criteria, are shown in Table S.1. The values are as follows: (0) not established; (1) possible; (2) probable; (3) confirmed; and (4) confirmed and continuing. These values are based on the analysts' evaluation of the groups.

Table S.1
Associations Between Major Jihadist Clusters Worldwide and al-Qaeda

	Pledged allegiance to bin Laden	Joint leadership/leadership, marriage, or family ties	Coordinated or joint operations with AQ or AQ operatives	Received AQ funding for operations	Received AQ funding for logistical support	Received training in AQ camps	Provided training to AQ in local camps	Shared combat or training experience with AQ	Provided sanctuary for wanted militants	Held joint strategy meetings	Imitated AQ concept of operations	Internalized AQ world view of global jihad
Al-Zarqawi Network	4	0	3	2	2	3	3	4	4	2	4	3
Saudi jihadists	2	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	3
Laskar-e-Taiba (Kashmir)	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
Jaish-e-Muhammad (Kashmir)	0	0	2	3	3	2	1	2	4	3	4	3
Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (Kashmir)	4	0	2	3	3	3	1	3	4	3	3	3
Laskar-e-Jhangvi (Pakistan)	0	0	3	2	2	3	1	3	2	3	2	4
Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan	0	0	1	3	3	3	0	2	1	1	0	3
Harakat-ul-Jihad-Islami Bangladesh	4	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	4
Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group	0	1	4	3	3	3	1	3	4	4	4	3
Salafiya Jihadia (Morocco)	0	1	4	3	3	1	1	3	4	4	4	3
GSPC (Algeria)	4	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	4	4	2	3
Dhamat Houmet Daawa Salafia (Algeria)	0	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	3
Tunisian Combatant Group	0	1	4	2	2	3	3	3	4	2	4	3
Libyan Islamic Fighting Group	0	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	0	3
Al-Itihaad al-Islami (Somalia)	0	0	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	2	3	3
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	1	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	3
Chechens/Basayev faction	0	0	0	1	1	4	4	4	4	2	4	2
Jemaah Islamiyah (Southeast Asia)	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3

NOTE: AQ = al-Qaeda.

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Conclusions and Recommendations

No one tool is likely to be decisive against al-Qaeda. An effective strategy for countering and defeating the global jihadist movement will necessarily employ a complex mixture of military, intelligence, financial, political, legal (including the enactment of appropriate legislation), and even social instruments. This strategy should also include the use of techniques of political warfare that the United States and its allies successfully applied to wage a largely successful campaign against Marxism-Leninism—like al-Qaeda, a global revolutionary creed that served as an intellectual, political, and emotional foundation of a worldwide revolutionary movement.[7] (See pp. 159–171.)

Western policymakers might usefully draw on this now-forgotten corpus of Cold War knowledge and experience to develop a strategic informational warfare campaign against al-Qaeda. As a first step, policymakers should consider ways of attacking al-Qaeda's ideology. From the analysis in this book, it is clear that ideology is the center of gravity of the global jihadist phenomenon. Therefore, it is important to watch the rate of dissemination or retreat of the global jihadist ideology. If the ideology continues to spread and gain greater acceptance in the Muslim world, it will produce more terrorists to replenish the ranks of al-Qaeda and related groups. If the ideology is countered and discredited, al-Qaeda and its universe will wither and die. It is important for Muslim allies to highlight that the Islamic state envisioned by al-Qaeda would exclude the diverse streams of Islam. In the world of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, there is no room for Shi'ites, and within Sunni Islam there is no place for mainstream interpretations of the religion.

A related factor is the extent and strength of the links between the global and local jihads. The clusters within the "al-Qaeda nebula" show the spread of the jihadist mindset throughout the Muslim world. The global jihadist movement gains strength to the extent that it can co-opt local struggles. If it cannot, the global movement loses coherence and focus.

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[7] For more on the strategic communications campaign of the Cold War era, see Lord (2004), pp. 220–221; Hixon (1997); Lucas (1999).

It follows that a comprehensive U.S. strategy needs to move beyond the boundaries of conventional counterterrorism theory and practice and address these ideological and political factors. Broadly, the strategy has four prongs: First, attack the ideological underpinnings of global jihadism. Second, seek to sever the links—ideological and otherwise—between the groups in the clusters of the terrorist nebula and the global jihad. Third, deny sanctuaries. Fourth, strengthen the capabilities of frontline states and moderate civil society groups to counter local jihadist threats in order to deny al-Qaeda alternative sanctuaries and over time reduce the "clusters" that compose the global jihadist movement. (See pp. 160–161.)

Attack the Ideology

The war on terror at its most fundamental level goes to the war of ideas. The goal here is to delegitimize jihadist ideology and the use of terrorism and to deny extremists the high ground of Islamic politico-religious discourse, which has been adroitly exploited by al-Qaeda to further the appeal of its own radical and absolutist rhetoric. As we have outlined in another RAND study, prevailing in the war of ideas requires empowering moderate Muslims to counter the influence of the radicals.[8]

Although ideology is inherently difficult to attack by outsiders, the ideological approach has weaknesses that are susceptible to exploitation. Some analysts note that the jihadist movement is sensitive to religious ideology to the point of vulnerability. Combatants are replaceable, but theologically trained sheikhs are not. The death or recantation of several Saudi sheikhs who had provided religious justification for jihadist attacks may have weakened the movement ideologically.[9] However, the al-Qaeda ideology has always had a pronounced Egyptian bent, so the influence of Saudi sheikhs might not have been central to al-Qaeda's ideological struggle. In any event, if this assessment of the centrality

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[8] That document, Rabasa et al. (2004), describes a strategy to empower Muslim moderates.

[9] Stephen Ulph, presentation at Jamestown Foundation panel discussion, "The Iraqi Insurgency and al-Qaeda," Washington, D.C., October 7, 2004; and Ulph (2004b).

of ideology is correct, then decapitation strategies should be expanded from operational leaders to ideologues. Not infrequently, these ideologues are asked to provide sanction for terrorist operations and are therefore a key part of the terrorist decisionmaking process. Preventing al-Qaeda's ideological mentors from continuing to provide theological justification for terrorism could expedite the movement's ideological deterioration. Prosecution of "spiritual leaders" such as Abu Hamza al-Masri in the United Kingdom and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir in Indonesia and the deportation proceedings in the United Kingdom against the Jordanian-Palestinian cleric Abu Qatada, regarded as al-Qaeda's spiritual leader in Europe, are cases in point.[10]

Break the Links Between the Global and Local Jihads

The second prong of the strategy is to break the links between the global and local jihadist groups. The international nature of al-Qaeda is both a source of strength and a potential weakness. Al-Qaeda's ability to persuade local groups to link their struggles with a broader, pan-Islamist campaign is arguably the organization's signal achievement. Thus, unlike the terrorist groups of the 1970s, al-Qaeda has not been hindered by geographical constraints that limit the scope of its operations.

However, internationalization brings costs as well as benefits. As demonstrated by the evolution of the international communist movement during the previous century, contradictions inevitably arise between the global vision promulgated by a movement's theoreticians and the national agendas that many local cadres naturally pursue.[11] Exploiting this friction could be part of an effective Western counterstrategy. For example, overt and covert information operations in Southeast Asia, South Asia, North Africa, and other areas of major terrorist activity might highlight the inapplicability of al-Qaeda's vision to

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[10] According to the 2001 Spanish indictment of the Madrid al-Qaeda cell, Abu Qatada was appointed as the spiritual leader of al-Qaeda, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), and the Tunisian Combatant Group. See Juzgado Central de Instrucción No. 005, Madrid, Sumario (Proc. Ordinario) 0000035/2001E.

[11] Rich (2003), p. 47.

regional and local conditions. In non-Arab Muslim countries such as Pakistan, the Arab nature of al-Qaeda's hard core could be stressed, as could al-Qaeda's preoccupation with "apostate" regimes in the Middle East. Such an approach could complement parallel political warfare themes that highlight the materialist, neo-fascist, and the upper- and middle-class character of al-Qaeda's hard core—in other words, the fundamentally "alien" nature of men like bin Laden and al-Zawahiri.

Achieving this goal hinges on decreasing the utility of the relationship with al-Qaeda for the local groups. A number of local Muslim rebel movements that had maintained some relationship with al-Qaeda and its affiliates before September 11—for instance, the Philippines' Moro Islamic Liberation Front—have distanced themselves from bin Laden to avoid being drawn into the wrong side of the war on terrorism.

To accelerate this trend, the United States will need to tailor the specific components of its counterterrorism policy to ensure that they are relevant to extant and emerging patterns of local and regional terrorism. This requires tracking closely the ideological and operational trajectory of the groups that constitute the "al-Qaeda nebula" in order to target weaknesses in their current configuration. For instance, in the wake of the arrest of key operatives over the past two years, Southeast Asia's Jemaah Islamiyah has become factionalized along an international/Indonesian divide: One leadership faction remains committed to the al-Qaeda vision of global jihad; another faction seems to be more focused on a local Indonesian agenda, including political activity through its Indonesian front organization, the Majlis Mujahideen Indonesia (MMI). Therefore, a U.S. and allied strategy to counter JI must target the group's political and terrorist dimensions. Similarly, addressing group ties that are predicated on logistical support (as they are in Kashmir) will require a policy mix that is somewhat different from those involving joint planning sessions and coordinated attacks (as in the case of the North African groups). Mapping and gauging the organizational parameters of terrorist connections will be equally important in prioritizing threats to U.S. interests.

Finally, the United States will need to be more proactive in its thinking and accept the idea that the problem of countering terrorism

is akin to what Bruce Hoffman has referred to as a time series of photographs: ". . . the image captured on film today is not the same as yesterday nor will it be the same tomorrow."[12] A myriad of factors brought on by future world events could conceivably have a direct, or indirect but yet significant, impact on al-Qaeda and its affiliates—neither of which are likely to be consigned to the annals of history anytime soon. Accordingly, policies will need to be constantly assessed, reassessed, and modified to take account of potential surprises that could emerge over the near to medium term. (See pp. 161–163.)

Deny Sanctuaries

As discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this book, al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan allowed the group's leaders to concentrate all their efforts on growing their organization and planning their operations. Securing that safe haven substantially increased al-Qaeda's financial requirements but lowered its overall need for covertness, eased command and control, enabled extensive training and planning, and generally allowed it to operate at a far lower marginal cost per attack. The loss of its sanctuary has reduced the efficiency of the organization, made training of cadres more difficult and laborious, and raised the marginal costs of operations.

Sanctuaries are areas and physical facilities where terrorists can conduct training, network and plan operations, but they can also be defined in other ways—as financial, cyber, and propaganda nodes, for instance. Al-Qaeda has perfected the use of information technology (IT), particularly the Internet, as a terrorist tool, and has made use of the mass media to spread its propaganda. Part of what makes al-Qaeda and its affiliates such a difficult challenge is that they are able to "hide in plain view." Jihadist groups in Western Europe are embedded in the broader Muslim communities and have used the services and infrastructure available on the continent for propaganda, indoctrination, recruitment, and operations on the scale of the March 2004 Madrid terrorist attack. Preventing the reconstitution of a sanctuary anywhere in the Muslim world is therefore a critical requirement of U.S. coun-

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[12] Hoffman (2003a), p. 16.

terterrorist strategy. This requires proactive security cooperation with and support of countries under assault by al-Qaeda and its affiliates. (See pp. 163–164.)

Strengthen the Capabilities of Frontline States to Confront Local Jihadist Threats

Aside from the campaign against al-Qaeda, the global war on terror can be viewed as the sum of many wars on terror fought in local and regional theaters across the world. These local wars have to be fought and won by the local governments and security forces with the United States in a supporting role. Those governments have the most at stake, as well as the local knowledge, access to the population and, hopefully, political legitimacy, to carry these conflicts to a successful conclusion.

The United States could help friendly countries achieve their counterterrorism objectives by training and equipping local counterterrorist police and military units and intelligence services. As a general principle, counterterrorism operations are most effective when carried out by indigenous forces, with U.S. forces remaining in the background and providing support as necessary. Although the types of assistance provided would depend on the specific circumstances of individual countries, military assistance should focus on providing small-unit training and mobility while intelligence assistance could focus on data collection and analytical capabilities.

Encouraging cooperative regional arrangements can reduce the U.S. footprint in counterterrorism efforts. For instance, in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), regional countries have agreed to establish a regionwide intelligence network, taken steps to block terrorist funds and tighten border controls, and established a regional counterterrorism center in Kuala Lumpur. Similar cooperative arrangements should be encouraged in other parts of the world.

Since many terrorist groups operate in ungoverned areas, the capabilities of governments with imperfect control over their territories should be strengthened to enable them to assert authority over areas that are currently outside government control. Terrorists also take

advantage of porous and poorly monitored borders to move personnel, equipment, and funds, so governments' ability to monitor and control their borders should be strengthened.

For the U.S. military, the main implication of the above is that increasingly, U.S. military forces may have to interact with respective police, intelligence, and security services, as well as military forces, creating potentially a new set of requirements in political-military relationship and interoperability issues. For the U.S. Air Force, new types of missions may require fusion not only with Army components, but also with the security forces of the cooperating country. (See pp. 164–165.)

Implications for the U.S. Air Force

Air and space power have important roles to play in countering al-Qaeda and the jihadist groups that form its nebula. Most of these missions are familiar, but the relative mix required for effective prosecution of a campaign against terrorists is quite different from what the Air Force is used to providing in more conventional military operations. In Afghanistan, air and space power, combined with Special Operations Forces (SOF), was the key to joint and coalition military operations. Future battlefields most likely will be discontinuous, with shadowy hostile forces organized in small, unlinked groups. Eliminating these forces will require integration of air and ground forces on a scale greater than today.[13] (See pp. 166–171.)

SOF, especially Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), once considered peripheral to the U.S. Air Force's (USAF's) main mission, are now central to antiterrorism missions, which often require "quiet operations" with a relatively low profile. These are particularly important in countries where overt U.S. military operations against terrorist groups might be politically difficult for cooperating governments.[14] On the operational side, Air Force Special Operations Forces have the capability to pinpoint and track small groups and individuals, capture them, and search for critical intelligence. These capa-

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[13] "Air and Space Power" (2004), p. 95.

[14] Tirpak and Grier (2004), pp. 70, 75.

bilities are of paramount importance in a murky war against small, elusive groups of enemies who move back and forth over borders.[15] But just as important is their training functions. Air Force Special Operations Forces teach critical skills in night flying, air evacuation, and air assault to air forces of cooperating countries. However, there is only a single squadron, 6 SOS at Hurlburt Field, Florida, to carry out this crucial training function. Not only is this squadron too small to meet the requirements of the global war on terrorism, but throughout its existence it has had difficulties obtaining even the air-frames necessary to perform its mission.[16]

Air-delivered firepower has been used successfully in counterterrorist operations in a variety of contexts. The continued evolution of precision munitions has enabled air power to be used to target specific individuals and small groups—by Israel in the West Bank and Gaza (see Part 2) and by the U.S. against targets associated with the al-Zarqawi network in Fallujah, Iraq, in Yemen, and elsewhere. USAF and U.S. Navy (USN) jets provided the bulk of U.S. combat power in the war in Afghanistan and proved instrumental in bringing down the Taliban regime and eliminating al-Qaeda's largest and most important sanctuary.

It is likely that air power will continue to be called upon to provide lethal punch to U.S. and allied efforts to root out and destroy terrorists and their supporting infrastructure. Modern air forces have the advantage of being able to reach terrorist and insurgent targets in inhospitable or inaccessible terrain while simultaneously being relatively invulnerable to the kinds of defenses that are likely to be found in jihadist arsenals.

An important combat role for U.S. air forces is to work closely with non-U.S. ground forces in locating and striking terrorist targets. As was the case in Afghanistan, this could mean developing an "on the fly" partnership with troops of a very different level of sophistication. In some cases, these ground units may be leavened with U.S. Special Forces or advisors, but it should be anticipated that, from time to time,

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[15] Hebert (2005), p. 32.

[16] This point was made by one of the reviewers of this report, Dr. Thomas Marks.

USAF and USN pilots will find themselves supporting soldiers who have little or no U.S. training and scant knowledge of how to effectively employ air power. In such cases, the USAF will need to have available air-to-ground control elements that can be rapidly integrated into friendly ground force formations. In addition to their training in managing air support, these airmen will also benefit from having appropriate language skills and some cultural knowledge.

Air transport can be the key to counterterrorist or counterinsurgency operations in countries with widely dispersed populations and poor land transportation infrastructure—conditions that define almost all areas where terrorists and insurgents operate. Only by being able to bring forces rapidly to the scene can governments neutralize the terrorists' operational and tactical advantages and quell religious and ethnic clashes before they flare into full-scale communal conflict. Yet, many of the countries confronting terrorist and insurgent movements—Indonesia and Colombia come to mind—have woefully inadequate air transport capabilities. Rebuilding the air transport capabilities of countries at risk should be a priority in U.S. counterterrorism policy and security assistance programs. In addition, the U.S. Air Force—the world's premier practitioner of air mobility—will probably find itself called upon to directly provide transportation under some circumstances.

Providing training to the armed forces of friendly countries threatened by jihadist terror groups or insurgents will be another important job for the U.S. military, including the Air Force. It seems likely that these training missions could be numerous and potentially prolonged. Further, given that they will often be conducted in locations where the threat to U.S. personnel is quite high, they will impose force protection burdens. Finally, the fundamentally political nature of the battle against jihadist groups means that in some cases the training objectives will revolve at least as much around inculcating appropriate norms of behavior, such as respect for human rights and civilian lives and property, as transmitting expertise in operational and tactical skills.

None of these activities would appear to call for major changes in USAF force structure or posture.[17] The same may not be true of the final task that we want to emphasize: providing timely, accurate, and actionable information to commanders and operators at all levels. Air and space platforms have shown themselves to be vital components of the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) architecture for the war on terrorism. Cross-border operations between neighbors will be crucial in the decades to come. However, it is equally true that the campaign against al-Qaeda and other jihadist terrorists and insurgents has been hindered by shortcomings in existing systems, organizations, and processes. Improvement is needed, and the USAF will likely be called upon to make important contributions.

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have emerged as very useful tools for surveillance, reconnaissance, targeting, and, at times, striking terrorist targets. As al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups continue to decentralize and disperse, the demand for the kinds of capabilities offered by platforms such as the USAF's Predator and Global Hawk UAVs seems almost certain to multiply. If, in the future, the United States may wish to maintain sustained 24-hour multiple-source surveillance over multiple—and widely separated—swaths of inhospitable terrain, it is not clear that the Air Force plans to make sufficient investment in UAVs. Certainly, space-based systems and manned aircraft will play important roles, but UAVs offer both greater effectiveness over satellites and less risk than manned platforms, making them highly appealing to future commanders. The USAF should assess the likely demand for UAVs and size its future force accordingly.

The intelligence demands of countering jihadist terrorism will also be a human capital issue, not just for the USAF but for every agency, civilian and military, on the front line of that battle. All of the strategies laid out here for checkmating terrorist groups—waging political warfare, attacking radical Islamist ideology, breaking the

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[17] The one exception might be the proposed procurement of some number of a tactical transport aircraft better suited than the existing fleet for operations in and out of smaller, less-developed airstrips. As this is written, there is some controversy surrounding how many aircraft to buy, if any, and whether the Army or Air Force should operate them.

linkages between local and global groups, and so on—depend vitally on U.S. and allied decisionmakers having an accurate image of how these organizations are structured and staffed and how they relate to each other. Further, since terrorist and insurgent groups are dynamic entities and the relationships among individuals and organizations are fluid, this picture will need to be continuously reassessed and updated. Properly trained personnel will be critical to success. Analysts will need a deep understanding of the region they are observing—its language, geography, history, and culture—to be able to interpret rapidly and accurately what they are seeing and hearing. They will also need to be tightly networked with one another, and perhaps with their counterparts in other countries as well, so that important information about new or evolving relationships in the threat space do not disappear in the gaps between institutional stovepipes. Developing and sustaining an adequate number and variety of these specialized intelligence professionals, as well as creating the technical and bureaucratic infrastructures to support them, will be a challenge not just for the Air Force but throughout the entire counterterrorism community.

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Abbreviations

AaI	Ansar al-Islam (Iraq/international)
AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
AIAI	Al-Itihaad al-Islami (Somalia)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group (Philippines)
CBRN	chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear [weapons]
CRG	Control Risks Group
CSIS	Canadian Security Intelligence Service
CTR	Currency Transaction Report
DGFI	Directorate General of Field Intelligence
DHDS	Dhamat Houmet Daawa Salafia (Algeria)
EBO	effects-based operations
EIJ	Egyptian Islamic Jihad
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FTO	foreign terrorist organization
GIA	Armed Islamic Group (Algeria)

GICM	Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Algeria)
GUBOP	Directorate for Combating Organized Crime (Russian Interior Ministry)
HM	Hizbul Mujahideen
HuA	Harakat-ul-Ansar
HuJI B	Harakat-ul-Jihad-Islami Bangladesh
HuM	Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (Pakistan/Kashmir)
ICG	International Crisis Group
IED	improvised explosive device
IM	Islamic Manch (association)
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
ISI	Inter-Service Intelligence (Pakistani agency)
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
IT	information technology
JeM	Jaish-e-Muhammad (Pakistan/Kashmir)
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah (Southeast Asia)
LeJ	Laskar-e-Jhangvi (Pakistan)
LeT	Laskar-e-Taiba (Pakistan/Kashmir)
LIFG	Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
MANPADS	Man-portable air defense systems
MDI	Markaz-ad-Da'awa-Wal-Irshad (Pakistani madrassa)
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Philippines)
MMI	Majlis Mujahideen Indonesia

NDFB	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NIF	National Islamic Front
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan)
RPG	rocket-propelled grenade
SJ	Salafiya Jihadia (Morocco)
SM	Sipah-i-Muhammad
SMS	Short Message Service
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOS	Special Operations Squadron
SSP	Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan
TCG	Tunisian Combatant Group
TEL	Terrorism Exclusion List
TJP	Tahrik-i-Jafaria Pakistan
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAVs	unmanned aerial vehicles
UK	United Kingdom
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
USAF	U.S. Air Force
USIP	United States Institute for Peace
USN	U.S. Navy
WMD	weapons of mass destruction
WTC	World Trade Center

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Defeating the global jihadist movement—which we define as al-Qaeda and the universe of jihadist groups that are associated with or inspired by al-Qaeda—is the most pressing security challenge facing the United States today. The global jihadist movement can be distinguished from traditional or local jihads, which are armed campaigns conducted by Islamist groups against local adversaries with usually limited aims and geographic scope, in that it targets the United States and its allies across the globe and pursues broad geopolitical aims.

Although the U.S. campaign against al-Qaeda and the global jihadist movement campaign has had some notable successes, such as the destruction of al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan, the elimination of many of the group's leaders, and the growing resolve of many countries to take action against al-Qaeda and its associates, no informed observers believe that al-Qaeda will be eliminated anytime soon. Indeed, in some respects al-Qaeda has metastasized into an even more formidable adversary—dispersed across the global South, Western Europe, and North America, largely self-sustaining, and despite intense government countermeasures, able to mount devastating operations, such as the railway bombing that killed nearly 200 people in Madrid on March 11, 2004, and the London bombings of July 7, 2005. The United States itself continues to be threatened by large-scale attacks, as suggested by heightened security alerts and reports of plans to attack financial

targets in New York and Washington.[1] Countering al-Qaeda is thus likely to preoccupy U.S. national security institutions for at least the remainder of the decade, and perhaps longer.

To help planners anticipate the movement's evolution, anticipate future methods of terrorist operation, and develop an effective counterstrategy, this study explores some of the most salient aspects associated with terrorist phenomena across the world and their implications for the security of the United States and its friends and allies. The global terrorist threat represented by al-Qaeda and its associated groups is the subject of this volume. It should be noted, however, that this study is not intended to be comprehensive. Journalists, analysts, politicians, and scholars have written or uttered literally millions of words on international terrorism, particularly since the attacks of September 11, 2001, and it is impossible for a single monograph to capture the entire essence of these assessments, much less definitively map the full complexity of an entity that has developed over a 20-year period into the world's first truly global terrorist movement.

Roadmap to the Book

The results of the study are reported in two volumes: The subject of the first is al-Qaeda and what we refer to as the "al-Qaeda nebula," an ecosystem of terrorist groups around the world that have internalized the al-Qaeda worldview and its methodology of mass-casualty terrorist attacks. The second volume (*Beyond al-Qaeda: Part 2, The Outer Rings of the Terrorist Universe*)[2] deals with terrorist phenomena outside the al-Qaeda ideological orbit: Islamic and non-Islamic terrorist and insurgent groups with local agendas and the more diffuse threat posed by violent anti-globalization movements. We include them in this study because

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[1] In August 2004, antiterror raids in Pakistan yielded computer disks and other information sources suggesting that terrorists linked to al-Qaeda had carried out extensive surveillance of the World Bank headquarters in Washington, the New York Stock Exchange, and the Citigroup Center in New York. Dan Eggen and John Mintz, "Alerts Issued for District, N.Y.," *The Washington Post*, August 2, 2004.

[2] Rabasa et al. (2005).

although most of these groups do not threaten the United States directly, they threaten U.S. interests and the stability of friends and allies. Indeed, some of these groups—such as Lebanese Hezbollah—could under certain conditions evolve into global threats. In our analysis of these groups, therefore, we look for indicators of their future evolution. In the second volume, we also analyze the nexus between terrorism, insurgency, and crime. This is a critical aspect of the whole problem of international terrorism because in many cases terrorist groups cannot sustain themselves and survive without the income and resources that they derive from criminal activity. Although terrorism and organized crime are different phenomena, the important fact is that terrorist and criminal networks overlap and cooperate in some enterprises. The phenomenon of the synergy of terrorism and organized crime is growing because similar conditions give rise to both and because terrorists and organized criminals use similar approaches to promote their operations.

This volume traces the evolution of al-Qaeda and maps out the contours of the terrorist nebula. Chapters One through Five consider five broad themes:

- al-Qaeda's ideology
- al-Qaeda's strategy, structure, and evolving operational dynamic
- al-Qaeda's finances
- al-Qaeda's planning cycle
- al-Qaeda's relationship with groups within its ideological orbit, and the threat posed by these latter entities.

Violence is al-Qaeda's raison d'être. Unlike Hezbollah or Hamas, which have a territorial focus, a mass base, and a political platform, and which cultivate support through the provision of social services, al-Qaeda is a purely ideological and terrorist group that attracts adherents by means of its violent anti-Western agenda and its elite status at the apex of the global jihadist movement.

Al-Qaeda's ideology is what binds together the group's increasingly atomized network. In this part of the study we discuss the implications of this development for understanding the evolving phenom-

enon of global terrorism. We also consider the interrelated issues of al-Qaeda's strategy, structure, and operational evolution—before and after September 11—and how they have shaped the network's overall attack profile and operational tempo. These topics include al-Qaeda's use of new sanctuaries and the emerging role of urban training grounds; the group's interest in chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons, and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS); the use of converts; the changes in al-Qaeda's finances to more covert ways of raising and transferring funds and to an increased reliance on criminal activity; and its role in the ongoing insurgency in Iraq. The section concludes with an examination of those entities that have been fully co-opted into the inner circle of Osama bin Laden's group and that are generally considered to be an integral component of his broader jihadist movement.

Chapters Six through Eleven examine the contours of the al-Qaeda nebula, the far larger category of terrorist systems that, while not institutionally part of al-Qaeda, have already established contacts with bin Laden's network or have assimilated its ideology and methodology. Like the astronomical phenomenon, this nebula is a cloud-like mass that upon examination reveals itself to be made up of many distinct components. These groups will be subdivided into regional clusters and discussed in terms of (1) their historical links to al-Qaeda; (2) the extent to which their relationship with al-Qaeda has affected their overall operational agendas and attack tempos; and (3) how those groups are likely to evolve over the short to medium term.

Finally, some words about terminology are in order. What is known as al-Qaeda (typically translated from Arabic as "the base") has in fact always assumed a variety of different forms. In this book, *al-Qaeda* will be used to describe three distinct facets of a single phenomenon. First, in its pre–September 11 form, al-Qaeda refers to the terrorist entity that coalesced around Osama bin Laden in Sudan and Afghanistan in the mid to late 1990s. Second, in the post–September 11 environment, al-Qaeda is the label applied to the remnants of bin Laden's inner circle, which at the time of this writing (August 2004) is reportedly in hiding in the remote Pakistani tribal areas along the

Afghan border. Finally, al-Qaeda is used to refer to the broader, globally dispersed terrorist "nebula" that continues to receive ideological inspiration from bin Laden and his inner circle.

Although we will continue to use the al-Qaeda label in the context of this broader movement, a term that we believe more accurately describes the Islamic extremist threat facing the United States today is the *global jihadist movement,* as defined above. Although al-Qaeda in its post-9/11 incarnation clearly still exists, as we have seen with the discovery of detailed surveillance reports of a multitude of targets in the United States, the threat has extended beyond this smaller, albeit highly lethal group. To put the matter succinctly, "[e]ver since its fame began to spread through the embittered Muslim world, al-Qaeda has been at once an organisation of Islamic extremists and an ideology of Islamic extremism."[3]

Despite the evolution of this broader movement, the United States and other countries engaged in the war on terrorism have continued to refer to the perpetrators carrying out terrorist attacks against their interests as "al-Qaeda," when in fact it is unclear to what degree al-Qaeda (defined in this context as the remnants of bin Laden's inner circle) has had command and control over terrorist operations since September 11. More likely, as we have seen with the attacks in Bali in October 2002, in Morocco in May 2003, and in Spain in March 2004, these operations are actually conducted by a combination of local jihadists who received al-Qaeda training and may retain some ties to al-Qaeda leadership, and other jihadists who have no organizational ties to al-Qaeda at all, but share its apocalyptic vision.

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3 "Plots, Alarms and Arrests," *The Economist*, August 14, 2004.

CHAPTER TWO

Al-Qaeda's Ideology and Propaganda

Ideology

Although it is a shopworn phrase, "know your enemy" remains the cornerstone of any sound security policy. Ideology is central to this understanding and is, thus, an essential component of any strategy designed to counter al-Qaeda, the West's principal terrorist threat. To most Americans and other Westerners, explaining terrorist motivation in terms of ideological and other nonmaterial influences seems perplexing, for as Carnes Lord has observed, "[We] tend to assume that concrete interests such as economic well-being, personal freedom, and security of life and limb are the critical determinants of political behavior everywhere."[1]

For their part, journalists have tended to personalize this movement by emphasizing the central role of its nominal leader, Osama bin Laden. However, as the Saudi renegade himself concluded after his escape from Tora Bora in Afghanistan at the end of 2001,

> God willing, the end of America is imminent. Its end is not dependent on the survival of this slave to God. Regardless if Usama is killed or survives, the awakening has started.[2]

To be sure, bin Laden's iconic status among radical Islamists as a U.S. nemesis, as well as his leadership of the global jihad against

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[1] Lord (1989), p. 22.

[2] "'Full Text' of Usama Bin Ladin Recorded Statement Aired by Al-Jazirah TV, 27 Dec[ember]," Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], December 27, 2001.

the United States, has had a powerful mobilizing effect among certain Islamic sectors. That said, the ideas articulated by bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri and echoed across the extremist fringes of the Muslim world have arguably played the greater role in sustaining the international jihadist campaign, not least by helping to transform a terrorist nucleus into a far broader, indeed global, insurgency.[3]

The fact that ideology is so central to al-Qaeda should not be surprising. On a purely material level, terrorist organizations are almost always outmatched by the government forces that they oppose. Relative to the former, the incumbent typically possesses overwhelming firepower, superior human and technical resources, and far greater financial reserves. Faced with such crushing odds, particularly at the beginning of an armed struggle when groups tend to be at their weakest, terrorists must continuously strive to bolster themselves and the motivation of their members. Indeed if a movement is to survive, it must at the very least have the ability to replace fallen converts with fresh recruits. To a certain extent, the execution of successful operations helps serve this purpose, both by building morale within the group and by demonstrating to potential converts that the organization is operationally dynamic.[4]

But terrorist attacks, while necessary, are not sufficient to sustain a movement operating against a determined adversary. Militant extremists also require what J. Bowyer Bell has termed "the dream."[5] The term refers to the revolutionary "software" that helps convince militants—whose underground "lifestyle" characteristically tends to be marked by physical danger, isolation from loved ones, and psychological stress—that they are uniquely righteous, that their mission is just, and that they are at history's vanguard.

A simple faith in the cause is enough to sustain some terrorists. Others, however, require a more formal articulation of beliefs and objectives that have the power to explain the past, rationalize the present, and elucidate the future; in short, they need an ideology. For violent

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3 Rich (2003), p. 46.

4 Crenshaw (1981), p. 387.

5 Bell (1998), p. 12.

underground organizations, ideology can serve other purposes as well. Writing about left-wing terrorism in Italy, but in a manner equally relevant to a discussion of al-Qaeda, Donatella della Porta has observed that ideology "offered ways of reducing the psychological cost of participation in terrorist organizations" by dehumanizing political adversaries, who were portrayed as "pigs" and "tools of the capitalist system," and thus worthy of the severest, most violent sanctions.[6] This worldview, della Porta observes, was "founded on an absolute opposition 'friend-enemy.' The victims were therefore considered not as human beings made of flesh and blood, but as symbols."[7]

These features are readily apparent in the al-Qaeda worldview. At its core, al-Qaeda's ideology is profoundly internationalist, attempting to contextualize local conflicts as part of a broader global struggle against apostasy (as defined by bin Laden and his circle). This worldview has been variously described as "ultra-conservative" and "millenarian,"[8] "Wahhabi,"[9] "pan-Islamic" and "apocalyptic,"[10] "conspiratorial,"[11] "neofundamentalist,"[12] "counter-hegemonic,"[13] and as "profoundly hostile" to the West."[14] However, in its essence, al-Qaeda's ideology is a version of "jihadist-salafism," an extremist Islamic paradigm described by Gilles Kepel as "respect for the sacred texts in their most literal form [combined with] an absolute commitment to jihad."[15]

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6 Della Porta (2001), p. 149.

7 Della Porta (2001), p. 149. For a discussion of the role of ideology in insurgent movements, see Scott (1979), pp. 97–134.

8 Jason Burke, "9/11 Two Years On," *Observer* (London), September 7, 2003, p. 21.

9 Azzam (2003), p. 3.

10 Cook (2003), p. 34.

11 Zeidan (2001).

12 "The Political Imagination of Islam: Conversation with Olivier Roy," Institute of Historical Studies, University of California, Berkeley, April 16, 2002, http://globetrotter.Berkeley.edu/people2/Roy/roy-con1.html (as of February 16, 2006).

13 Khan (2003), p. 418.

14 U.S. Institute of Peace (2003), p. 3.

15 Kepel (2002), p. 220.

While inherently radical and Islamic in its orientation, much of al-Qaeda's doctrine is a syncretic creation that embraces and integrates elements drawn from Western revolutionary socialism and European nihilist antecedents.[16] The notion that "the world can be transformed by terror is not a peculiarly Islamic aberration," as John Gray has observed:

> From the Jacobins through . . . the Baader-Meinhof gang, the modern West has spawned ideologies and movements that sanction the use of terror to make a better world. Even the Nazis . . . believed that they were creating a new and superior type of human being. However horrible their utopian vision, all these movements believed they could create a future better than anything that had existed in the past by the systematic use of violence. Al-Qa'ida has more in common with these modern Western experiments in terror than it does with anything in Islamic traditions.[17]

In particular, this jihadist framework shares many of the features of Marxism-Leninism, which is somewhat ironic given the hatred bin Laden and his ideologists profess for communism. The similarity between the two outlooks is apparent in a number of respects, including the emphasis on universalistic claims; the focus on an internationalism; a conspiratorial habit of mind; the desire for a radically new political, social, and economic order; and, most fundamentally, the belief that the world is sharply divided into two opposing camps.

These parallels stem, in large part, from the educational background of many of al-Qaeda's most violent extremists who, far from being the products of religious institutions, actually originated from secular educational institutions. Coming into contact with Marxists-Leninists, they took the revolutionary notions of those scholars as the basis of their ideological doctrine, which—while explicitly Manichean in interpretation and conception—is defined according to specific

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[16] Gray (2003), p. 79; and Matthew Price, "Re-Clash of Civilizations," *Boston Globe*, February 15, 2004, p. D4.

[17] John Gray, "Living with Bin Laden," *The Independent* (London), May 18, 2003, p. 25.

Quranic principles.[18] In this manner, al-Qaeda depicts the world in terms of a stark and ultimately irreconcilable dichotomy—not between communism and capitalism but between the forces of Islamist belief and non-belief, with bin Laden himself taking on the functional Leninist role as the leader of the international (jihadist) revolutionary vanguard.

This notion has clear origins in the writings of Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), whose doctrines have exerted a major influence on al-Qaeda's Egyptian hard core. Qutb, a key intellectual figure in the Muslim Brotherhood who was hanged by Egyptian dictator Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1966, provided the theoretical underpinnings for "violent Muslim resistance to regimes that claim to be Muslim, but whose implementation of Islamic precepts is judged to be imperfect."[19] During the 1960s, Qutb postulated that the world was engulfed in jahiliyya, that is, the state of sin, ignorance, and moral darkness that had characterized society before the arrival of the Prophet. Echoing Lenin, Qutb called for the creation of a violent revolutionary vanguard to wage jihad and bring about Islam's restoration.[20] In Qutb's utopian vision—to be brought into being through the crucible of revolutionary violence—egoism, exploitation of man by man, petty class hierarchies, and other supposed ills of liberal democracy would be eliminated.[21] "This was Leninism in Islamist dress," as Ladan Boroumand and Roya Boroumand correctly concluded.[22]

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[18] Roy (1994), p. 3.

[19] Robert Irwin, "Is This the Man Who Inspired Bin Laden?" *The Guardian* (London), November 1, 2001, p. 8.

[20] Qutb (n.d.), p. 62.

[21] Qutb (n.d.), p. 62.

[22] Boroumand and Boroumand (2002), p. 8.

Themes

Neither bin Laden nor any other members of his inner hard core have articulated a comprehensive vision of the future.[23] In this, al-Qaeda is not alone among terrorist and insurgent groups. During the 1970s and 1980s, leaders of the Communist Party of Peru–Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) spoke frequently of their program for fostering a "world proletarian revolution" but said little about what they would do once they seized power. Such "unprogrammatic simplicity"[24] can be useful for any extremist political movement because a vague vision of the future is likely to attract a broader audience, alienate fewer potential recruits, and mitigate the possibility of being proven wrong. That said, a number of prominent themes have emerged in the pronouncements by bin Laden and his circle, and these have remained largely consistent over time.

Although bin Laden, al-Zawahiri (his reputed second in command), and others alternate the content of their messages from time to time—for example, emphasizing the Palestinian cause, or the U.S. occupation of Iraq—the central, underlying themes have remained constant and are likely to continue to form an integral part of al-Qaeda's ideological repertoire in the future. Al-Qaeda's themes resonate with millions of people across the Muslim world who are seeking coherent, unified explanations for the suffering of their coreligionists in areas of conflict around the world as well as a strategy for personal and political transformation. Prominent themes include the following:

- The oppressive regimes that persecute Muslims, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, are in league with the United States.

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[23] Gerecht (2002).

[24] Gerecht (2002).

- Since the abolition of the caliphate in 1924, the "Crusaders" have worked to prevent true believers from establishing an Islamic state.[25]
- More broadly, Christendom, together with world Jewry, is seeking to destroy Islam;[26] indeed, a Manichean "clash of civilizations" is under way.[27]
- The United States has created "an ocean of oppression, injustice, slaughter and plunder" (in bin Laden's words) and has thus merited responses such as the 9/11 attacks.[28]
- America's allies will pay a heavy price in blood and treasure for their role in their attacks on the Muslim nation. As al-Qaeda warned after the October 2002 bombing of a French oil tanker over the coast of Yemen, Washington's partners "will not remain forever safe from Allah's hand of revenge."[29]
- Guerrilla warfare and other "asymmetric" strategies are powerful tools for defeating even the largest and most sophisticated armed forces, as demonstrated in Afghanistan against the Soviet army and in Vietnam against the U.S. military.[30]
- The economy is the U.S. center of gravity and is acutely vulnerable. "The New York and Washington attacks [on 9/11], con-

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[25] See, for example, "A New Bin Laden Speech," MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series No. 539, July 18, 2003, http://www.memri.org/bin/opener.cgi?Page=archives&ID=SP53903 (as of February 16, 2006).

[26] See, for example, Salah Najm, "Usamah Bin-Ladin, the Destruction of the Base," al-Jazirah, June 10, 1999, FBIS.

[27] "Full Text of Interview Held with al-Qa'ida Leader Usama Bin Ladin on 21 Oct 2001," Jihad Online News Network, January 21, 2003, FBIS.

[28] "Azzam Exclusive: Letter from Usamah Bin Muhammad Bin Ladin to the American People," Waaqiah (Internet), October 26, 2002, FBIS.

[29] "Al-Qa'ida's Statement Congratulates Yemenis on the Bombing of the French Tanker Off Yemen's Coast," *Al-Quds al Arabi* (London), October 16, 2002, FBIS.

[30] "Bin Laden's Sermon for the Feast of the Sacrifice," Middle East Media Research Institute [MEMRI], Special Dispatch Series No. 476, March 5, 2003, http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=jihad&ID=SP47603 (as of August 30, 2004).

trary to all theoretical predictions, showed the extent of the fragility of the American economy," concludes one pro–al-Qaeda commentator.[31]

- Contributing in some way to violent, defensive jihad is the solemn obligation of every Muslim.[32]

These themes are circulated widely via the Internet, in books and pamphlets, and most notoriously, through videotapes in which bin Laden and al-Zawahiri expound on various ideological, political, and topical subjects.

Some analysts have charged that the message propagated by bin Laden and other extremists is a political nullity that offers no real solutions to the urgent problems of the Muslim masses, such as poor housing, unemployment, and the lack of educational opportunities.[33] This is true insofar as it goes—as mentioned above, the al-Qaeda ideology is unprogrammatic in nature—but it misses a larger point. Like other millenarian programs, the network's doctrinal agenda focuses not on the present, the here and now, but on the future. To be sure, that vision is somewhat hazy and ill defined, but it offers a promise and an escape from the petty concerns of everyday struggles, no matter how pressing life's ordinary problems might first appear.

Propaganda

As suggested in the preceding section, the worldview articulated by bin Laden and his circle, for all its archaic trappings, is in reality a curiously modern formation that has borrowed heavily from twentieth-century Western traditions, including both fascism and communism.[34] Writing about the European adherents of this ideology, Oliver

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[31] Abu-'Ubayd al-Qurashi, "A Lesson of War," Al-Ansar (Internet), December 19, 2002, FBIS.

[32] Anonymous (2004), p. 7.

[33] See, for example, Doran (2002).

[34] This point is made in Berman (2003).

Roy concludes correctly that "[h]owever 'old time' their theology may sound to Westerners, and whatever they may think of themselves, radical Euro-Islamists are clearly more a post-modern phenomenon than a pre-modern one."[35]

Nowhere is al-Qaeda's postmodern character more apparent than in its use of propaganda. Propaganda has of course been a feature of most if not all modern terrorist and insurgent campaigns, which have included the use of posters, books and pamphlets, radio, and more recently, television. Militants have also sought to arouse the consciousness of the masses by carrying out "propaganda by the deed," that is, violent acts that in their brutality or audaciousness are intended to demonstrate the movement's intensity and might.[36]

Al-Qaeda employs all of these techniques. But al-Qaeda's propaganda is particularly distinctive in the relentlessly global nature of its dissemination, which has been made possible by the canny use of electronic media, most notably the Internet. As a result of this media strategy, al-Qaeda's messages have penetrated deeply into Muslim communities around the world. Indeed, only the most advanced of modern states equal al-Qaeda's capability to spread sophisticated propaganda quickly and globally.

Bin Laden's first communiqué was an open letter in 1995 to the king of Saudi Arabia, followed by a declaration of war against the United States. These provocative statements were reinforced by a series of high-profile interviews with Western and Arab journalists from 1997 to 2001, in which bin Laden explained his call to war and praised terrorist operations in Saudi Arabia, Kenya, and Tanzania. After the September 11 attacks, al-Qaeda made use of video- and audiotaped messages to praise various terrorist attacks and warn of greater violence to come. Finally, al-Qaeda issued training materials, such as the *Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad*, the 2001 training video, and more-recent manuscripts, such as *In the Shadow of the Lance*, which serve the dual purpose of instructing terrorists and spreading al-Qaeda's worldview and justification for violence. Therefore, al-Qaeda has not relied

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[35] Roy (2003), p. 71.

[36] Laqueur (1987), pp. 48–49.

on just one form of propaganda, such as interviews or written statements. These various forms have most likely allowed al-Qaeda to reach more people. This is particularly true given the mixture of written and audiovisual messages, which has allowed al-Qaeda's propaganda to transcend both technology and literacy barriers.

Al-Qaeda has also used rhetoric as a means of communicating its propaganda to various audiences. Bin Laden's earliest propaganda came in the form of proclamations written in formal, scholarly prose. This is particularly true of his 1995 "Open Letter" to King Fahd, his Declaration of War, and his 1998 *fatwa*.[37] In these statements, the language is similar to that of historic letters and proclamations issued at critical junctures in Islam's history. In fact, bin Laden makes use of these historic statements, drawing on avatars of radical Islam, such as Ibn Taymiyya and Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab, to reinforce his argument.[38] Later statements, particularly following September 11, have become less formal in language and more contemporary, citing recent attacks and their successes as grounds for continuing the international jihad. This further suggests that bin Laden's initial proclamations were unique in form, message, and rhetoric, signaling his belief in their importance as historical statements in Islam's history.

Bin Laden's careful use of language helps ensure that his messages resonate among Arabic-speaking audiences. It reinforces the image he seeks to portray as a defender of Islamic interests, a pious man untainted by the spiritual bankruptcy that plagues the Muslim world.[39] Commenting on a November 2002 communiqué from bin Laden, a sympathetic Islamic "expert" interviewed in al-Jazeera described the communication as a

> wise, calm, and rational message, in which he explains his grievances. He explains them to the whole world with extreme fairness to the effect that he is not a man of aggression, but through his

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[37] A *fatwa* is a pronouncement or opinion on a question of Islamic law by a qualified religious scholar.

[38] See, for example, bin Laden's "Open Letter to King Fahd," 1995. These conclusions are drawn from English translation of Arabic texts, not from the original texts themselves.

[39] Anonymous (2004), p. 120.

> approach, he is defending this nation. . . . [H]e is telling the entire nation: Since the United States has thus far failed to arrest or kill me . . . then the nation . . . can resist this US arrogance.[40]

Al-Qaeda has made excellent use of various methods of spreading its propaganda, again not relying on just one medium to circulate its message. First and foremost, al-Qaeda has been heralded as the terrorist group that revolutionized its operations by successfully utilizing information technologies (IT), particularly the Internet. As noted by the SITE Institute, which tracks jihadist forums, members of jihadist forums inform one another of the latest technological trends and means for exchanging information. A posting in one of these forums in March 2006 described a free and clandestine means of sending text messages using a cellular phone. Short Message Service (SMS) was used to organize flash mobs to protest the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad.[41] Another forum produced a guide for Internet safety and anonymity. The guide advised on ways to circumvent procedures used by governments to identify users.[42] The high level of sophistication achieved by cyberjihadists is illustrated by the manual issued by an al-Qaeda mouthpiece, the Global Islamic Media Front, which provided a highly technical and detailed guide for creating Internet proxies. The eleven-page guide uses a combination of images and analogies to instruct the users in utilizing proxy servers and even creating their own private proxies to ensure anonymity. The guide describes a variety of Internet protocols, web applications, and language scripts as steps to

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[40] "Al-Jazirah Interviews Islamic 'Expert' Al-Siba'i on Bin Ladin's Recent Message," al-Jazirah, November 12, 2002, FBIS.

[41] SITE Institute, "Jihadist Forum Messages Concerning Another Medium for Information Exchange," http://www.siteinstitute.com (as of March 23, 2006).

[42] SITE Institute, "A Guide for Internet Safety and Anonymity Posted to Jihadist Forums," http://www.siteinstitute.com (as of March 24, 2006).

creating a private proxy.[43] The jihadist Internet even has job advertisements. A Global Islamic Media Front posting in October 2005 advertised open positions for "electronic mujahideen."[44]

Al-Qaeda is certainly not unique in using the Internet. Today, virtually every major terrorist or insurgent group maintains a sophisticated Web site. However, al-Qaeda is unique in two respects. First, there is the sheer size of its Internet presence. Cyberspace, according to one account, is now home to some 4,000 Web sites that serve as virtual environments for waging jihad.[45] Second, al-Qaeda is remarkable in the scope of activities it conducts in this medium. One study describes al-Qaeda's use of this medium as "cyberplanning," the combination of mobilization, communication, fundraising, and planning attacks through the Internet.[46] Gabriel Weimann argues that al-Qaeda's particular strength is in its ability to use IT as a means of attacking its enemies: "Al Qaeda combines multimedia propaganda and advanced communications technologies to create a very sophisticated form of psychological warfare."[47] Weimann further notes that al-Qaeda uses the Internet not only to spread its messages but also as a source through which sympathizers "can access pre-recorded videotapes and audiotapes, CD-ROMs, DVDs, photographs and announcements."[48] Stephen Schwartz argues that al-Qaeda has made exceptional use of the Internet as a recruitment tool.[49] These different analyses reveal that al-Qaeda is unique not merely in its use of the Internet but, rather, in

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[43] SITE Institute, "A Highly Technical and Detailed Guide for Creating Internet Proxies by the Global Islamic Media Front," http://www.siteinstitute.com (as of March 31, 2006).

[44] SITE Institute, "The Global Islamic Media Front Advertises Open Positions for Electronic Mujahideen," http://www.siteinstitute.com (as of October 7, 2005).

[45] SITE Institute, "Radical Islamists Use Internet to Spread Jihad," http://www.siteinstitute.org (as of June 2, 2005).

[46] Thomas (2003), pp. 112–123.

[47] Weimann (2004a, 2004b).

[48] Weimann (2004a), p. 5.

[49] Stephen Schwartz, "The Islamic Terrorism Club," *The Weekly Standard*, November 10, 2003.

the multiplicity of ways in which it works through this medium to strengthen its organization by making its ideology, strategy, and tactics more widely available to potential recruits.

Al-Qaeda has also spread its propaganda through the production of videos. The Global Islamic Media Front stated in an Internet posting, "because destroying a Crusader's vehicle without publishing a tape of the operation gives the enemy the chance to deny it . . . the enemy cares less if one of its vehicles has exploded . . . but worries about the information and the psychological effect of the operation and this is what happened."[50] In October 2003, a series of videotapes were released that contained testimonies of the suicide bombers in the May 2003 Riyadh terrorist attacks.[51] The videos bear the insignia of Sabah Productions (Cloud Productions); they include multiple cameras and show signs of considerable editing, suggesting significant production capabilities.[52]

Al-Qaeda has also used more traditional means, such as the creation of manifestos, tracts, and other written materials. The group also published a training manual that offers tips on deception and various terrorist tactics. Both the training manual and the *Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad* have turned up in numerous places around the globe, including the United Kingdom and the Philippines.[53] These written forms of propaganda have not only spread al-Qaeda's worldview but have also offered practical advice on engaging the enemy in battle.

Finally, al-Qaeda has made excellent use of the media to spread its propaganda. Al-Qaeda has its own media sources including *Nida'ul Islam* ("The Call of Islam"), a magazine published in Australia, which has printed many of bin Laden's statements throughout the past decade.[54] Al-Qaeda operatives have more recently launched the biweekly *Voice of*

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[50] SITE Institute, "The Role of Jihadist Forums in Support of the People on the Battlefield—Part Two," http://www.siteinstitute.com (as of March 10, 2006).

[51] Jason Burke, "Bin Laden Urges Terror Blitz," *The Observer*, October 19, 2003.

[52] Mansfield (2004).

[53] U.S. Department of Justice (2004).

[54] Gerecht (2002), p. 3.

Jihad magazine that deals particularly with the justification for waging war in the Arab peninsula, and *Al-Battar Training Camp*, a magazine that focuses specifically on tactics.[55]

In addition to its own media sources, al-Qaeda has made use of the international media to spread its propaganda. This includes Arab media such as the satellite stations al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya. But it also includes Western media sources, particularly CNN, the BBC, ABC news, MSNBC, and other major news networks that have broadcast al-Qaeda's audio and videotapes—particularly those claiming to be of bin Laden—along with other materials such as its training videos. It is perhaps no accident, therefore, that when CNN reporter Peter Arnett asked bin Laden in his 1997 interview what his future plans were, bin Laden answered: "You'll see them and hear about them in the media, God willing."[56]

Although difficult to measure, the persistence of al-Qaeda's propaganda over the past nine years suggests that it is affecting its various audiences in a way that its leadership sees as useful. First, bin Laden himself has praised the effects of his own statements on encouraging Muslim supporters to rise up and join in the global jihad. For example, in a January 1999 interview, five months after the August 1998 U.S. embassy attacks in Africa, bin Laden did not take credit for organizing the attacks but, rather, claimed that they were instigated by his 1998 fatwa, in which he called on Muslims to attack Americans wherever they could.[57]

Al-Qaeda's propaganda, coupled with its actions, also appears to have shaped international public opinion. The most obvious example of this is the effect of the March 2004 bombings in Madrid. The Spanish government was one of the staunchest supporters of the U.S. decision

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[55] "Al-Qa'ida's 'Voice of Jihad' Magazine: Issue No. 9," MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series No. 650, January 27, 2004, http://www.memri.org (as of May 28, 2004); "The Al-Battar Training Camp: The First Issue of Al-Qa'ida's Online Military Magazine," MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series No. 637, January 6, 2004, http://www.memri.org (as of May 28, 2004).

[56] "Al-Qa'ida's 'Voice of Jihad' Magazine"; "The Al-Battar Training Camp."

[57] "Exclusive Interview: Conversation with Terror," *Time,* January 11, 1999, http://www.time.com/time/asia/news/interview/0,9754,174550,00.html (as of April 3, 2006).

to go to war against Saddam Hussein, despite the fact that the Spanish population did not generally support military action in Iraq.[58] The parliamentary election, held just a few days after the Madrid bombings, ushered in a Socialist government that withdrew Spain from the U.S.-led Iraq coalition.[59] Although al-Qaeda did not directly influence the outcome of the election—voters turned out the Popular Party government in large part because of the widespread belief that the government had deceived the public about who was responsible for the attack—the bombings nevertheless redounded to al-Qaeda's advantage. For much of the international public not attuned to the complexities of Spanish politics, al-Qaeda seemed to have demonstrated the ability to remove major European political leaders from power.[60]

Al-Qaeda propaganda also appears to have successfully influenced journalists. As previously mentioned, Weimann notes that al-Qaeda's Web sites have become a consistent source of information for foreign journalists. This suggests that journalists take these sites and their information seriously—including explanations for current strikes and claims of future attacks—as sources for their reports. Thus al-Qaeda's propaganda has influenced media perceptions on its intentions, capabilities, and future trajectories.

Al-Qaeda's propaganda also appears to have had an effect as psychological warfare against its enemies, particularly the United States. Al-Qaeda threats released since September 11, made mainly through al-Jazeera, have received immediate attention in the international media. These statements—together with other factors—have helped influence decisions to raise the terror alert, on occasion, and have continually sent ripples of fear throughout the U.S. population. Weimann notes that these statements have succeeded in creating what he calls "an impressive scare campaign."[61] Thus, al-Qaeda's propaganda appears to have

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[58] John Vinocur, "Some in Europe See Spain's Turnabout as Al Qaeda Victory," *International Herald Tribune,* March 17, 2004.

[59] Vinocur, "Some in Europe . . ."; Erin Ailworth, "Former Leader Visits L.A.," *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 2004.

[60] Nesser (2004), pp. 71–75.

[61] Weimann (2004a), p. 5.

had the intended effects on its various audiences: It has inspired supporters, changed public opinion, influenced the international media, and instilled fear in its enemies.

CHAPTER THREE

Strategy, Structure, and Operational Evolution

Strategy

Al-Qaeda's strategy flows logically from its ideology. To outsiders, those within the network may appear irrational—motivated by insane hatreds, grossly unrealistic in their goals, and willing to kill innocent men, women, and children to achieve their ends. In reality, al-Qaeda, like other terrorist groups, acts in a rational manner in the sense that it weighs ends and means, considers alternative approaches, and calculates costs and benefits.[1] Its leaders may miscalculate from time to time, but this is a characteristic that it shares with even the wisest political figures.

Consider for example the attacks of September 11, 2001. On one level, the attacks were a mistake, since they led directly to Operation Enduring Freedom, the elimination of al-Qaeda's Afghan redoubt, and the destruction of the group's network of training camps. Yet the leadership appears to have anticipated the American response and calculated that any expected losses were outweighed by the benefits. Prominent among these were the damages the relatively low-cost attacks caused to the U.S. economy. In a videotape aired in November 2004, bin Laden concluded that the 9/11 strikes, estimated to cost $500,000, resulted

[1] For more on al-Qaeda as a rational actor, see Doran (2002).

in more than $500 billion in damages to the American economy, "[m]eaning that every dollar of al-Qaida defeated a million dollars by the permission of Allah, besides the loss of a huge number of jobs."[2]

With this decisionmaking context in mind and taking into account its broad ideological tenets, what are al-Qaeda's central strategic priorities? Toppling the "apostate" regimes of the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan, remains a paramount objective.[3] For al-Qaeda, these governments primarily exist because of U.S. underpinning; their destruction thus is contingent on destroying this support. In the fashion of many earlier terrorist organizations, such as the National Liberation Front (FLN), whose anti-colonial campaign succeeded in driving the French from Algeria, al-Qaeda has sought to achieve this objective by pressuring the United States to withdraw from the Middle East through the perpetration of increasingly costly (to the United States) acts of violence. High-profile attacks in Kenya and Tanzania (1998), the Gulf of Aden (2000), and New York (2001) have all been integral to this endeavor.[4] As bin Laden explains: "Our method thus far in this battle has been to continue to pile up more American corpses onto their unjust government until we break the arrogance of the United States, crush its pride, and trample its dignity in the mud of defeat."[5]

Somewhat ironically given its purportedly transcendental and spiritual purpose, al-Qaeda's analysis of its anti-U.S. pressure campaign has also included a strongly materialist cast. Bin Laden and the other members of the group's hard core have long stressed America's supposed economic vulnerabilities. For example, in October 2003, bin

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[2] "Al-Jazirah Site Posts 'Full Transcript' of Bin Ladin's Message," November 1, 2004, FBIS.

[3] Azzam (2003), p. 3.

[4] The perpetrators of the car bombing of the U.S.-Saudi National Guard training office in November 1995 admitted having derived inspiration from bin Laden, although bin Laden's role in the attack remains unclear. See National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (2004), p. 60.

[5] Muhammad Salah, "'World Islamic Front' Threatens New Operations Against Americans," *Al-Hayah* (London), August 19, 1998, FBIS.

Laden announced with obvious relish that the attacks on the World Trade Center had cost the American economy more than a trillion dollars, and went on to thank God for the size of the U.S. budget deficit, which had topped $450 billion.[6]

Prudence dictates that U.S. national security planners assume al-Qaeda will continue its attempts to deliver a devastating attack (or attacks) against American assets—both at home and abroad and possibly with chemical, biological, radiological, or (more improbably) nuclear devices. Nothing suggests that the hard core has changed its views since December 2003, when bin Laden vowed to continue to pursue Americans "in their own backyard."[7] Indeed, as then Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet told Congress in February 2004,

> [al-Qa'ida] detainees consistently talk about the importance the group still attaches to striking the main enemy: The United States. Across the operational spectrum—air, maritime, special weapons—we have time and again uncovered plots that are chilling.[8]

More broadly and in line with the general aim of punishing and destroying "nonbelievers," al-Qaeda and associated groups are likely to mount smaller-scale attacks against soft targets. The network may, in fact, be forced to give precedence to this strategic tenet (as opposed to high-impact Western targets) given the operational constraints of the post–September 11 environment.[9] Intelligence services, police, the armed forces, political leaders, and even ordinary citizens throughout the West have all, arguably, become far more vigilant, which has exacerbated the challenges associated with terrorist recruitment, financing,

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[6] See "Al-Jazirah Carries Bin Ladin's Audio Messages to Iraqis, Americans," October 18, 2003, FBIS.

[7] "Al-Jazirah Airs al-Zawahiri Recording on 2nd Anniversary of 'Tora Bora Battle,'" Al-Jazirah Satellite Channel Television, December 19, 2003, FBIS.

[8] George C. Tenet, "The Worldwide Threat 2004: Challenges in a Changing Global Context," February 24, 2004, http://www.cia.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/2004/dci_speech_02142004.html (as of February 16, 2006).

[9] Cronin (2003), p. 1.

communication, surveillance, and counterintelligence. In short, while hitting prestigious targets will remain the "ideal," operational considerations could well dictate a switch to more modest and easier attacks.

Either way, al-Qaeda will continue to act, to maintain organizational cohesion as well as to sustain and expand the movement. "To act is their sole necessity," notes one French observer.[10] For al-Qaeda, terrorism is purposeful, instrumental, and intended to serve a variety of political, ideological, and organizational objectives. Violent actions keep the network and its doctrinal program in the news, help to build morale among cadres, and through the propaganda of the deed demonstrate that the group is functionally active and formidable. All of these facets contribute to bin Laden's long-term objective of mobilizing Muslims for the promised global jihad against the West.[11] Hence, although clearly weakened by the U.S.-led global campaign against terrorism, al-Qaeda has nonetheless devoted resources to maintaining a visible operational tempo, attacking targets ranging from tourist resorts (Indonesia, Kenya) to residential compounds (Saudi Arabia) to relatively undefended foreign consulates, places of worship, and banks (Turkey).

Structure

Like the term "terrorism" itself, "al-Qaeda" is a contested concept. For some analysts, the group is more a worldview or ideology than an organization.[12] To the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), for instance, al Qaeda is a terrorist organization with a clear-cut struc-

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[10] Didier Francois, "On al-Qa'ida's Trail," *Liberation* (Paris), September 9, 2003, pp. ii–xi.

[11] Hoffman (2003b), p. 437; Jason Burke, "9/11 Two Years On," *Observer* (London), September 7, 2003, p. 21.

[12] See, for example, Raufer (2003), pp. 391–398; and "Symposium: Diagnosing Al Qaeda," *Front Page Magazine*, August 18, 2003, http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=9416 (as of February 16, 2006).

ture, hierarchy, and command-and-control mechanisms.[13] By contrast, other observers highlight the organization's transformation over time, stressing how it morphed from a centralized entity in Afghanistan in the 1990s to a scattered global network in the aftermath of Operation Enduring Freedom.[14]

Al-Qaeda's Structure Before September 11

Al-Qaeda was founded in the late 1980s, although the exact year is debated.[15] Jason Burke notes that the word "al-Qaeda" has several meanings: It can be translated as "the base" or "the foundation" (the common understanding of the word), but it also can mean a "precept, rule, principle, maxim, formula, model or pattern." Burke argues that the latter definition better fits the origins of what we now call al-Qaeda, particularly as it was employed during the 1980s, when the term was used to describe a mode of jihadist action against occupying Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Burke further notes that bin Laden had formed a small group of jihadists that had pledged their loyalty to him in the 1980s, but that there is disagreement over whether this group called itself al-Qaeda or not.[16] It was from this small group around bin Laden that al-Qaeda evolved into the loosely knit structure that reached its zenith prior to September 11.

Several scholars argue that al-Qaeda truly began to take shape while bin Laden was in Sudan during the early and mid-1990s, where he was strongly influenced by the country's nominal leader, Hassan

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[13] "Congressional Statement of J. T. Caruso, Acting Assisting Director, Counter Terrorism Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation, on Al-Qaeda International," December 18, 2001, http://www.fbi.gov/congress (as of July 11, 2002). Jason Burke sees this characterization as a product of the FBI's organizational culture, which he argues has traditionally focused on pursuing well-defined criminal entities with known members who can be prosecuted in a court of law. See Burke (2003), p. 11.

[14] See, for example, Gunaratna (2002a), pp. 72–73; Benjamin and Simon (2002), p. 167.

[15] Gunaratna (2002a), p. 75, cites a 1989 meeting in Khost as the birth of the al-Qaeda we now know. However, in a recent communication, Gunaratna reveals that al-Qaeda was cofounded by Dr. Abdullah Azzam and Osama bin Laden in September 1988 (Gunaratna review, July 2005).

[16] Burke (2003), pp. 7–9.

al-Turabi. A radical Islamist whose followers seized control of Sudan in a coup d'état in 1989, al-Turabi had as one of his major goals the creation of worldwide Islamic movements. To this end, he established several organizations, including the Islamist International and the Popular [Islamist] International in 1991—which aimed to unify Sunni Islam and various jihadist movements around the globe—and the Armed Islamic Movement/International Legion of Islam, which is the militant arm of these organizations.[17] In 1994, bin Laden and al-Turabi cofounded the Advice and Reform Committee, headquartered in London, with the specific purpose of criticizing the Saudi royal family for allowing U.S. troops to be based on Saudi soil.[18]

However, in the view of most analysts, al-Qaeda's structure only cohered after bin Laden's return to Afghanistan in 1996, following his deportation from Sudan. Under the rule of the Taliban, this desolate country offered the first real opportunity to build a solid terrorist enterprise with a strong degree of organizational coherence. In Afghanistan, bin Laden found the right combination of anarchy, instability, and antipathy toward the West and its values to construct a network that, according to Gunaratna,

> comprised a core base or bases in Afghanistan, satellite terrorist cells worldwide, a conglomerate of Islamist political parties, and other largely independent terrorist groups that it draws on for offensive actions and other responsibilities.[19]

Central to al-Qaeda's pre-9/11 structure was the so-called hard core—a dozen or so inner members surrounded by an outer circle of roughly 100 highly motivated loyalists drawn from around the Muslim

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[17] Bodansky (2001), pp. 32–35.

[18] Anonymous (2002), p. 145; Burke (2003), pp. 157–158, calls it "The Advice and Reformation Committee" and claims that its primary purpose was to improve the image of bin Laden and al-Turabi and counter Saudi propaganda in the worldwide Muslim community.

[19] Gunaratna (2002a), p. 73, cites an al-Qaeda training manual as his source of information. For more on the organizational structure of al-Qaeda, see *Indictment of United States of America v. Zacarias Moussaoui,* December 2001, http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/moussaouiindictment.htm (as of December 12, 2003).

world and committed to the jihadist agenda.[20] Directing this hard core was a complex leadership structure comprising four layers. At the top was bin Laden, who appointed an "immediate deputy" or "emir," Abu Ayoub al-Iraqi.[21] Below this was the *shura majlis,* or consultative committee, made up of veterans from the Soviet-Afghan war who had sworn a pledge of allegiance, or *bayat,* to bin Laden in 1989. These loyalists included al-Zawahiri and the operations specialist Mohammed Atef.[22] Below the shura majlis were four operational committees, according to Gunaratna: "military, finance and business, fatwas and Islamic study, and media and publicity."[23]

Al-Qaeda's Structure After September 11

The global war on terrorism began with a military operation against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan that aimed to destroy its authority and the sanctuary it had provided to al-Qaeda. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) achieved both these objectives, toppling the Taliban in a matter of weeks and scattering the core of bin Laden's group, particularly following the 18-day battle for Tora Bora.

Terrorism analysts are in general agreement that OEF was instrumental in severely weakening al-Qaeda's command and control structure.[24] Some observers, however, go further, arguing the campaign actually destroyed the organization's structural coherence. According to Burke, "the nearest thing to al-Qaeda, as popularly understood, existed for a short period, between 1996 and 2001. Its base had been Afghanistan and what I had seen in Tora Bora were the final scenes of its destruction."[25]

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[20] Burke (2003), p. 13.

[21] Abu Ayoub is now identified as Mamdouth Salim, alias Abu Hajir al Iraqi, arrested in Germany and incarcerated in the United States (Gunaratna review, July 2005).

[22] Gunaratna (2002a,) pp. 75–76.

[23] Gunaratna (2002a), pp. 77–78. In addition to this leadership structure, al-Qaeda retained a separate guerrilla force—the 055 Brigade—which during the group's tenure in Afghanistan was primarily used to assist the Taliban in its struggle against the Northern Alliance.

[24] See, for example, Gunaratna (2002a), p. 73.

[25] Burke (2003), p. 5.

A central tenet of the global campaign against terrorism has been to disrupt al-Qaeda's operational tempo and coherence by destroying its core leadership.[26] To a substantial extent, this campaign has succeeded in killing or capturing many of the group's most senior leaders:

- Mohammed Atef, al-Qaeda's operations chief, who was killed in a November 2002 U.S. air raid in Kabul[27]
- Ramzi bin al-Shib, the reputed recruiter and financier of the September 11 attacks (and alleged "20th hijacker"), who was captured in Pakistan on September 11, 2002[28]
- Abu Zubaydah, who is believed to have replaced Atef in the network and who was caught in Pakistan in March 2002[29]
- Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, al-Qaeda's alleged point man on the Arabian Peninsula and main planner for maritime attacks (including the 2000 strike on the USS *Cole*), who was detained in the United Arab Emirates in November 2002[30]
- Khaled Sheikh Mohammad, who was arrested in Pakistan in March 2003[31]
- Riduan Isamuddin (also known as "Hambali"), bin Laden's main point of contact in Southeast Asia (and the accused mastermind

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[26] For a complete list of the FBI's most wanted, see http://www.fbi.gov/mostwant/terrorists/fugitives.htm (as of February 2, 2004).

[27] See http://www.fbi.gov/mostwant/terrorists/fugitives.htm. Atef is cited as the most senior al-Qaeda operative to have so far been taken out of commission.

[28] "News Conference Regarding Zacarias Moussaoui," Department of Justice Conference Center, December 11, 2001.

[29] Don Van Natta, Jr., "Al Qaeda Hobbled by Latest Arrest, US Says," *The New York Times,* March 3, 2003.

[30] Philip Shenon, "US Says Capture of Al Qaeda Leader May Provide Clues to Thwarting Terror Attacks," *The New York Times,* November 23, 2002.

[31] Peter Finn, "Al Qaeda Deputies Harbored by Iran," *The Washington Post*, August 28, 2002; "Al Qaeda Hobbled . . . . "

of the Bali 2002 bombings), who was seized by Thai security forces just outside Bangkok in August 2003.[32]

How have these arrests affected al-Qaeda? Most scholars agree that the elimination of some of the network's key figures has been important in reducing the organization's overall operational capabilities. However, several commentators point out that a number of prominent leaders remain at large—including, most obviously, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri; Saif al-Adil, the Egyptian reputed as the head of al-Qaeda's security committee; Saad bin Laden, one of Osama's sons; and Mahfouz Ould Walid (also known as Abu Hafs the Mauritanian), a reputed operations planner.[33] They also point out that many of the Egyptians brought into al-Qaeda by al-Zawahiri—who in many ways constitute the logistical backbone of the network—have yet to be detained.[34] The significance of bin Laden's and al-Zawahari's continued presence in al-Qaeda has been an issue of debate. Several scholars have emphatically noted that, while these two individuals were important leaders in the creation of the network, the centrality of their operational leadership post–September 11 has become increasingly questionable.[35] For these commentators, the primary role of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri after the onset of the global war on terrorism has been that of a source of inspiration through their statements to the press and via their propagandizing on the Internet. As Burke notes, while they have

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[32] Maria Ressa, Atika Shubert, Amy Chew, "Asia's Most Wanted in U.S. Hands," CNN.com, August 15, 2003, http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/08/15/hambali.capture/ (as of February 15, 2006).

[33] Saif, Saad bin Laden, and Walid are all alleged to be in Iran. See "Al Qaeda Deputies Harbored by Iran," *The Washington Post*, August 28, 2002; and "US Says Iran Harbors al Qaeda 'Associate,'" *The Washington Times*, June 10, 2003.

[34] Hoffman (2003a), p. 8; "Al-Qaeda: Organization or Ideology?" *On Point*, November 25, 2003, http://www.wbur.org (as of December 13, 2003).

[35] For example, in a *Front Page Magazine* interview, five RAND researchers—Bruce Hoffman, Brian Jenkins, John Parachini, William Rosenau, and Gregory Treverton—all agreed that al-Qaeda would survive the loss of bin Laden. See Jamie Glazov, "Symposium: Diagnosing Al Qaeda," *Front Page Magazine*, August 18, 2003, http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=9416 (as of February 15, 2006).

served as the ideology and motivation for jihadist terrorism, they have exerted only marginal direct influence in the actual mechanics of subsequent attacks.[36]

Other commentators take a somewhat less sanguine view, noting that bin Laden and al-Zawahiri have released scores of statements since September 11 calling for Muslims around the world to rise up and attack Americans, British, and other Europeans whenever possible and to challenge their own corrupt and impious governments. According to these analysts, the mere fact that such exhortations to violence continue to be made—and, more seriously, continue to be acted upon—must of necessity be a major cause for concern.[37]

On a broader level, targeting the leadership may have had perverse consequences. Michael Kenney, drawing on the example of Colombian drug cartels, cautions that the strategy of taking out the known top layer of an organization can have the unintended consequence of transforming the enterprise into an entity with no central leadership but the continued capacity to operate. Stated differently, destroying the leadership may not necessarily kill an organization and could, in fact, create a new, disaggregated one that is more difficult to predict and preempt.[38]

Since 9/11, al-Qaeda's inner circle appears to have been playing a steadily diminishing role in planning, financing, and supporting terrorist strikes. Burke's analysis is worth quoting at length:

> The first major attack after the 2001 war came in October 2002 in Bali where more than 200 people died in a suicide attack on a nightclub. Investigations showed this strike was the work of

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[36] "Al-Qaeda: Organization or Ideology?" interviews with Steven Simon, Jason Burke, and Josh Meyer, *On Point,* November 25, 2003, http://www.wbur.org (as of December 13, 2003).

[37] For example, bin Laden's November 12, 2002, statement proclaims: "Why did your governments ally themselves with America to attack us in Afghanistan, and I cite in particular Great Britain, France, Italy, Canada, Germany and Australia?" Center for Studies on New Religions, http://www.cesnur.org/2002/laden_nov.htm (as of February 2, 2004).

[38] Kenney (2003), pp. 187–206. Kenney notes that the U.S. war on drugs succeeded in taking out the top leadership of the Colombian drug cartel but that inflows of cocaine remained unchanged. Gunaratna believes that the Istanbul bombings were the work of al-Qaeda and not of an associated group (Gunaratna, review, July 2005).

> a group tangentially connected to bin Laden but acting semi-independently. Some of the funding and strategic direction for the bombing may have come from the central core but little else. The next major attacks—at Casablanca, Riyadh, Mombassa and Istanbul—revealed steadily diminishing amounts of central direction. Finally, in Madrid . . . this process reached its logical conclusion. The attack, the most murderous so far, was the work of local militants who had been influenced by ideas of the global strand of Islamist militancy but had no contact with men like bin Laden at all.[39]

The July 2005 attacks in London would appear to fall within this pattern. Although the suicide bombers may have received, or attempted to receive, training from al-Qaeda-affiliated groups in Pakistan, these individuals had no apparent connections with al-Qaeda's inner circle, financial or otherwise.

Thus, while it appears that the decapitation strategy has succeeded in greatly reducing the functional ability of al-Qaeda's leadership core, it clearly has not brought about the end of the al-Qaeda phenomenon. Rather, dozens of like-minded local organizations have come to the fore, hitting more-vulnerable targets with deadly force. Discerning the capabilities and modus operandi of these smaller, less known groups will present a substantial new set of challenges for counterterrorism planners. Indeed, if Burke is correct in suggesting that new groups are emerging—affiliates that have had no training or financing from the pre–September 11 al-Qaeda—then fighting this threat will require a major departure from the decapitation strategy. More important will be a sustained and aggressive campaign of counterpropaganda aimed at discrediting the jihadist call and, thereby, dissuading local groups from taking up arms and attacking foreign and domestic targets.

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[39] Jason Burke, "The New Matrix of Terror," *India Today*, July 25, 2005, LexisNexis, August 31, 2005.

Operational Evolution

Because the United States can often force a change in al-Qaeda's tactics as a result of the success of its counterterrorist operations against the network, it is critical that policymakers identify in advance how their actions may affect the movement's overall operational dynamic and tempo. For example, to have ongoing success against a particular terrorist cell, it is crucial to understand the impact of this loss on the overall group or on its operational planning cycle if the cell is dismantled, and to anticipate how the network may recover. It is important to keep in mind that the outcome may be unexpected or may result in a changed modality more destructive to U.S. interests, something Washington obviously wants to avoid.

To accurately evaluate how al-Qaeda's tactics and targets have changed over time, it is first important to distinguish al-Qaeda and groups that have an organizational affiliation with it from those that are only loosely connected to the network or simply share its worldview (those entities will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Six through Eleven of this volume). Terrorist groups such as Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which have an integral and recognized link to al-Qaeda, are more likely to exhibit a common set of targets and tactics, whereas groups that have a less concrete relationship tend to incorporate methods and techniques that al-Qaeda does not commonly use. The working hypothesis of the present study is that the latter alliances both strengthen and weaken the network. Although informal ties with other terrorist groups provide al-Qaeda with operational and tactical flexibility, the inner core of the movement tends to have less control over how these operations are conducted.

For example, al-Qaeda's frequent use of sophisticated suicide attacks largely reflects the influence of the EIJ, a fully co-opted group whose own use of martyrdom was developed and refined in Egypt during the 1990s. Undoubtedly, it was the EIJ's operational experience that allowed al-Qaeda to emerge on the stage of world politics so successfully in 1998 with the simultaneous attacks on the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. By contrast, the Abu Sayyaf Group

(ASG) in the Philippines, a group established with bin Laden's support, has specialized in the use of kidnapping, extortion, assassination, and small-scale urban bombings—which, although justified in the name of the international jihadist movement,[40] essentially reflect the group's own operational capabilities and choices. This style of terrorism has tended to be amateurish in execution (with the arguable exception of the string of foreign abductions that took place in 2000), and it is debatable what real value these activities have had for al-Qaeda's overall functional, organizational, and ideological priorities.[41]

With these distinctions in mind, it is therefore useful to take a close look at how al-Qaeda has altered its operational strategy since the 1998 East Africa bombings—bin Laden's first large-scale attack against the United States—to better project how assault methods may be shifted over time.

After the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, the United States and its allies dismantled at least five al-Qaeda cells around the world, a significant setback for the organization. Although bin Laden likely anticipated counterterrorist actions in the wake of these attacks, he apparently did not readily appreciate how quickly Washington, in conjunction with other international intelligence services, would be able to unravel the plot, understand who was behind it, and shut down the networks associated with its planning and execution.[42] The al-Qaeda networks involved in planning the East Africa attacks were uncovered more quickly than the terrorists anticipated, for several reasons.

First, documents were found in possession of the EIJ operatives involved in planning the thwarted attack against U.S. interests in Albania that revealed their contacts with other members of their network in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Azerbaijan. Second, al-Qaeda did not anticipate that the Albania attack would be thwarted,

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[40] See, for instance, "Abu Sayyaf Group," U.S. Department of State (2002b), http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2002/html/ (as of February 16, 2006); "Abu Sayyaf and Its Links to Bin Laden," CNN.com, September 2001; and Hookaway (2004).

[41] Abu Sayyaf Group; "Abu Sayyaf and Its Links to Bin Laden."

[42] Anonymous (2002), p. 221.

and the EIJ operatives had not been careful to hide operational and contact information. EIJ operatives in each location were found with numbers and names of other operatives in their personal possession, leading intelligence and police officials to uncover and arrest their colleagues. Finally, officials gained information from EIJ militants through interrogation.[43] Since that time, al-Qaeda has altered and expanded its target set, making organizational modifications that have resulted in significant changes to the way it conducts operations.

Al-Qaeda has opted to stick closely to what has worked in the past, such as multiple suicide bombings, but the manner and means for carrying out these strikes have definitely changed. The use of planes as suicide bombs in the September 11 attacks and the small boat packed with explosives that devastated the USS *Cole* are two of the best examples of al-Qaeda innovation in this direction. However, there have been a number of other instances of operational shift: a switch from hard to soft targets and from mass casualty to smaller, but more frequent attacks; an increased focus on the economic impact of the attacks; greater efficiency in the utilization of loose networks and recruitment of U.S. and European nationals to evade detection; and moves to create new types of safe haven to maintain critical skills, such as conducting terrorist training in private homes. Each of these modifications, and the circumstances surrounding them, will be discussed in more detail below.

Hard Versus Soft Targets

In 1996 when bin Laden first announced his fatwa against the United States, al-Qaeda focused most of its energy on attacking hard targets, such as embassies and military installations. These facilities are not only the most difficult to penetrate but also represented the focal point of U.S. power and influence abroad. Al-Qaeda hoped that if its operatives could successfully hit and destroy such venues, it would force the United States out of the various countries it was "occupying" and

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[43] Muhammad Salah, "A Record of Jihad Years from 'Ayn Shams to Tirana. Official in Charge of Jihad's Station in Albania: I Traded in Yemen and Learned Forgery in Sudan," *Al-Wasat*, FBIS FTS19990303001107, March 1, 1999.

compel it to curtail its support for "apostate" regimes. In so doing, al-Qaeda would necessarily transmit a message of power that could be used to build morale and attract new recruits.

Following the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings, al-Qaeda moved to incorporate attacks against soft targets on a more concerted basis, both to produce a higher civilian body count and to provide greater operational latitude for carrying out more frequent attacks. While assaults were still mounted against hard strategic targets, such as the suicide bombing of the USS *Cole* in 2000, a broader portfolio of strike options was becoming evident. This was first seen in the thwarted plot to attack the U.S. embassy in Albania; documents subsequently recovered by security forces showed that al-Qaeda had singled out several other vulnerable targets in the event that the primary mission should prove too difficult, including mounting an assault against an American housing complex in Tirana.[44] This change in tactics was further highlighted in the planned millennium bombings of American and Israeli tourist venues in Jordan in December 2000.[45]

September 11 involved attacks on both soft and hard targets, and it represents the most sophisticated and deadly attack conducted by any terrorist organization to date. Al-Qaeda began planning at least two years in advance of the strikes, reflecting a time frame similar to that which characterized the East African operation. Suicide terrorism was, again, the preferred weapon; however, the delivery mechanism changed dramatically from the traditional explosive-packed car/truck to the use of hijacked commercial jet airliners. The soft and hard targets al-Qaeda chose for the attacks—the World Trade Center (WTC) and the Pentagon—represented the pinnacles of U.S. economic and military power. Moreover, the numbers of people killed in these assaults well exceeded al-Qaeda's expectations (especially in the case of the WTC), more than fulfilling its desired goal of inflicting mass

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[44] "Jordan Indicts Members of Terrorist Cell," International Policy Institute for Counterterrorism, March 29, 2000, http://www.ict.org.il/ (as of February 21, 2006).

[45] "Jordan Indicts . . . ."

casualties (which, as noted above, could be interpreted as a miscalculation given the robust nature of the Bush administration's subsequent response).

Since September 11, al-Qaeda and entities affiliated in some way with the network have focused primarily on attacking soft targets. Both 2002 and 2003 saw a rise in such attacks, with assaults ranging from nightclubs in Indonesia to a synagogue in Tunisia. In choosing such a course of action, al-Qaeda appears to be hoping that it can project an image of omnipresence. However, it could also reflect a growing weakness in the network, which—suffering from a concerted counterterrorism onslaught by the United States and its allies—no longer has the means or capabilities to conduct more sophisticated, strategic assaults on hard targets.

Mass-Casualty Versus Smaller, More Frequent Attacks

Although inflicting mass casualties remains a primary goal of al-Qaeda, the group has had to alter its operational strategy since September 11 to focus on conducting smaller, more frequent attacks. There are two main reasons for this change. First, the loss of a secure base in Afghanistan and the subsequent arrest of both senior and mid-level commanders have denuded the group of the necessary logistical and functional assets needed to plan an operation on the scale of 9/11. Second, because it can no longer exhibit clear command and control over its attack—again, a consequence of the aforementioned loss of haven and leadership—al-Qaeda has been forced to increasingly rely on other terrorist groups who are in some way connected to the network to conduct its attacks. Although the parameters of those affiliate strikes have not approached those of the high-profile assaults seen in Washington and New York, they have acted as a de facto force multiplier in the sense that they have been regularly perpetrated on a truly global scale. During 2003, for instance, al-Qaeda was "credited" with a plethora of suicide attacks in various parts of the world, including

Morocco, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Turkey.[46] Not only did these acts of terrorism ensure that the group continued to be viewed as both vibrant and relevant, they also helped to underscore an image of the network as being able to strike at will around the globe.

Focus on Economic Impact

Al-Qaeda has additionally incorporated attacks against U.S. installations or infrastructure that are likely to have some kind of economic effect on its overall target set. The group first realized the potential of this form of terrorism in the wake of September 11. Although the WTC and Pentagon were primarily chosen for their symbolic status as the seat of American commercial and military power, the financial damage wrought by the two strikes was enormous (especially in the former case), affecting New York businesses, the airline industry, tourism, and indirectly contributing to a national—and, arguably, global—recession.[47]

Al-Qaeda's continued plans to use jets as flying bombs further underscores the movement to maximize the economic consequences of an attack. Although the choice of this particular modus operandi undoubtedly reflects its past use as a successful form of mass-destruction terrorism, there is good reason to believe that it also reflects the perception that such operations will result in further setbacks to commercial aviation and tourism. Indeed, in December

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[46] Chris Plante, "US Suspects al-Qa'ida in Morocco Bombings," CNN.com, May 18, 2003, http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/africa/05/17/al.qaeda.morocco/ (as of February 16, 2006); "Saudi Bombing Deaths Rise," BBC News, May 13, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3022473.stm (as of February 16, 2006); Maria Ressa, "Fears of New Suicide Terrorism Squad," CNN.com, http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/08/11/alqaeda.blast/ (as of February 16, 2006); "Warning of More Attacks in Turkey," CNN.com, November 20, 2003, http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/11/20/turkey.blast/ (as of February 16, 2006).

[47] Gilmore Commission (2002), pp. 9–10.

2003, a number of flights from Europe to the United States were canceled precisely because of reported attempts by al-Qaeda to hijack the planes during the traditionally busy holiday season.[48]

Efficient Use of Loose Networks

As previously noted, counterterrorist actions by the United States and its allies are responsible, at least in part, for al-Qaeda's increased reliance on loose networks of operatives to conduct operations. Arrests of senior leaders and the loss of its Afghan haven have forced the group not only to turn to other established terrorist affiliates to conduct attacks but also to operate in a more decentralized, cellular fashion.[49] After the East Africa attacks, al-Qaeda first began to shift its focus toward using clandestine networks, largely for pragmatic and operational reasons. However, the group still maintained relative command and control over its operations, tending to rely on jihadists brought into al-Qaeda as sworn members rather than contracting with particular individuals for specific attacks. Cadres were required to prove their depth of knowledge of the Koran and their commitment to Islam and al-Qaeda's ideology. Each also took an oath of loyalty to bin Laden and went through a sustained program of terrorist training.

Without the infrastructure in place to recruit dedicated members and because it is no longer in the group's best interest to have an easily identifiable core of operatives, al-Qaeda has necessarily had to alter its strategy. Accordingly, the preferred approach today is to have cells composed of newly recruited operatives who come together for a specific operation and then disperse after it is over. Operating in this manner, al-Qaeda has sought to compensate for the loss of its bases in Afghanistan (which availed more direct, long-term, face-to-face con-

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[48] "Flights Canceled over Terrorist Fears," *The Seattle Times,* December 25, 2003, http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/nationworld/2001823220_planes25.html (as of February 16, 2006); "Flights Canceled Amid New Worries About al-Qaeda," USAToday.com, January 30, 2004, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2004-01-30-terror-threats-airlines_x.htm (as of February 16, 2006).

[49] Gilmore Commission (2002), pp. 12–13.

tact between members), while at the same time increasing the difficulty of quickly identifying individuals involved in particular attacks and anticipating their role in the overall planning process.

New Sanctuaries

With the loss of its leadership and training infrastructure in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda has had to find alternative safe havens to continue to plan operations and train new recruits. In the post-9/11 era, the group is unlikely to find another environment as conducive to its needs as the one it enjoyed under the Taliban. Indeed, an important objective of the United States and its allies was to discourage other potential state sponsors from offering territorial sanctuary to terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, a policy that has already prompted some former renegade states—notably Libya and Sudan—to distance themselves from terrorist groups.

Since the loss of its extensive training complex in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda and its offspring have had to invent new ways of teaching their operational tradecraft to the next generation of jihadists. In Afghanistan, al-Qaeda—under the patronage of the Taliban—was able to train thousands of new recruits from a variety of backgrounds in both guerilla warfare and terrorist tactics ranging from small arms training to counterinterrogation techniques with relative impunity. The creation of the 11-volume *Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad,* acquired by U.S. intelligence in 1999, was designed to serve as a step-by-step do-it-yourself guide for the up-and-coming terrorist to augment what he learned in the Afghan training camps, and to educate those who could not make it to the camps. This publication has served as the primary text for training new recruits in an era when training camps are harder to set up. It includes sections on how to blow up a plane and threaten with a knife and has been widely circulated on the Internet. Also on the Internet are online courses offered by Islamist Web sites on how to build explosive devices.[50]

These texts and other "virtual" ways of learning about how to wage jihad are crucial for supporting the growing number of urban training

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[50] Stern (2003).

grounds that have emerged since the loss of Afghanistan. Urban training grounds are defined as operational spaces in urban areas, such as private homes or warehouses, where new recruits can engage in the full spectrum of terrorist training, ranging from ideological indoctrination to target selection and how to conduct surveillance. As discussed in the section on al-Qaeda propaganda, a new Internet magazine called *Al-Battar Training Camp* purports to help prospective terrorists get up to speed quickly in the comfort and anonymity of their own homes.[51] The brainchild of the former al-Qaeda leader in Saudi Arabia, Yusuf al-Ayiri (former bodyguard of bin Laden who was killed by Saudi forces in 2003), *Al-Battar* appears to be published bimonthly. In the magazine's first issue, the author says,

> Because many of Islam's young people do not yet know how to bear arms . . . and because the agents of the Cross are hobbling the Muslims and preventing them from planning [jihad] . . . your brothers the Mujahideen in the Arabian peninsula have decided to publish this booklet to serve the Mujahid brother in his place of isolation, and he will do the exercises and act according to the military knowledge included within it.

The magazine contains articles on such topics as how to properly operate a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) and how to orchestrate a kidnapping.[52]

In addition to starting this magazine intended to reach thousands of new recruits via the Internet and give them a way to train in the post–September 11 era, al-Ayiri also began establishing a network of covert training camps at farms and in private homes around

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[51] "Al-Qaeda Offers Do-It-Yourself Terror Training," WorldNetDaily, January 5, 2004, http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=36459 (as of February 16, 2006).

[52] "Al Battar Magazine Issue No. 10," SITE Institute, May 24, 2004; "Al Battar Magazine Issue No. 13," SITE Institute, July 23, 2004, http://www.siteinstitute.org/terroristpublications.html (as of February 16, 2006).

Saudi Arabia.[53] A group called "Al-Qaeda's Military Committee in Saudi Arabia" released a communiqué in December 2003 announcing the existence of these camps by saying, "One of [Yusuf al-Ayiri's] last blessed deeds was to establish several training camps in [Saudi Arabia] which several of the hero mujahadeen have come from."[54]

Besides the network in Saudi Arabia, other training "camps" have been established in urban areas in France and the United Kingdom (UK). A number of North African extremists affiliated with al-Qaeda were arrested in France and the UK since 9/11 and were suspected of manufacturing chemicals for use in future terrorist attacks. In January 2003, British authorities arrested six men suspected of producing ricin, a highly toxic substance, in their north London apartment. In the apartment the authorities found ricin precursor agents and processing equipment. According to British forensic analysts, the material present in the apartment tested positive for ricin.[55]

One French-born al-Qaeda terrorist of Algerian descent, Menad Benchellali, was arrested in December 2002 for manufacturing ricin in his apartment in Lyon. Police found a laboratory equipped to produce biological and chemical agents in a bedroom that doubled as a sewing room by day. According to French police reports, Benchellali, known in al-Qaeda circles as "the chemist," would lock himself in the room and work through the night to experiment with new biological and chemical recipes. Based on leads developed in the Benchellali case, British authorities raided the apartments of a number of Algerian terrorists in 2003 and also found ingredients for manufacturing ricin.[56]

The wave of terrorism in Morocco, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and elsewhere shows that al-Qaeda's "second generation" is still

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[53] Evan Kohlmann, "A Saudi Home: Al Qaeda in the Kingdom," *National Review Online,* February 9, 2004, http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/kohlmann200402090859.asp (as of February 16, 2006).

[54] Kohlmann, "A Saudi Home . . . ."

[55] Jeffrey M. Bale, Anjali Bhattacharjee, Eric Croddy, and Richard Pilch, "Ricin Found in London: An al-Qa`ida Connection?" Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), January 23, 2003, http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/reports/ricin.htm (as of February 16, 2006).

[56] Joby Warrick, "Al Qaeda: Death in a Jar," *Hamilton Spectator*, May 8, 2004, p. F08.

able to conduct effective attacks despite the loss of training bases in Afghanistan. These attacks may not be as spectacular as those executed on September 11, but they are more frequent and give the impression that al-Qaeda can strike anywhere at any time. Training is vital to maintaining the quality of al-Qaeda's terrorist attacks—which in turn is essential to maintaining the credibility of the global jihadist movement and attracting new recruits—and thus far, al-Qaeda has shown an ability to sustain the integrity of that training through the proliferation of virtual jihad and the diffusion of urban training centers.

Unconventional Weapons

Bin Laden has made no secret of his interest in acquiring CBRN weapons, but he does not seem to have been successful in translating intent into execution. Of course, the level of difficulty in acquiring unconventional weapons of different kinds is not the same, with the development of a nuclear weapon at the most difficult end of the spectrum and probably beyond al-Qaeda's current capabilities. The technology for the development of a nuclear device is available in the open literature, but a terrorist group seeking to develop such a device would face formidable logistical and technical challenges—including obtaining at least 50 kilograms of enriched uranium and developing a usable device without tests that could be detected.[57] Given the difficulties in developing a nuclear device, the most likely course would be to attempt to build a radiological weapon, possibly using materials diverted from stockpiles in the former Soviet Union, or to purchase a ready-made weapon.

Following Pakistan's detonation of a nuclear device in 1998, bin Laden declared that other Muslim nations "should not be lax in possessing nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons."[58] Bin Laden has used two arguments to justify the possession and use of these unconventional devices. First, bin Laden is a believer in their deterrent value.

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[57] "Nuclear Capabilities May Elude Terrorists, Experts Say," *The Washington Post*, December 29, 2004.

[58] "Bin-Laden Congratulates Pakistan on Its Possession of Nuclear Weapons," *Al-Quds al-'Arabi* (London), June 1, 1998, FBIS.

As he told an interviewer in 1999, "It would be a sin for Muslims not to try and possess the weapons that would prevent the infidels from inflicting harm on Muslims."[59] Second, since bin Laden claims that "the United States is the biggest mischief maker, terrorist, and rogue in the world . . . and it is the duty of every Muslim to struggle for its annihilation,"[60] CBRN weapons, with their potential to cause mass casualties, serve as ideal instruments.

Theological justification was provided by a Saudi cleric named Nasir bin Hamid al-Fahd. According to Anonymous (the pseudonym of Michael Scheuer, former head of the CIA's bin Laden unit), in May 2003 al-Fahd issued a fatwa entitled "A Treatise on the Legal Status of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction Against Infidels" that addressed theological problems raised by the use of CBRN weapons. Al-Fahd argued that weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) have no special standing as proscribed weapons under Islamic laws. Moreover, Muslims may retaliate proportionately for attacks on them. Since, according to al-Fahd, "some brothers have totaled the number of Muslims killed directly or indirectly by [American] weapons and come up with a figure of nearly 10 million," it was permissible for Muslims to inflict an equivalent number of casualties in an attack on Americans.[61]

Bin Laden's CBRN acquisition effort began while he was living in Sudan during 1991–1996. His intimate relationship with the Nationalist Islamic Front (NIF), Sudan's ruling clique, gained him entrée to the NIF's Military Industrial Corporation, a potential source of CBRN expertise, equipment, and materials.[62] During this period, bin Laden also began a protracted and apparently fruitless campaign

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[59] Rahimulla Yusufzai, "Conversation with Terror," *Time* (Canada), January 11, 1999, p. 14.

[60] "Interview with Osama Bin Laden Reported," *Al-Akhbar* (Islamabad), March 31, 1998, FBIS.

[61] Anonymous (2004), pp. 155–156. Al-Fahd further justified large-scale civilian casualties if they were the result of an attack meant to defeat the enemy and not aimed at killing civilians. He also deemed the killing of Muslims in such attacks permissible, if there was no alternative.

[62] Anonymous (2002), p. 186.

to acquire material for building a nuclear device.[63] After his relocation to Afghanistan in 1996, bin Laden received advice from Pakistani nuclear scientists, most notably Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood, a 38-year veteran of Pakistan's civil nuclear program.[64] At a laboratory in Darunta, bin Laden's followers developed a crude form of cyanide gas, which they tested on a dog in December 1999, recording the event on videotape. After the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001, technical manuals found in Khost, Kabul, and other areas confirmed al-Qaeda's deep interest in CBRN weapons.[65]

Press accounts also indicate that during this period bin Laden attempted to purchase nuclear weapons from sources within the former Soviet Union. These reports allege that bin Laden's agents sought atomic demolition munitions (so-called "suitcase nukes") and, more fancifully, that with the help of organized crime figures in Russia and Chechnya, obtained nuclear warheads from Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Russia.[66] Although some analysts conclude that some of these claims have the "ring of plausibility,"[67] there is no publicly available evidence to confirm that al-Qaeda or any other terrorist entity has fabricated, purchased, or stolen a nuclear device. Indeed, no U.S. or allied government official has ever stated publicly that terrorists have succeeded in acquiring a nuclear device or other sophisticated weapon.

Although some analysts, journalists, and public officials claim fancifully that some of these weapons can be "built in a basement," the evidence suggests that creating devices capable of causing mass casualties requires substantial expertise, time, and money.[68] Aum Shinrikyo,

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[63] See, for example, *United States of America v. Usama Bin Laden et al.,* particularly pp. 357–366.

[64] Anonymous (2002), p. 188; Baker, "Pakistani Scientist . . . ," p. A01.

[65] Burke (2003), p. 187; Mike Boettcher and Ingrid Arnesen, "Al Qaeda Documents Outline Serious Weapon Program," January 25, 2002, CNN.com, http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/01/24/inv.al.qaeda.documents (as of February 27, 2006).

[66] "Al Qaeda Network May Have Transported Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons to the United States," *The Frontier Post* (Peshawar), November 20, 2001, FBIS.

[67] Anonymous (2002), p. 192.

[68] Parachini (2003), pp. 37–48.

the religious cult responsible for the sarin nerve agent attack on the Tokyo subway in March 1995, was able to fashion a crude chemical weapon, but failed to fabricate a biological device, despite substantial amounts of money, a pool of scientific and engineering talent, and a secure operating environment free from government surveillance.[69] Al-Qaeda seems to have encountered similar challenges even in near-ideal conditions under the Taliban in Afghanistan. Although bin Laden enjoyed complete security, financial resources, and access to expertise, there is no evidence that he succeeded in fabricating a biological or chemical weapon, let alone a nuclear device.[70]

Again, this is not to say that bin Laden or the broader jihadist movement he spearheaded does not remain committed to acquiring CBRN devices, despite the hurdles involved. Terrorists, according to the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism, are "doing everything they can" to obtain materials to build CBRN.[71] In congressional testimony in February 2004, George C. Tenet, then director of central intelligence, announced an "increase in the threat of more sophisticated CBRN" and highlighted al-Qaeda's continued quest for chemical weapons, anthrax, and nuclear devices.[72] Al-Qaeda's continued interest in CBRN was confirmed by the January 2003 ricin finds in London.[73]

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[69] Rosenau (2001).

[70] For more on al-Qaeda's efforts to acquire a nuclear device, see Daly, Parachini, and Rosenau (2005).

[71] Quoted in Steven Gutkin, "U.S. Terror Expert Warns of Dirty Bomb," Associated Press, February 8, 2004.

[72] George C. Tenet, "The Worldwide Threat: Testimony of Director of Central Intelligence George C. Tenet Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," February 24, 2004, http://www.cia.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/2004/dci_speech_02142004.html (as of April 3, 2006).

[73] John Steele and Philip Johnson, "Ricin Terror Flat Was Rented for Asylum Seekers," *Daily Telegraph* (London), January 9, 2003, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2003%2F01%2F09%2Fnrici09.xml (as of February 16, 2006).

MANPADS Acquisition

Al-Qaeda remains resolute in its desire to continue to attack American commercial aircraft both inside the United States and abroad. The use of commercial airliners in the September 11 attacks underscored for al-Qaeda that American airliners are vulnerable both to a hostile takeover and to financial ruin in the wake of a terrorist attack, although increased security measures have made it increasingly difficult for terrorists to bring weaponry on board and to gain access to the cockpit. In short, September 11 taught al-Qaeda and its affiliates that attacking U.S. airliners directly or using them in a terrorist operation is an effective way of killing many of Americans and inflicting significant economic damage on the United States.

MANPADS remain an attractive tool for al-Qaeda and its affiliates to use in their operations. In fact, al-Qaeda has used MANPADS twice since 9/11, but both attempts to hit the intended target failed. In May 2002, al-Qaeda operatives tried to shoot down a U.S. military aircraft in Saudi Arabia using a shoulder-fired missile, but it either did not fire or misfired.[74] In November 2002, al-Qaeda terrorists launched two shoulder-fired SA-7 Strela-2Ms at an Israeli charter aircraft in Mombasa, Kenya, missing the target probably because the plane was already out of range for the missiles to lock onto the airplane's engines.[75]

In February 2003, British military forces surrounded Heathrow Airport for three days over concerns that jihadist militants were going to shoot down an aircraft there using MANPADS.[76] According to British counterterrorist authorities,[77] initial reports appeared to indicate that the jihadists had succeeded in importing via Dover or another port on the English Channel as many as nine SA-7 Strela surface-to-air

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[74] "FBI Warns Portable Missiles a Threat," CNN.com, May 31, 2002, http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/05/31/terror.threat/ (as of February 16, 2006).

[75] Kuhn (2003).

[76] An extensive discussion of this threat can be found at "SAMs—The Unresolved Air Security Threat," http://www.thetravelinsider.info/2002/1206.htm (as of February 16, 2006).

[77] O'Brien's interviews with senior UK counterterrorist officials, London, May 2004 and September 2005.

missile (SAM) launchers, but subsequent investigations and interviews determined that this information was false, although there had been sufficient intelligence-led concerns surrounding such a plot to merit the strong reaction at Heathrow. Six men were arrested at the time as a precautionary measure but were subsequently released without charge. It remains unclear whether this possible attack was the one Khaled Sheikh Mohammad reported that bin Laden had ordered against Heathrow soon after 9/11 to "punish Tony Blair . . . his principal enemy." Khaled Sheikh Mohammad reportedly told his interrogators that he gave an al-Qaeda team money to undertake surveillance of Heathrow, "assessing its weak points and finding locations from which planes might be shot down." The actual Heathrow operation would have taken place more than a year after this directive was allegedly issued by bin Laden. Khaled Sheikh Mohammad claimed that the operation he knew of "never advanced beyond surveillance" and blamed communications interruptions following the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and the overthrow of the Taliban.[78]

The proliferation of MANPADS throughout the world—there are reportedly 150,000 in circulation—makes it more likely that an increasing number of terrorist groups and individuals will take possession of these weapons and incorporate them into their attack planning.[79] Some estimates indicate that at least 100 Stinger missiles are still circulating in Afghanistan and thousands are missing in Iraq that terrorists could obtain and smuggle out of the country for use in a planned attack.[80] For the terrorists, the only drawback to the use of these weapons—as demonstrated by the examples above—is that the older models are not always reliable. In fact, recent estimates show that

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[78] Christina Lamb, "Al-Qaeda Leader Says: Heathrow Our Target," *Sunday Times* (London) March 28, 2004.

[79] As of August 2003, 27 terrorist groups reportedly possessed MANPADS. Fred Bayles, "Threat Is 'No Longer Theoretical,'" *USA Today,* August 13, 2003.

[80] "JTIC Exclusive: Proliferation of MANPADS and the Threat to Civil Aviation," Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Center, August 13, 2003, http://www.janes.com/security international_security/news/jtic/jtic030813_1_n.shtml (as of April 3, 2006).

the Strela-2 in particular has a low probability of kill.[81] Al-Qaeda is an organization that places a high value on carrying out successful operations. Failed attacks only undercut its mission and can even result in declining recruitment and a perception that it is a weakened and ineffective organization.

The good news is that until now an assumption can be made that al-Qaeda possesses only older MANPADS, since the group surely would have used a more effective missile in its operations if it had one in order to ensure its success. As a result, al-Qaeda may shy away from using older models such as the SA-7 and the Stinger missile in the future. These earlier failures could also have been as a result of human error, but MANPADS in general are relatively easy to use and many terrorists trained in Afghanistan or who have fought in insurgent conflicts are well-trained in their use.[82] In fact, al-Qaeda has reportedly been training its members in the use of MANPADS for the last three years. An al-Qaeda video was recovered in 2001 that detailed how to assemble and use a Strela-2 system.[83]

However, al-Qaeda and its affiliates are more likely to seek out newer, more reliable MANPADS that have a higher success rate, such as the SA-18. These weapons are more expensive than their earlier counterparts and can cost up to $100,000 each on the open market for the most advanced systems.[84] Although there are fewer of these weapons on the black market, simply because they have not been around as long as their earlier counterparts, they are in circulation and have been used by terrorist groups that have an ongoing relationship with al-Qaeda. Moreover, some reports indicate the U.S. military has observed more sophisticated MANPADS than the SA-7 and Strela-2 in circulation

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[81] Robert Wall, "Hardening Resolve," *Aviation Week & Space Technology,* August 23–30, 2004.

[82] The CIA had difficulty teaching some of the illiterate Afghan mujahideen how to operate a Stinger missile during the Afghan-Soviet war; "JTIC Exclusive: Proliferation of MANPADS and the Threat to Civil Aviation."

[83] "JTIC Exclusive."

[84] The SA-7 can cost as little as $5,000, according to Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Center, 2003.

in Iraq.[85] In August 2003, FBI agents arrested a British arms dealer who—after praising bin Laden—tried to sell al-Qaeda an SA-18 and implied that it could be used against a commercial airliner.[86] Chechen extremists have used the SA-18s to shoot down Russian helicopters and could theoretically sell one to al-Qaeda for the right price.[87] While terrorists will continue to seek out these types of weapons to use against U.S. and other Western airliners, researchers in the United States and other countries are looking for ways to harden the defenses of commercial airliners against the MANPADS threat—by first examining the vulnerabilities of these aircraft, focusing in on the effects a MANPAD hit would have on engine operation and safety of flight, and then applying a series of countermeasures.[88]

Recruitment of Western Converts

Recent converts to Islam are an increasingly attractive subset of potential recruits for al-Qaeda, particularly in Europe and the United States. Although the majority of Muslim converts reject the extremist worldview, a small but growing number have been involved in terrorist attacks against the West. According to one source, out of 212 individuals who have been implicated in terrorist attacks since 1993, 18 (8.5 percent) were converts to Islam.[89]

Although U.S. converts to Islam arrested for their involvement with al-Qaeda, such as Jose Padilla and Adam Yahiya Gadahn, have received a significant amount of press and sparked a broader discussion about the nature of al-Qaeda recruitment in the United States, some scholars argue that European converts to Islam warrant more concern.[90] Islam is Europe's fastest growing religion and many experts note an increase in the number of converts after 9/11, although there

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[85] Wall, "Hardening Resolve."

[86] Samson (2003).

[87] Bayles, "Threat Is 'No Longer Theoretical.'"

[88] Wall, "Hardening Resolve."

[89] Leiken (2004).

[90] Leiken (2004).

are no reliable statistics to provide solid evidence of this trend.[91] The increasing concern over the susceptibility of Europe's converts to jihadist recruitment is in part a rise in the number of "protest converts," or angry, disaffected, rebellious youth searching for an outlet or cause. Members of this small group of converts are the most likely to find their way into a terrorist organization like al-Qaeda that offers adventure, danger, and a way to prove their commitment to the cause.[92] A senior French security official said recently that converts were his organization's "most critical work now."[93]

For example, brothers David and Jerome Courtailler both converted to Islam to escape a troubled childhood and drug addiction in the French countryside. Both came to Islam after befriending radical Muslims who had terrorist connections. Shortly after David's conversion in 1996, recruiters in his prayer group told him they were sending him to Afghanistan to "study the Quran" and gave him money, a contact number, and a plane ticket to Pakistan. After he arrived in Pakistan, David was quickly taken by car to al-Qaeda's Khaldan training camp in Khost, Afghanistan, where he trained in bomb making. Jerome converted to Islam under the influence of al-Qaeda member Djamel Beghal, who was heading a terrorist cell planning an attack against the U.S. embassy in Paris. David returned to England in 2000 and was believed to be helping a terrorist cell to plan a large-scale bombing. He was arrested after 9/11 with a large cache of explosives. Jerome was also arrested shortly after 9/11 in connection with the terrorist plot against the embassy in Paris. He is believed to have been the source of the fake Belgian passports used by the suicide bombers who killed Northern Alliance commander Ahmad Shah Massoud on September 10, 2001.[94]

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91 Craig G. Smith, "Europe Fears Converts May Aid Extremism," *The New York Times,* July 19, 2004.

92 Chuck Colson, "Al Qaeda and Converts to Islam," Townhall.com, April 28, 2004, http://www.townhall.com/opinion/columns/chuckcolson/2004/04/28/11522.html (as of February 17, 2006).

93 Leiken (2004).

94 Smith, "Europe Fears . . . . "

The example of the Courtailler brothers illustrates that the path from conversion to terrorism, especially for those considered "protest converts," can be exceedingly short. One of the key reasons is that many converts—particularly those from Europe and the United States—know little about Islam when they are first introduced to the religion and therefore are more likely to accept the perspective and interpretation they are taught.[95] Unlike Muslim converts in South Asia or the Middle East, they lack the cultural context to be able to filter out extremist rhetoric. In addition, many converts become educated about Islam not only through the the individuals they meet but by surfing the Internet. The proliferation of Islamic extremist Web sites designed to attract new recruits—particularly protest converts like Adam Yahiya Gadahn—helps guide these individuals into accepting and taking on the extremist worldview.[96]

It is important to note, however, that although there are many ways for new converts to become exposed to radical Islam—for example, through the Internet or through personal relationships with individual Muslims who subscribe to the jihadist worldview—many converts are self-selected for radical groups like al-Qaeda rather than being directly enlisted into these groups by a so-called al-Qaeda recruiter. According to Marc Sageman,

> The process of joining the jihad . . . is more of a bottom-up than a top-down activity. . . . Joining the jihad is more akin to the process of applying to a highly selective college. Many try to get in but only a few succeed, and the college's role is evaluation rather than marketing.[97]

Al-Qaeda finds converts particularly attractive because they can travel more easily and operate undetected by local security services, particularly in their countries of origin. In the past, al-Qaeda used

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[95] Smith, "Europe Fears . . . . "

[96] Robert Spencer, "The New Face of Al-Qaeda," *FrontPageMagazine.com*, June 1, 2004, http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=13591 (as of February 17, 2006).

[97] Sageman (2004), p. 122.

converts more for logistical support, but as the United States and its allies in the war on terror began to identify and arrest Arab and South Asia members of al-Qaeda, the group began using Caucasian-looking Europeans and, in some cases, Americans to actually execute operational plans because they were more likely to be unknown to police and intelligence services.[98] Moreover, Europeans can travel to the United States without having to obtain visas.[99] Former al-Qaeda operations chief, Khaled Sheikh Mohammad, now in a U.S. secure facility, has admitted to employing both European and American converts and using them not only in operations but as intermediaries to protect his identity.[100]

Al-Qaeda is finding these ready-to-use converts in European and, to a somewhat lesser extent, American prisons. The Islamic population in Europe's prisons is growing; France's prison population, for example, is more than 50 percent Muslim.[101] Shoe bomber Richard Reid converted to Islam in prison and was put in contact with radical Muslims once he was released. The Islamic missionary organization Tablighi Jama'at also serves as a pathway to jihad by sending converts to study in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, where they often make contact with militants. Al-Qaeda also uses recruiters to spot converts in like-minded militant organizations and radical mosques in Europe.[102] The Muslim Council of Britain, in an attempt to counteract this trend, issued a warning to 1,000 mosques to be on the lookout for individuals who seek to infiltrate mosques and turn young men into fanatics.[103]

Evidence that al-Qaeda is continuing to put converts in positions of increasing importance is illustrated by the arrest in Britain in August 2004 of Muslim convert Esa al-Hindi (an ethnic Indian, his real name

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98 Sageman (2004), p. 122.

99 Colson, "Al Qaeda and Converts . . . ."

100 Leiken (2004); Daniel Klaidman, Mark Hosenball, Michael Isikoff, and Evan Thomas, "Al Qaeda in America: The Enemy Within," *Newsweek,* June 17, 2003.

101 Smith, "Europe Fears . . . . "

102 Smith, "Europe Fears . . . . "

103 Leiken (2004).

is Dhiren Barot). Intelligence officials identified al-Hindi as a major al-Qaeda player who transferred operational information between Britain, Pakistan, and the United States. Al-Hindi was believed to have conducted detailed surveillance of high-value economic targets inside the United States in anticipation of a spectacular terrorist attack prior to the U.S. presidential elections in November 2004.[104] Other converts arrested for terrorist activities include French citizen Pierre Robert, the mastermind of the May 2003 bombings in Casablanca, and Christian Ganczarski, a German involved in the 2002 attack at the Djerba synagogue in Tunis.[105]

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[104] "Pakistan Intelligence May Be Driving Arrests," CNN.com, August 6, 2004, http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/08/05/terror.wrap/ (as of February 17, 2006).

[105] Josh Lefkowitz and Lorenzo Vidino, "Joining Al Qaeda," *The Wall Street Journal,* August 29, 2003.

CHAPTER FOUR

Al-Qaeda's Finances

Resource Structures and Networks

Given the financial war on terrorism conducted by the United States and the international community, al-Qaeda's resource structures and networks have changed. Al-Qaeda has hardened still existing sources of funds, developed new sources of financing, further diversified its resource base, moved an even larger amount of transactions through the informal hawala system, and increased its dependence on nonmonetary barter transactions. For example, it now goes through a much more sophisticated process when soliciting funds via the Internet. Rather than just publishing Web sites that openly solicit money and resources, al-Qaeda infiltrates legitimate charitable organizations and asks for money through the Web; engages in online fraud, identity theft, and other Internet crimes; and then uses those proceeds to fund their activities.

In its fundraising, al-Qaeda uses various security measures, such as "anonymisers" that replace the IP address assigned by an Internet service provider with an "anonymiser" address that cannot be tracked.[1] Additionally, illegitimate organizations posing as charities and nongovernmental organizations are reopening offices—virtual or real—after having been targeted and shut down by the United States and its allies.[2] Simply opening an office in Pakistan, where the government

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[1] Josh Lefkowitz and Lorenzo Vidino, "Joining Al Qaeda," *The Wall Street Journal,* August 29, 2003, p. 61.

[2] Roth, Greenburg, and Wille (2004), pp. 119–120.

is reluctant to crack down further on Islamic radicalism, still allows these "charities" to operate and provide some funds to terrorist organizations. Indeed, extremist leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil, accused by the United States of having substantial ties to al-Qaeda, operates his anti-U.S. group openly in Peshawar. The back cover of the December 2003 magazine his organization publishes sports a full-page advertisement admonishing Muslims who cannot, for whatever reason, participate in the jihad in Iraq to give money to send to individuals who are fighting there.[3]

In addition to hardening still-existing sources of income and further diversifying terrorists' financial base, an additional trend in terrorist fundraising is emerging—money is being raised increasingly at the grassroots level of support, rather than largely from wealthy donors and/or organizations.[4] While wealthy Gulf State organizations and individuals still provide a substantial amount of al-Qaeda's funding, this financial support is being supplemented by larger numbers of small donations throughout the Muslim world. This trend parallels a longer-term trend in terrorist financing.[5]

Al-Qaeda has also modified the way it transmits funds around the globe. Before September 11, many financial institutions were believed to have transferred millions of dollars of al-Qaeda's money, wittingly or otherwise. The Bank Secrecy Act requires U.S. financial institutions to file Currency Transaction Reports (CTRs) on transactions above $10,000; however, with literally millions of such transactions occurring every year, the act did little to deter the terrorists from using such methods. Often the transfers were made to students (as many of the 9/11 hijackers were), which would be expected—students must pay for tuition and living expenses, etc. Disguising the transfers thus essentially

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[3] Paul Watson and Mubashir Zaidi, "Militant Flourishes in Plain Sight," *The Los Angeles Times,* January 25, 2004, p. A.1. Of note, Khalil was reportedly arrested sometime during summer 2004 after being linked to additional assassination attempts against Prime Minister Musharaf.

[4] Interview with Dan Benjamin, terrorism analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington, D.C., February 5, 2004.

[5] Kiser (2005).

invalidated the value of the CTRs. However, now that such transactions involve greater scrutiny and other policies are in place to prevent legal transmission of terrorist funds, terrorists are increasingly using the informal hawala transaction system. Additionally, they are increasingly using "mules"—couriers who physically carry large quantities of cash, gemstones, or other valuables to various parts of the globe.

Future Financial Prospects

Evidence suggests that al-Qaeda still can and may be willing to expand even further into the criminal world to raise money. The UN estimated the value of the global illicit drug market for 2003 at $13 billion at the production level, $94 billion at the wholesale level, and $322 billion at the retail level.[6] A comparison with even the most generous estimates of al-Qaeda's financing—approximately $1 billion per year—suggests that terrorist financing is simply dwarfed by drug money. While some evidence exists that points to al-Qaeda involvement in the poppy and opium trade in Afghanistan, there is no information suggesting it is involved in any other lucrative drug markets, such as the cocaine markets in South America or the drug markets in the Golden Triangle. Whether or not al-Qaeda would be able to enter these markets is a separate discussion, but it illustrates the idea that there are areas to which al-Qaeda could turn to supplement its income. Furthermore, al-Qaeda could simply adopt some of the creative money-raising schemes used by other Islamic terrorist groups, such as Hamas and Hezbollah (see Chapter Seven of the companion volume on the links between terrorist groups and transnational criminal networks).

Clearly, there is no shortage of alternatives available to al-Qaeda. The organization is constrained largely by the limits of its own imagination. Many fundraising criminal activities exist to which al-Qaeda could turn if it wants. Moving its finance-generating activities away

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[6] United Nations, Office on Drugs and Crime, World Drug Report 2005, Chapter 2, "Estimating the Value of Illicit Drug Markets," http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR_2005/volume_1_ex_summary.pdf (as of April 3, 2006). Note that the retail value of drugs intercepted at the U.S. border ranged between $1 billion and $2 billion annually in the 1990s.

from a reliance on donations to criminal activity will have some consequences on the group, although it is difficult to forecast exactly what those consequences would be. Additionally, transferring wealth to various parts of the world may prove to be a greater challenge, but coming up with suitable alternatives is by no means impossible.

These changes in both raising and moving funds create interesting financial dynamics. Large sums of money are more visible in both collection and transmission, and therefore more vulnerable. Al-Qaeda has responded by diffusing both activities—raising larger numbers of small donations from an increasing number of sources, while simultaneously moving money around in a greater variety of ways. Another interesting dynamic is that U.S. expertise in targeting financial transfers lies more with transfers between political borders than it does within them.[7] In other words, the risks to terrorists when collecting and transferring money within a country are substantially less than when moving money outside a country.

These dynamics are beginning to shape terrorist activity. Although there are few signs of a reduction in terrorist activity and operations overall (indeed, after September 11 the pace of al-Qaeda attacks has accelerated), the attacks are certainly different. Rather than large, spectacular, internationally orchestrated attacks, the attacks (with the exception of the Bali and Madrid bombings) have been smaller and local, and they appear to have greater autonomy from al-Qaeda's center. This could be explained by the financial dynamics described above. With more local fundraising efforts and greater restraints on international money transfers, a "ceiling" may have been established under which terrorist funds may begin to pool. Local al-Qaeda affiliates may now find themselves both financially enabled and possibly encouraged to make operational decisions on their own. Collecting their own money but unable to forward it to the larger organization, coupled with receiving no money and little guidance from above, creates a situation in which local commanders will be increasingly likely to act on their own. At the same time, large, September 11–like attacks are less likely.

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7 Interview with Chris Verbeek, Federal Bureau of Investigation, February 11, 2004.

Empirical evidence provides some support for this idea. Attacks in Morocco, Kenya, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Saudi Arabia appear to be the work of local radicals.[8] They reflect less of the planning acumen, strategic vision, or sophistication than that characterized by the attacks against the U.S. embassies in Africa, the attack on the USS *Cole,* or the coordinated attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Further, evidence suggests that many of these attacks were funded locally as well—suggesting that al-Qaeda's center and periphery are not transmitting money in either direction.[9]

Another way in which financial dynamics shape terrorist activities is best explained through a comparison of fixed and marginal costs. When al-Qaeda's leaders were welcome guests in other countries (the Sudan and then Afghanistan) they had easy sanctuary—but it came at a cost. The 9/11 Commission suggests that al-Qaeda was paying the Taliban approximately $20 million a year; as previously mentioned, bin Laden himself stated he lost nearly $150 million in the Sudan. In exchange for these large fixed costs, al-Qaeda had sanctuary and could afford to operate openly. In Afghanistan, terrorist training camps operated at a near hectic pace, churning out as many as 70,000 graduates in the space of five years. From this sanctuary, al-Qaeda's senior leadership could concentrate all its efforts on growing the organization and planning operations. Without this sanctuary, the majority of terrorist attacks conducted by al-Qaeda would at least have been more difficult, if not prohibitively so.

After paying these fixed costs, al-Qaeda could then plan and conduct spectacular terrorist attacks, like the ones in Africa, Yemen, and

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[8] Susan Schmidt and Douglas Farrah, "Al Qaeda's New Leaders: Six Militants from Ranks to Fill Void," *The Washington Post*, October 29, 2002, http://meadev.nic.in/ind-ter/for-med/AlQaedaNewLeaders.htm (as of June 16, 2004). See also Jack Kelly, "Al Qaeda Smaller, Fragmented, but Still Deadly," *USA Today*, September 9, 2002, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2002-09-09-1acover_x.htm (as of 27 June 2004).

[9] Schmidt and Farrah, "Al Qaeda's New Leaders . . . ." For example, the March 11, 2004, train bombings in Madrid were apparently completely locally funded, largely through the rather autonomous cell's sale of narcotics. See Al Goodman, "Spain: Terror Cell 'Neutralized,'" CNN.com, March 14, 2004, http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/04/14/spain.terror/index.html (as of June 29, 2004).

the United States. The figures often quoted for these attacks—$50,000 to bomb the USS *Cole*, $500,000 for the September 11 attacks—represent marginal costs. Without the sanctuary in Afghanistan, the marginal cost of the September 11 attacks would have been far greater than the half million dollars so claimed, if the attack had been possible at all.

The point of this discussion is that there is a synergy between sanctuary and finances. Sanctuary substantially increased al-Qaeda's financial requirements, but that safe haven lowered overall needs of covertness, eased command and control, enabled extensive training and planning, and generally allowed terrorist groups to operate at a far lower marginal cost per attack. When a terrorist organization must be covert, its efficiency decreases substantially, training cadres becomes more laborious, and the marginal costs of achieving the same level of operational capability are much higher. On the other hand, even though terrorist organizations may maintain marginal costs of training and operations, without sanctuary they will get a much lower-quality cadre. To illustrate, the video released by al-Qaeda on February 4, 2004, shows current recruits firing AK-47s in someone's backyard in Saudi Arabia[10]—far cheaper than sending someone through a three-month training camp in Afghanistan, but also a much less effective training regimen that is not likely to produce operators nearly as skilled as those trained in Afghanistan.

In sum, al-Qaeda's financial infrastructure has proven quite resilient. There is scant evidence to suggest that al-Qaeda's finance committee is still directing the collection and dissemination of funds. However, recruiting, training, and operations continue. The trade-off is fairly clear: The new localized nature of financing is enough to support operations, but it is clearly not as efficient as the earlier "business model." While authorities have effectively targeted large donors and obvious transmission mechanisms, successfully targeting a grassroots financing system will prove more challenging.

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[10] Al Qaeda's Sahab Institute for Media Production released a video entitled "Badr al-Riyadh: The Assault on the Crusader al-Muhaya Settlement and Discovering Important Details," analyzed and translated by Intel Center, Alexandria, Virginia, February 2004.

CHAPTER FIVE

Al-Qaeda's Operational Planning Cycle

Al-Qaeda's operational planning cycle, defined as the steps involved in planning and executing a terrorist attack, is constantly evolving—much like the organization itself. As al-Qaeda morphs and changes organizationally to adjust to arrests and disruption of planned attacks, so does its operational style. Before the 9/11 attacks, when al-Qaeda was composed largely of a small hard core of senior and mid-level leaders in Afghanistan responsible for overseeing most of the group's terrorist plans, al-Qaeda favored "spectacular" attacks against primarily U.S. "hard" targets, such as diplomatic and military facilities abroad. These operations—which include the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania and the 2000 USS *Cole* attack—took years to plan and involved selecting the right recruits to execute the attack and ensuring that they were properly trained, indoctrinated, and sworn and trusted members of al-Qaeda. The cell leader responsible for the attack would then help the recruits to establish themselves in the community where the attack was to take place, making sure that they had regular jobs, that they "blended in," and that their daily routine was nothing out of the ordinary so that they would not raise suspicion. Recruits would even marry local women and live "regular" lives free from terrorist activity—sometimes for up to two years—to solidify their place in the community and avoid detection by police and intelligence officials.

Once operational planning began, the recruits would conduct meticulous casing and surveillance of the target set, in some cases build the bomb to be used in the operation, travel as necessary to obtain other materials for the attack and to meet with others involved in the planning, arrange such logistical details as obtaining the attack vehicle,

and do a trial run of the operation if necessary. According to the official investigation into the dual bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, al-Qaeda took five years from conception to execution to complete the attacks in August 1998. Bin Laden sent his trusted aide, Wadi al-Hage, to Kenya in 1993 to conduct initial surveillance on the U.S. embassy and other Western targets. Moreover, the East Africa investigation also revealed that the creation of surveillance reports was often the first step in al-Qaeda's operational planning cycle. Months and years would pass before the attack would be carried out.[1]

Similarly, the USS *Cole* plot took four years to complete. This "spectacular attack" differed from the 1998 East Africa operation in that the plan was conceived in 1996 by an al-Qaeda member visiting Yemen, rather than by bin Laden and his senior leaders in Afghanistan. This al-Qaeda member noticed that American warships came in and out of Yemeni waters. But operational planning in this case did not begin until 1998, when scouts were dispatched to find suitable warships to target. In January 2000, al-Qaeda attempted an attack against the USS *The Sullivans* using a small craft similar to the one later used in the *Cole* operation. However, the boat sank before it reached its target and the operation went unnoticed. In October 2000, al-Qaeda attacked the *Cole* using the same methods.[2]

The September 11 attacks took only two years to plan once the attack was conceived but was based on an earlier plot. That operation failed after only a few short months but involved the same meticulous planning.[3] The September 11 plot originated in 1999 with senior al-Qaeda operative Khaled Sheikh Mohammad, who discussed the concept with bin Laden and his operational chief Mohammed Atef. Bin Laden and Atef revised the plan to include hitting targets such as the U.S. Capitol, the Pentagon, the White House, and the World

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1 "Badr al-Riyadh: The Assault on the Crusader al-Muhaya Settlement and Discovering Important Details," analyzed and translated by Intel Center, Alexandria, Virginia, February 2004 (Video).

2 "Badr al-Riyadh . . . ."

3 "Badr al-Riyadh . . . ."

Trade Center.[4] The hijackers were selected and sent for training in Afghanistan later that year, and two of the lead operatives arrived in the United States in 2000 and engaged in flight training and other attack preparations. However, during the hijackers' time in the United States, their actions did not raise the suspicion of the authorities. They blended into the American cultural landscape by dressing in Western attire, frequenting bars, and generally keeping to themselves.[5]

Although the United States was unable to prevent these particular attacks from occurring, it did thwart others based on lessons learned about al-Qaeda's operational patterns following each attack through observation, intelligence gathered from arrested operatives, and documents recovered by local authorities. Several notable hallmarks of an al-Qaeda attack emerged in the period leading up to September 11. The first was that al-Qaeda prefers to kill large numbers of Americans or Westerners by executing a "spectacular" attack. Because success is a must, detailed planning must take place. One operative arrested in Pakistan said that when conducting surveillance of a particular room, he was trained to note every detail in that room: the color of the walls, the dimensions, the doors, windows, etc. A second lesson was that al-Qaeda exhibited great patience in its operational planning. Al-Qaeda operatives could take years to plan an attack because it was important to make sure every detail was in place. A third lesson was that because attack plans took years to unfold, al-Qaeda would proceed with multiple operations at the same time, also ensuring that, if one plot was disrupted by authorities, the group could simply select another target without compromising the work it had done or could execute another plan already in place.

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4 National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (2004), p. 155.

5 Mitch Lipka, "Multiple Identities of Hijack Suspects Confound FBI," *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, September 28, 2001.

Post-9/11 Planning Trends

The U.S.-led global war on terrorism has forced changes in the way al-Qaeda operates, primarily because the majority of those conducting terrorist attacks since September 11 are not sworn al-Qaeda members but rather are affiliated with al-Qaeda to varying degrees or simply share al-Qaeda's world view and have tried to emulate its operational style. As a result, the trademark simultaneous vehicle bomb explosions against multiple U.S. or Western targets that have come to be associated with al-Qaeda are being repeated in these operations, even though they are not all planned by al-Qaeda's hard core. In some cases, such as the May 2003 attacks against soft targets in Morocco, terrorist leaders with al-Qaeda connections who trained in Afghanistan were the organizers.

One major change in these "franchised" terrorist attacks is that the planning cycle appears to have shortened. For example, the October 2002 attacks in Bali, Indonesia, that killed over 200 in two simultaneous nightclub bombings were perpetrated by al-Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). The time frame from conception of these plans to execution was only eight months. Senior JI operative Hambali, a close associate of bin Laden, came up with the idea for the Bali operation in February 2002; and between April and October the operatives responsible for carrying out the attacks implemented the plans.[6] One of the reasons for the shortened attack time frame is that after 9/11 it has become more difficult for al-Qaeda and its affiliates to attack hardened targets due to the increase in security. Therefore, the group is turning to softer targets that are easier to hit because they are plentiful and security is often not a significant concern. Islamic extremists who support al-Qaeda's worldview are also under increased scrutiny from police and intelligence services worldwide and, as a result, may have shortened their planning cycle to avoid detection and disruption of their operational plans.

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[6] "Bali Chronology, Cause and Effect: Terrorism in the Asia Pacific Region," Australia Broadcasting Corporation Asia Pacific, http://abcasiapacific.com/cause/network/bali_chronology.htm (as of February 17, 2006).

Al-Qaeda and its affiliates also appear in some cases to time their operational plans to have a specific political impact. The Madrid train bombings in March 2004 appear to have been designed to disrupt the impending Spanish elections and force Spain to withdraw its troops from Iraq, according to a document retrieved from a jihadist Web site on the day of the attacks by the Norwegian defense think tank Forsvarets Forskningstitutt.[7] Although al-Qaeda's actions alone did not determine the outcome of the election in Spain, both the emotion surrounding how the incumbent Spanish government handled the investigation into the attack and the unpopularity of the war in Iraq in Spain did influence Spanish voters. The Spanish people chose a Socialist government that pledged to pull all Spanish troops out of Iraq. Al-Qaeda believed that its tactic to influence the outcome of the elections was successful.

Despite these notable changes and the overarching challenge of identifying the operational planning cycles of a wide range of terrorist affiliates with varying degrees of training and connections to al-Qaeda, information developed from the August 2004 arrests in Pakistan has revealed that some segments of al-Qaeda are still operating the old-fashioned way, using long-range, detailed planning that can take years to execute. U.S. and Pakistani intelligence acquired a number of computer disks from one of the senior al-Qaeda operatives that included dozens of detailed surveillance reports of multiple, economic targets in the United States, such as the World Bank and the New York Stock Exchange.[8] This new intelligence provided an unprecedented look into how al-Qaeda operates, how detailed and specific its plans are, and how far in advance the group prepares. The surveillance reports were

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[7] This document was prepared by the Media Committee for Victory of the Iraqi People and was entitled "Jihadi Iraq: Hopes and Dangers." The document was analyzed by Haizam Amirah Fernández of the Real Instituto Elcano of Madrid, "¿Tiene Al Qaeda una strategia global?" April 20, 2004, http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/materiales.asp (as of February 17, 2006). Spanish analysts generally accept the view that the Madrid bombings had a strategic purpose that was successfully accomplished (Rabasa discussions with Spanish security analysts, Madrid, September 2005).

[8] Salman Massood and David Rohde, "Pakistan Arrests Suspects in Bombings of U.S. Embassies," *The New York Times,* July 29, 2004.

reportedly prepared in 2000 and 2001, but if they are indeed tied to recent al-Qaeda planning in the United States, the attacks will have been conceived three to four years in advance, a time frame consistent with al-Qaeda's operational planning cycle.[9]

Iraq in al-Qaeda's Strategic Agenda

How does the insurgency in Iraq fit into al-Qaeda's strategic agenda? Bin Laden clearly sees the country as an important arena for confrontation between Islam and its supposed enemy, the United States and its allies. According to one pro–al-Qaeda publication, the besieged state is a "front that we want to utilize for fighting the Americans, like the other fronts [of jihad]."[10] With the Taliban regime removed from power, Iraq is viewed as a potential new Afghanistan, a rallying point for Islamic militants from the Middle East, North Africa, Western Europe, and other regions.

The ongoing Iraqi insurgency serves al-Qaeda's interests in four complementary ways. First, as a rallying point it functions as an instrument for remobilizing dormant jihadists and for recruiting new militants to the cause.[11] Second, U.S. and coalition forces that might otherwise be engaged in counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda are committed to dampening the Iraqi insurgency (although it may have the same effect on jihadists—drawing them into Iraq when they could have been employed to attack U.S. and Western targets elsewhere). Third, attacks on occupying forces, whether tactically successful or not, can be used in propaganda to convey the familiar trope that the United States and its allies are vulnerable and, more impor-

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[9] Dan Eggan and John Lancaster, "Al Qaeda Showing New Life," *The Washington Post,* August 14, 2004.

[10] "New Al-Qa'ida Online Magazine Features Interview with a 'Most-Wanted' Saudi Islamist, Calls for Killing of Americans and Non-Muslims," MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series No. 591, 17 October 2003, http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=jihad&ID=SP59103 (as of February 23, 2006) (bracketed material in original).

[11] "French Judge: Iraq Conflict Helping al-Qa'ida Recruitment," Agence France-Presse (North American Service), September 9, 2003, FBIS.

tant, that insurgents have the means and motivation to confront and possibly defeat the world's mightiest powers.[12] Finally, the pattern of insurgent attacks suggests a mindset that is very much compatible with one of the currents that has contributed to al-Qaeda's approach to the world. Specifically, what President Bush describes as a terrorist strategy designed "to tear Iraq apart with ethnic violence, to undermine Iraqi security forces, to demoralize our coalition and to prevent the rise of a sovereign, democratic government" hints at a mentality that is very much congruent with bin Laden's own normative conception of the "purposeful" use of militant aggression.[13]

Beginning in the summer of 2003, Saudi names began appearing among those of "martyrs" killed in Iraq. In November 2003, the Saudi opposition Web site arabianews.org, which had chronicled the deaths of various Saudi jihad fighters in Iraq, reported the death of Adel al-Naser from Riyadh in Bagobah, a city near Baghdad. The Web site observed that the number of Saudis fighting in Iraq had been rising and that these fighters were still heading to Iraq, with little scrutiny by Saudi authorities. American government sources have estimated that as many as 2,000 foreign militants may have entered the country.[14] These jihadis come primarily from Saudi Arabia, other Arab countries in Iraq's vicinity, North Africa, and Europe. Some appear to be well trained. Others are simply young men who left their lives in their respective countries and who have sought to wage a holy war against

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[12] This potentially contributes to al-Qaeda's fundraising, recruitment efforts, and internal morale-building by suggesting that armed resistance to a force as strong as America's is not an exercise in futility and that victory is possible.

[13] White House, transcript of presidential radio address, February 21, 2004, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/02/print/20040221.html (as of February 17, 2006). For more on the nihilism undergirding al-Qaeda and other contemporary terrorist movements, see "Bin Laden, Dostoevsky and the Reality Principle: An Interview with André Glucksmann," March 31, 2003, http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-2-95-1111.jsp# (as of February 17, 2006).

[14] Richard C. Paddock, Alissa J. Rubin, and Greg Miller, "Iraq Seen as Al Qaeda's Top Battlefield," *The Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 2003.

the U.S., coalition, and Iraqi government forces.[15] A March 2005 study by Reuven Paz looks at 154 jihadists—primarily members of the al-Zarqawi group—killed in Iraq in the previous six months. Table 5.1 shows the breakdown, sorted by country of origin.

Of the 154 jihadists killed, 33 carried out suicide bombings. Twenty-three of the suicide bombers (70 percent) were Saudis.[16] Recruitment networks in Europe have been routing aspiring jihadis to Iraq. Milan and Florence, Italy, are two of the European nodes forrecruitment of these fighters. In late 2003, German police acting on an Italian warrant arrested Abderrazak Mahdjoub, an Algerian known as "the Sheikh," whom Italian prosecutors charged with running a clandestine network that provided money and false papers to recruits from Europe who wanted to go to Iraq to fight. Italian police simultaneously arrested two men in Milan who they said belonged to the same ring.[17]

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[15] These individuals came in through a number of routes—Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan via Baluchistan and the Iranian cities of Zabol and Zahedan; Damascus is a hub for fighters coming from Eurasia. Hamas and its offshoot, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), provided shelter, food, and training. From Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Saudi Sunni tribes on the Syrian-Iraqi border assisted the movement of fighters. See Steven Stalinsky, "Arab and Muslim Jihad Fighters in Iraq," MEMRI Special Report No. 19, July 27, 2003, www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=sr&ID=SR1903 (as of April 3, 2006).

[16] Paz (2005a).

[17] See Carlotta De Ciutiis, "There Are Two Al-Qa'ida Cells in Florence," *Il Giornale* (Milan, Tuscany supplement) January 20, 2004. Significantly, the city is also home to part of al-Qaeda's European network. See Sisty and Beelman (2001); Reeve (1999), p. 209; Tom Hundley, "Mosque Denies Link as Terror Incubator," *Chicago Tribune*, Internet Edition, October 25, 2001.

Table 5.1
Jihadists Killed in Iraq, October 2004–March 2005

Country	Number	
Saudi Arabia	94	(61.0%)
Syria	16	(10.4%)
Iraq	13	(8.4%)
Kuwait	11	(7.1%)
Jordan	4	(2.5%)
Lebanon	3	(1.9%) (one was living in Denmark)
Libya	2	
Algeria	2	
Morocco	2	(one was living in Spain)
Yemen	2	
Tunisia	2	
Palestine	1	
Dubai	1	
Sudan	1	(living in Saudi Arabia)
Total	154	

CHAPTER SIX

The al-Qaeda Nebula

Since September 11, al-Qaeda is no longer the same organization it once was—a tight-knit band of extremists who had sworn *bayat* (allegiance) to bin Laden and who were operating at the behest of a small hard-core group of lieutenants directing attacks from the remote foothills of Afghanistan. Islamic terrorism is no longer dominated by discrete groups but now operates on a much more cellular level, with many attacks planned by terrorist operatives who have either a very loose connection to al-Qaeda leaders or none at all. As a result, few groups can be defined as "lying at the center of al-Qaeda's universe." Moreover, it is no longer exactly apparent how much benefit is derived from making that connection, particularly since we do not have an accurate idea of how much command and control bin Laden possesses or how many resources he actually controls. What is clear, however, is that the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, and Saudi Islamic extremists have clearly and openly allied themselves with a worldview that the United States is seeking to discredit; they are committed to conducting violent attacks against U.S. citizens and institutions under the auspices of that ideology.

These groups are distinct from other al-Qaeda affiliates in that they have publicly sworn allegiance to bin Laden and profess to be taking orders directly from al-Qaeda leaders. Extremists currently operating against U.S. and Western targets in Saudi Arabia also have clear-cut ties to al-Qaeda but do not appear to be operating as an organized group at this point. Thus, they have stopped short of openly declaring their collective loyalty to the organization. However, individual Saudi extremists may have sworn bayat to bin Laden and are operating at

al-Qaeda's behest. All these al-Qaeda affiliates are also waging local jihads to establish Islamic governments in their respective countries, although the EIJ has not been as active in this regard in recent years.

The EIJ's relationship with al-Qaeda perhaps paved the way for how other terrorist groups sought to coalesce with bin Laden's organization. The group's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has been characterized by some analysts as a strategic thinker who forged a friendship with bin Laden while they were both in Sudan in the mid-1990s. Some have even said that Zawahiri radicalized bin Laden and that, in Sudan and later in Afghanistan, the two collaborated on a common vision of pursuing global jihad against "the Jews and Crusaders."[1] Al-Zawahiri first announced that his group had tied its fortunes to al-Qaeda when bin Laden released his Khost fatwa against the United States in 1998. Al-Zawahiri and a handful of other Islamic terrorist groups signed the fatwa confirming their participation in the "World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders."[2] Al-Zawahiri continued to deepen his relationship with al-Qaeda over the next several years, offering operatives to bin Laden not only for use in terrorist attacks, but also to train other jihadists in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. The EIJ was involved in the 1998 bombings in East Africa and was responsible for planning a thwarted attack against the U.S. embassy in Albania that same year.

Although the EIJ's operational networks were significantly damaged by arrests following the 1998 bombings, al-Zawahiri continued to push for a closer relationship with al-Qaeda. This internationalist emphasis generated considerable opposition within the EIJ, resulting in al-Zawahiri's subsequent ouster as the group's chief in 2000.[3] Al-Zawahiri went on to become al-Qaeda's second-in-command, although after a year he was once again asked to assume the helm of the EIJ. He

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1 Wright (2002).

2 Wright (2002).

3 Prominent elements within EIJ believed that formalizing links with al-Qaeda would result in heightened international pressure on the group, as well as dilute the overarching aim of overthrowing the Egyptian government and replacing it with an Islamist theocratic order.

accepted the invitation and, as a condition of his return, subsumed the EIJ into al-Qaeda's ranks—resulting in a merger of the two groups and a new name: al-Qaedat al-Jihad.[4]

Al-Zawahiri went on to play a key role in the planning of the September 11 attacks and in many ways took up the mantle as inspirational leader of al-Qaeda. Although U.S. counterterrorist operations in Afghanistan have restricted his movements, he still routinely issues statements to mobilize both existing jihadists and potential recruits and serves in the vanguard for al-Qaeda against the United States and its allies.[5]

The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat is the only other organized terrorist group to date that has announced a formal relationship with al-Qaeda. Perhaps modeling itself after the EIJ, the GSPC—which has only been in existence since 1996—pledged its support for al-Qaeda in an official statement issued by the group's then leader Nabil Sahraoui in October 2003. The communiqué asserted that the GSPC was operating at the behest of and in full accordance with bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar.[6]

The GSPC maintains a significant network of Islamic extremists in Europe, Africa, and Canada, which al-Qaeda has tapped into for logistical support. A case in point was the group's involvement in a plot that Italian police thwarted in February 2002 to conduct a chemical attack against the U.S. embassy in Rome.[7] Although al-Qaeda has clearly benefited from its links to the Algerian Islamist network, it is unclear to what extent the GSPC has benefited thus far from al-Qaeda, at least on a material level. Like many other Islamic terrorists, GSPC

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4 See Blanche (2001).

5 "Al Qaeda Claims Responsibility for September 11," CNN.com, April 15, 2002, http://www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/central/04/15/alzawahiri.transcript/ (as of February 16, 2006).

6 Sahraoui was killed by Algerian forces in June 2004. He was replaced by Abou Musab Abdelouadoud (real name, Abdelmalek Droukdel), the group's explosives chief. See "Algerian Group Backs Al Qaeda" (2003).

7 Mark Phillips, "Italy: Cops Thwart Terror Attack," CBS News, February 20, 2002, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/02/20/attack/main329974.shtml (as of April 3, 2006).

members trained in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. However, the group has been largely financially self-sufficient, deriving most of its funds from criminal activities such as credit card and passport fraud.[8]

Saudis have played a prominent place in al-Qaeda, second only to the Egyptians.[9] Evidence uncovered in the investigation of terrorist activities in the Saudi kingdom, for instance, provides strong support for the claim that ideological and operational relationships between terrorists operating there and al-Qaeda are both close and continuing. Many of the extremists responsible for the wave of attacks in Saudi Arabia trained with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and returned to their country disillusioned with their government and increasingly committed to waging jihad against the Saudi regime and U.S. and other Western powers that, in their view, were "occupying" their holy land.[10] Many of the jihadist leaders in Saudi Arabia, such as Saleh al-Oufi, Abdel Aziz al-Muqrin, Yusuf al-Ayiri, and Khalid Haj (all of whom were killed in firefights with Saudi forces) trained in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan.[11] Saudi jihadists are known to have maintained a working relationship with al-Qaeda in terms of both strategic and tactical direction and logistical support. The types of attacks that terrorists conduct in Saudi Arabia, such as the coordinated suicide car bomb attacks that took place in April and May 2004—a hallmark al-Qaeda tactic—further confirm this relationship.

Extremists who claim responsibility for these attacks often refer to al-Qaeda or bin Laden in their public statements. The terrorists who killed an American hostage in June 2004, for instance, justified the murder on the grounds that their demand that all al-Qaeda pris-

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[8] Courtney C. Walsh, "Italian Police Explore Al Qaeda Links in Cyanide Plot," *The Christian Science Monitor,* March 7, 2002.

[9] The Saudi connection to al-Qaeda only became apparent quite recently. It thus came as a shock to many U.S. commentators and analysts that 15 of the 19 September 11 hijackers hailed from the Kingdom.

[10] Faiza Saleh Ambah, "In Saudi Arabia, Fresh Recruits for Al Qaeda," *The Christian Science Monitor,* April 16, 2004.

[11] Dan Murphy, "All-Out War Between Al Qaeda and House of Saud Under Way," *The Christian Science Monitor,* June 3, 2004.

oners held in the kingdom's prisons be released had not been met. A group that called itself the "al-Qaeda Organization in the Arabian Peninsula" beheaded another American hostage, Paul Johnson, later that same month.[12] Another group calling itself the "al-Haramain Brigades" claimed credit for a massive car bombing in the kingdom in April 2004 and praised "imam Sheikh bin Laden" as the inspiration for the attack.[13] Al-Qaeda spokesmen have also announced that as part of their "grand strategy" they plan to "exterminate" all non-Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula.[14]

Beyond this core, the terrorist entity that we currently label al-Qaeda has metastasized into a network of like-minded Islamic radicals who are committed to using mass violence to defeat their adversaries. This configuration of terrorists can be more accurately described as a global jihadist "nebula," which, though held together by bonds of varying degrees of intensity, collectively seeks to harm the United States, the West, and "apostate" governments in the Muslim world. Despite the ambiguity and opaque nature of this movement, it is important to understand the relationships that exist among the various cells and groups that the movement encompasses and to grasp the mechanisms by which new recruits join. This is necessary if we are to continue to preempt terrorist attacks; arrest emerging leaders; and develop a more comprehensive picture of the ideological, organizational, and operational elements that drive and sustain the contemporary global jihadist movement. Instituting separate but interrelated programs both to understand and then to "unpack" each of these three components will be key to our success in making effective inroads against the movement.

The following chapters discuss the specific terrorist groups that are feeding fighters into the global jihadist movement. Since al-Qaeda lost its sanctuary in Afghanistan, new groups have been formed and new alliances have been made. We will outline in more detail what

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[12] "Profile: Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin," BBC News, June 19, 2004.

[13] "A Blow for the Forces of Evil," *The Economist,* April 22, 2004.

[14] Jefferson Morley, "Is Al Qaeda Winning in Saudi Arabia?" *The Washington Post,* June 18, 2004.

these groups are, the nature of their links to what is left of the al-Qaeda leadership, and how their relationship might alter or change in the near future. The major groups in this "al-Qaeda nebula" and their degree of association with al-Qaeda, based on twelve key criteria, are shown in Table 6.1. The values are as follows: (0) not established; (1) possible; (2) probable; (3) confirmed; and (4) confirmed and continuing. These values are based on the analysts' evaluation of the groups, based on the criteria in the table.

These jihadist groups exhibit a duality. Their preoccupation with both local and regional jihads gives them a threat potential that goes beyond their immediate tactical environment. The hybrid ideological and operational nature of these organizations stems from their interaction with the international jihadist movement as currently constituted under the existing umbrella of al-Qaeda's global network. This study considers only organized or semistructured Islamic entities, concentrating its analysis on the following five regions:

1. South Asia, with the focus on groups in Kashmir, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (Chapter Seven)
2. the Caucasus and Central Asia, with the focus on groups in Chechnya and Uzbekistan (Chapter Eight)
3. North and East Africa, with the focus on groups in Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and Somalia (Chapter Nine)
4. the Middle East, with the focus on groups and networks in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq (Chapter Ten)
5. Southeast Asia, with the focus on the trans-regional Jemaah Islamiyah network (Chapter Eleven).

In each chapter, the analysis considers the extent to which contacts between local groups and al-Qaeda have defined ideological agendas and operational tempos and examines future threat trajectories over the short to medium term.

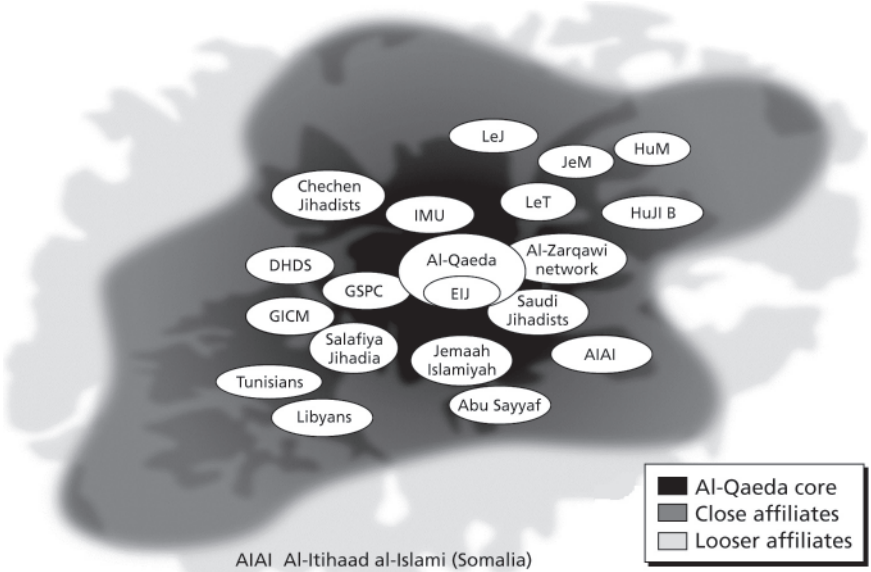
This terrorist nebula and its regional clusters are represented graphically in Figure 6.1.

Table 6.1
Associations Between Major Jihadist Clusters and al-Qaeda

	Pledged allegiance to bin Laden	Joint leadership/leadership, marriage, or family ties	Coordinated or joint operations with AQ or AQ operatives	Received AQ funding for operations	Received AQ funding for logistical support	Received training in AQ camps	Provided training to AQ in local camps	Shared combat or training experience with AQ	Provided sanctuary for wanted militants	Held joint strategy meetings	Imitated AQ concept of operations	Internalized AQ world view of global jihad
Al-Zarqawi Network	4	0	3	2	2	3	3	4	4	2	4	3
Saudi jihadists	2	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	3
Laskar-e-Taiba (Kashmir)	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
Jaish-e-Muhammad (Kashmir)	0	0	2	3	3	2	1	2	4	3	4	3
Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (Kashmir)	4	0	2	3	3	3	1	3	4	3	3	3
Laskar-e-Jhangvi (Pakistan)	0	0	3	2	2	3	1	3	2	3	2	4
Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan	0	0	1	3	3	3	0	2	1	1	0	3
Harakat-ul-Jihad-Islami Bangladesh	4	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	4
Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group	0	1	4	3	3	3	1	3	4	4	4	3
Salafiya Jihadia (Morocco)	0	1	4	3	3	1	1	3	4	4	4	3
GSPC (Algeria)	4	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	4	4	2	3
Dhamat Houmet Daawa Salafia (Algeria)	0	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	3
Tunisian Combatant Group	0	1	4	2	2	3	3	3	4	2	4	3
Libyan Islamic Fighting Group	0	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	0	3
Al-Itihaad al-Islami (Somalia)	0	0	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	2	3	3
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	1	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	3
Chechens/Basayev faction	0	0	0	1	1	4	4	4	4	2	4	2
Jemaah Islamiyah (Southeast Asia)	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3

NOTE: AQ = al-Qaeda.
RAND *MG429-T-6.1*

Figure 6.1
The Terrorist Nebula and Regional Clusters



AIAI Al-Itihaad al-Islami (Somalia)
DHDS Dhamat Houmet Daawa Salafia (Algeria)
EIJ Egyptian Islamic Jihad
GICM Morroccan Islamic Combatant Group
GSPC Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
HuJI B Harakat-ul-Jihad-Islami Bangladesh
HuM Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (Pakistan/Kashmir)
IMU Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
JeM Jaish-e-Muhammad (Pakistan/Kashmir)
LeJ Laskar-e-Jhangvi (Pakistan)
LeT Laskar-e-Taiba (Pakistan/Kashmir)

RAND *MG429-6.1*

CHAPTER SEVEN

South Asian Clusters

Kashmir

Laskar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, and Harakat-ul-Mujahideen

Dozens of jihadist groups have been identified in Kashmir,[1] many of which have a significant nonindigenous component.[2] The bulk of these external fighters are organized under the auspices of seven main groups: al-Badr, Laskar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), Harakat-ul-Jihad-Islami (HuJI), Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JuM), and the Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Front (JKIF) (see Figure 7.1). Of these seven, three—LeT, JeM, and HuM—have been directly linked to bin Laden's transnational terror network.[3]

Laskar-e-Taiba (literally "Army of the Pure") dates back to 1993 when it was established as the military wing of the Markaz-ad-Da'awa-

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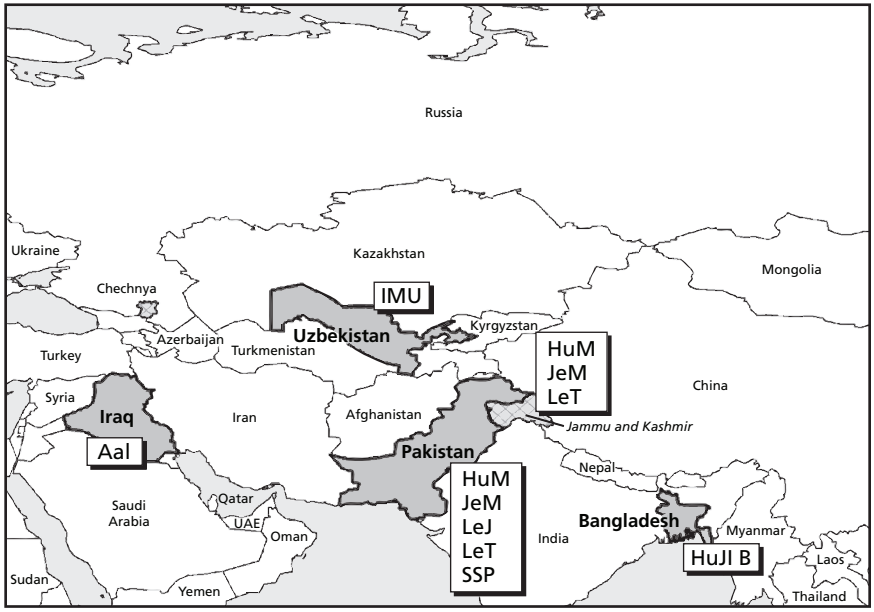
[1] For a breakdown of the groups that have been identified in Kashmir by various sources see Marks (2005).

[2] The one exception is Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), which is composed mostly of indigenous Kashmiris. Chalk interviews, Indian intelligence, Delhi, February 2001 and September 2002.

[3] LeT, JeM, and HuM were banned by the Pakistani government in January 2002, ostensibly due to a combination of pressure and economic incentives from the United States. Since then the three groups have operated under various front names, including Tehrik-ul-Furqan (JeM), Pasban-e-Ahle Hadith, Al Mansooren (JeM), Khuddam-ul-Islam (JeM), Jamatud Dawah (LeT), and Harakat-ul-Mujahideen al-Aalami (HuM). For the purposes of clarity, however, the original designations for each of the organizations will be used throughout this chapter.

Figure 7.1
South and Central Asian Clusters



NOTE: See the Abbreviations for full names of groups.
RAND *MG429-7.1*

Wal-Irshad (MDI) madrassa (although it did not rise to prominence in terms of militant activity until 1997). The group, which is led by Hafiz Sayeed,[4] has an estimated 1,500 cadres on the ground in Kashmir and operates primarily in the Srinigar Valley from bases in Gujranwala in Pakistani Punjab. [5] LeT defines its objectives in both local and regional terms, pursuing a twofold ideological and operational agenda that is both pan-Islamic and state-centric. Specifically, the organization seeks

[4] Sayeed was placed under house arrest in 2002 as part of a general crackdown on Islamic militants in Pakistan. He was released in January 2003, however, on the orders of the Lahore High Court. "The Other Armies," *The Economist,* January 18, 2003.

[5] LeT sources claim to have at least 6,000 cadres deployed in Jammu and Kashmir, from an overall trained mujahideen base of 10,000. Mohammad Amir Rana, "Jihad-e-Kashmir and Afghanistan," December 2003, p. 252. See http://www.hvk.org/articles/0403/32.htm (as of April 3, 2006).

to institute a fundamentalist theocratic order in Pakistan while exploiting ethno-religious tension in Kashmir to trigger a wider religious revolution across the Indian state.[6]

Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (literally the "Movement of Holy Warriors") was originally formed in 1985 to participate in the anti-Soviet Afghan campaign. The group is currently under the charge of Farooq Kashmiri, who took over the mantle from long-time leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil in February 2000. It retains significant strongholds in India's southern Kashmir region, although it has lost large numbers of its armed members in defections to the JeM since 2000. HuM is closely associated with the radical Deobandi teachings of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, advocating a strong pan-Islamic ideology that defines the violent secession of Jammu and Kashmir as the first step in a wider religious war against India.[7] The group has also been linked to wider transnational imperatives and was allegedly represented at the signing of bin Laden's 1998 Khost fatwa in the person of Khalil.[8]

Jaish-e-Muhammad (literally "Soldiers of Muhammad") is a relatively recent group that was launched in February 2000 by former members of HuM. The group is led by Maulana Masood Azhar[9] and is currently estimated to have at least 600 dedicated cadres in Jammu and Kashmir; since 2003, the bulk of these militants have been split into two main factional fronts: Khuddam ul-Islam and Jamaat ul-Furqan.[10] Like its predecessor HuM, JeM is driven by a strong pan-Islamic inter-

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6 Yoginder Sikaand, "Islamist Militancy in Kashmir: The Case of Lashkar-I-Tayyeba," paper supplied to author, Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, August 2002, p. 2; "Backgrounder on Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)," Institute for Conflict Management, http://www/Seagreen\maind\Web\India\J&K\Terrorist_Outfits.htm (as of September 2005).

7 "Backgrounder: Harakat-ul-Mujahideen," Institute for Conflict Management, http://www/Seagreen\maind\Web\India\J&K\TerroristOutfits.htm (as of September 2005); U.S. Department of State (2002b), pp. 93–94.

8 Watson and Zaidi, "Militant Flourishes."

9 Azhar, like Sayeed, was placed under house arrest in 2002 but released a year later. "The Other Armies," *The Economist,* January 18, 2003; Watson and Zaidi, "Militant Flourishes . . ." (2004).

10 U.S. Department of State (2004), p. 123.

nationalism that appears to go well beyond the "liberation" of Jammu and Kashmir. The organization carries pictures of burning American effigies on its calendars and posters, and Azhar himself has repeatedly affirmed that no Muslim should rest in peace until the United States and Israel are annihilated.[11]

Although these groups remain organizationally distinct and exhibit subtle ideological and theological differences,[12] they are characterized by an overlapping membership that variously reflects personal ties, a common anti-Indian agenda, and shared experiences in overseas militant training camps.[13] The three groups are also thought to have established links with Islamist radicals based in Bangladesh as well as Sunni sectarian extremists in Pakistan.

According to Indian government and intelligence sources, the historical basis of al-Qaeda's links to LeT, HuM, and JeM stem from deliberate operational decisions taken within Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) agency. The long-term aim of the Pakistani state in the view of these officials is to gradually step up the tempo of the conflict in Kashmir, both to create a strategic bulwark along Pakistan's vulnerable northeastern flank and to offset existing power symmetries with India through a prolonged "war of a thousand cuts."[14] While these

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[11] Masood Azhar, quoted in "Militant Freed in Hijacking Vows to Destroy U.S., India," *The Seattle Times*, January 5, 2000. See also "Backgrounder: Jaish-e-Muhammad."

[12] The LeT, for instance, is affiliated to the Ahl-e-Hadith sect of Wahhabism (which emphasizes statements attributed to the Prophet Mohammad); JeM and HuM follow the fundamentalist Deobandi school of Islam. Laskar also advocates a stronger and wider justification for jihad than Jaish, legitimating holy war against all nonbelievers (whereas JeM limits the focus of its violence to oppressors of Islam). Chalk interview, Washington, D.C., December 2003. See also Howard (2000), pp. 36–39.

[13] Chalk interviews, Indian intelligence, Delhi and Srinigar, September 2002.

[14] Chalk interviews, Indian intelligence and police, Delhi and Srinigar, September 2002. It is acknowledged that Indian claims pertaining to the existence of links between Kashmiri groups and al-Qaeda need to be carefully weighed in light of Delhi's historically tumultuous relationship with Pakistan. That said, both the Research and Analysis Wing (Delhi's external intelligence wing) and the Intelligence Bureau (responsible for domestic security) have a substantial presence in Kashmir and each works in conjunction with the Jammu and Kashmir police, who are recognized as having a comprehensive picture of the militant situation in the region.

assertions almost certainly reflect an opportunistic attempt to mobilize international opinion in favor of Delhi's position on Kashmir, several indicators do exist that the three groups have established some sort of tactical relationship with bin Laden's global terror network.

The first real sign of those ties emerged in August 1998 following the U.S. cruise missile strikes in Afghanistan that were launched in retaliation for the attacks against Washington's embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Twenty-one militants who were killed in two al-Qaeda camps—Khalid bin Waleed and Muwavia—were subsequently identified as affiliates of HuM and LeT.[15] The existence of these activists has been generally recognized as evidence of at least wider ideological and, possibly, tactical solidarity between the two groups and bin Laden—a sense of Islamist fraternity that appears to have been carried over to JeM. Indeed, Masood Azhar is known to have written an 802-page manual, *The Virtues of the Jihad,* in which he explicitly praises the al-Qaeda founder as *jihad ki shole ko dobara jilanewala* ("the great reigniter of the sprit of the jihad") and the inspiration for helping to wrest Islam from the grip of a morally corrupt secular culture.[16]

A sizable proportion of the LeT militants killed or captured have similarly been linked to radicals who received training in former Afghan militant centers run by either al-Qaeda or the Taliban, including camps Tayyaba and Aqsa.[17] According to Indian sources, captured militants describe largely similar experiences at these facilities, providing a degree of authentication to depictions of courses that are typically claimed to run for three weeks and that cover basic weapons-handling of everything from anti-aircraft missiles and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) to AK-47 rifles and pistols. A number of detained militants have also made common reference to so-called al-Qaeda "graduate

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[15] Bergen (2001), p. 8; Rana (unpublished), p. 172; "Over a Dozen Harakat Members Missing Since US Attacks," *The News* (Pakistan), August 26, 1998; "Pakistani Intelligence Had Ties to Al Qaeda, US Officials Say," *The New York Times,* October 29, 2001; "Pak Cries Foul Over US Revenge Attacks," *The Indian Express*, August 22, 1998.

[16] Chalk interview with Pakistani expert, United States Institute for Peace (USIP), Washington, D.C., December 2003. See also Haqqani (2002), pp. 72–74.

[17] Rana (unpublished), p. 252.

programs" that were allegedly run in cooperation with the ISI and that focused on developing skills in such areas as escape and evasion, ambush preparation, long-range reconnaissance, the construction and placement of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), intelligence/counterintelligence, field communications, and suicide tactics.[18]

Apart from training, Indian sources have consistently claimed that al-Qaeda has supplied LeT, HuM, and JeM with money—both directly and through intermediaries in Pakistan—to purchase arms, ammunition, and other battle-related materiel.[19] Although the veracity of these charges must be taken in the politically interested context in which they are made, arms seizures registered by the security forces do show the three groups have enjoyed access to a wide-ranging and extensive assortment of sophisticated weaponry.[20] The extent to which these munitions have emanated from the ISI and the Pakistani military, as opposed to outside jihadist sources, is impossible to tell. That said, one cannot fully discount Delhi's claim that at least some JeM, HuM, and LeT weaponry may have been acquired with al-Qaeda's support.

It is also worth bearing in mind that certain Pakistani commentators allude to the existence of financial flows between al-Qaeda and Kashmiri groups. One source alleges that bin Laden personally interceded to prevent the emergence of JeM from triggering an interfactional war with HuM and provided *qisi* (blood money) to ensure that the two groups would not work at cross-purposes.[21]

Finally, the March 2002 arrest of Abu Zubaydah, along with several other suspected jihadists from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Syria in the Punjabi town of Faisalabad, attests to the possible availability of

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[18] Chalk interviews, Indian military and intelligence officials, Srinigar and Delhi, September 2002.

[19] Chalk interview, Pakistan expert, USIP, Washington, D.C., October 2003.

[20] Chalk briefing, Army 15 Corps Headquarters, Srinigar, September 2002. In the Kashmir Valley region alone, 16,047 assault rifles, 738 RPGs, 223 sniper rifles, 57 mortars, 4,813 pistols, and 839 general purpose machine guns were recovered between 1990 and 2002, in addition to numerous quantities of night vision devices, advanced radio sets (complete with solar charges), and field binoculars.

[21] Chalk interview, Pakistan expert, USIP, Washington, D.C., December 2003.

safe havens well inside Pakistan's borders. The fact that Zubaydah was captured in a house reputedly belonging to LeT has been interpreted by several commentators in the West as strongly suggestive that members of the group have actively cooperated with al-Qaeda and possibly assisted with the movement of cadres throughout Pakistan.[22]

Although there is as yet no conclusive evidence to verify the existence of concerted Kashmiri–al-Qaeda ties, there are several reasons to suggest that links may be pertinent today. Ideologically, the radical internationalism and anti-Westernism of LeT, HuM, and JeM has grown markedly over the past year. Several of the LeT's current writings stress the idea of a trans-regional jihad stretching from Afghanistan to India, a concept that was strongly supported by Abdullah Azam—an ideological source for al-Qaeda.[23] Equally as indicative is the group's annual three-day *ijtimah* (convention), which over the past three years (from 2002) has been noteworthy for the virulently anti-Western tone that has formed the basis of many of the speakers' proclamations, including specific exhortations of holy war against the United States.[24]

Similarly, JeM and HuM diatribes are increasingly focused on issues that have little, if anything, to do with the struggle in Kashmir. The former group's main media mouthpiece, *Dharbi-i-Mumin* (literally, "Blow of the Believer"), frequently carries stories that denounce Zionism or America and other alleged oppressors of Muslims—including the Pakistani government on account of its support for the Bush administration's global war on terrorism. Moreover, Masood Azhar's

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[22] See U.S. Department of State (2003); Kronsdat and Vaughn (2004), p. 5; Raman (2002); "The Terrorists Next Door; al Qaeda Suspects Posed as Traders Before Capture in Pakistan," *The Washington Post,* April 4, 2002.

[23] These writings include "Hum Jihad kyon kar rahen hain" ("Why Are We Waging Jihad?"); "Yeh zagiri kaun torega" ("Who Will Break This Chain?"); "Ryaz ul mujahidebb" ("Training for Mujahideen"); "Difai-e-jihad" ("Defense of Jihad"); "Sadai-e-jihad" ("Voice of Jihad"); and "Chalo jihad ko chalen" ("Go and Wage Jihad"). Chalk interview, USIP, Washington, D.C., December 2003.

[24] Arif Jamal, News on Sunday, November 10, 2002; Chalk and Fair (2002).

preaching now gives greater emphasis to the general problems of the Muslim world and the related need to restore effective Muslim military power everywhere from the southern Philippines to Chechnya.[25]

These changes in ideological tenor are important in the sense that they appear to reflect a perceptible change in the strategic agenda of Kashmiri groups—or elements therein. Specifically, these organizations now routinely profess concerns and aspirations that, at least rhetorically, accord closely with the open-ended aims of the broader al-Qaeda network. As such, they may be indicative of a growing sense of Islamist solidarity that now sees its primary mission in terms of propagating global, as opposed to local (or even regional) holy war.

On a tactical level, LeT, JeM, and HuM operational activities have additionally taken on a wider slant that, in many ways, seems to be predicated on explicit opposition to the United States and governments that support the global war on terrorism—that is, the same mix of enemies repeatedly denigrated by bin Laden. LeT is alleged to have been instrumental in recruiting jihadists to fight coalition forces in Iraq (something that even the ISI does not fully discount),[26] as well as executing terrorist strikes in Europe. Indeed, according to British intelligence, several of those responsible for the July 2005 bombings in London or in some way tied to the incidents may have sought militant training in the group's camps in Pakistan.[27]

Organizationally, there are also signs of greater coordination and cooperation between JeM, HuM, and LeT to facilitate attacks against Western targets and perceived American collaborators in Pakistan.[28] Although the three groups have long been characterized by overlapping

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[25] Chalk interview, USIP, Washington, D.C., December 2003. See also Haqqani (2002), pp. 72–74.

[26] Chalk interview, ISI, Rawalpindi, January 2005. It should be noted, however, that Pakistani intelligence tends to take the view that LeT recruitment for the war in Iraq is more the result of ad hoc actions by individual members of the group than a sanctioned directive from Lashkar's central leadership.

[27] See, for instance, Elaine Sciolino and Don Van Natta, "2004 British Raid Sounded Alert on Pakistani Militants," *The New York Times*, July 14, 2005; and Elaine Sciolino and Don Van Natta, "Searching for Footprints," *The New York Times*, July 25, 2005.

[28] RAND interview with Pakistani journalist, Islamabad, January 2003.

membership, they have traditionally tended to act as distinct entities, only occasionally coming together for combined, large-scale missions such as the strikes on the Srinigar state legislature in October 2001 and the Indian national parliament three months later.[29]

This trait has reportedly changed in the sense that logistical and operational ties are now being institutionalized on a semiformal basis through the creation of umbrella organizations that incorporate members of all three Kashmiri groups in addition to Sunni sectarian militants associated with Laskar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ, see below). One such group, known as Brigade 313, has been tied to several incidents since mid-2002, including assassination attempts against President Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, and the Karachi Corps Commander General Ahsan Saleem Hyat; the murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl; the mailing of parcel bombs to detectives working in the police antiterrorist branch; and two prominent attacks on the U.S. consulate and the Sheraton hotel in Karachi during 2002.[30] Indian and Pakistani commentators allege al-Qaeda and renegade elements within the security forces, disillusioned with the pro-Western leanings of the current Islamabad government, have fostered these ties with the former, further asserting that many of the joint

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[29] Chalk interview, Indian intelligence, Delhi, September 2002. See also "New Delhi Lays Blame," *The Washington Post,* December 29, 2001; "Kashmir Suicide Bombing Group Linked to Osama Bin Laden: India," Agence France-Presse, October 2, 2001; and "Delhi Tracks Al Qaida, Jaish Links," *Gulf News,* October 11, 2001. The attack on the Indian parliament represents the most audacious attack carried out to date by Kashmiri militants. Involving a joint LeT-JeM squad, the strike demonstrated careful planning, surveillance, and execution and brought Delhi and Islamabad to the brink of war.

[30] See Amir Mir, "Target Musharraf," *The Herald Magazine* (Pakistan), January 2004, pp. 38–42; "Friends Turned to Foes," *The Herald Magazine* (Pakistan), January 2004, pp. 40–41; "Terror's Allies," *The Herald Magazine* (Pakistan), August 2004, pp. 58–61.

operations were developed in conformity with the designs of senior al-Qaeda planner Khaled Sheikh Mohammad before the latter's arrest in March 2003.[31]

With Pakistan coming under increased pressure to curtail all overt physical support for militant extremism on its soil, it is conceivable that LeT, HuM, and JeM could move to consolidate links with outside jihadists, including those associated with al-Qaeda. Certainly this would be of concern to the United States, not least given the numbers of foreign jihadists who are known to have fled to Pakistan's remote northern border regions following the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.[32]

Assessment and Future Outlook

For the most part, LeT, JeM, and HuM have confined their terrorist activities to Jammu and Kashmir. However, all three groups have exhibited a disposition to act outside this theater. As noted above, the three groups have reportedly collaborated in striking targets located in Pakistan under semiformalized umbrella groups. Intelligence officials in India's Research and Analysis Wing insist that this growing reach is

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[31] Briefing given to Chalk by India's National Security Advisory Council, Delhi, September 2002. See also Rohan Gunaratna, "Al Qaeda Origins, Threat and its Likely Future," presentation at Workshop on Emerging Terrorist Threats in Africa and Southeast Asia, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., August 19, 2005; "Investigation of Attacks on Musharraf Points to Pakistani Group," *The Washington Post,* January 13, 2004; Juliette Terzieff, "Assassination Tries Linked to al Qaeda," *San Francisco Chronicle,* January 16, 2004; "After Pakistan Raid, 3 Mysterious Suicides," *The New York Times,* August 7, 2002; "Two Years Later: The Islamic Ally," *The New York Times,* September 9, 2003. It should be noted that LeT's involvement in Laskar-e-Omar is not universally acknowledged in Pakistan and that the umbrella group itself is not necessarily seen to be the main perpetrator behind the Karachi attacks.

[32] Chalk interview, U.S. Department of State, November 2004. Pakistani military incursions into South Waziristan during 2004—which represented the first time that Islamabad had directly intervened in the semiautonomous tribal areas—provided an indication of the extent of outside Islamist penetration along the country's northern border areas over the last three years. During the sweeps, 302 militants were killed and 656 arrested. Some 80 percent of these fighters were foreign, mostly comprising Afghan Arabs, Uzbeks, and Chechens, as well as a smaller number of Uighurs from China. Chalk interview, ISI, Rawalpindi, January 2005. Similar figures were cited during a conference on "The Tribal Areas of Pakistan: A Haven for Terrorists?" Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), London, January 19, 2005.

a direct result of external assistance and coordination provided by al-Qaeda (and hard-line, extremist members of the Pakistani military and intelligence apparatus).[33] That said, there is as yet little direct evidence that Kashmiri jihadists have been decisively integrated into the wider al-Qaeda nebula and are now carrying out strikes at the sole behest of outside militants. In this sense, it would be incorrect to evaluate contacts between al-Qaeda and LeT, JeM, and HuM (to the extent that they have occurred) in the same manner as those that have emerged with largely or fully co-opted networks such as those in Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia.

In sum, JeM, HuM, and LeT connections to al-Qaeda would seem to be indicative of a mutuality of interest that is more a reflection of growing Islamist solidarity than an attempt to establish a true operational partnership that is not connected to the Kashmiri struggle (which would threaten the very basis of the groups' mandates). As one Pakistani commentator put it, Kashmiri militants and al-Qaeda are like two fighters in the same trench: engaged on different missions but increasingly aware of a common enemy.[34]

Pakistan

Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Laskar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)

In Pakistan, the main domestic militant threat emanates from rival Shi'a and Sunni groups that have been engaged in a long-standing and bloody sectarian conflict since the mid-1980s.[35] The principal protagonists involved in this internal religious struggle are the SSP and its

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[33] Chalk interview, Indian intelligence, Delhi, September 2002. See also "New Delhi Lays Blame," *The Washington Post,* December 29, 2001; "Kashmir Suicide Bombing Group Linked to Osama Bin Laden: India," Agence France-Presse, October 2, 2001; and "Delhi Tracks Al Qaida, Jaish Links," *Gulf News,* October 11, 2001.

[34] Chalk interview with Pakistan expert, USIP, Washington, D.C., December 2003.

[35] Sectarianism in the Pakistani context refers essentially to organized and militant religious activism, the specific aim of which is to safeguard the interests of particular Sunni and Shi'a communities (Nasr, 2000), pp. 171–172. For more on the general mobilization of ethnic and sectarian identity, see Horowitz (1985).

terrorist offshoot LeJ on the Sunni side; and the Tahrik-i-Jafaria Pakistan (TJP) and its militant wing Sipah-i-Muhammad (SM) on the Shi'a side.[36] In terms of affinity with al-Qaeda and threat contingencies to U.S. and Western interests, the first two entities have engendered most concern.

Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi established the SSP in 1984 in reaction to the growing assertiveness of Pakistan's Shi'ite minority following the 1979 Iranian revolution.[37] The group, which was led by Azam Tariq until his assassination in October 2003, espouses a three-track agenda: (1) to combat the Shi'ites at all levels; (2) to strive to have this community declared a non-Muslim minority in Pakistan; and (3) to institute Sunni Islam as the official religion of the state. For the SSP, the ideal polity is one that emulates the "rightly guided" caliphs of early Islam; it is this model that the group's founding father, Nawa Jhangvi, sought to emulate in modern-day Pakistan.[38]

LeJ was founded in 1996 by a breakaway group of radical Sunni extremists reputed to feel that the SSP was deviating from the original principles of Nawaz Jhangvi (from whom the group derives its name).[39] Muhammad Ajmal (also known as Akram Lahori) reportedly acts as the group's current leader (although he has been in police custody since 2002). He believes that the only way to effectively transform Pakistan into a Sunni state is through violent means. LeJ has an estimated mili-

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[36] All of these organizations have been proscribed in Pakistan—the LeJ and SM in August 2001 and the SSP and TJP in January 2002.

[37] The scale of sectarian extremism in Pakistan escalated markedly following the Iranian revolution and the establishment of the TJP. Dedicated to the explicit promotion of Shi'ite interests, the TJP soon came to be viewed as a direct challenge to Pakistan's dominant Sunni establishment as well as a potential Iranian proxy. The SSP was established in 1984 with the backing of the Zia ul-Haq regime to contain and ultimately eliminate this perceived threat. For further details see Nasr (2000); Zaman (1998), p. 704; Waslekar et al. (2002), pp. 59–63; and "Pakistan's Growing Crisis: In the Shadow of Afghanistan" (1998), pp. 1–2.

[38] Zaman (1998), pp. 701–702; Rana (unpublished), pp. 112–122; "Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, Terrorist Group of Pakistan," South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/ssp.htm (as of February 21, 2006).

[39] Several other militant Sunni SSP offshoots exist, including the Jhangvi Tigers, al-Haq Tigers, al-Farooq, the al-Badr Foundation, Allahu Akbar, and Tanzeemul Haq. Of these, the Jhangvi Tigers, al-Haq Tigers, and Allahu Akbar are known to have merged with LeJ.

tant base of 300 cadres organized into semiautonomous cells of five to eight members and retains most of its hard-core strength in the Punjab.[40]

Both the SSP and LeJ maintain they are in no way organizationally linked. Few analysts in India and Pakistan believe this to be the case, however. The two groups' cadres come from the same Deobandi madrassas and share the same sectarian belief system, worldview, and charter of demands. In addition, the SSP leadership has never criticized the terrorist actions of LeJ, and it is suspected that the latter merely acts as a deniable conduit through which the former can direct attacks against Shi'ites.[41]

Although the SSP and LeJ are primarily focused on the sectarian conflict in Pakistan, each is widely suspected of having established links with al-Qaeda. Both groups sent recruits to train at terrorist camps in Afghanistan, many of whom subsequently participated in attacks against the Northern Alliance as well as massacres of Afghan Shi'ites that were carried out in such areas as Bamiyan and Mazar-e-Sharif. On returning home, these cadres further militarized already extreme Sunni ideological stances, supplementing established anti-Shi'a agendas with a more Talibanized slant.[42]

Other than training, the SSP is thought to have benefited from financing distributed by wealthy Gulf patrons with known sympathies for bin Laden. The desert town of Rahimayar Khan in southern Punjab appears to have played a prominent role in facilitating the transfer of monies from the Middle East to the Sipah leadership. Each year, thousands of Arabs come to the region, spending a month and several

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[40] Rana (unpublished), pp. 123–124; "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi," South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/lej.htm, (as of February 21, 2006).

[41] Chalk interview with Pakistani expert, USIP, Washington, D.C, December 2003. See also "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi" and Howard (2000), p. 38.

[42] Chalk's e-mail correspondence with Pakistani commentator, December 3, 2003, and interview with Pakistani-based journalist, Islamabad, January 2005. See also "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi"; Mir, "Terror's Allies" (2004), pp. 58–59; Azizullah Khan, interview with Jam Mohammad Yousuf, Chief Minister of Baluchistan, reproduced in "Clueless in Quetta," *The Herald Magazine* (Pakistan), April 2004, p. 32.

million dollars hunting local wildlife. Western commentators believe that over the years a significant proportion of these "tourist dollars" were transferred to the SSP (as well as other local Islamist protégés) to sustain anti-Shi'a activities in Pakistan.[43]

Assertions have also been made that contacts with al-Qaeda emerged in the context of LeJ links with Kashmiri extremists. As noted above, the group's membership overlaps with that of JeM, LeT, and HuM, which several commentators believe is indicative of an outside hand. Moreover, Indian sources have claimed that front-ranking LeJ terrorists consistently benefited from access to HuM's Khalid bin Waleed camp in Afghanistan, securing training from al-Qaeda instructors in everything from small arms handling to the preparation of IEDs and hit-and-run tactics.[44]

Finally there are strong indications that ties to al-Qaeda have developed through the conduit of transnational criminal networks. Throughout the 1990s, Pakistan was engulfed by a range of illicit enterprises that proliferated after the collapse of the formal state structures in Afghanistan resulted in increased heroin production throughout the so-called Golden Crescent[45] and the emergence of a thriving, unregulated light arms industry in the remote North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan regions. Narcotics smuggling developed as a particularly serious problem with dealers and subcontractors in Karachi and Quetta playing a key role in the movement of Afghan opiates through Central Asia to markets in Russia and Europe.[46] Many of these narcotic syndicates operated out of the port city of Karachi,

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[43] See, for instance, Howard (2000), p. 37.

[44] "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi."

[45] By 1996, the Golden Crescent, which connects Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, had supplanted Southeast Asia's infamous Golden Triangle as the world's main source of refined opiates. The vast majority of these drugs is produced in and trafficked from Afghanistan. By the end of 2002, the country's overall opium yield was in the range of 3,656 metric tons, which equates to an approximate heroin output of 365 metric tons (Chalk, 2000, pp. 38–39).

[46] By the end of 2001, Pakistan had an estimated drug-using population of four million—including 1.5 million heroin addicts—who were helping to fuel an underground economy that some analysts believe was worth as much as US $1.4 billion. See Blood (2002) and U.S. Department of State (2002a), p. VII-24.

which bin Laden was keen to establish as a regional center to support his own transnational terrorist agenda.[47] As both Indian and Pakistani sources point out, it is certainly conceivable that al-Qaeda exploited the growing interaction between drug trafficking and sectarian groups in this part of the country to recruit hard-line and increasingly criminalized SSP-LeJ elements for both attack and logistical purposes.[48]

Although both the SSP and LeJ are believed to have developed links with al-Qaeda, LeJ has allegedly established the closest contacts. The SSP has been more circumspect in order to protect its members from government arrest and surveillance.[49] Maulana Tariq, for instance, is on record as affirming that he considers it a sin to utter "even a single word against peace and tranquility in Pakistan" and that he would strive to ensure members of his organization "observe the best norms, speak [and act] with responsibility," and refrain from any acts of violence in the country.[50] Obviously, any outward association with bin Laden or his affiliates would run counter to a pragmatic stance of this sort.

LeJ, on the other hand, remains committed to violence and has become increasingly anti-Western, targeting its aggression as much toward the present Pakistani government for its collusion with the U.S.-led war on terror as against the country's Shi'ite minority. At the time of this writing, three major assassination attempts had been made on the life of President Musharraf, all of which have been variously

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[47] Karachi's attractiveness as an al-Qaeda logistical center is due to a number of factors, including the city's endemic lawlessness, its well-established Arab population, and the existence of trade, cultural, and financial ties with important Islamic hubs in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

[48] Chalk interview with Pakistan expert, USIP, Washington, D.C., December 2003, and Indian intelligence, Delhi, September 2002.

[49] In what was hailed as a landmark address to the nation on January 12, 2002, President Musharraf announced a policy of zero tolerance for Islamic extremism, specifying that sectarian militants (including those connected to the SSP) would be the target of especially close government scrutiny and countermeasures. For excerpts of his speech, see "Musharraf's New Pakistan. What the People Think," *The Herald,* February 2002, pp. 44b–45b.

[50] Rana (unpublished), pp. 130–131. It should be noted that several Pakistani commentators believe the SSP continues to actively endorse and engage in violence and now merely acts through the conduit of LeJ in order to pursue its militant agenda.

connected to LeJ—either directly or through Kashmiri front organizations.[51] Indian, Western, and Pakistani intelligence officials assert that these and other acts of violence, including the murder of Daniel Pearl and the 2002 bombings in Karachi, underscore the continuing salience of LeJ–al-Qaeda ties, reflecting a commonality of purpose that is both ideological and operational in character.[52] According to one high-ranking official in Islamabad, LeJ is now acting as an ostensible al-Qaeda strike force that is being used to eliminate high-ranking members of the country's national leadership.[53]

Further (albeit nondefinitive) evidence of an al-Qaeda–LeJ link has emerged in testimony from Akram Lahori. By his own admission, the incarcerated LeJ leader has confirmed that members of his own group, together with other organizations such as HuM, have sworn an oath on the Quran to physically eliminate Pervez Musharraf at any cost. The basis for this commitment is apparently a conviction that the Pakistani president has both damaged and betrayed the true cause of jihad and is now working to further the U.S. agenda in Pakistan and throughout South Asia.[54]

Assessment and Future Outlook

As noted above, while LeJ's existence stems from the history of violent sectarianism that has plagued Pakistan for most of the past three decades, the group has definitely begun to recalibrate its agenda with a

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[51] See, for instance, Raman (2003); Salman Masoud, "Musaharraf Vows Renewed Crackdown," The National Post (Canada), December 26, 2003; John Lancaster and Karman Khan, "Investigation of Attacks on Musharraf Points to Pakistani Group," *The Washington Post,* January 14, 2004; Terzieff, "Assassination Tries Linked to Al Qaeda"; and Salman Masood, "Link to Qaeda Cited in Effort to Assassinate Pakistan Chief," *The New York Times,* March 16, 2004.

[52] Chalk interviews: Indian intelligence, Delhi, September 2002 and Washington, D.C., December 2003; Pakistan's ISI Directorate, Rawalpindi, January 2005; and Pakistan Ministry of the Interior, Islamabad, January 2005. See also "Investigation of Attacks on Musharraf Points to Pakistani Group," *The Washington Post,* January 13, 2004; and "Assassination Tries Linked to al-Qaeda," *San Francisco Chronicle,* January 16, 2004.

[53] Mir, "Terror's Allies," p. 58.

[54] Mir, "Friends Turned Foes," pp. 40–41.

more deliberate anti-Western and anti-Musharraf focus. More significantly, the LeJ leadership has been prepared to act on and operationalize this extended ideological mission by carrying out attacks that have been effectively devoid of any anti-Shi'a overtones. It is reasonable to assume that at least some of this reorientation is owing to an external al-Qaeda influence, which is arguably stronger than that currently exerted on Kashmiri militants (whose main preoccupation remains with Kashmir). The importance of common stomping grounds in Karachi should not be underestimated in this regard, particularly in terms of connecting outside and local Islamist interests through the common medium of organized crime.[55]

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that LeJ's ideological and operational agenda is being driven solely by externally defined imperatives. Not only has the group been abandoned by the same institutional system that during the 1980s and 1990s was clearly prepared to promote Sunni extremism as part of an active Shi'a containment policy, it has also been subjected to an increasingly draconian crackdown by the authorities since 2001. There is little question that these developments have influenced LeJ perceptions of the "enemy," and it is reasonable to assume that they have played an important role in turning the group against the current regime in Islamabad.

Although al-Qaeda may well have attempted to exploit LeJ's growing anti-Musharraf focus for its own purposes, there is little evidence that it has been instrumental in transforming LeJ's operational and ideological character. As the International Crisis Group (ICG) concludes:

> The objectives and goals of Pakistani sectarian terrorists in the post–11 September world might be closer to those of transnational jihadis but the internal enemy still takes priority over the enemy without. "It is a two-track jihad," says a [former] member of a banned [sectarian] group. "The external enemy is known, his

[55] See, for instance, Waslekar et al. (2002), pp. 51–63.

> intentions against Islam and Muslims are no secret. But the internal enemy posing as Muslim . . . is more dangerous. Stopping internal enemies is our priority.[56]

Bangladesh

Harakat-ul-Jihad-Islami Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the principal group that has been linked to al-Qaeda is Harakat-ul-Jihad-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI B), which aims to establish a system of Islamic *hukumat* (rule) across the country. The organization's roots date back to 1992, although it has emerged as a prominent militant entity only since 2000. Shauqat Osman (also known as Maulana or Sheikh Farid) leads the group, overseeing an operational cadre that is believed to number 15,000, of whom 2,000 are described as hardcore. Most of these militants are based in cells scattered along a stretch of coastline that runs from the port city of Chittagong, south through Cox's Bazar to the Burmese border.[57] Indian intelligence sources allege that HuJI B's long-term goal specifically calls for an Islamic revolution in India's northeast and that, with the help of the ISI and Bangladesh's Directorate General of Field Intelligence (DGFI), the group has actively sought to cultivate links with radicals in Kashmir and Assam—

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[56] ICG (2005b), p. 5.

[57] U.S. Department of State (2003), pp. 133–134; Lintner (2002); Lintner (2003), p. 3; "Harakat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI)," Terrorist Outfits, Bangladesh, South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/Huj.htm (as of February 21, 2006).

including HuM, JeM, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB).[58]

HuJI B's links to al-Qaeda allegedly go back to the group's inception in 1992, when bin Laden instructed Bangladeshi mujahideen returning from Afghanistan to take up arms against the government in Dhaka and to replace it with a fundamentalist order committed to the creation of a nation of "true believers."[59] Although it is difficult to establish the veracity of this claim, al-Qaeda is known to have disseminated at least some funds to the country throughout the 1990s, much of which appears to have been channeled through the Saudi-based al-Haramain Foundation[60] and the "Servants of Suffering and Humanity International" charity in Dhaka.[61]

Together with donations from Pakistan, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Oman, these financial contributions were used to underwrite a proliferating web of radical unlicensed madrassas (known as *Dars-e-Nizami*) throughout Bangladesh that have been linked to some of the country's most fundamentalist religious entities and parties, including the Muslim League, the Tablighi Jama'at, the Jammat-e-Tulba, the Jamaat-ul-Muderessin, Islamic Oikya, and Jamaat-e-Islami. Indian and U.S. sources both maintain that the

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[58] Jaideep Saikia, "Triangle of New Concern: North East India," unclassified briefing, RAND, Alexandria, Virginia, n.d. ULFA was established in 1979 and seeks the creation of an independent Assam state in India's northeast; the group has an estimated strength of 2,000 cadres. The NDFB emerged in 1988 (then under the name of the Bodo Security Force/BSF) and is committed to carving out a separate "Bodoland" north of the Brahmaputra River for the region's mostly Christian tribal groups who number around 13 percent of Assam's total population; it is reportedly able to field some 1,500 fighters. For an interesting account of these groups and their links with militants in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Burma, see Davis and Bedi (2004).

[59] "Harakat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI)," Terrorist Outfits, Bangladesh, South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://wwwsatp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/Huj.htm (as of February 21, 2006); Alex Perry, "Deadly Cargo," *Time Asia,* October 21, 2002.

[60] The al-Haramain Foundation is widely believed to be one of the principal financial conduits for the dissemination of funds from the Middle East to terrorist groups.

[61] Ajai Sahni, "Al Qaeda's Strategic Reach in South Asia," paper presented before "The Transnational Violence and Seams of Lawlessness in the Asia-Pacific: Linkages to Global Terrorism" Conference, Honolulu, Hawaii, February 19–21, 2002, p. 7.

madrassas—which number between 15,000 and 20,000, of which at least 40 are known to be run by Afghan war veterans—have constituted an important source of recruits for extremists.[62]

HuJI B is also thought to have established contacts with al-Qaeda through the Taliban. Between 1996 and 2001, several hundred Harakat activists received training in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan.[63] The precise number of recruits who were sent to these camps is unknown; however, given that several facilities were reserved only for Bengali speakers, it would appear that the overall Bangladeshi component was quite substantial.

A more concrete tie to al-Qaeda has been identified in the person of Sheikh Abdur Rahman, the leader of the "Jihad Movement in Bangladesh"—to which HuJI B belongs—and one of the original signatories of the 1998 Khost "Declaration of Jihad against Jews and Crusaders." Apart from bin Laden and Rahman, other parties to the joint statement included Ayman al-Zawahiri, Rifa'i Ahmad Taha (also known as Abu Yasir) of the EIJ, and Sheikh Mir Hamzah, secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan.[64] In June 2001, a 25-member joint al-Qaeda–Taliban team was reportedly dispatched from Afghanistan to train HuJI B cadres in Bangladesh.[65]

It appears that this initial foray into Bangladeshi territory provided the impetus for a further expansion of logistical and operational ties between al-Qaeda and the HuJI B throughout 2002. It is known, for instance, that al-Zawahiri was in Dhaka during the first part of the year, using his time in the Bangladeshi capital to explore the feasibil-

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[62] Saikia, "Triangle of New Concern"; Datta (2003), p. 8; Perry, "Deadly Cargo." Overall, it is estimated that the total number of madrassas in Bangladesh is in the vicinity of 64,000.

[63] Recruits were taken mainly via Nepal to Pakistan before making the final trip to Afghanistan. On arrival, they were reportedly paid 30,000 Bangladeshi taka (approximately US $525) and then offered an additional "stipend" of 10,000 taka (approximately US $175) to fight alongside Taliban and al-Qaeda forces against the Northern Alliance. Lintner (2002).

[64] Saikia, "Triangle of New Concern"; Datta (2003), p. 8; Lintner (2002); Abuza (2005a), p. 53. For the complete text of the Khost fatwa see Alexander and Swetnam (2001), Appendix 1B, pp. 1–3.

[65] Sahni, "Al Qaeda's Strategic Reach in South Asia," p. 7.

ity of establishing a new beachhead for regional Islamic extremism in areas around the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In July that same year, Indian intelligence sources verified that a fishing vessel—later identified as the MV Mecca—had been covertly ferrying al-Qaeda operatives and weapons into Bangladesh for several months and that unlicensed madrassas funded by al-Haramain were providing training and arms to Arab and North African militants from Yemen, Algeria, Libya, and Sudan. This was followed three months later by the arrest of Fazle Karim (also known as Abu Fuzi), a known Harakat activist and reported veteran of bin Laden's camps in eastern Afghanistan, who admitted he was part of an al-Qaeda–Taliban team that had been secretly established in Bangladesh.[66]

Commenting on these developments, one Western diplomat in Dhaka remarked that by the year's end Bangladesh had emerged as a viable haven for foreign jihadists: "If . . . militants want to come in here and buy themselves new passports and new identities, stock up on any weapons they might want and maybe do a little refresher training before heading off again, there's nothing to stop them."[67]

As in the case of the extremist groups in Kashmir, the HuJI B's rhetoric has become steadily anti-Western in the wake of the global war on terrorism, gravitating toward an ideological agenda that now, arguably, gives precedence to internationalist over local objectives. Many of the fundamentalist religious institutions to which HuJI B has been linked are open about their support of al-Qaeda's war against the West. Indeed, Mullah Obaidul Haque, head of the national mosque in Dhaka and a known sympathizer of Harakat, is on record for pledging that "America and Bush must be destroyed," while HuJI B, itself, now explicitly exhorts the dual refrain of *Ambra Sobai Hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghanistan*: "We will all be Taliban and Bangladesh will be Afghanistan."[68]

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[66] Datta (2003), p. 9; Perry, "Deadly Cargo"; Lintner (2002); Lintner (2003), pp. 19–21; Abuza (2005a), pp. 53–54.

[67] Cited in Perry, "Deadly Cargo."

[68] Perry, "Deadly Cargo"; Sahni, "Al Qaeda's Strategic " (2002), p. 7; Datta (2003), p. 8; Abuza (2005a), p. 53.

Regional commentators believe that the increasingly pan-Islamic orientation of HuJI B is being fostered by al-Qaeda ideological "perches" that have been set up in Bangladesh over the last three years. At least six dedicated transnational training camps are thought to operate in Bangladesh. These camps were reportedly set up with the direct backing of renegade elements in the ISI and DGFI to offset the terrorists' reduced operational and political space in Pakistan after September 11.[69] According to one former Burmese guerrilla, three facilities located just outside the town of Cox's Bazar have a combined capacity of at least 2,500 cadres, with the largest comprising a complex of 26 interconnected bunkers built under a three-meter-high false forest floor. The camps are allegedly complete with kitchens, lecture halls, telephones, and televisions, and all have access to a wide range of weapons, including AK-47s, heavy machine guns, pistols, RPGs, mortars, mantraps, and mines.[70]

A further possible indication of links between al-Qaeda and Harakat militants is manifest in the so-called Islamic Manch (IM, literally Islamic Association), which was formed in mid-2002 at Ukhia, near Cox's Bazar. Coming under the leadership of HuJI B and representing nine other radical Islamic interests in Bangladesh, this umbrella group advocates an extremist jihadist rhetoric that closely resonates with bin Laden's line. The movement seeks the creation of a transnational caliphate that will eventually take in all of Bangladesh, Assam, north Bengal, and Burma's Arakan province, and has been identified as a key propaganda and logistical conduit for al-Qaeda in South Asia. Indian and Western intelligence sources fear that many of the al-Qaeda and Taliban members who entered the country between 2001 and 2002 are now training the IM and may be seeking to establish the group as

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[69] An internal HuJI B document lists no less than 19 training camps across Bangladesh, but it is uncertain how many of these actually offered dedicated militant instruction. Indian intelligence sources believe that, overall, the country hosts a total of 194 militant camps for various insurgent movements opposed to the Delhi government.

[70] Saikia, "Triangle of New Concern"; Perry, "Deadly Cargo."

a concerted operational wing for cross-regional attacks in South Asia (in essence, a version of the Jemaah Islamiyah network in Southeast Asia).[71]

Assessment and Future Outlook

HuJI B actions have been directed against Bangladesh's Hindu minority as well as the country's moderate Muslims. For the most part these attacks have been small-scale and opportunistic, which would seem to suggest that al-Qaeda has not had a significant bearing on the group's operational agenda. That said, HuJI B cadres have exhibited at least a rhetorical willingness to act beyond the Bangladesh theater; in this context, connections to bin Laden and his global terror network begin to take on greater relevance. Indian intelligence sources have long insisted that the HuJI B has made logistical and operational arrangements with groups in Jammu and Kashmir—claims that are now being further supplemented by the assertions of independent regional observers who believe similar ties may have been instituted with militants based in Assam and Burma.[72]

Although there is no conclusive, publicly available evidence to verify these allegations or back the associated claim that outside contacts have been made at the behest of external extremist forces, the presence of a Harakat leader at the signing of the 1998 Khost fatwa, the group's reported hosting of an al-Qaeda–Taliban training team, and its central role in the (explicitly transnational) IM do seem to reflect a broad jihadist outlook. According to one commentator, members of the Rohingya Solidarity Organization and the Muslim Liberation Tigers

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[71] Perry, "Deadly Cargo"; Saikia, "Triangle of New Concern"; Datta (2003), p. 9; Lintner (2002).

[72] See, for instance, Perry "Deadly Cargo"; Lintner (2002); Lintner (2003), pp. 19–21; Abuza (2005a), pp. 53–54; "Dhaka Police Look for Al-Qaeda Link," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 10, 2002. The International Crisis Group (ICG) reported several border incidents during 2004 that Indian sources claimed were connected to Bangladeshi ties with northeastern separatists (ICG, 2004, p. 5).

of Assam have been training in HuJI B camps since at least June 2002, while Harakat activists have traveled to Kashmir and even Chechnya to join forces with Islamist militants fighting there.[73]

More recently, a 2003 report by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) expressed specific concern over the growing extremist activism exhibited by HuJI B, hinting that this was being fostered by al-Qaeda as part of a wider policy to drive Western aid agencies out of Bangladesh.[74] In February 2005, suspected Islamist extremists firebombed several such organizations, which could represent the first stages of a heightened, externally directed operational agenda of this sort.[75] If Harakat militants are, in fact, moving in this direction and beginning to hire themselves out as "subcontractors" for al-Qaeda, it would represent a fundamentally new development in HuJI B targeting and mission objectives that must be factored into assessments of the organization's future threat potential.

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[73] Lintner (2002).

[74] Jim Bronskill, "CSIS Wary of Bangladesh," CNEWS, December 12, 2003; Raman (2004); Hussain (2004).

[75] ICG (2005a), p. 5; "WB Concerned Over Attacks on NGOs," *The Daily Star,* February 18, 2005.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Caucasus and Central Asia

Al-Qaeda has channeled its activities in the Caucasus and Central Asia through two groups: the Basayev faction of Chechen jihadists fighting against the Russian Federation and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

Chechnya

Chechen Jihadists (Basayev Faction)

The jihadist struggle in Chechnya has its roots in the history of the Chechen resistance to the Russian conquest of the Caucasus, dating back to the nineteenth century. In 1944, Stalin deported almost the entire Chechen population—roughly 400,000 people—to Central Asia, where many subsequently perished. This legacy of repression helps to explain the basis of contemporary Chechen nationalism, which has tended to be more radical and anti-Russian than that of other Muslim communities within the Russian Federation.

When the USSR collapsed in 1991, Chechens led by former Soviet General Dzhokhar Dudayev deposed the old Soviet leadership of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic. However, these rebels were unable to consolidate any real degree of authority, leaving criminal groups (the so-called Chechen Mafia) and armed radicals to dominate. The resulting anarchy, combined with a Russian fear of territorial fragmentation, resulted in Russia's refusing to recognize Chechnya as a separate republic. In 1994, then President Boris Yeltsin moved to bring the area back under Moscow's control, launching a full-scale

military intervention that triggered a bloody two-year civil war.[1] Despite an agreement in 1996 that gave Chechnya semiautonomous status, a renewed wave of violence broke out in 1998, the main impetus for which came from Islamists committed to driving Russia from Chechnya and neighboring Dagestan through the force of arms. Numbering approximately 2,000 fighters, this semistructured network of jihadists, led by Shamil Basayev, forms the crux of the present terrorist-insurgency in this part of the Caucasus.[2] The aim of these radicals is to destroy what they regard as a Russian colonial empire and to create a single Muslim state on the territory of Chechnya, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Tatarstan based on Wahhabist ideological precepts.

Chechen jihadists have engaged in a plethora of violent and illicit activity, ranging from organized crime and kidnapping to guerrilla warfare and, increasingly, terrorist strikes perpetrated in the heart of the Russian Federation. These include

- a series of four apartment building bombings during September 1999, which collectively killed 293 and injured 370
- the seizure of the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow in October 2002, which ultimately led to the deaths of 129 hostages following a raid by Russian special forces
- plots to assassinate President Putin in 2001 and 2002
- a 2002 hijacking of a Russian airliner in Saudi Arabia
- the Kaspiik bombing during a parade held on Great Patriotic Day, which killed dozens and injured hundreds of others

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[1] Dudayev was killed in a rocket attack that zeroed in on his satellite phone signal.

[2] For more background on the Chechnya conflict, see De Waal and Carlotta (1998); Lieven (1998); Nivat (2001); and Seely (2001).

- a string of suicide attacks throughout 2000–2004 that, combined, took the lives of over 200 people (see Table 8.1)[3]
- the downing of two civilian aircraft by female suicide bombers and the horrific massacre of schoolchildren and teachers at Beslan in September 2004.[4]

A little-known terrorist group calling itself the Islambuli Brigades (named after the Egyptian soldier who assassinated Egyptian president Anwar Sadat) has claimed responsibility for several terrorist attacks in August 2004: the simultaneous downing of two passenger jets on August 24 that killed 89 people, and an August 31 attack by female suicide bombers outside a Moscow metro station that killed nine and injured scores. The group reportedly posted a statement on the Internet saying the attacks were carried out "in support of the Muslims of Chechnya." It turns out that the Islambuli Brigades is a subsidiary of the Basayev faction.

Although it does not enjoy the prominence of the Palestinian issue, the Chechen cause does have a high profile in the Islamic world. This recognition has been apparent both in the widespread coverage that the Qatar-based al-Jazeera television network has given to such events as the 2002 Moscow theater hostage seizure and in the ties that Chechens have established with al-Qaeda. These contacts go back to the early 1990s when the former autonomous republic first began its struggle to

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[3] See, for example, U.S. Department of State (2003), pp. 31–32; "Fourth Blast in Russia Kills 17," *The Washington Post,* September 17, 1999; "History of Hijackings in Chechen Conflict," BBC News, July 31, 2001; Adnan Malik, "Chechens Hijack Plane to Saudi Arabia," *Portsmouth Herald,* March 16, 2001; "Russia Confirms West's Suspicions About Deadly Gas," *The Washington Post,* October 31, 2002; "A Cult of Reluctant Killers," *The Los Angeles Times,* February 4, 2004; and "Russia Says Subway Blast a Suicide Bomber," Associated Press, February 17, 2004.

[4] David Holley, "2 Russian Airliners Crash Nearly at the Same Time," *The Los Angeles Times,* August 25, 2004; Kim Murphy, "A Violent Reminder That a War Lives," *The Los Angeles Times,* August 27, 2004; Stefan Wagstyl and Tom Warner, "Rebels Grind Away Putin's Popularity," *The Financial Times,* September 2, 2004; "Russian Seige Ends in Bloodshed," *The Straits Times* (Singapore), September 4, 2004; "Al Qaeda Connection to Beslan Attack," *The Straits Times,* September 7, 2004.

secede from the Russian Federation. Mullah Omar's Taliban was one of the first to endorse the legitimacy of Chechen independence and to offer training and haven to Islamic fighters committed to this end.[5]

Table 8.1
Major Suicide Attacks Carried Out by Chechen Militants, 2000–2004

Date	Event	Deaths	Injuries
June 7, 2000	Suicide car-bomb attack in the village of Alkhan-Yurt (southwest of Grozny)	2	5
November 29, 2001	Suicide bombing in Urus-Martan	1	3
May 12, 2003	Suicide truck bombing at the government administration and security complex in Znamenskoye	59	
May 14, 2003	Suicide bomb attack during a religious festival in the town of Ilaskhan-Yurt (east of Grozny)	16	145
June 5, 2003	Suicide bombing of bus carrying Russian air force pilots	16	
July 5, 2003	Two suicide bombers blow themselves up at an open-air rock concert at a Moscow airfield	14	60
July 10, 2003	A female suicide bomber is arrested before she can blow herself up in central Moscow; a Russian security officer is killed while examining her explosive device	1	
July 27, 2003	A female suicide bomber blows herself up after being stopped from entering a security base southeast of Grozny		1
December 5, 2003	Suicide bombing of a commuter train in the southern region of Stavropol	44	150
December 9, 2003	Suicide bombing outside the National Hotel in Central Moscow	6	14
February 7, 2004	Suicide bombing of Moscow subway train	41	100

SOURCE: "A Cult of Reluctant Killers," *The Los Angeles Times,* February 4, 2004.

[5] "Bin Laden's Man in Chechnya," *The Sunday Herald* (Edinburgh, UK), October 26, 2002.

This initial recognition laid the groundwork for the development of subsequent ties between Chechen mujahideen and the international jihadist movement based in Afghanistan. According to Russian sources, Ibn-ul-Khattab (real name, Samir Saleh Abdullah al-Suwailem), the Saudi leader of the Arab fighters in Chechnya, struck up a personal relationship with bin Laden during his time in Afghanistan.[6] Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's second-in-command, is alleged to have made a exploratory trip to the Caucasus. Although the trip failed (al-Zawahiri was detained by Russian police before reaching his intended destination), it did set into motion a number of events that built further ties between Chechen jihadists and al-Qaeda through the International Islamic Front for Jihad on the Jews and Crusaders. Al-Zawahiri later told his lieutenants that Chechnya offered an ideal logistical base for al-Qaeda in Central Asia—Muslim, chaotic, and then effectively independent.[7]

The most concerted Chechen–al-Qaeda link appears to have been established in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge, which until 2003 was a lawless haven for drug traffickers, crime syndicates, and kidnappers. (In 2003, the Georgian government instituted a major crackdown against criminal elements based in the Pankisi Gorge, which has been relatively successful in establishing a semblance of normalcy throughout the region.) One of bin Laden's main lieutenants in this region was a Jordanian known as Abu Atiyya. In addition to overseeing the deployment of recruited cadres to militant camps, he is thought to have played a key role in reassigning trained personnel to operational terror networks and cells in such places as Azerbaijan, Turkey, and (according to Western sources) Europe.[8]

More serious are Georgian claims that the Pankisi area was used as a specialized zone for the training of Chechens in the use of chemical weapons. According to local intelligence sources, al-Qaeda

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6 The Russians assassinated Khattab with a poisoned letter in 2002.

7 For further details see "Saga of Dr. Zawahiri Sheds Light on the Roots of al-Qai'da Terror," *The Wall Street Journal,* July 2, 2002.

8 See, for instance, "Al-Qai'da Terror Plot Foiled, Say French Police," *The Guardian* (UK), January 12, 2004.

operatives in the region included Middle Eastern chemists skilled in the manufacture of poisons who had been deployed to the Pankisi Gorge to help with preparations for unconventional attacks against American citizens and installations in Chechnya as well as other parts of the Caucasus and Central Asia.[9]

Links to bin Laden's global network have also been apparent in terms of training and financial and ideological support. The internationalization of the Chechen terrorist network is illustrated by the presence of Chechen training camps in Georgia and the Pakistani tribal area of Waziristan.[10] Considerable money has been transferred to Chechnya from the Gulf states (the bulk of these money transfers was allegedly coordinated by an Islamic spiritual leader known as Abu Omar Sief).[11] Saudi missionaries are known to have been active in promoting Wahhabist and Salafist tendencies throughout the region.[12]

Al-Qaeda's influence on the Chechen jihadists can be detected in the recent surge of suicide attacks, which prior to the late 1990s were essentially absent from the Chechen struggle. Women known as "Black Widows," so named because many have suffered the loss of husbands at the hands of Russian security forces, have conducted the bulk of these attacks. Intelligence sources in Moscow assert that the international jihadist movement coordinates training and indoctrination for

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9 "Al-Qai'da Terror Plot Foiled."

10 See discussion of the South Asian parameters of the Chechen conflict in Peters, Dickens, Eaton, et al. (2005).

11 "A Cult of Reluctant Killers."

12 It is important to note that while religion has been a significant motivating factor for most outsiders to become involved in the Chechen conflict, ethnic and national considerations have been more important for the Diaspora Chechen community.

these female suicide bombers (acting through a local recruiter known as "Black Fatima") and that a dedicated wing of 50 bombers has been assembled to carry out suicide attacks.[13]

Exactly why the Chechens seem to have embraced al-Qaeda is an open question. On the one hand, Islam is not as deeply rooted in Chechnya as in other regions of the former Soviet Union, such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and the target is not so much the West at large as Russia. That said, informed commentators assert that Chechen jihadists do interpret any attack on Muslims anywhere as an assault on the Muslim world and are therefore predisposed to the global vision of bin Laden. Reflecting this, Chechens have been active in jihads not only in Chechnya, but also in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Uzbekistan.[14]

Assessment and Future Outlook

In many ways, al-Qaeda sees the conflict in Chechnya as a laboratory for terrorist and guerrilla warfare against a conventional military power. Training and logistical support provided to Basayev's forces have been tailored to develop operational and organizational lessons that can be applied to Islamists fighting across the general Central Asian region. Al-Qaeda's calculation appears to be that this type of operation will destabilize a broad swath of enemy states across the Caucasus and Central Asia—from Azerbaijan to Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and India.

In 2002 a cell that the French have called the "Chechen network"—although the members were actually North Africans, most of them relatives of Menad Benchellali, the son of a radical imam in the Lyon suburb of Venisseux—was found to be developing chemical and

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[13] "A Cult of Reluctant Killers." Abu Wahid, a Saudi national who is believed to be the commander of the Chechen rebels' eastern front explained the ideological rationale of the Black Widows during a 2004 interview with Al-Jazeera: "These women, particularly the wives of the moujahideen who are martyred, are being threatened in their homes. Their honor and everything are being threatened. They do not accept being humiliated and living under occupation. They say they want to serve the cause of almighty God and avenge the deaths of their husbands and persecuted [Muslim] peoples."

[14] During the 1999 fighting in Kosovo many mercenaries with the Kosovar Liberation Front (KLF) were Chechens funded and trained by al-Qaeda. See "FSB: Chechen Rebels Hiding in Kosovo," *St. Petersburg Times* (Russia), February 25, 2000.

biological weapons. Members of this cell had trained with Chechens in the Pankisi Gorge camps. This incident underscored the potential of Basayev's movement as an operational conduit for attacks against Western targets outside Chechnya.[15] More worrying, the attempted development of unconventional weapons might suggest an intention to use Chechen militants to carry out a future al-Qaeda "spectacular."

From Moscow's perspective, there is no doubt that the Chechen movement is now working in full conjunction with al-Qaeda. According to the Russian Interior Ministry's Directorate for Combating Organized Crime (GUBOP), terrorist attacks in Russia rose by a full 38 percent between 2002 and 2003, from 407 to 561. The overwhelming majority of these attacks was carried out in the Southern Federal District, which covers the wider North Caucasus region.[16] This rise in tempo has been attributed directly to growing linkages between Chechen rebels and the international jihadist movement. Commenting on this development, Yuri Demidov, head of GUBOP's Counterterrorism Section (sometimes referred to as T Center), observed that "[Chechen groups have] given up the struggle for an independent [state] and are now just carrying out the plans of international terrorists."[17]

Uzbekistan

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) represents a coalition of Islamic militants drawn mainly from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan who are opposed to the authoritarian secular regime of Uzbek president

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[15] Benchellali, a chemist who had been trained in poison-making skills in Afghanistan, was actively attempting to produce a botulism toxin as well as ricin. He had tested his chemicals on animals and was believed to have been planning suicide bomb attacks on prominent targets in Paris, including the Russian embassy. "Benchellali and His Close Relatives Before the Antiterrorist Judges," *Le Figaro,* January 13, 2004. See also Vidino (2005).

[16] Galeotti (2004), p. 6.

[17] Yuri Demidov, cited in Galeotti (2004).

Islam Karimov.[18] Although the immediate focus of the IMU has been on Uzbekistan, its long-term aim is the establishment of a transnational caliphate that would embrace, at a minimum, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, extending eventually to the outer perimeters of Central Asia's Muslim regions.[19] According to U.S. government estimates, the IMU's current strength amounts to no more than 700 militants,[20] the main concentrations of whom are located in the Ferghana Valley and the Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya regions of Uzbekistan. Although the movement as a whole comes under the combined leadership of Tahir Yuldashev and Juma Khodjiev (otherwise known as Juma Namangani), who are the original founders,[21] it tends to operate as a loosely structured collection of semiautonomous groups, each of which answers to individual, regionally based *hujras* (command councils). Although the aims of these subcommands are defined in terms of a wider Islamist agenda, most are also characterized by specific local designs that reflect the interests of their respective constituencies.[22]

Most IMU links to al-Qaeda date back to 1996, when bin Laden relocated to Afghanistan and set up a secure base of operations in areas under the control of the Taliban. In common with groups from other regions of the Muslim world, Uzbek militants were exposed to al-Qaeda's doctrine of global jihad and were able to gain access to cru-

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[18] In addition to the IMU, governments in both Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic have claimed that another Islamist group, the Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT), has links to outside Islamic extremists and that its organizational structure provides a channel for recruitment of terrorists.

[19] U.S. Department of State (2003); Rotar (2003).

[20] U.S. Department of State (2004), p. 122. Determining an accurate figure for IMU membership is difficult (some estimates run as high as 15,000–20,000) as the movement operates on the basis of an extremely secretive cellular structure. Some cells may number no more than four to five people.

[21] In November 2001, anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan alleged that Namangani had been killed in a U.S. air strike while commanding al-Qaeda forces around Mazar-e-Sharif. However, reports that have since circulated suggest that the Uzbek leader may not, in fact, have been killed.

[22] "Renewed Concerns That Terrorists Are Regrouping," RFE/RL Central Asia Report, July 25, 2002.

cial operational and logistical support—including weapons, training, leadership planning, and finances.[23] Informed commentators argue that, of all the militant organizations present in Afghanistan prior to 2001, IMU received by far the most generous support, allowing the group to effectively increase the tempo, range, scope, and sophistication of its attacks both in Uzbekistan and more generally throughout Central Asia.[24]

Indicative of this potential were a number of significant IMU strikes between 1998 and 2001, including five simultaneous car bombings in Tashkent on February 16, 1999 (one of which almost killed President Karimov), a full-scale assault on several villages located along the Tajik border in early August 2000,[25] and subsequent high-profile kidnappings of German, Japanese, American, Russian, and Ukrainian nationals in Kyrgyzstan that same month.[26] The audacity of these attacks is noteworthy, not least because of the restricted operational space available to the IMU as a result of the increasingly draconian internal security measures being adopted by the Central Asian republics at that time.

The IMU has also been connected to al-Qaeda through groups in bin Laden's wider terror network. The movement has long been accused of working in collaboration with Chechen rebels in Russia and Dagestan as well as with Uighur separatists in China's Xinjiang province.[27] According to Uzbek officials, the primary purpose of these

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[23] "Renewed Concerns That Terrorists Are Regrouping."

[24] In an interview with the Kyrgyz newspaper *Slovo Kyrgyzstana,* an Afghan field commander revealed that Yuldashev had jointly worked on his plan for establishing a Ferghana emirate with Mullah Omar and that of all the parties in Afghanistan, only the IMU directly benefited from Taliban assistance. See Rotar (2003).

[25] As a direct result of this latter operation, Tashkent instituted the Southern Group of Forces, comprising some 6,000 troops from various branches of the military, to defend against renewed IMU offensives. Informed commentators believe the size of the detachment bears witness to the perceived threat the group is seen to pose to Uzbek frontier regions.

[26] Katzman (2002), pp. 19–20; "Renewed Concerns That Terrorists Are Regrouping"; "Islamic Militants with Japanese Hostages Hold Kyrgyz at Bay," *The New York Times,* October 18, 1999.

[27] Rotar (2003).

ties has been to facilitate the export of Islamic radicalism to the outer fringes of Central Asia as well as to establish networks that have played an indispensable role in the trafficking of Afghan heroin.[28] U.S. authorities now believe that the income derived from these drug running operations was essential to the development and expansion of terrorist infrastructure that bin Laden set up in northern Afghanistan during the latter half of the 1990s.[29]

IMU ties with al-Qaeda do not appear to have atrophied in the wake of Operation Enduring Freedom and may in fact have been strengthened. Following the bombing campaign in October 2001, the IMU suspended much of its Uzbek-focused activity, committing itself largely to the war against the U.S.-led coalition. Although many of the group's members were killed or captured, Western observers believe that the experience helped to solidify what were already strong personal and group ties between al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the IMU and to strengthen a sense of shared, internationally oriented Islamic identity.

U.S. officials believe that the IMU leadership is now working to rebuild the organization and widening its target base to include all those perceived as opposed to its vision of Islam.[30] They also point to signs of increased activity following a long period of dormancy: bombings in Bishkent and Osh between December 2002 and May 2003;[31] the discovery of a plot to attack an American airbase close to the Kyrgyz capital in November 2003; a series of bloody assaults in

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[28] Chalk interviews, Washington, D.C., and New Delhi, February 2001. See also Rashid (2002), ch. 6.

[29] See, for instance, "Osama bin Laden a 'Narco-Terrorist,'" *The Washington Times,* January 22, 2004; and "The Iceberg Beneath the Charity," *The Economist*, March 15, 2003.

[30] Katzman (2002), pp. 19–20; "Renewed Concerns That Terrorists Are Regrouping."

[31] One of those arrested in the bombings was Azizbek Karimov, a former chief of the IMU's "security service" who testified that he had been directly ordered to plant the bombs by the group's central leadership in consultation with al-Qaeda. See Rotar (2003) and "Renewed Concerns That Terrorists Are Regrouping."

the Uzbek capital between March 28 and April 1, 2004; [32] and suicide strikes against the U.S. and Israeli embassies in Tashkent on July 30, 2004.[33] The United States believes these developments are indicative of a regrouping of the IMU in Central Asia that is being deliberately fostered by al-Qaeda.[34]

Assessment and Future Outlook

U.S. officials and analysts believe that there is an active working relationship between the IMU and the al-Qaeda network and that this is directly fueling the overall threat potential of the group in Central Asia. The suicide bombings in Uzbekistan came after violence that left at least 47 dead, mostly alleged militants, who Uzbek authorities claim traveled from southern Kazakhstan through Azerbaijan and Iran to terror camps in Pakistan's lawless tribal areas in Waziristan, where they were trained by Arab al-Qaeda instructors. Although these attacks were not carried out by the IMU per se, the IMU may, in fact, have morphed into a broader, regional violent Islamic group capable of launching attacks against governments, police, and foreigners. Other regional commentators remain somewhat less convinced, however. The head of the International Crisis Group's effort in Central Asia, David Lewis, asserts that while some regrouping of the IMU in Uzbekistan

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[32] A group calling itself the Jihad Islamic Group claimed responsibility for the attacks. The strikes included a suicide bombing on a police station, the first ever to be carried out in Uzbekistan, which outside commentators believe is a further indication that the IMU's revival is possibly being fomented by outside influences. For further details see McConnell (2004), pp. 14–17; "Islamic Group Takes Credit for Uzbek Clashes," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 2004; and David Holley, "Islam's Distant Battle," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 2004.

[33] "Blast Hits U.S., Israeli Embassies in Uzbekistan," MSNBC News Services, July 30, 2004; "Uzbek President Points to Islamic Extremists in Attacks," *The Los Angeles Times*, August 1, 2004.

[34] According to the U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, there has been a noticeable spike in threats to Western interests across Central Asia over the past two years, the main trigger for which appears to be an al-Qaeda–sustained IMU "which despite being dealt a heavy blow in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001, has reemerged as an active organization in Central Asia." Cited in "Central Asia: Focus on Security Threat from Radical Islamic Groups," IRINnews.org, January 14, 2004, http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=38916&SelectRegion=Central_Asia (as of February 27, 2006).

and Kyrgyzstan may have taken place, the movement at most poses only a residual threat to regional security, and its operational effectiveness is almost certainly not as high as some other analysts suggest.[35] This assessment is shared by a number of Central Asian observers, who maintain that there is little ongoing support for the IMU from al-Qaeda or the Taliban and that the movement has been effectively vanquished as a viable insurgency.[36]

Thus, the future threat trajectory of the IMU remains uncertain. If, in fact, the group is being sustained as a component of the international jihadist front, one can expect to see attacks against Western and allied interests in Central Asia, some of which may be coordinated with other regional entities. If, on the other hand, the IMU is now devoid of outside assistance, its operational focus will probably amount to no more than small-scale localized attacks, with the group shifting its activities to political agitation through its existing network of underground supporters.[37]

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35 "Central Asia: Focus on Security Threat."

36 "Central Asia: Focus on Security Threat."

37 "Renewed Concerns That Terrorists Are Regrouping."

CHAPTER NINE

The North and East African Clusters

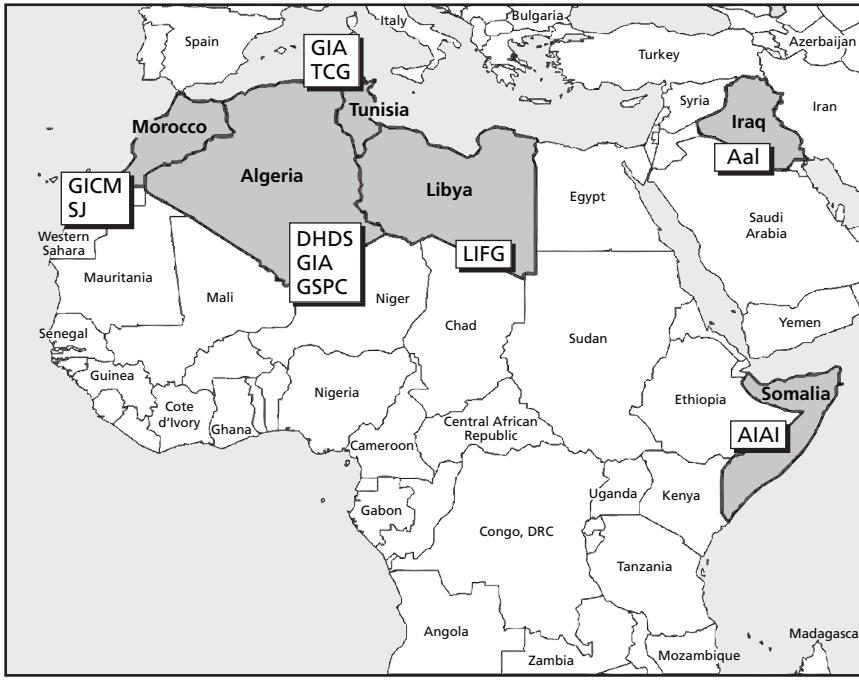
North Africa

North African terrorism is shadowy and difficult to define. Groups operating in this region frequently share membership, pursue similar goals, and often participate in the same attacks. That being said, it is possible to delineate certain organizations that are generally acknowledged to have established some sort of ideological, logistical, or operational relationship with al-Qaeda. This section analyzes these organizations, focusing its attention on entities existing in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. A map showing the countries where the main North African groups operate is shown in Figure 9.1.

Morocco: The Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group and Salafiya Jihadia

Two groups that can be considered part of the international jihadist movement operate in Morocco: the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (*Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain* [GICM]) and Salafiya Jihadia (SJ)—which might be no more than a label for a constellation

Figure 9.1
North and East African Clusters



NOTE: See the Abbreviations for full names of groups.
RAND *MG429-9.1*

of different groups.[1] Although there may be no correlation, the emergence of the GICM and SJ coincided with the rise of al-Qaeda and the international jihadist movement in the late 1990s. The exact details of the emergence of GICM and SJ are unclear. Certain commentators believe the former group was established outside Morocco in London around 1999 or 2000, where its members reportedly operated in the same circles as London-based al-Qaeda ideologue Abu Qatada. Others,

[1] Pargeter (2005). The GICM has been proscribed as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) by the United States government and is currently subject to a range of financial and political sanctions pursuant to Executive Order 13224; the group has also been penalized by the United Nations Sanctions Committee under Security Council Resolution 1267. SJ has yet to be designated an FTO, possibly because U.S. authorities have only become aware of it relatively recently.

however, contend that the GICM manifesto was written as early as 1998 and that the group had already established European bases, which were used for gunrunning and document forgery purposes.

With regard to SJ, the United States only became aware of the group's existence following the Casablanca bombings in May 2003. Moroccan authorities, however, claim that the group was formed in the 1990s and had become particularly infamous for conducting brutal attacks against women and other "infidel" targets well before the attacks of 2003. Both organizations advocate a hard-line Wahhabist ideology and seek to replace the current secular Rabat regime with a theocracy that adheres to shari'a law in all aspects of life. According to the U.S. State Department, both the GICM and SJ identify with the broader aim of reestablishing a transnational caliphate across the Maghreb and are part of a wider network of North African extremists who are prepared to work with the international jihadist movement.[2]

Ties between the GICM and SJ and al-Qaeda, as in the case of many other North African terrorist groups, appear to have originated primarily through personal contacts that senior group leaders established during the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad in the 1980s. It is unclear, however, whether the more senior operatives were directly integrated into the al-Qaeda network or were merely exposed to and influenced by the movement's transnational jihadist ideas as a result of their common experience as Afghan "alumni."[3]

Both the GICM and SJ have been connected to attacks and plots in Morocco, but their connections to al-Qaeda remain ambiguous. Further investigation has revealed that although links exist between the leader of the Casablanca operation, Pierre Robert, and al-Qaeda, the group that conducted the attacks appears to have functioned more as a "franchise" of al-Qaeda, than as a group operationally linked to al-Qaeda.[4] The near-simultaneous attacks in Riyadh four days before the Casablanca attacks, bearing similar hallmarks, lend further credence

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[2] U.S. Department of State (2003), p. 140; Ulph (2004a).

[3] Moncef Sellimi, "Report Cites Moroccan Security Sources on New Arrests Among Salafi Jihdist Group," Al-Sharq al-Aswat, FBIS GMP20030531000120, May 31, 2003.

[4] Kalpakian (2005), p. 113.

to this possibility. In May 2003, both the SJ and GICM conducted a series of multiple car bombings that struck several foreign interests in Casablanca—including a Spanish social club, a Jewish community center, and a hotel and restaurant frequented by Israeli tourists. The attacks left over 40 persons dead and 65 injured.[5] According to one source, the attacks were legitimized by a fatwa from Taliban leader Mullah Omar, financed by bin Laden, and executed with the assistance of "professional" externally based specialists, although this claim cannot be verified.[6]

Soon after the attacks, a prominent GICM leader, Abdelaziz Benyaich, was arrested in Spain as one of the ringleaders behind the bombings. He was subsequently connected to an additional al-Qaeda plot against U.S. naval vessels in the Strait of Gibraltar, which was allegedly to have taken place in coordination with strikes on tourist buses en route from Rabat to Casablanca and on a café in Marrakech popular with foreign nationals. Moroccan authorities believe that Benyaich was acting under the orders of a senior Yemeni al-Qaeda commander, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri.[7]

More recently, Moroccan extremists[8] were tied to the March 11, 2004, simultaneous bombings of commuter trains in Madrid, which left 191 people dead. That attack remains one of the most destructive acts of terrorism ever carried out in Europe. The arrest of a key conspirator, Amer Azizi, a Moroccan tied to the GICM, has lent further credence to the charge that Moroccan extremists are now playing a key role in the strategic operations of the international Islamist movement

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5 "Bomb Carnage Shocks Morocco," BBC News, May 17, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3037157.stm (as of February 27, 2006).

6 Francois Soudan, "Paris Magazine Reports on Terrorist Networks Responsible for 16 May Attacks," *Paris Jeune Afrique-L'Intelligent,* FBIS GMP20030712000005, July 6, 2003.

7 Nashiri was believed to be al-Qaeda's operations chief in the Persian Gulf and the mastermind behind the suicide bombing of the USS *Cole* in 2000. He was captured in October 2002.

8 We use the term "Moroccan extremists" in this context to refer to known members of the SJ or GICM or extremists of Moroccan descent known to local law enforcement or intelligence services.

and that some of the most destructive operations alleged to have been carried out in the name of the organization are intimately tied to the North African networks.[9]

Certainly the Rabat government has long claimed that links have been established among GICM, SJ, and al-Qaeda. Moroccan authorities assert that all three groups have been working together since at least early 2003 and that each has agreed to fully coordinate their respective ideological and operational agendas for the purposes of launching concerted attacks against Western and allied interests in the Maghreb and Europe.[10] However, there is still no evidence that SJ and GICM took orders from bin Laden or other senior al-Qaeda leaders to conduct the May 2003 attacks.

GICM and SJ: Assessment and Future Outlook

While the GICM and SJ remain primarily focused on fomenting an Islamist revolution in Morocco, both groups clearly fall into the category of "willing supporter" of al-Qaeda—prepared to act on behalf of or otherwise support al-Qaeda when called to do so. Both organizations have undoubtedly viewed such tactical cooperation as helpful to their own objectives, not least because it appears to have enabled them to secure financial and logistical support. Acting in this manner, the GICM and SJ have been able to progressively extend the range and scope of their activities in Morocco. This, in turn, has allowed the two groups to attract new recruits and suicide cadres in Morocco and, just as importantly, to focus worldwide attention on their cause.

The actual extent to which the GICM and SJ rely on al-Qaeda backing is somewhat more difficult to discern. While both organizations have definitely benefited from the provision of outside assistance, several commentators believe the two groups are able to draw on

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[9] See "Madrid Suspect Charged in 9/11," *The Los Angeles Times,* April 29, 2004; Tracy Wilkinson, "Train Bombings Kill Nearly 200 in Spain," *The Los Angeles Times*, March 12, 2004; Sebastian Rotella and Tracy Wilkinson, "Al Qaeda Now Focus of Spain's Bombing Probe," *The Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 2004; Elaine Sciolino and Emma Daly, "Blast Suspects in Madrid Had New Plot, Officials Say," *The New York Times*, April 9, 2004.

[10] Djamel Boukrine, "Al Qa'ida Related Organization Seen Helping Moroccan Islamists," *Le Mat*, FBIS GMP20020812000004, August 12, 2002.

additional sources of logistical and financial support from organized crime. Indeed, the investigation into the Casablanca bombings revealed that the attacks were carried out with SJ's own resources and that the group had already planned and carried out a series of robberies and attacks against private citizens and property in Morocco to raise money for this and future operations.[11]

It is also worth bearing in mind that working with al-Qaeda may very well have medium- to long-term effects that outweigh any short-term gains that the GICM and SJ have so far achieved. The Casablanca bombings, for instance, triggered a major government crackdown against entities identifying with radical ideologies that has since resulted in widespread arrests and detentions throughout the country. While these actions do appear to have energized increased Islamist fervor and support for the GICM-SJ cause, they have also depleted the two groups of experienced and trained operatives, creating a critical "middle-management" personnel void that could prove difficult to fill.[12]

More to the point, the Rabat government is now fully aware of the potential threat of militant extremism in its own backyard, and while it has been a strong partner in the U.S.-led war on terrorism, it now appears to more fully appreciate the need for concerted (rather than ad hoc) domestic security responses and initiatives.[13] If followed through in a consistent and thorough manner, these measures are likely to severely restrict the operational space available to GICM and SJ militants, possibly permanently depriving them of the disinterested or passive internal environment that had facilitated their activities prior to May 2002.

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[11] Muhammed Wamusa, "Arab Magazine Views Growing Power of Moroccan Islamist Groups," *Al Watan al-Arabi*, FBIS GMP20020822000073, August 23, 2002.

[12] Ulph (2004a).

[13] See, for instance, "Le Monde Cites Moroccan Expert on Reasons for Terrorist Attacks," *Le Monde,* FBIS EUP20030520000072, May 20, 2003.

Algeria: The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat and the Dhamat Houmet Daawa Salafia

Most of the existing terrorist groups that hail from Algeria are splinters of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which declined largely as a result of popular alienation from its campaign of brutal massacres of civilians during the mid-1990s. Two prominent terrorist groups have since emerged, both of which have been identified as having links with al-Qaeda: the GSPC (discussed in Chapter Six) and the Dhamat Houmet Daawa Salafia (DHDS).[14]

The DHDS, or Protectors of the Salafist Call, also known as the Group of Supporters of the Salafist Trend, led by Mohammad Benslim, split from the GIA in 2001 (before which it was known as Katibat el-Ahoual, literally the "Horror Squadron"). Like the GSPC, the group is opposed to the secular orientation of the current Algiers regime and seeks to institute a fundamentalist Islamic order in its place. The group is well organized, has acquired a relatively advanced military arsenal, concentrates the bulk of its attacks in Algeria against government and security personnel, and has allegedly participated in the planning of terrorist operations abroad.[15]

Like the GSPC, the DHDS traces its ties to al-Qaeda through the group's common ancestry in the GIA and the extensive role that Algerians in general played in the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad during the 1980s.[16] Bin Laden had always taken a special interest in the Islamist struggle in this part of North Africa and, following the outbreak of the Islamist insurgency in 1992, quickly moved to establish ties with the Algerian jihadists. However, the GIA's role in the massacres of

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[14] For more information on the GSPC's relationship with al-Qaeda, see "Algerian Group Backs Al Qaeda" (2003).

[15] "Designation of Dhamat Houmet Daawa Salafiya Under Executive Order 13224," Federal Register, Vol. 68, No. 202, October 20, 2003, http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/14mar20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2003/03-26524.htm (as of April 3, 2006).

[16] According to one source, Algerians made up one-third of all combatants during the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad and were among the first recruits to train in bin Laden's camps in the Sudan during the early 1990s. See Fanney (2003).

civilians, which were creating great consternation in the Muslim world, caused al-Qaeda to gradually distance itself from the GIA by the late 1990s.

The emergence of splinter factions in the form of the DHDS and GSPC provided an ideal opportunity for bin Laden to reestablish operational and logistical ties in Algeria, which was not only the theater of an ongoing armed Islamist struggle, but was well placed to facilitate the planning and execution of attacks in the Mediterranean as well as across Europe.[17] For example, one Algerian member of DHDS, Mohammad Meguerba, revealed to his Algerian interrogators that bin Laden tasked him just before 9/11 to carry out attacks in Europe.[18] In contrast to the GSPC, there is little specific information concerning the nature and scope of the partnership between the DHDS and al-Qaeda.[19] While there are reports that logistical, intelligence, and financial ties between the two groups have been instituted to facilitate international attacks,[20] most accounts concur that the bulk of DHDS activity, at least at this stage, centers on civilian and military targets in western Algeria.[21]

DHDS: Assessment and Future Outlook

As suggested above, the extent of DHDS links to al-Qaeda remains uncertain, and it is therefore difficult to ascertain what effect reputed outside connections might have had on the group. However, should more explicit ties emerge in the future, it is reasonable to assume that the DHDS will be able to avail itself of added financial and logisti-

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[17] See, for instance, Knights (2003); Fanney (2003); Schanzer (2002).

[18] Jenny Booth and Sean O'Neill, "The Missing Witness Who Revealed the Ricin Plot," *Times Online*, April 13, 2005, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1568044,00.html (as of April 3, 2006).

[19] "Designation of Dhamat Houmet Daawa Salafiya Under Executive Order 13224."

[20] See, for instance, "Islamist Suspects Arrested in Spain Named," MADRID EFE, FBIS EUP20030124000473, January 24, 2003. According to this report, DHDS operatives were providing al-Qaeda operatives in Spain with both "intelligence and infrastructure."

[21] "Algiers Daily Security Analyst Views Terrorism Picture in Western Part of Country," *Algiers Le Mat*, FBIS GMP2002060000010, June 9, 2002.

cal resources. This support will necessarily be contingent on how far the DHDS is prepared to go in terms of facilitating al-Qaeda's operational agenda, particularly its willingness to provide frontline cadres for attacks on U.S. and Western targets.

Libya: Libyan Islamic Fighting Group

The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) emerged in 1995 with the dual intent of overthrowing the regime of Muammar al-Qadhafi and establishing an Islamic state through armed struggle. From the outset, the group was composed mostly of Libyans who had fought and trained in Afghanistan during the anti-Soviet war in the 1980s. Little is known about the organization's structure other than that it appears to operate under a joint command.[22] The group has a base of several hundred fighters and has moved to set up an overseas logistical infrastructure to compensate for losses suffered in Libya over the last several years.[23]

The LIFG has claimed responsibility for two failed assassination attempts against Qadhafi (1996 and 1998)[24] and has threatened to conduct suicide attacks against Libyan interests abroad. To date, however, the group has not carried out any attacks outside Libya (although it has participated in the planning of al-Qaeda operations). The bulk of its activity is directed against local security forces in and around Benghazi.[25]

The LIFG is thought to have enjoyed links with the al-Qaeda network since 1995. In the group's defining manifesto issued that year, LIFG leaders specifically asserted that one of their objectives was

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[22] One of the group's leaders was alleged to be Abu Anas al-Libi. Some sources report that Abu Anas was killed in Afghanistan prior to September 11; others maintain he is in the custody of a foreign security service.

[23] U.S. Department of State (2003), p. 138.

[24] Press reports maintain that LIFG's assassination attempt against Qadhafi in 1996 was carried out by a Libyan oppositionist living in the United Kingdom, although this cannot be confirmed.

[25] U.S. Department of State (2003), p. 138; Kamil al-Tawil, "Second Libyan Group Claims al-Qadhafi Bid," *Al-Hayah*, London, FBIS FTS19980619000684, June 19, 1998.

"standing in support and allegiance of all other Jihad group[s] in any spot of the world."[26] Three years later this rhetorical pledge was translated into action. According to British security sources, members of the LIFG played a role in the planning of the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, operating through the conduit of Abu Anas, who was reputedly recruited by bin Laden specifically for this purpose.[27]

Further indication of links between Libyan extremists and al-Qaeda emerged in the wake of the subsequent U.S. retaliatory missile strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan. Denouncing these actions as illegitimate and unjustified, the LIFG issued a vehemently anti-U.S. communiqué that called for the "unification of stances vis-à-vis the ferocious offensive now that the American Administration has chosen the road of hostility to the Islamic nation."[28]

LIFG: Assessment and Future Outlook

LIFG cadres currently appear to be ideologically split over whether to maintain ties to al-Qaeda. Although the group still appears to be organizationally intact, there are signs that a divide may be emerging between those who want to keep the movement focused on achieving local goals (overthrowing Qadhafi) and those that are actively seeking to align the LIFG with the international jihadist movement. The true nature and extent of this organizational fissure are unknown, however, and the balance of opinion in the central leadership remains unclear.

That said, it seems likely that even if the LIFG moves decisively to distance itself from al-Qaeda, residual links with bin Laden's movement will persist through personal ties and contacts. Moreover, Tripoli's increasingly close relationship with the United States, particularly in

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[26] "New Group Urges Jihad Against al-Qadhafi," soc.culture.Algeria newsgroup, FBIS FTS19951022000038, October 22, 1995.

[27] "'Abu Anas al-Libi' Killed in Afghanistan Before 11 September," *London al-Hayah,* FBIS GMP200203222000078, March 22, 2002.

[28] "UK-Based Islamists Deny Bin Laden Link," London al-Sharq al-Aswat, FBIS FTS19980827000837, August 26, 1998.

matters pertaining to counterterrorism,[29] could well cause those who wish to maintain a discrete local focus to at least acquiesce in strikes against a more broadly defined set of Western targets. In other words, there will be a continuing danger of Libyan extremists helping plan (if not carry out) attacks against American and allied interests across the Maghreb and, leveraging the LIFG's existing overseas network, even farther afield in East Africa and southern Europe.[30]

Tunisia: Tunisian Combatant Group

Islamist extremists have lacked the political space to develop a significant following in Tunisia, where manifestations of political Islam are tightly monitored by the state. As a result, Tunisia has not confronted the type of civil unrest and insurgency found in other Maghreb polities. That said, Tunisian extremists are known to operate as an organized entity, the Jama'a Combattante Tunisienne or Tunisian Combatant Group (TCG). This group has not only worked in conjunction with the wider North African jihadist network but is independently active in European locations such as the United Kingdom and Italy.

The TCG emerged sometime in early 2000 and, in common with many other Muslim extremists in North Africa, seeks to establish a fundamentalist Islamic state in Tunisia. While primarily advocating local goals, the organization also expresses an ideological affinity with the wider jihadist movement. Little is known about the structure of the TCG. However, as noted above, the group is not believed to enjoy an overt popular following in Tunisia and it reportedly suffers from a lack of weapons, finances, and resources.[31]

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[29] At the time of writing, Qadhafi had agreed to pay compensation to the victims of the 1988 Pan Am bombing and for the downing of an Air France jet over Niger the following year. The Libyan leader had also given his full commitment to cracking down on Islamic extremists in North Africa and to working with the international community in allowing unhindered access to verify the credentials of the country's supposed nuclear facilities.

[30] While neither British nor U.S. intelligence sources report any concrete evidence of a LIFG operational presence in East Africa at present, both remain cognizant of such a potential threat in the future. Chalk interviews, U.S. Embassy and British High Commission, Nairobi, February 2004.

[31] U.S. Department of State (2003), p. 144.

According to the U.S. State Department, the TCG established ties with al-Qaeda and the broader North African jihadist movement immediately after its founding in 2000. As was the case with groups in Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Egypt, these links developed through personal relationships forged in the crucible of the anti-Soviet Afghan campaign during the 1980s. Between 2000 and 2003, the TCG was connected to al-Qaeda both ideologically and operationally. British and U.S. intelligence sources believe the group acted as a local recruiter for bin Laden, coordinating its endeavors with other regional Islamists such as the GSPC. Tunisian extremists are thought to have played a role in facilitating the movement of al-Qaeda operatives and material across Europe, providing false documents, finances, intelligence and other logistical support.[32] The TCG has also been connected to several high-profile attacks and plots attributed to international extremist elements. These include the April 2002 suicide truck bombing of a synagogue in Djerba that killed 22 people[33] as well as a 2001 plan to target the U.S., Algerian, and Tunisian embassies in Rome.[34]

TCG: Assessment and Future Outlook

As with many other North African Islamists, the TCG has a predominantly domestic agenda but is ready and willing to carry out attacks against U.S. and Western interests. The group's small domestic constituency creates an incentive to cooperate with the global jihadist network to secure outside support for its activities. This disposition to act on behalf of the international jihadist cause, or at least in conjunction with it, could potentially make the organization as threatening as other, stronger "willing supporters" of al-Qaeda, such as the SJ and GICM.

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[32] By *Tunisian extremists* we mean known members of the TCG or individuals of Tunisian descent known to be involved in, or suspected of involvement in, terrorist activity.

[33] The 2002 attack, which employed liquefied petroleum gas, was claimed by al-Qaeda, which acknowledged that the operation was carried out by a Tunisian martyr who left a prerecorded videotape stating his willingness to die for the wider jihadist cause. See "Al-Qaeda-Linked Group Claims Tunisia Blast," International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism, April 17, 2002, http://www.ict.org.il/spotlight/det.cfm?id=768 (as of February 27, 2006).

[34] U.S. Department of State (2003), p. 144.

East Africa

Somalia: Al-Itihaad al-Islami (AIAI) and the "New" Somali Jihadi Network

Initially, jihadism in Somalia was synonymous with al-Itihaad al-Islami (AIAI, commonly shortened to al-Itihaad), a Wahhabist organization dedicated to the creation of a fundamentalist Islamic state in Somalia. According to local sources, veterans of the Afghan war founded the group during the 1980s. Al-Itihaad gained strength after the collapse of the Said Barre regime in the early 1990s (predominantly by offering employment and social services in a country bereft of any real government) and is alleged to have played some role in the "Black Hawk Down" incident in Mogadishu.[35] AIAI managed to further strengthen its position by establishing links with successful Somali businesses and creating its own enterprises in the areas of banking, telecommunications, export-import, and religious instruction.[36] By the middle of the decade, the group was thought to have built up a militia of at least 1,000 fighters, the funding for which was primarily channeled through Islamist charities based in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.[37]

Following a series of high-profile attacks in Ethiopia between 1995 and 1996,[38] AIAI was subjected to a sustained military onslaught at the hands of the Addis Ababa government. This withering offensive precipitated the gradual dismantling of al-Itihaad's political and

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[35] Shinn (2002); U.S. Department of State (2003), p. 127. It should be noted that informed commentators have cast doubt on these claims, not least because they were made a full three years after Somali warlord Mohammed Farid Aideed clashed with U.S. forces (although this does not, in itself, discount the possibility that Al-Itihaad members could be implicated in attacks on U.S. forces).

[36] Shinn (2002); Kansteiner (2002); Dagne (2002). AIAI was placed on the United States' Terrorism Exclusion List (TEL) in December 2001.

[37] ICG (2005c), p. 1.

[38] These included the assassination of General Hayelom Araya, head of operations in Ethiopia's Ministry of Defense, and the attempted assassination of Transport Minister Abdul-Mejid Hussein (now Ambassador to the United Nations) during 1995; the bombing of the Ethiopian government-owned Ghion Hotel in Addis Ababa in January 1996; and the bombing of the Ras Hotel in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia's second largest city, a month later.

operational architecture, which had largely collapsed by 1998.[39] However, various members of the group remained active and are since thought to have filtered into a more, nebulous jihadist movement that does not appear to have a clear (or at least announced) political agenda and that seems inclined to conduct urban insurgency and terrorism. According to Western intelligence services, militants associated with the network were involved in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania as well as the November 2002 suicide strike against the Paradise Hotel in Mombassa and the attempted downing of an Israeli charter jet en-route to Tel Aviv, both in November 2002.[40]

Since about 2002, one particularly violent faction has emerged in Mogadishu. Led by Aden Hashi 'Ayro, this group has been implicated in the killings of foreign aid workers as well as the assassinations of former police and military personnel in the Barre government.[41] Western sources also allege that the cell has helped al-Qaeda operatives based in Somalia with logistics, jobs, identities, and the protection of training sites in the Lower Shabelle and Banaadir regions and is possibly cooperating to consolidate an extended jihadist beachhead stretching from Somalia to Tanzania.[42]

It should be noted that informed local commentators have taken a somewhat more skeptical view of the alleged link between Somali jihadists and al-Qaeda, noting both the lack of detailed information about supposed militant camps and the generally opaque nature of

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[39] It should be noted that the United States government continued to view the AIAI as the main Islamist protagonist in Somalia well beyond 1998, formally placing the group on Washington's Terrorism Exclusion List (TEL) in December 2001. See U.S. Department of State (2002c).

[40] Chalk interview, Control Risks Group (CRG), London, February 2004. See also "Intelligence Sources Believe Al-Qaeda, Somali-Based Group May Be Behind Mombassa Attacks; Islamist Group Planning Attacks Against US Interests, Beach Resorts May CIA Report Warned," *Newsweek,* December 1, 2002; "Usama's Allies," *Africa Confidential,* Vol. 42, No. 24 (November 9, 2001), http://www.africa-confidential.com/country.asp?ID=44 (as of April 3, 2006); and ICG (2005c), pp. 8–9.

[41] ICG (2005c), p. 4.

[42] Chalk interviews, Western officials, Nairobi, February 2004. See also ICG (2005c), p. 4; and Gunaratna (2004), pp. 21–22.

external Islamist penetration into East Africa.[43] According to journalists in Nairobi, there is no definitive evidence to suggest that Somali jihadists have had a decisive influence on radical Islamist activity in Kenya[44] or Tanzania. These journalists believe that the main external presence in this part of the country stems from the Persian Gulf states, although there is extremist activity in the coastal region around Mombassa.[45]

The Somali Jihadist Network: Assessment and Future Outlook

It remains unclear to what extent the Somali jihadists have played a role in facilitating al-Qaeda operations and planning. On the one hand, the country's very chaos, dysfunctionality, and anarchy would seem to preclude any group from being able to offer external militants a reliable conduit through which to develop a viable logistical presence. In addition, Somali Muslim tendencies—while strong and anti-Western in focus—are heavily driven along ethnic and tribal lines and traditionally have not provided a firm ideological framework for the fostering of a concerted transnational militant jihadist identity.[46]

That said, Somalia constitutes an extremely active and dangerous transshipment point for drugs, guns, and people that has been studiously exploited by internal extremists (as well as other armed groups). It is certainly conceivable that at least some of these criminal links may

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[43] Comments made during the United States Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research Workshop on "Emerging Terrorist Threats in Africa and Southeast Asia," Washington, D.C., August 19, 2005. See also Dagne (2002).

[44] It should be noted that local journalists do acknowledge a heavy Somali influence among Kenyan Muslims in the northeast of the country, but they do not consider this area a main theater for radical Islamic activity, largely because it is too poor for most people to care about anything more than getting by on a day-to-day basis.

[45] Chalk interview, Associated Press, Nairobi, February 2004. Indeed, local journalists assert that the Somali Islamic community is deeply divided between those in the northeast of the country and those on the coast, with the latter tending to view the Somali-influenced Muslims as backward and unprogressive.

[46] Chalk interviews, CRG, London, February 2004, and Associated Press representatives, Nairobi, February 2004. Notably, there is no tradition of martyrdom in Somalia, nor has the country's Islamist community been instrumental in sending fighters to participate in overseas jihadist struggles such as those that have occurred in Afghanistan and Bosnia.

have been made available to outside radicals, including elements associated with the global jihadist movement. More seriously, the 'Ayro faction that has emerged in Mogadishu is known to have established ties with business circles in Dubai that have historically acted as a financial and communications conduit for bin Laden's financial interests. Western officials fear that al-Qaeda has already moved to exploit these ties in order to extend its own penetration into Mogadishu. If Somalia attains some semblance of stability in the future, the main concern is that Arab jihadists will seek to extend their operational presence across East Africa from these "urban perches."[47]

[47] Chalk interview, British and U.S. security officials, London and Washington, D.C., January and August 2005.

CHAPTER TEN

The al-Zarqawi Network: Jordanian and Iraqi Jihadis

Jordan

Jordan does not appear to have any organized terrorist groups operating on its soil. Rather, it has a network of loosely affiliated extremists who work in small units and who share the common objective of attacking U.S., Western, and in some cases Jordanian targets. Members of this cell-based movement are mostly thought to have fought in the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan, where they established personal relationships and forged a common commitment to carry out the Islamic revolution in their homelands through violent means.[1] The leading member of the ad hoc movement was the notorious terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (real name Ahmed Fadhil Nazzar Khalailah), a Jordanian who directed the jihadist terrorist campaign in Iraq and who had pledged allegiance to bin Laden. (As this report was going to print, word was received that al-Zarqawi and several of his associates had been killed in a U.S. Air strike on their hideout on June 7, 2006.)

Al-Zarqawi took his nom de guerre from his birthplace, the town of Zarqa, northeast of Amman. As a young man, he entered a life of crime and was jailed for drug possession and sexual assault. At some point in his criminal career, al-Zarqawi came under the influence of radical Salafist preachers, gave up drugs and alcohol, and married one

[1] Gambill (2004). Nicolas Pelham, "Jordan Foils Al-Qaeda Plot to Attack US," *The Christian Science Monitor,* July 1, 2002, http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0701/p01s03-wome.htm (as of February 27, 2006).

of his cousins. In 1989, he left his family to fight in Afghanistan. After participating in the Afghan war, al-Zarqawi returned to Jordan, where he ran afoul of the authorities. In 1994, he was sentenced to 15 years of hard labor on charges of membership in an illegal organization and weapons possession. In prison, al-Zarqawi established a following among the prisoners, on whom he enforced strict dress and behavior rules. Upon his release from prison as part of an amnesty following the accession of King Abdullah II, al-Zarqawi resumed his terrorist activities. When his involvement in the so-called "millennium" plot to bomb tourist sites in Jordan during the 2000 millennium celebrations was discovered, al-Zarqawi fled to Pakistan.[2]

The Jordanian jihadist network has been tied to several attacks and plots in that country. In October 2002, a militant acting under the direct orders of al-Zarqawi assassinated U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley.[3] Three months earlier, authorities in Amman thwarted a plan to bomb the American and Israeli embassies as well as leisure centers used by Western military personnel based in Jordan—attacks that, again, were alleged to have been coordinated by al-Zarqawi.[4]

The links between the Jordanian jihadist network and al-Qaeda have yet to be fully understood. As noted above, members of the move-

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[2] Gambill (2004); Levitt (2003a); "Fugitive Cast in Role of Super-Villain," *The Los Angeles Times,* March 7, 2004; "Terrorists Grabbed in Border Raids," *The Australian,* February 26, 2004; "Ansar al-Islam Eyed in Iraq Bombings," NBC News, March 2, 2004, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4428430/ (as of February 27, 2006); "Profile: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," BBC News, February 12, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle_east/3483089.stm (as of February 27, 2006). There are some discrepancies in the accounts of al-Zarqawi's early life and of his activities after his release from prison in Jordan in 1999. Gambill says that he is not of Palestinian descent, as alleged by some Western media reports, but a member of a branch of the Bani Hassan, a large Bedouin tribe loyal to the Hashemites.

[3] Levitt (2003b); "Fugitive Cast in Role as Super-Villain," *The Los Angeles Times,* March 7, 2004; BBC News, "Profile: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi." Bin Sewid, who was captured by Jordanian authorities soon after the assassination, has confessed that al-Zarqawi provided funding and weapons for the murder.

[4] Levitt (2004), p. 27; Burgess (2002). The Jordanian prime minister, Abu Ragheb Ali, has asserted that al-Zarqawi was dispatched to the country to select eleven recruits to carry out these attacks, all of whom were provided with weapons (including machine guns, silencers, and tear gas) and US $60,000.

ment have been willing to undertake action against U.S. and Western targets in Jordan. Although this does not provide definitive evidence of a link to al-Qaeda, the choice of targets appears to have been influenced by bin Laden's ideological outlook. Indeed, a videotape reportedly aired by bin Laden in November 2002 made specific reference both to the planned attacks against the American and Israeli embassies and to Foley's assassination.

Al-Zarqawi himself was not formally part of the al-Qaeda network until his organization swore allegiance to bin Laden in October 2004. Nevertheless, even before the organization pledged allegiance, he was believed to be actively cooperating with al-Qaeda in fomenting a transnational jihadist front in Iraq (see the section below on Iraq). The United States believes that al-Zarqawi was not only training members of Ansar al-Islam in the use of chemical weapons but was also the likely mastermind behind a series of anti-Shi'a sectarian attacks and suicide bombings in Iraq that killed well over 500 people (mostly Iraqis) in 2003 and 2004. A reward of $10 million was offered for information leading to the terrorist's capture, underscoring Washington's concern over the influence that he was seen to wield among wider Islamic militant elements in the Middle East and Europe.[5]

Jordanian Network: Assessment and Future Outlook

There has been a dramatic rise in anti-American sentiment in Jordan since the onset of the global war on terrorism and the war in Iraq, particularly within the Arab-Afghan expatriate community that was forced to return to the country after Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001. Western authorities remain actively concerned that this internal environment is fostering al-Qaeda loyalties and operational linkages, which could transform what is presently a loosely based network to a more structured movement complete with its own com-

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[5] Levitt (2003a); Levitt (2004), pp. 7–28; "Terrorist Grabbed in Border Raids," *The Australian,* February 26, 2004; "Fugitive Cast in Role as Super-Villain," *The Los Angeles Times,* March 7, 2004; BBC News, "Profile: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi." At the time of writing, in the summer of 2004, 116 terrorists linked to the Jordanian militant had been arrested in Europe and the Middle East, with arrests having taken place in the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Turkey, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

mand and control system. The prospect of higher intensity and more sophisticated attacks could be expected to increase under prevailing conditions in the Middle East.

Iraq

Ansar al-Islam, al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad–Tanzim Qai'dat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn, and the Mujahideen Shura Council

Al-Qaeda's links to Islamist militants in Iraq are becoming clearer. An undetermined number of individual jihadists, whether freelance or pledging allegiance to bin Laden, have entered the country and have teamed up with Sunni insurgents of varying stripes to perpetrate attacks against U.S., coalition, and Iraqi government forces, and international and Iraqi civilian targets. Indeed, some of the most horrific bombings that have taken place in the country since Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) have a definite al-Qaeda signature. These include the suicide bombings of the Jordanian embassy on August 7, 2003, the UN headquarters in Baghdad on August 29, 2003, and the simultaneous bombing of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan headquarters in Irbil on February 1, 2004. In all of these cases, the terrorists appear to have worked through an Iraqi organization, Ansar al-Islam (AaI), sometimes known as Ansar al-Sabah.[6]

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[6] See, for example, "Al-Qaeda's Advice for Mujahideen in Iraq: Lessons Learned from Afghanistan," v1.0, IntelCenter, April 14, 2003, http://www.intelcenter.com/Qaeda-Guerrilla-Iraq-v1-0.pdf (as of April 3, 2006); Abu-al-Aziz al-Muqrin, "Guerrilla Warfare," *Al-Battar Camp,* January 3, 2004; "Death Toll Climbs in Irbil Attacks," *The Los Angeles Times,* February 3, 2004.

AaI was founded in September 2001 by Mullah Krekar (who is presently based in Norway),[7] with the goal of transforming Iraqi Kurdistan into an Islamic state. The group has between 500 and 700 cadres at its disposal, most of whom are based in Iraq's mountainous northern regions along the border with Iran. Despite suffering the loss of an estimated 200 members during allied bombing raids in March 2003, Ansar retains a high operational potential in Iraq due to an intensive (and largely successful) recruitment drive that has embraced a broad cross-section of sympathetic foreign jihadists from North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. In 2003, AaI was organized into two fighting units, Jund al-Allah ("Soldiers of Allah") and al-Usad ("The Lions").

AaI militants have been connected to several high-profile bombings in Iraq. In addition to the bombings of the Jordanian embassy, the UN headquarters, and the Kurdish party headquarters, mentioned above, the group is also believed responsible for the bombing of the coalition headquarters in Baghdad on January 18, 2004; the car bombing in Najaf on August 29, 2003, that killed 82 people (including the principal target, Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer al-Hakim) and wounded hundreds; the bombing of the International Committee of the Red Cross headquarters in Baghdad on October 9, 2003, and the Italian paramilitary police command and control post in the southern city of

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[7] Krekar, born Najm al-Din Faraj Ahmad, was initially arrested at Schiphol airport in Amsterdam on September 12, 2002, after being denied entry to Iran. He was subsequently deported to Norway where he has held refugee status for more than a decade. Although the Ansar leader was briefly detained for three months on terrorism-related charges, these were dropped in April following a court decision that there were insufficient grounds to hold him in prison. Since then, Krekar has lived freely in Norway, where he has repeatedly refuted any connection to bin Laden or terrorist attacks in Iraq. For further details see "Ansar al-Islam Leader Arrested in Norway," Associated Press, January 2, 2004; "Italian Public Prosecutors Interrogate Krekar," *La Repubblica,* December 19, 2003, FBIS EUP2003122000181; and "Mullah Krekar Charged with Assisting Suicide Attack," *Verdens Gang,* January 2, 2004, FBIS EUP20040102000169.

Nasiriyah on November 12, 2003; and the simultaneous bombings of Shi'ite shrines in Baghdad and Karbala on March 3, 2004, the day of the Shi'ite holy day of Ashura, that killed at least 143 worshippers.[8]

Arab diplomatic sources claim that al-Qaeda started sending top operatives to Iraq as early as October 2002. Many of these jihadists were immediately put in touch with AaI because of the latter's stance against Kurdish parties aligned with the United States, its links with echelons of the Baghdad government, and the fact that many Ansar fighters had already trained in Afghan camps under the direct control of al-Qaeda.[9]

After Saddam fell, Ansar al-Islam began to mutate and fragment into different groups whose composition became less Kurdish and more Arab, including Sunni fighters and former regime supporters. A cluster of these Sunni Arab groups, led by al-Zarqawi, has been referred to as al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad (Monotheism and Jihad), the Iraqi version of the regional extremist group of the same name. Al-Tawhid is a Palestinian Sunni movement with its roots in Jordan, where it is waging a campaign against the Jordanian monarchy, which it rejects as "un-Islamic." The al-Tawhid movement promotes and supports the jihad of all believers worldwide; in particular, the struggle against "Jews and Crusaders" led by al-Qaeda. It is important to point out that in Iraq, al-Tawhid as an organization only appeared after the May 2004 beheading of Nicholas Berg.[10] After al-Zarqawi's group pledged allegiance to bin Laden, al-Zarqawi renamed al-Tawhid as Tanzim Qai'dat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers). More

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[8] See BBC News, "Profile: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi"; "US Defends Security Setup in Iraq," *The Los Angeles Times,* March 4, 2004; "Death Toll in Twin Strikes on Iraqi Shiites Rises to 143," *The Los Angeles Times,* March 3, 2004.

[9] Mullah Krekar has specifically acknowledged that he met bin Laden in the late 1980s and that many members of his group continue to have close links and sympathies with al-Qaeda.

[10] "Jamaat al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad / Unity and Jihad Group," http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/zarqawi.htm (as of February 23, 2006).

recently, in 2006, al-Zarqawi and his organization lowered their public profile in favor of an Iraqi-led umbrella organization of jihadist groups, the Mujahideen Shura Council.[11]

Despite the absence of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi from a leadership position within the Mujahideen Shura Council, he remained a central figure in the jihadist enterprise in Iraq. He appeared to function as a coordinator between several Islamist networks and, according to a February 2004 *Time* report, had been given responsibility for rotating al-Qaeda militants between South and Central Asia and northern Iraq.[12] According to U.S. and European intelligence sources, al-Zarqawi trained members of his group in the use of unconventional weapons, including nine cadres implicated in a ricin terrorist plot in the United Kingdom, France, and Italy in early January 2003.[13]

Al-Zarqawi's prominent role in the Islamist terror campaign in Iraq was displayed in a letter he allegedly wrote to the al-Qaeda leadership claiming responsibility for 25 "martyrdom" operations (which would account for almost all such attacks from the fall of Saddam until early 2004) and laying out a blueprint for triggering sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shi'ites. Divided into several sections, the document makes specific reference to the "two honorable brothers"(believed to be a reference to bin Laden and al-Zawahiri) and describes Operation Iraqi Freedom as a contractual agreement reached between Israel and the United States as part of a wider Zionist ploy to carve out a greater

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[11] The Mujahideen Shura Council was established in January 2006 to unify the jihadist groups in Iraq and presumably to give the jihadist movement an Iraqi face. It is composed of al-Zarqawi's group, al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers; the Victorious Army Group; the Army of al-Sunnah wal-Jama'a; Jama'a al-Murabiteen; Ansar al-Tawhid Brigades; the Strangers Brigade; and the Horrors Brigade. SITE Institute, "Chatter Concerning the Establishment of the Mujahideen Shura Council in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and Unification with Other Insurgency Groups," http://www.siteinstitute.org (as of March 27, 2006).

[12] Levitt (2004), p. 27.

[13] For further details on the alleged plots, see "Bioterror Plot," ABC Interactive News, January 9, 2003; "French Tip Led Police to Poison Gang," *The Australian,* January 10, 2003; "FBI Issues Bulletin About Deadly Ricin Poison," Reuters, January 10, 2003; and "British Officer Slain, 4 Hurt as Terror Suspects Are Seized," *The New York Times,* January 14, 2003.

Jewish state stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates. Although the letter is unsigned, American, British, and Iraqi officials say there is no doubt that al-Zarqawi wrote it.

Despite al-Zarqawi's reputed hostility to Shi'ites, U.S. authorities believe he had been coordinating operations in Iraq from unidentified parts of Iran or Syria. Even before September 11, Iran played an important role in al-Zarqawi's movements and operations. Under the Taliban, al-Zarqawi established himself in Herat, in western Afghanistan, and ferried operatives between Afghanistan and Europe through the Iranian city of Mashhad. Upon the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, al-Zarqawi moved to Iran, where the deputy leader of his al-Tawhid organization, known as Abu Harun, had already relocated. According to published reports, in March 2002 al-Zarqawi was escorted to the Iraqi border and expelled into the area controlled by Ansar al-Islam in Iraqi Kurdistan. When the U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq, al-Zarqawi moved back to Iran. There he met with al-Qaeda's security chief, Muhammad Ibrahim Makawi, who asked him to coordinate the movement of al-Qaeda militants into Iraq.[14]

The ability to use Iran, and later Syria, as a strategic launch pad and rest area would add a further layer of complexity to the nature of al-Qaeda links in Iraq, perhaps vindicating the view that Sunni and Shi'ite extremists are capable of bridging the sectarian divide when their geopolitical interests dictate. It also illustrates the historical and perennial nature of transborder linkages, trade among tribes, and smuggling that allows groups like Ansar and al-Zarqawi's group to move with impunity across international borders.

Definitive evidence of al-Qaeda–Ansar links in Iraq emerged with several arrests of leading militants during 2004. Among those captured were Husam al-Yemeni and Hasan Ghul, both known al-Qaeda operatives suspected of having worked with Ansar in terrorist recruitment. Western sources regard the capture of these two individu-

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[14] Gambill (2004); Mark Hosenball, "Terrorism: Following Zarqawi's Footsteps in Iran," *Newsweek*, October 25, 2004; Barsky (2004). According to another version provided by a U.S. counterterrorism expert, al Qaeda first tried to set up its own operation in Iraq but failed. Al-Zarqawi became the banner carrier of the jihadists there. Al-Zarqawi turned to al Qaeda for support much later when he was under severe pressure from the coalition forces.

als as particularly important given their operational role in Iraq: al-Yemeni was widely believed to be al-Zarqawi's right-hand man; Ghul (who is known as the "Gatekeeper" in terrorist circles) is thought to be a principal conduit through which al-Qaeda moves money and people around the Middle East, East Africa, and possibly beyond.[15]

Other prominent al-Qaeda members who are alleged to be working in conjunction with Ansar[16] include Othman Suleiman Daoud, an Afghan national believed to be based in the Sunni triangle north of Baghdad—the focus of much of the present insurgency against the U.S. military—and Faraj Shaabi, a Libyan who allegedly spent most of the 1990s in Sudan before he was ordered to Iraq by bin Laden in 2003. Overall estimates of foreign jihadists in Iraq vary, ranging from fewer than 1,000[17] to around 3,000, according to informed diplomatic sources. Most are volunteers from Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Sudan, Yemen, Libya, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia.[18] Many of the suicide bombers deployed in Iraq are foreign nationals lured by the cause of jihad against U.S. and pro-U.S. forces and representatives.

Jihadist Groups in Iraq: Assessment and Outlook

Al-Qaeda's influence over Ansar is manifested in the nature of the latter's operational profile, which has increasingly come to focus on well-timed, planned, and precision attacks designed to kill indiscriminately with maximum exposure. High-profile suicide car and truck

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[15] Coalition Joint Task Force 7 Briefing, January 29, 2004, http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20040129-0381.html (as of February 27, 2006); "Suspected al-Qaeda Operative Nabbed in Iraq," Associated Press, January 23, 2004. Ghul is alleged to have played some role in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, although officials stress that these reputed links are still being probed.

[16] Al-Qaeda is also thought to have worked with operatives from other organizations in Iraq, including, notably, its co-opted satellite GSPC. At least two senior commanders from the group are currently believed to be in the country, helping to recruit and train suicide bombers. They are Amin Hadad (also known as Baba Al Nada) and Mohammed Talahi (also known as Zakariya). See "Iraq Has Been Al-Qaida's Top Priority Since October 2002," http://www.geostrategy-direct.com/geostrategy-direct/secure/2004/2_10/1.asp (as of October 2004).

[17] See, for instance, the figures in Hoffman (2004), p. 13.

[18] "Iraq Has Been Al-Qaeda's Top Priority Since October 2002."

bombings against international and Iraqi targets have become common.[19] Variants on the traditional suicide car bombing also seem to be emerging: attacks using disguises similar to those employed by Palestinian terror groups, and the development of sophisticated ambush bombings with improvised explosive devices, which originated among the Kurdish Islamic rebels in Iraq's north.[20] Ansar militants have increasingly resorted to the use of female suicide bombers; in February 2004, the group successfully adopted the tactic for the attack on the Kurdish party headquarters in Irbil. Attacks by al-Zarqawi's group also focus on Shi'a festivals and ceremonies in the hope of fomenting civil war between Shi'a and Sunni sects.

It can be expected that al-Zarqawi's group, other groups in the Mujahideen Shura Council, and Ansar adherents will continue to work together and provide each other with funds, logistical support, and expertise to wage a consistent, if not concerted, campaign against coalition and Iraqi government forces. The strategic plan by these groups is to isolate U.S. forces in Iraq by targeting Arab translators and policemen, abducting and assassinating Arab and foreign diplomats, and attacking Shi'ite groups.[21] At the same time, the lowering of al-Zarqawi's profile prior to his death reflected an awareness that this strategy is not likely to succeed without putting an Iraqi face on their movement. The SITE Institute's director, Rita Katz, postulates that

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[19] "US General Says al-Qaeda Iraq Links Growing," Reuters, January 25, 2004.

[20] See, for example, Major Eric O. Estep, "Enemy Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) and Recommendations," Support Operations Plans 3rd COSCOM, LSA Anaconda, Iraq, undated; Karasik interviews of senior analysts, Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 2005.

[21] A series of messages posted to jihadist forums at the beginning of 2006 detail alleged Shi'ite conspiracies against the Sunni. A statement issued by Ansar al-Sunnah on February 28, 2006, concerning the "late happenings" in Iraq over the bombing of the Shi'ite mosque in Samarra and the tide of events that ensued, alleges that the Shi'ite government is responsible so that it may "create a state of chaos" and coerce the Americans into granting it the sole power in the newly formed Iraqi government. SITE Institute, "A Series of Messages on Jihadist Forums Concerning Alleged Shi'ite Conspiracies Against the Sunni Muslims in Iraq," March 6, 2006; and "A Statement from Ansar al-Sunnah Army Headquarters Concerning the Latest Happenings in Iraq and Alleged Shi'ite Duplicity in the Mosque Bombing," http://www.siteinstitute.org (as of February 28, 2006).

al-Zarqawi's withdrawal from a leadership position in the jihadist component of the Iraqi insurgency was spurred by al-Zawahiri's letter to al-Zarqawi of July 2005, which advises that "it does not appear that the mujahideen, much less Al Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers, will lay claim to governance without the Iraqi people. Not to mention that that would be in contravention of the Shura methodology. . . ."[22] The immediate goal, as the al-Zawahiri letter suggests, continues to be the establishment of an Islamic emirate in Iraq as a stepping stone toward the establishment of the global caliphate.

In addition, Ansar's international network may well be used as an additional "medium" through which to conduct al-Qaeda attacks wider afield—a threat that remains particularly pertinent in Europe, the Middle East (the failed "chemical" attack in Amman, Jordan, in April 2004), as well as in East Africa. The August 2005 attacks in Aqaba and Eilat demonstrated that al-Zarqawi's group can reach outside of Iraq to attack both American and Israeli targets. Beyond Iraq, the militants may head for other vast ungoverned areas of East Africa to plot further attacks as well as open or reinforce fronts across the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa.[23]

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[22] Rita Katz, "The Coming Wave of Jihad," *The Boston Globe,* March 13, 2006.

[23] Richard Norton-Taylor, "Al-Qaeda Will Retreat to Africa," *The Guardian,* August 25, 2005. The author was quoting CENTCOM's J5 chief, Major General Douglas Lute. See also Paz (2005b).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Southeast Asian Cluster

Jemaah Islamiyah and Its Offshoots

Long before the appearance of the global jihadist movement, the activities of a variety of internal ethno-nationalist and religious militant groups posed one of the most significant threats to the polities of the Southeast Asia region. During the 1990s, the residual threat posed by substate extremism had risen—both in reaction to the modernization pursued vigorously by many Southeast Asian states and as a result of radical influences from the Middle East and South Asia. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a network that connects militants in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand, today poses the main regional terrorist threat in Southeast Asia. JI is considered part of al-Qaeda's international terrorist network, but it is in fact a distinct organization with its own objectives and localized goals. The group, which operates solely within Southeast Asia, seeks to establish a pan-Islamic state in that region comprising Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Muslim areas of the Philippines and Southern Thailand.[1]

After the arrest of militants following the Bali I, Jakarta Marriott Hotel, Australian Embassy, and Bali II bombings in Indonesia, there appears to be increased dissension within JI, and related terrorist offshoots have newly surfaced. According to documents seized by the Indonesian authorities, one of the key JI operatives still at large, the Malaysian Noordin M. Top, is named as the leader of a group named

[1] "Asia's Own Osama," *Time*, April 1, 2002; and Wain (2001).

Tanzim Qai'dat al-Jihad, or Organization on the Base of Jihad.[2] These offshoots are probably not new organizations but merely regroupings of militants around different nuclei within JI.

JI's ideological roots date back to the Darul Islam rebellion in Indonesia. Lasting from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, the rebellion informed the thinking of radical Indonesian Muslims. The cofounders of the organization were two Indonesian clerics, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. In the early 1970s, the two established an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) in Ngruki, Central Java, that became one of the fountainheads of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia—the so-called Ngruki network. From 1978 to 1982 the two were imprisoned by the Suharto government. After their release, they moved to Malaysia, where they came in contact with an Indonesian al-Qaeda operative and veteran of the Afghan war, Riduan Isamuddin, alias Hambali. Hambali (captured in Thailand in August 2003), the only Southeast Asian member of the shura or central council of al-Qaeda, provided the link between the indigenous Indonesian radicals and al-Qaeda. He was also the chief conduit for funds from al-Qaeda to JI.[3] Another key figure was Mohammed Iqbal Abdur Rahman (alias Abu Jibril), an Indonesian national who, before his arrest in Malaysia in 2002, is alleged to have been head of training for al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia.[4] A map of the region is shown in Figure 11.1.

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[2] "Update 1—Indonesia Looks for New Group's Links to al Qaeda," *Reuters News,* January 31, 2006; "Offshoot of JI Terror Group Emerges," *AAP Bulletins*, February 1, 2006. According to former JI leaders, there is widespread unhappiness within the group over the bombing campaign by the terrorist faction led by Noordin M. Top. "Jakarta to Recruit Disgruntled JI Leaders," *The Straits Times* (Singapore), December 9, 2005.

[3] See, generally, ICG (2002). This analysis is one of the more detailed and in-depth pieces of research that has been done on the historical evolution of JI.

[4] ICG (2002), pp. 1–2; Zachary Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network," paper presented before the "Transnational Violence and Seams of Lawlessness in the Asia-Pacific: Linkages to Global Terrorism" conference, Hawaii, February 19–21, 2002, pp. 23–24.

Figure 11.1
Southeast Asian Cluster

NOTE: See the Abbreviations for full names of groups.
RAND *MG429-11.1*

Following the collapse of Suharto's government in 1998, Sungkar and Ba'asyir returned to Indonesia. In 1999, Sungkar died and Ba'asyir became the emir or spiritual leader of the organization. Ba'asyir established the Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) in Yogyakarta, a religious organization that analysts within and outside Indonesia believe serves as a political cover for JI's political activities.[5] After the Bali bombing of October 12, 2002 (see below), Ba'asyir was charged and convicted of immigration law violations. He was subsequently released

[5] Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror," p. 20. Indonesian intelligence claims there is no definitive evidence to link the MMI either to JI or to acts of terrorism. The group, itself, continues to insist that it acts as part of "legitimate" civil society, ostensibly committed to the peaceful implementation of shari'a law across the archipelago.

by a judge, but was immediately rearrested on terrorism charges and, at the time of writing, remains in police custody. Ba'asyir denies any association with JI or its terrorist agenda.[6]

It is believed that JI began establishing cells across Southeast Asia in collaboration with al-Qaeda as early as 1993. Regional intelligence sources have identified two figures as central to the group's early recruitment and placement efforts: Hambali, a veteran of the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan who before his capture was thought to have acted as bin Laden's main point of contact in the region; and Abu Jibril who, as noted above, is alleged to have been "head of training" for al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia.[7] Hambali was captured in August 2003 in Ayutthaya, Thailand, and is believed to be in U.S. custody. Abu Jibril was arrested in Malaysia in June 2001, where he remained in prison until he was deported to Indonesia in May 2004. Indonesian prosecutors initially accused him of involvement in several bombings in Indonesia but later dropped the charges because of lack of evidence. He is currently active in the MMI.[8] Two key JI operatives responsible for the Bali I bombing, Imam Samudra and Mukhlas (alias Ali Gufron), Hambali's replacement as operational chief, were captured, tried, and sentenced to death. Another high-profile terrorist, JI's top bomb-maker, the Malaysian Dr. Azahari Husin, and two subordinates were killed in a police raid on their hideout near the East Javan town of Malang in November 2005. Still at large are Noordin M. Top; Zulkarnaean, reported to be the current JI operational chief; Dulmatin, an electronics specialist known for his bomb-making expertise; and Umar Patek, a recruitment and training expert. (The last two are believed to be hiding out in Mindanao.)[9]

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6 See ICG (2003), p. 37; "Indonesian Cleric Convicted," *The Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 2003; and Devi Asmarani, "Bashir Fails in Lawsuit for Prison Release," *The Straits Times*, September 7, 2004.

7 ICG (2002), pp. 1–2; Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror," p. 20.

8 In January 2003, the U.S. Treasury Department blocked Jibril's assets and accused him of being the "primary recruiter and second in command" of Jemaah Islamiyah.

9 According to a December 2005 report in the Philippine press, Dulmatin and Umar Patek were on the run with members of the Abu Sayyaf Group. They fled separately from Indonesia to the southern Philippines with the goal of establishing a base of operations there. *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* December 2, 2005.

JI is believed to operate in much the same networked manner as al-Qaeda. The organization's structure comprises the following: (1) a central command (*qiyadah maraziyah*), which is part of a wider governing council (*majlis qiyadah*); (2) a hard core of dedicated jihadists (numbers vary greatly by source); and (3) a wider associate base that is drawn from both established insurgent militant organizations and loosely connected radicals scattered across the region.[10] According to a 2003 Singapore Government White Paper, these cadres are organized into specific territorial cells, known as *mantiqis*,[11] that cover the following areas:

- M1: Singapore, Malaysia (except Sabah) and southern Thailand
- M2: Indonesia (except Sulawesi and Kalimantan)
- M3: Sabah, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and the southern Philippines
- M4: Australia and the Indonesian province of Papua (Irian Jaya).[12]

JI came to the world's attention in December 2001, when a major international terrorist plot was uncovered in Singapore that was to have involved the bombings of U.S. Navy vessels docked at the Changi Naval Base, the Ministry of Defense, a shuttle bus serving the Sembawang Wharves and Yishun subway, the British and Australian High Commissions, the U.S. and Israeli embassies, and commercial complexes housing American firms. The plan came to light when the Singaporean intelligence service, which had been monitoring the JI cell, arrested the members to disrupt the attacks. Subsequently, a videotape

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[10] ICG (2003), p. 11.

[11] Each mantiqi, in turn, is thought to be made up of sub-branches, or *wakalah*, which are organized into functional groups that cover responsibilities for fundraising, religious work, security, and operations. See Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs (2003), p. 10; and Lesley Lopez, "Portrait of a Radical Network in Asia," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 2002.

[12] Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs (2003), p. 10. See also Evans (2003) and "Singapore Offers Grim View of Future Terror," *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 11–12, 2003.

and notes detailing reconnaissance of potential targets in Singapore were found in the house of al-Qaeda military leader Mohammed Atef in Kabul (Atef was killed in a U.S. air strike).[13]

The actual mechanics of the Singapore operation, which intelligence authorities estimate took two years of planning, fell to the late Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi (a senior JI bomb maker closely tied to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) who was killed by Filipino forces in 2003 after his escape from a Manila prison) and Mohammed Jabara. Working under the respective aliases of "Mike" and "Sammy," the two JI members coordinated a local preestablished cell of militants, helping to select appropriate targets and fine-tune the logistics for the planned bombings.[14]

Although the Singapore plot was thwarted, several other terrorist attacks have been directly linked to JI since 2000. These include a series of near-simultaneous bombings that killed 22 people in the Philippine capital in December 2000; 38 church explosions in Indonesia the same month; a further string of attacks in Manila in 2002; the October 12, 2002, Bali bombing—rivaled only by the Madrid train bombing of March 11, 2004, as the worst act of international terrorism since the September 11 attacks; a suicide attack on the U.S.-owned Marriott Hotel in Jakarta on August 5, 2003, that killed 13 people and left dozens injured; a car bombing outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta on September 9, 2004, that killed 9 people; and the bombings of three establishments in Bali on October 1, 2005, that killed 23 people, including the three perpetrators. JI terrorist attacks in Indonesia since the first Bali bombings are shown in Table 11.1.

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[13] Gunaratna (2002a), p. 188; "Singapore Announces Arrest of 21 Militants," *The Washington Post,* September 17, 2002; "Singapore Terror Group Had Plan to Bomb US Warships," *The South China Morning Post,* January 12, 2002; "A Tale with Many Beginnings," *The Straits Times* (Singapore), January 11, 2002.

[14] Chalk interview, Singapore intelligence, Singapore, March 2004. See also Gunaratna (2002b), p. 11; and "US Holding Canadian in Embassy Bomb Plot," *The Washington Post*, August 2, 2002.

Table 11.1
Terrorist Events in Indonesia Since Bali I

Location and Date	Number of Deaths	Type of Explosives	Method of Delivery	Bomb Maker
Three bombings (Paddy's Café, Sari Club, U.S. honorary consul's office), Bali, October 12, 2002	202	High-powered explosives, with TNT as explosive or booster	Car bomb (Sari Club); in vest by suicide bomber (Paddy's Café); bomb in plastic food container (U.S. honorary consulate)	Azahari and Dulmatin
J.W. Marriott Hotel, Jakarta, August 5, 2003	13	TNT, sulfur, aluminum powder, and gasoline	Car bomb	Azahari
Australian Embassy, Jakarta, September 9, 2004	9	TNT, potassium chlorate, sulfur, and aluminum powder	Car bomb	Azahari
Three bombings (Raja's Café, Menega's Café, Nyoman's Café), Bali, October 1, 2005	23	Suspected to be triacetone triperoxide (TATP)	Plastic food containers carried in backpacks by suicide bombers	Azahari

SOURCE: *Tempo* (Indonesia), October 11–17, 2005.

The sequence of the attacks suggests a one-year cycle for execution, although the planning might have gone on for a longer period. The methods of the first three attacks involved car bombs. However, the lack of success of the J.W. Marriott and Australian embassy attacks, where all the casualties except for one were Indonesians, might explain the abandonment of cars as the method of delivery for the explosives in favor of bombs carried in backpacks by suicide bombers. This method allows the terrorists to target their attacks more precisely on establishments frequented by foreigners and those catering to them.

JI and Local Islamist Groups in Southeast Asia

An intricate pattern of personal ties has developed among Islamic extremists in Southeast Asia. Many of these relationships were first forged in the crucible of the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan and have since been bolstered by marriages and social networks that frequently cut across specific group affiliations.[15]

On an ideological level, common interpretations of jihad and a common international outlook have also been manifest, most of which appear to have been fostered by a small circle of pondoks or pesantren—Muslim boarding schools in Indonesia and Malaysia. According to Southeast Asia terrorism expert Zachary Abuza, the Indonesian security services believe that there are 60–100 pesantren that are centers of JI recruitment. In this category of terrorist incubators are Pondok al-Mukmin in Ngruki, Sukohardjo in Solo (Surakarta), Mutaqin in Jabarah, Dar us-Syahadah in Boyolali, all in Central Java; al-Islam in Lamongan, East Java; and the Hidayatullah network in East Kalimantan and Sulawesi. Jaafar Umar Thalib, the leader of the now disbanded Laskar Jihad, administers another pesantren, Ihya as-Sunnah in Yogyakarta.[16] The most notorious of these institutions are Pondok Ngruki, founded by Ba'asyir and the late Abdullah Sungkar, the emirs or spiritual leaders of JI, and Pesantren al-Islam, the institution associated with the family of Amrozi, one of the plotters of the 2002 Bali bombings.[17] Although these radical pesantren are relatively small in number (there are thousands of schools overall), they have had a disproportionate influence in shaping and propagating radical Islam in Southeast Asia.

There is evidence that training facilities in Mindanao have been used for instructing Indonesian militants, several of whom have been

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[15] See, for instance, ICG (2003), pp. 2–7, 26–29; and Abuza (2003a), pp. 136–137.

[16] Abuza (2004), p. 31; Shuha (2005).

[17] See ICG (2003), pp. 26–27; and generally ICG (2002).

identified as prominent JI commanders.[18] According to the International Crisis Group, several hundred Indonesians passed through Hudaibiyah, a small base situated in a remote corner of the sprawling Abu Bakar complex that, prior to being overrun by the Philippine military in 2000, served as the headquarters of the MILF. The camp provided an intensive six-month course that included instruction in weapons handling, demolition and bomb making, map reading, guerilla tactics, field engineering, leadership, and self-defense.[19]

It also appears that at least some organizational coordination has taken place for JI operations in Southeast Asia. A key figure in helping to fine-tune the mechanics for the planned 2001 attacks in Singapore, for instance, was the late Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi,[20] a close associate of Hambali and former senior explosives expert in the MILF.[21] Laskar Jundullah, a violent Islamist militia active in Sulawesi, has been linked to JI through its leader Agus Dwikarna, who was also an official in Ba'asyir's MMI. Dwikarna was arrested in the Philippines in 2002 for illegally possessing explosives and remains a chief suspect in the series of bomb attacks that rocked Manila and Jakarta during December 2000.[22]

The above links notwithstanding, the extent of JI's ties with local Southeast Asian groups remains difficult to ascertain. The broad nature of Islamic radicalism in Southeast Asia is different from the extremist Wahhabist influences found in the Middle East, tending in most cases to be driven by uniquely defined historical ethno-national grievances.[23] Moreover, the dispersed nature of groups such as the MILF and ASG

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[18] Zachary Abuza, "The Moro Islamic Liberation Front at 20: State of the Revolution," paper given before the Workshop on Muslim Issues, George Washington Club, Washington, D.C., July 9, 2004, p. 14.

[19] ICG (2003), p. 17.

[20] Philippine security forces shot al-Ghozi in October 2003 after he apparently walked out of a maximum-security prison in Manila.

[21] Gunaratna, "The Singapore Connection," p. 11.

[22] ICG (2002), p. 3.

[23] Comments made during the Workshop on the New Dimensions of Terrorism, Singapore, May 2002. See also Tan (2003b) and Wain (2001).

makes it difficult to gauge whether relationships are the product of ad hoc initiatives stemming from local commanders or whether they reflect directives emanating from central group leaderships. Equally problematic is the question of the permanence of any links that have been established and the extent to which these continue to factor into overall ideological and operational agendas. Indeed, the MILF leadership, which is currently engaged in peace talks with the Philippine government, is sensitive to the issue of linkages with outside extremists. In 2003, the MILF's long-time leader Salamat Hashim renounced terrorism as part of the resumption of a peace process. This policy was reaffirmed by Salamat's successor, Murad Ebrahim. Since then, according to Philippine military sources, the MILF has refrained from the use of terror tactics and has cooperated with the Philippine armed forces against Abu Sayyaf elements operating in Mindanao.[24]

JI: Assessment and Future Outlook

From its inception, Jemaah Islamiyah developed intimate ties with al-Qaeda. Their cadres trained together in Afghanistan. They share a common worldview, a preference for mass-casualty attacks on Western targets, and—in the person of Hambali—a leadership link. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, JI has its own agenda, distinct from that of al-Qaeda. The nature of the current ties, in light of the evolution of both organizations since September 11 and the onset of the war on terror, is an open question. Whether JI acts in full solidarity with al-Qaeda or continues to operate according to its own agenda is unclear. Just as problematic is the nature of JI's relationship with local violent Islamist groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Muslim Thai separatists, and Indonesian extremists.

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[24] Rabasa discussions with Armed Forces of the Philippines officials, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, August 2005. Zachary Abuza believes that there is evidence of continued cooperation between the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf Group, for pragmatic and ideological reasons. See Abuza (2005b).

The ASG was the earliest Southeast Asian jihadist organization established with bin Laden's support.[25] However, after the death of the group's founder and leader, Abdurajak Janjalani, in a clash with police in December 1998, the group lost much of its ideological impetus and degenerated into a criminal enterprise disguised in Islamist ideology. The ASG's links to al-Qaeda were attenuated when bin Laden's brother-in-law and agent in Southeast Asia, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, left the Philippines in 1994. Nevertheless, the ASG's kidnapping and beheading of American citizens and its earlier association with al-Qaeda made it the principal target of the U.S.-led war on terrorism in Southeast Asia after September 11. The campaign against the ASG seriously degraded the group's capabilities. There are indications, however, that the Abu Sayyaf leader, Abdurajak's brother Khaddafy Janjalani, has been seeking to reconstitute the group and return it to its original Islamist agenda.

Several aspects of the security environment in Southeast Asia make the region inherently vulnerable to the type of extremist network embodied in JI and to attempts to use it as a springboard for local and wider international terrorist attacks. Not only is the region characterized by highly porous land and sea borders well suited to the smuggling of arms and personnel, but political and socioeconomic factors—the Asian economic crisis of 1997–1998; the fall of the Suharto regime in Indonesia; the subsequent breakdown of order in large parts of Indonesia; and persistent armed separatist movements in the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia—produced the conditions that facilitated the growth of extremist organizations. Finally, Southeast Asia's status as a global commercial and tourist hub has provided a highly developed transport and finance infrastructure that can be used as effectively for illicit as for licit purposes, as years of drug smuggling and money laundering have amply shown.[26]

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[25] The ASG was founded by a Moro veteran of the war in Afghanistan, Abdurajak Janjalani. Abdurajak had developed strong links to radical groups in Afghanistan, including Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden's brother-in-law and his representative in the Philippines, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, helped to fund it in its early years (Abuza, 2005b, pp. 1–7).

[26] See, for instance, "Thai Expert Warns of Terrorists Spreading in Southeast Asia," Xinhua General News Service, December 26, 2001.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

New Approaches to Combating the Global Jihadist Movement

Countering al-Qaeda Through Political Warfare

The preceding discussion has obvious implications for devising an effective strategy to counter al-Qaeda. Such a strategy will necessarily employ a complex mixture of military, intelligence, financial, and political instruments. This strategy should also include the use of techniques described variously as "public diplomacy," "information operations," and "psychological operations." No one term is completely satisfactory. However, George Kennan arrived at a useful blanket concept in 1947, when he called on U.S. officials to develop a robust "political warfare" capability against the Soviet Union.[1] The United States and its allies waged a largely successful campaign against Marxism-Leninism—like al-Qaeda, a global revolutionary creed that served as an intellectual, political, and emotional foundation of a worldwide revolutionary movement.[2]

Western policymakers might usefully draw on this now-forgotten corpus of Cold War knowledge and experience to develop a strategic political warfare campaign against al-Qaeda. As a first step, policymakers should consider ways of attacking al-Qaeda's ideology. From the analysis in this report, it is clear that ideology is the center of gravity of the global jihadist phenomenon. Therefore, it is important to

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[1] Kennan and Harlow (1991), pp. 302–309.

[2] For more on this point, see Lord (2004), pp. 220–221.

watch the rate of dissemination or retreat of the global jihadist ideology.[3] If the ideology continues to spread and gain greater acceptance in the Muslim world, it will produce more terrorists to replenish the ranks of al-Qaeda and related groups. If the ideology is countered and discredited, al-Qaeda and its universe will wither and die.

A related factor is the extent and strength of the links between the global and local jihads. The clusters within the "al-Qaeda nebula" show the spread of the jihadist mindset throughout the Muslim world. The global jihadist movement gains strength to the extent that it can co-opt local struggles. If it cannot, the global movement loses coherence and focus.

It follows that a comprehensive U.S. strategy needs to move beyond the boundaries of conventional counterterrorism theory and practice and address these ideological and political factors. The strategy, in broad brush, has four prongs: First, attack the ideological underpinnings of global jihadism. Second, seek to sever the links—ideological and otherwise—between the groups in the clusters of the terrorist nebula and the global jihad. Third, deny sanctuaries to terrorists. Fourth, strengthen the capabilities of frontline states to counter local jihadist threats.

Attack the Ideology

The war on terror at its most fundamental level goes to the war of ideas. The goal is to deny extremists the high ground of Islamic politico-religious discourse, which has been adroitly exploited by al-Qaeda to further the appeal of its own radical and absolutist rhetoric. As we have discussed in another RAND study,[4] prevailing in the war of ideas requires empowering moderate Muslims to counter the influence of the radicals.

The question has been raised whether al-Qaeda and its associates have lost critical ground with Muslim public opinion by their attacks

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[3] This is difficult, but not impossible to measure. For instance, measures could include changes in the number and propinquity of jihadist Web sites, and the frequency of extremist propaganda found in mosques. See, for example, Freedom House (2005).

[4] Rabasa et al. (2004).

on Muslims and decapitations—a major determinant on the part of moderate Muslims in passing critical and negative judgment on jihadist actions and goals. After the bombing of the Grand Hyatt, Radisson SAS, and Days Inn hotels in Amman, Jordan, in November 2005, a poll in the Jordanian newspaper *al-Ghad* reported that 86 percent of the respondents condemned al-Qaeda.[5]

Although it is inherently difficult for outsiders to attack an ideology, the ideological approach has weaknesses that are susceptible to exploitation. A jihadist mindset places the onus of success on the individual; to maintain the motivation of its members, a group needs to maintain its tempo of operations, so any interruption to the planning cycle weakens the group.

Some analysts also note that the jihadist movement is sensitive to religious ideology to the point of vulnerability. Combatants are replaceable, but theologically trained sheikhs are not. Decapitation strategies should be expanded from operational leaders to ideologues. These ideologues are often asked to provide sanction for terrorist operations and are therefore a key part of terrorists' decisionmaking process. Preventing al-Qaeda's ideological mentors from continuing to provide theological justification for terrorism could expedite the movement's ideological deterioration. Prosecution of "spiritual leaders" such as Abu Hamza al-Masri in the United Kingdom and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir in Indonesia and the deportation proceedings in the United Kingdom against the Jordanian-Palestinian cleric Abu Qatada, regarded as al-Qaeda's spiritual leader in Europe, are cases in point.[6]

Break the Links Between the Global and Local Jihads

The second prong of the strategy is to break the links between the global and local jihadist groups. The international nature of al-Qaeda

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[5] "Amman Bomb Churned Local Emotions," *The New York Times,* November 17, 2005. The negative reaction to the bombing may have been a factor behind al-Zarqawi's lowered profile in recent months (see Chapter Ten, "The al-Zarqawi Network").

[6] According to the 2001 Spanish indictment of the Madrid al-Qaeda cell, Abu Qatada was appointed as the spiritual leader of al-Qaeda, GIA, GSPC, and the Tunisian Combatant Group. Juzgado Central de Instruccion No. 005, Madrid, Sumario (Proc. Ordinario) 0000035/2001E.

is both a source of strength and a potential weakness. Al-Qaeda's ability to link local groups with a broader, pan-Islamist campaign is arguably the organization's signal achievement. Unlike terrorist groups of the 1970s, al-Qaeda is not hindered by the geographical constraints that limited the scope of terrorist operations. Al-Qaeda, which employs a "toolkit" composed of the violent tactics and techniques of traditional terrorism, mass-casualty attacks, and propaganda and is able to operate on multiple fronts in several regions of the world, is the world's first truly global terrorist enterprise.[7] Indeed, the term "terrorist" is inadequate to describe al-Qaeda, which some analysts have more correctly characterized as a "global insurgency" that has successfully challenged the world's most powerful nations.[8]

But internationalization brings costs as well as benefits. As demonstrated by the evolution of the international communist movement during the previous century, contradictions inevitably arise between the global vision promulgated by a movement's theoreticians and the national agendas that many local cadres naturally pursue.[9] Exploiting this friction could be part of an effective Western counterstrategy. For example, overt and covert information operations in Southeast Asia, South Asia, North Africa, and other areas of major terrorist activity might highlight the inapplicability of al-Qaeda's vision to regional and local conditions. In non-Arab Muslim countries such as Pakistan, the Arab nature of al-Qaeda's hard core could be stressed, as could al-Qaeda's preoccupation with "apostate" regimes in the Middle East. Such an approach could complement parallel political warfare themes that highlight the materialist, neo-fascist, and upper- and middle-class character of al-Qaeda's hard core—in other words, the fundamentally "alien" nature of men like bin Laden and al-Zawahiri.

Achieving this goal hinges on decreasing the utility of local groups' relationship with al-Qaeda. A number of local Muslim rebel movements that had maintained some relationship with al-Qaeda and its affiliates before September 11—for instance, the Philippines' Moro

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7 Gunaratna (2002a), p. 11.

8 See, for example, Mackinlay (2002), p. 79.

9 Rich (2003), p. 47.

Islamic Liberation Front—have distanced themselves from bin Laden to avoid being drawn into the wrong side of the war on terrorism. To accelerate this trend, the United States will need to tailor the specific components of its counterterrorism policy to ensure that they are relevant to extant and emerging patterns of local and regional terrorism. Addressing group ties that are predicated on logistical support will require a policy mix that is somewhat different from those involving joint planning sessions and coordinated attacks. Mapping and gauging the organizational parameters of terrorist connections will be equally important in prioritizing threats to U.S. interests.

Finally, the United States must be more proactive in its thinking and must accept that the problem of countering terrorism is akin to what Bruce Hoffman has referred to as a time series of photographs: ". . . the image captured on film today is not the same as yesterday nor will it be the same tomorrow."[10] Neither al-Qaeda nor its affiliates are likely to be consigned to the annals of history anytime soon. But a myriad of factors brought on by future world events could conceivably have a direct, or indirect yet significant, impact on both of them. Accordingly, policies will need to be constantly assessed, reassessed, and modified to take account of potential surprises that could emerge over the near to medium term.

Deny Sanctuaries

As discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this volume, al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan allowed the group's leaders to concentrate all their efforts at growing their organization and planning operations. Securing that safe haven substantially increased al-Qaeda's financial requirements but lowered overall needs of covertness, eased command and control, enabled extensive training and planning, and generally allowed it to operate at a far lower marginal cost per attack. The loss of its sanctuary has reduced the efficiency of the organization, made training of cadres more difficult and laborious, and raised the marginal costs of operations.

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[10] Hoffman (2003a), p. 16.

Sanctuaries are areas and physical facilities where terrorists can conduct training, network, and plan operations, but they can also be defined in other ways—for example, as financial, cyber, and propaganda nodes. Al-Qaeda has perfected the use of information technologies, particularly the Internet, as a terrorist tool, and has made use of the mass media to spread its propaganda. Part of what makes al-Qaeda and its affiliates such a difficult challenge is that they are able to "hide in plain view." Jihadist groups in Western Europe are embedded in the broader Muslim communities and have used the services and infrastructure available on the continent for propaganda, indoctrination, recruitment, and operations on the scale of the March 2004 Madrid terrorist attack.[11] Preventing the reconstitution of a sanctuary anywhere in the Muslim world and dismantling those that exist are therefore critical requirements of U.S. counterterrorist strategy. This requires proactive security cooperation with and support of countries under assault by al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

Strengthen the Capabilities of Frontline States to Confront Local Jihadist Threats

Aside from the campaign against al-Qaeda, the global war on terror can be viewed as the sum of many wars on terror fought in local and regional theaters across the world. "Homegrown" groups are providing a progressively greater amount of terrorist manpower and other resources. The resources for such operations are typically derived locally (and increasingly from criminal activity) rather than being funded by al-Qaeda itself. Further, the weapons are cruder, although still effective. The operation plans are not as elegant or reflect tradecraft as well as fully trained al-Qaeda attacks. In other words, al-Qaeda has sub-

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[11] A case in point is Redouan al-Issar, a Syrian who is influential in The Hague group, a jihadist group that was believed to be planning bombing attacks in the Netherlands and that had made contact with like-minded groups in Spain, Morocco, Italy, and Belgium. According to published reports, al-Issar arrived in Germany in 1995 seeking political asylum. His request was denied, but he spent several years appealing the decision, collecting welfare in Germany, and traveling to the Netherlands, where he introduced members of The Hague group to extremist teachings. See David Crawford and Keith Johnson, "New Terror Threat in EU: Extremists with Passports," *The Wall Street Journal,* December 27, 2004.

stituted operatives who are less than fully trained, use less-effective weapons, attack in less-spectacular (and arguably less-strategic) ways, and pay higher costs in terms of the number of arrests in the postattack sweeps by the relevant governments.

These local wars have to be fought and won by the local governments and security forces with the United States in a supporting role. Those governments have the most at stake—as well as the local knowledge, access to the population, and, hopefully, the political legitimacy to carry these conflicts to a successful conclusion.

The United States could help friendly countries achieve their counterterrorism objectives by providing assistance to improve the technical capabilities of counterterrorism police and military units and intelligence services. Although the types of assistance provided would depend on the specific circumstances of individual countries, as a general principle this assistance should focus on data collection and analytical capabilities.

Since the terrorists justify their operations by branding the governments under attack as "apostate" governments aligned with the United States, the United States has a political need to reduce its footprint in counterterrorism as much as possible. This can be done by encouraging cooperative regional arrangements. For instance, in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), regional countries have agreed to establish a regionwide intelligence network, have taken steps to block terrorist funds and tighten border controls, and have established a regional counterterrorism center in Kuala Lumpur. Similar cooperative arrangements should be encouraged in other parts of the world.

Because many terrorist groups operate in ungoverned areas, the capabilities of governments with imperfect control over their territories should be strengthened to enable them to assert authority over those areas. Terrorists also take advantage of porous and poorly monitored borders to move personnel, equipment, and funds, so governments' ability to monitor and control their borders should be strengthened. Therefore, U.S. military forces will increasingly have to interact with the police, intelligence, and security services of other governments,

as well as with their military forces, creating potentially a new set of requirements in political-military relationship and interoperability issues.

Implications for the U.S. Air Force

Air and space power have important roles to play in countering al-Qaeda and the jihadist groups that form its nebula. Most of these missions are familiar, but the relative mix required for effective prosecution of a campaign against terrorists is quite different from what the Air Force is used to providing in more conventional military operations. In Afghanistan, air and space power, combined with Special Operations Forces (SOF), was the key to joint and coalition military operations. In Afghanistan, the Air Force took the lead in further advancing an American way of air warfare through effects-based operations (EBO).[12] The hallmark of EBO is combining modern Air Force capabilities—information superiority, mobility, and precision strike—with complementary capabilities from the other military services and government agencies. Future battlefields most likely will be discontinuous, with shadowy hostile forces organized in small, unlinked groups. Eliminating these forces will require integration of air and ground forces on a scale even greater than today's.[13]

SOF, especially Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), once considered peripheral to the Air Force's main mission, are now central to antiterrorism missions, which often require "quiet operations" with a relatively low profile. These are particularly important in countries where overt U.S. military operations against terrorist groups might be politically difficult for cooperating governments.[14] On the operational side, Air Force SOF have the capability to pinpoint and track small groups and individuals, capture them, and search for

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[12] See Davis (2001).

[13] "Air and Space Power and the Nation at War," *Air Force Magazine,* November 2004, p. 95.

[14] Tirpak and Grier (2004), pp. 70, 75.

critical intelligence. These capabilities are of paramount importance in a murky war against small, elusive groups of enemies who move back and forth over borders.[15] But training functions are just as important. Air Force SOF teach critical skills in night flying, air evacuation, and air assault to air forces of cooperating countries. However, there is only a single squadron, 6 Special Operations Squadron (SOS) at Hurlburt Field, Florida, to carry out this crucial training function. Not only is this squadron too small to meet the requirements of the global war on terrorism, but throughout its existence it has had difficulties obtaining even the airframes necessary to perform its mission.[16]

Air-delivered firepower has been used successfully in counterterrorist operations in a variety of contexts. The continued evolution of precision munitions has enabled air power to be used to target specific individuals and small groups—by Israel in the West Bank and Gaza (see Part 2, *The Outer Rings of the Terrorist Universe*) and by the United States against targets associated with the al-Zarqawi network in Fallujah, Yemen, and elsewhere. Air Force and Navy jets provided the bulk of U.S. combat power in the war in Afghanistan and proved instrumental in bringing down the Taliban regime and eliminating al-Qaeda's largest and most important sanctuary.

It is likely that air power will continue to be called upon to provide lethal punch to U.S. and allied efforts to root out and destroy terrorists and their supporting infrastructure. Modern air forces have the advantage of being able to reach terrorist and insurgent targets in inhospitable or inaccessible terrain while simultaneously being relatively invulnerable to the kinds of defenses that are likely to be found in jihadist arsenals.[17]

An important combat role for U.S. air forces is to work closely with non-U.S. ground forces in locating and striking terrorist targets. As was the case in Afghanistan, this could mean developing an "on the fly" partnership with troops of a very different level of sophistica-

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[15] Hebert (2005), p. 32.

[16] This point was made by one of the reviewers of this report, Dr. Thomas Marks.

[17] This applies mainly to fixed-wing aircraft; man-portable air defense missiles and light anti-aircraft artillery have proven to be dangerous to helicopters.

tion from those of the United States or its traditional allies. In some cases, these ground units may be leavened with U.S. Special Forces or advisors, but it should be anticipated that, from time to time, U.S. Air Force and Navy pilots would find themselves supporting soldiers with no or little U.S. training and scant knowledge of how to effectively employ air power. In such cases, the USAF will need to have available air-ground control elements that can be rapidly incorporated into friendly ground force formations. In addition to their training in managing air support, these airmen will also benefit from having appropriate language skills and some cultural knowledge. Although it is obviously impractical to teach the hundreds of languages found around the world, the importance of the struggle against jihadist terrorism does suggest that the USAF should consider developing cadres of air-ground liaisons competent in a handful of key languages, such as Arabic.

Airlift can be the key to counterterrorist or counterinsurgency operations in countries with widely dispersed populations and poor land transportation infrastructure—conditions that define almost all areas where terrorists and insurgents operate. Only by being able to bring forces rapidly to the scene can governments neutralize the terrorists' operational and tactical advantages and quell religious and ethnic clashes before they flare into full-scale communal conflict. Yet, many of the countries confronting terrorist and insurgent movements—Indonesia and Colombia come to mind—have woefully inadequate air transport capabilities. Building the air transport capabilities of countries at risk should be a priority in U.S. counterterrorism policy and security assistance programs. In addition, the U.S. Air Force—the world's premier practitioner of air mobility—will probably find itself called upon to directly provide transportation under some circumstances.[18]

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[18] Previous RAND research has found that battlefield aeromedical evacuation capabilities have important psychological effects on the performance of non-U.S. soldiers, who are more inclined to risk injury when they feel confident that they will be promptly treated and taken to safety if they are wounded. Since few countries currently field these capabilities, the U.S. military, including the Air Force, may be called upon to provide them when cooperating with a host country in counterterror or counterinsurgency operations. This also represents one area where helping friendly countries develop non-combat capabilities could have substantial payoffs in dealing with subnational violence. See Ochmanek (2003).

As noted above, local governments and militaries will ultimately be called upon to do most of the heavy lifting in bringing down terrorist and insurgent groups operating in and from their territories. Consequently, providing training to the armed forces of friendly countries threatened by jihadist terror groups or insurgents will be another important job for the U.S. military, including the Air Force. It seems likely that these training missions could be numerous and potentially prolonged. Further, given that they will often be conducted in locations where the threat to U.S. personnel is quite high, they will impose force protection burdens.

Finally, the fundamentally political nature of the battle against jihadist groups means that in some cases the training objectives will revolve as much around inculcating appropriate norms of behavior, such as respect for human rights and civilian lives and property, as around transmitting expertise in operational and tactical skills. The U.S. military has what might charitably be called a mixed record of success in providing such "socialization" training; future failures—or events that the capable propaganda machines of jihadist groups could present to the Muslim world as failures—could be very costly defeats in "political war."

None of these activities would appear to call for major changes in USAF force structure or posture.[19] The same may not be true of the final task that we want to emphasize, which is that of providing timely, accurate, and actionable information to commanders and operators at all levels. Air and space platforms have shown themselves to be vital components of the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) architecture for the war on terrorism. However, it is equally true that the campaign against al-Qaeda and other jihadist terrorists and insurgents has been hindered by shortcomings in existing systems, organizations, and processes. Improvement is needed, and the USAF will likely be called upon to make important contributions.

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[19] The one exception might be the proposed procurement of tactical transport aircraft better suited than the existing fleet to operate in and out of smaller, less-developed airstrips. As this is written, there is some controversy surrounding how many aircraft to buy, if any, and whether the Army or Air Force should operate them.

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have emerged as very useful tools for surveillance, reconnaissance, targeting, and, at times, striking terrorist targets. As al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups continue to geographically decentralize and disperse, the demand for the kinds of capabilities offered by platforms such as the USAF's Predator and Global Hawk UAVs seems almost certain to multiply. If we envision a future in which the United States may wish to maintain sustained 24-hour multiple-source surveillance over multiple and widely separated swaths of inhospitable terrain, it is not clear that the USAF plans to make sufficient investment in UAVs. Certainly, space-based systems and manned aircraft will play important roles, but UAVs offer both greater effectiveness than satellites and less risk than manned platforms, making them highly appealing to future commanders.[20] The USAF should assess the likely demand for UAVs and size its future force accordingly.

The intelligence demands of countering jihadist terrorism will also be a human capital issue, not just for the USAF but for every agency—civilian and military—engaged on the front line of that battle. All of the strategies laid out here for checkmating terrorist groups—waging political warfare, attacking radical Islamist ideology, breaking the linkages between local and global groups, and so on—depend vitally on having an accurate image of how these organizations are structured, who is involved with them, and how both individuals and groups relate to one another.

Further, since terrorist and insurgent groups are dynamic entities and the relationships among individuals and organizations are fluid, this picture will need to be continuously reassessed and updated. Although sensors can collect terabytes of data and advanced processing techniques can help bring some order to those data, properly trained personnel will be critical to success. These analysts will need a deep

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[20] UAVs offer a flexibility that satellites, governed by orbital mechanics and often controlled at the national level, do not. No satellite, for example, could follow a suspected terrorist's auto down the road, collecting the information needed to positively identify the occupants and, perhaps, even deliver the weapon that neutralizes them. Also, the UAV's relative proximity to its targets—thousands of feet rather than hundreds of miles—gives it the edge over space systems in employing many different kinds of sensors.

understanding of the region they are observing—its language, geography, history, and culture—to be able to interpret rapidly and accurately what they are seeing and hearing. Developing this pool of expertise represents a major challenge. The Air Force alone does not have the capacity to support the large number of analysts that would be required. Neither do the armed forces collectively. We may have to develop ways of rapidly mobilizing the nation's expertise on any specific area.

These analysts will also need to be tightly networked with one another, and perhaps with their counterparts in other countries as well, so that important information about new or evolving relationships in the threat space do not disappear in the gaps between institutional stovepipes. Developing and sustaining an adequate number and variety of these specialized intelligence professionals, as well as creating the technical and bureaucratic infrastructures to support them, will be a challenge not just for the Air Force but throughout the entire counterterrorism community.

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