

Testimony of
Steven Emerson
Before the
**United States House of Representatives Permanent Select
Committee on Intelligence**

April 9, 2008



Steven Emerson
Executive Director
Investigative Project on Terrorism
www.investigativeproject.org
email:stopterror@aol.com

Introduction:

The 2001 invasion of Afghanistan was successful in obliterating much of al Qaeda's command-and-control structure. Due to a robust and successful counter-terrorist policy made up of good intelligence gathered by the FBI, asset forfeitures and designations by the Department of the Treasury, and other good work by the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies within the intelligence community, the U.S. has fortunately not been hit with another attack since 9-11. Moreover, in the six and a half years since the those horrible events, al Qaeda's direct orchestration of acts of terrorism on the operational level has been somewhat constrained. This is not to say that al Qaeda has not been involved in terrorist attacks and plots since 2001 (training and guidance provided by al Qaeda in the 2005 London transit bombings and foiled 2006 Heathrow plot prove otherwise), but the group's leaders have relied largely on the power of self-anointed franchises and recognized the power of spreading its message and ideology via the Internet. Extremist Muslims throughout the world have responded to this message and have sought to execute a number of attacks. While most have been stopped, some have been successful, killing hundreds and injuring thousands more, resulting in propaganda coups for al Qaeda and its leadership.

Parallel to franchising the al Qaeda ideology, the group has successfully regenerated its operational capabilities in the sanctuary of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan. According to the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of July 2007 entitled, "The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland," al Qaeda "continues to plan high-impact plots, while pushing others in the extremist Sunni communities to mimic its efforts and to supplement its capabilities,"¹ and thus remains the primary terrorist threat to the United States.

The 2007 NIE also notes the threat posed by al Qaeda affiliate groups – particularly al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) – not just to our military personnel deployed in Iraq, but to the homeland itself. In that capacity, another al Qaeda affiliate deserves equal attention – al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the successor organization to the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (known by its French acronym, GSPC). Aside from its impressive operational and training competence, the fact that members of GSPC and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) – the original modern Algerian terrorist group – have targeted both the U.S. homeland and American targets in Europe makes AQIM an enemy that cannot be underestimated.

Al Qaeda strategy memos, intercepted letters and events themselves indicate that al Qaeda seeks to establish operationally capable affiliates elsewhere in the Middle East, particularly in the Palestinian territories, Jordan, and Lebanon. Terrorist plots in Europe over the last several years speak to al Qaeda's continued desire to launch attacks on the European continent and against the West in general.

Due to the reconstitution of al Qaeda's command-and-control structure in a geographically isolated sanctuary, the increasing capabilities and sophistication of al Qaeda affiliates, and the ongoing inspiration of extremist Muslims living inside the United States, I agree with the NIE assessment that the terrorist threat from al Qaeda and its affiliates to this country is at its highest

¹ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland," July 2007, http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf.

point since 2001. As reported by the 2007 NIE, we can expect plots against high-profile targets that seek to inflict mass casualties and/or create fear and uncertainty in both our economy and populace. This written testimony will focus on a number of issues, including the reconstitution of al Qaeda in FATA, the emerging second-generation leadership of al Qaeda, the threat posed by existing al Qaeda affiliate groups and the establishment of additional affiliate groups, the marked increase in al Qaeda propaganda over the past several years, notable plots and attacks since 9/11 in the West, the risk of infiltration by al Qaeda agents and operatives, and security gaps previously exploited by terrorists that have yet to be closed. Perhaps more importantly, this testimony will also address the larger problem of the global Islamist movement and U.S. missteps in trying to counter that ideology and failure to recognize the dangerous threat that it poses to the U.S. and the free world.

Reconstitution of al Qaeda in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA)

While U.S.-led military operations reportedly eliminated 80% of al Qaeda's core leadership, Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, and other key leaders managed to escape across the mountainous border to Pakistan, finding a safe haven with Pashtun tribes. Since then, al Qaeda has rebuilt its command-and-control structure in concert with a host of entities, including tribal groups, Islamist parties, Kashmiri terrorist groups, criminal elements, corrupt police officials, and rogue factions in Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). To understand how such a phenomenon could happen, it is important to understand the environment that exists in FATA and, to a lesser extent, the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP).



Figure 1: FATA and NWFP

Pakistan is composed of four provinces and two federal territories, of which FATA is one. FATA is a mountainous territory, composed of seven districts, or agencies, that has historically kept a certain amount of autonomy, due to its tribal and rural character as well as its difficult terrain. It is bordered by Afghanistan to the west, NWFP and the Pakistani Punjab to the east, and Baluchistan to the south. The Afghan border is notoriously porous and has never been effectively controlled by the Pakistani government or the British colonial government that preceded it. The Pakistani government attempts to wield a certain amount of control through political agents and tribal agencies, but corruption and the independent nature of the Pashtun tribal structures render this system ineffective. After the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Afghan Taliban militia and officials, al Qaeda members, and Uzbek extremists retreated to FATA. They were welcomed by many tribal leaders, while coming into conflict with others. This shift in the power dynamic of FATA led to the so-called Talibanization of the region, not just due to the Afghan Taliban but also because of the rise of Pakistani Taliban and extremist militia organizations independent of their Afghan brothers. Thus, FATA quickly became a sanctuary for insurgents fighting NATO and Afghan troops in Afghanistan.

Talibanization and the increasing hostility of the Pashtun tribes in FATA, especially in Waziristan, also led to a low grade insurgency against the Pakistani government. Under pressure from Washington to resolve this issue, President Musharraf sent the Pakistani military into FATA, which has always been infamous for its hostility to external military power, even if that power is technically a part of the same country. Predictably, the Pashtun tribal and Taliban militias went to war with the Pakistani Army, resulting in high casualties for the Pakistanis, which peaked in 2004. President Musharraf then attempted to broker peace with the tribes and militias. This effort culminated in September 2006 with a counter-productive deal between Musharraf and tribal and militant leaders in North Waziristan, including several men wanted for arrest by the Pakistani government. According to the deal, foreign fighters were to leave North Waziristan and the tribal leaders were to clean house. Of course, this did not happen and the insurgency in FATA grew, emboldened at what could be seen as official government sanction of these illegal armed groups. Regardless, the deal ended when Pakistani forces crushed militants who seized control of the infamous Red Mosque in Islamabad in July 2007. Tribal and militant leaders denounced Musharraf and refused to come to terms with him. Since then, the tribal and Taliban forces have been fiercely engaging the Pakistani Army, kidnapping large groups of soldiers – sometimes entire companies – and performing public and sometimes taped executions. In 2007, there were 36 suicide bombings in Pakistan against military targets, many of which have been blamed on these Taliban militias.

It is in this environment that al Qaeda has managed to survive and rebuild, relying on the protection of their tribal hosts and Taliban militias. In concert with these allies, al Qaeda maintains training camps and a sophisticated propaganda operation. One of these allies is Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an umbrella organization of the Pakistani Taliban groups formed in December 2007. This group is led by Baitullah Mehsud, a native of South Waziristan in FATA, who was once quoted as saying, “Only Jihad can bring peace to the world.”² He was recently implicated in the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (although he denies involvement). TTP has a presence in all seven agencies of FATA and in many districts in

² “Profile: Baitullah Mehsud,” *BBC*, December 28, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7163626.stm.

NWFP. Mehsud reportedly commands 5,000 fighters and operates with relative impunity in FATA.

These tribal and Taliban militias, however, are vulnerable in one sense: there is a certain amount of tension and discord stemming from disagreements and inter-tribal distrust. One example of this is an apparent schism between Mehsud and Hafiz Gul Bahadur, another Taliban leader in Waziristan and deputy commander of TTP, Mehsud's organization. While Bahadur and Mehsud are leaders of the same organization, they are of different tribes. Bahadur was among the signatories of the peace deal between the Pakistani government and North Waziristan in September 2006, mentioned above. Bahadur has resisted Mehsud's efforts to coordinate attacks in North Waziristan, which is Bahadur's turf. Bahadur has even negotiated independent cease-fires and truces with the Pakistani Army and told Mehsud to steer clear of North Waziristan.

The recent elections in Pakistan have created a great deal of uncertainty about Pakistan's future policy in its border regions. The new Pakistani government, led by the People's Party, will likely seek a FATA and NWFP policy that differs markedly from Musharraf's policy. The People's Party holds 84 out of 342 seats in Pakistan's National Parliament and has partnered with the Pakistani Muslim League (N) to form the first civilian government since Musharraf took power in a military coup in 1999.

Recently, Pakistan's Chief of the Army Staff, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, briefed the new government on the situation in FATA. The meeting ended with the civilian officials stating their intention to pursue peaceful dialogue, especially with Pakistani Taliban groups like Mehsud's TTP. They expressed an unwillingness to use force at the expense of negotiation. The new government will be strongly opposed to U.S. covert cross-border incursions and Predator strikes. It is almost certain that this policy will only lead to increased Talibanization in FATA that will continue to spread to NWFP.

Relation to the Situation in Afghanistan

FATA serves as both a sanctuary for al Qaeda's global jihad and for the Afghan Taliban insurgency being waged against the Afghan government and NATO troops. It is important to take note here of the situation in Afghanistan as it directly relates to issues in FATA and regional security in general.

In February of this year, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates traveled to Europe to appeal to our NATO allies to increase their levels of support for our combined efforts in Afghanistan. Gates' pleas were met by a range of responses from indifference to contempt.

Despite fierce fighting in recent months, and a heightened security threat to the West by Taliban gains and improvement in battle and terrorist techniques, the American request for more troops to shore up the efforts fell on deaf ears. Some European allies have demonstrated a reluctance to allow their troops – currently deployed in Afghanistan – to serve in areas where much of the fighting is taking place, opting to keep them in already safe regions, working on much needed reconstruction projects, which, for the time being, are of secondary importance until the Taliban forces can be defeated and the Southern region of the country brought under NATO control.

European leaders have cited the difficulty of increasing troop levels amidst a climate of public opinion that is heavily against both the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite this, key European military leaders seemingly understand the importance of the situation. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has called for two more battalions to be added to the current forces in the Afghan theater.

The lack of European support for our necessary efforts in Afghanistan at this crucial time – especially while the U.S. is shouldering such a high percentage of the burden in Iraq – is, to say the least, extremely unfortunate. The general position of the European governments betrays a lack of understanding of the gravity of the situation, and a placement of short term political desires over long term strategic and security needs.

Worse, in an effort to calm public opinion, European allies have placed dangerous and ineffective combat restrictions on its troops, in an effort to prevent deaths which will then be reported by an unfriendly media to a population already hostile towards participation in the war in Afghanistan and cooperation with United States foreign policy in general. Such restrictions minimize the actual level of help from our European allies in a war that is not yet over.

If various reports from the Department of Defense are accurate, the U.S. will soon be sending several battalions of Marines from Iraq to support the allied effort in NATO, increasing the already high percentage of the U.S. burden. Further efforts must be made on the part of the Bush administration to impress upon our allies the need for not only vocal support for our combined cause in Afghanistan, but also for further financial and other concrete forms of cooperation such as increased troop levels, as well as military help, by way of various Special Forces assets to match our influx of Marines. The consequences of failure in Afghanistan are immense, as it was the base al Qaeda used to launch the 9/11 attacks. Allowing the Taliban to reconstitute its control over more areas of Afghanistan is an intolerable situation, both to the United States and Europe. Europe has been the victim of terrorist attacks planned in the tribal areas that transcend the Afghan-Pakistan border, and is a much closer and accessible target of these extremists than is the United States. As such, Europe needs to recognize the necessity of increasing its levels of support to ensure an allied victory over the Taliban and its allies in Afghanistan, for its own safety and security.

Al Qaeda Leadership

During Operations Enduring Freedom and Anaconda many senior al Qaeda leaders were captured or killed, including Operations Chief Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Military Chief Mohammed Atef, and Senior Operations Facilitator Abu Zubaydah. Notably missing from this list were the most senior of the al Qaeda leadership, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri, who, after escaping various American or allied strikes, remain free.

Bin Laden and al Zawahiri have shown a keen ability, as has the al Qaeda network as a whole, to change and adapt. When leaders are killed, new figures emerge from within the organization to fill the post. When strategies fail, new strategies are applied – as evidenced by the flurry of new media productions in the ever-expanding information war.

It is in this context that a new crop of al Qaeda leaders has emerged to fill the void left by the capture and killing of many in the so-called old-guard. Many of these individuals are, as former CIA Associate Director of Operations, Robert Richer, told the *New York Times*, “far more capable than the mujahideen who fought the Soviets ever were” due to the fact “they have been fighting the best military in the world, with the best technology and tactics” on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Much as the old-guard has largely been replaced by new leaders with changing approaches to the global jihad, the leadership of the new guard is also faced with frequent turnover. A list of these senior leaders that are in the crosshairs of U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere includes Abu Yahya al-Libi, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, Abu Obaidah al-Masri, and Khalid Habib. This testimony will provide a brief profile of each of these men, charting their ascent to positions of prominence and how it has impacted the changing war against al Qaeda – and thus, the changing tactics that we must employ in fighting it.

Abu Yahya al-Libi

Abu Yahya al Libi’s rise to prominence came following a July 2005 high-profile escape from the high-security U.S. prison at Bagram Air Base near Kabul, Afghanistan. Prior to his capture by Pakistani forces in the wake of 9/11, al Libi had long been committed to the jihad movement as a member of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG, elements of which have now been folded into al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb; see below) – an al Qaeda connected organization dedicated to ousting the Qaddafi government. Al Libi’s older brother was also a crucial figure in the radical Islamist group.

Al Libi’s experience with the global jihad movement went far beyond LIFG, however. Like many Libyans in the movement, al Libi found his way to Afghanistan in the early 1990s, but was soon sent back to Africa to study Islam. After completing his studies, he returned to Afghanistan, which had been taken over by the Taliban, and began attending training camps to impart extremist Islamic ideology upon the next generation of jihadis. As an Islamic scholar, it appears that al Libi’s military training was minimal.

Al Libi told the dramatic story of his imprisonment and subsequent escape in an as-Sahab video release. Of his arrest after 9/11, he said:

Subsequently, the sweeping campaign of arrests began, targeting all Mujahideen residing in Pakistani soil, and not only the Mujahideen but also foreigners residing in Pakistan, including those legally studying in the religious schools and so on, and others. So during this oppressive, sweeping campaign, many of the Mujahid brothers were arrested, and we received our share of these arrests and I was arrested on May 28th, 2002, in the city of Karachi, at the hands of Pakistani intelligence and police but with the guidance and direction of American intelligence. And as you know, America has declared its all-out war on all Mujahideen, and not merely al Qaeda or Taliban. Its campaign was against all Jihadi movements in general and I was affiliated with a Jihadi group, the well-known Fighting Islamic Group [of Libya] and as part of this campaign, I was arrested and taken to one of the police stations in Pakistan, and after only six hours, I was handed over to the Americans, who were running a prison in Karachi. And that's how I was arrested.

He made claims that he and his fellow prisoners were subjected to torture and coercive measures in Karachi and later in Kabul and at Bagram Air Base. Of the Americans he encountered, he said:

The truth is, we found the American character, or the American soldier with whom we had long-term contact, to be a mix of doctrinal, behavioral, moral, and ideological deviation. I have not found a description more precise and fitting than His statement, Exalted be He: "And those who reject Allah enjoy [this world] and eat as cattle eat; and the Fire will be their abode."

Al Libi had only high regard for Taliban leaders he met in prison, illustrating the continued close relationship between al Qaeda and the Taliban that is likely to persist should al Libi's position in al Qaeda continue to rise.

But I swear by Allah and testify for His sake that the brother Taliban whom we met in prison were among the best we have seen of Allah's worshippers – whether in terms of piety and fear of and devotion to Him or in terms of their disassociation from and rejection of the unbelievers and their methodologies or in terms of their loyalty to the believers, to the extent that they feel that they have been neglectful of your rights. He feels that what happened to you – and you're now together with him in prison – is his fault and that he didn't protect you sufficiently. So those Talib leaders whom we saw were of the highest standard and truly deserve to be leaders of the Ummah, and I don't say this out of exaggeration, [empty] praise, and excessive flattery which oversteps the bounds, but I say it as testimony for Allah's sake about which I will be questioned in His presence.

He later addressed the defeat al Qaeda was dealt in Afghanistan in 2001- 02 and praised the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, saying:

Without a doubt – and this is something we must recognize – the Mujahideen have paid a price in the campaign which the US has waged against them. But this is not a shame or defect – we don't say that it is a shame or defect. We call ourselves Mujahideen, and they are those who raise the slogan of Jihad, and what is Jihad? Jihad is made up of exertion, difficulty, exhaustion, and hardship, and in this, they take pride and find prestige. So this campaign involved some of the heads and leaders of the Mujahideen and some of their role models and some who sacrificed themselves, and their time for the sake of championing Allah's religion. We mention as an example the Mujahid hero Khalid Shaykh Muhammad. The Ummah (Islamic nation) doesn't appreciate the importance of this man, nor the services which he rendered to Allah's religion. And how sorry we were that this brother fell into the hands of the Americans, but Allah – Exalted is He – wanted something and there's no doubt that what Allah chose for him and the Mujahideen will be better for them.

Another portion of his speech is lengthy, but is worth quoting because it foreshadowed the role al Libi has undertaken in al Qaeda: that of the doctrinaire who unflinchingly challenges the Sunni ulema (scholars) to support global jihad. When asked if he had a message for the ulema, al Libi stated:

I say to the Muslim Ulema: Muslim Ulema, what is you're waiting for? What is it that makes you refrain? I say this to some of the Muslim Ulema who have disowned the Mujahideen, repudiated their actions, and dedicated their pens, pulpits and mouths to slandering the Mujahideen. I say to them: don't you know that one day you shall stand in front of Allah? Don't you know that you shall be questioned about every word you say? Don't you know that you will be held accountable for each testimony you give – whether for unbelievers or against the Mujahideen? Don't you know that this world is short-lived and will pass and end, after which you will harvest the fruits of what you do today?

Muslim Ulema: who will awaken the Ummah from its coma? Who will arouse concern in this Ummah? Why do we always hear from the Mujahid scholars, "Go and perform Jihad; Jihad is obligatory in Iraq"? Why don't we ever hear a Mujahid scholar say, "Come to Jihad?" Why don't we hear them say, "Come on, come to us"? Why aren't there scholars in the arenas of Jihad? If Jihad is an individual obligation, is it obligatory on the youth only? What has exempted you? Your knowledge? What has excused you from this duty? Muslim Ulema: it is essential that you free yourselves from this painful reality. You must repudiate these puppet governments which terrorize and frighten you. I swear by Allah you shall never taste the sweetness of faith, nor the dignity of the believer, nor the glory and power of true belief and certainty in Allah until and unless you enter the arenas of Jihad and experience the Jihad firsthand instead of from a distance.

So we request the Muslim Ulema to stand beside their brothers and not confront them nor be a burden upon them, nor force the Mujahideen to sacrifice some of their energy and effort to respond to their misconceptions. We expect the Muslim Ulema to themselves be providers of fatwas, guidance, education and motivation. Regarding the duty of motivation, this great duty which Allah assigned to His Prophet, saying: "So fight in Allah's Cause – you are held responsible only for yourself and rouse the believers." (An-Nisa 84) if the righteous, sincere Ulema don't carry out this forgotten act of worship, who will? Who do we expect to say to the Mujahideen, "Go ahead"? Who do we expect to say to them, "Make sacrifices"? Who do we expect to say to them, "Slay the enemies of God"? Why do we always – or almost always – find many of the Ulema standing as an obstacle in the path of Jihad?

Is there a clearer and purer banner than the one that the Mujahideen have raised in this era, whether in Afghanistan or Iraq or Palestine or elsewhere? If the Mujahideen have made some mistakes, then that's because of your negligence and absence from their midst. They're making every effort for their actions to be in conformity with the tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and mistakes befall them because they're human or because of their lack of knowledge due to your absence from the field. So if you refrain, it's not the duty of the Mujahideen to join you in refraining and abandon the fields of Jihad and let the enemies of God, kill, slaughter, violate honor, and demolish mosques, for us to say, "Leave the Jihad, the Jihad has brought nothing but corruption, destruction, and calamities upon the Ummah." The Jihad which has exposed these puppet governments which have raised the banner of total loyalty to the enemies of Allah, the Jews and Christians, were it not for this Jihad, they wouldn't have been exposed.

It was statements like this, and his formal training as a scholar, that allowed him to fill a position that had not formally existed before – that of al Qaeda's scholar. This was a role that neither bin Laden – an engineer by trade – or al Zawahiri – a medical doctor – could always credibly fill. They issue their own fatwas and pen complex religious texts, but al Libi can be taken more seriously on Islamic doctrine by other scholars and learned Muslims due to his formal schooling.

This fact has proven to be of vital importance when examining al Qaeda's as-Sahab media releases since 2005. Al Libi has appeared in at least a dozen different video recordings put out

by the organization in the past year alone – more often than either bin Laden or al Zawahiri. At a time when the fight against al Qaeda is largely an information war, al Libi serves as the poster child for the new, post-9/11 al Qaeda central. In many of these videos he has lashed out against ulema who do not support al Qaeda, groups insufficiently dedicated to the jihad, the Saudi government, and Shiites. Various reports indicate that al Libi, while possessing little to no tactical experience, is well-positioned to succeed Osama bin Laden in his roll as head of the global Jihad movement.

Mustafa al-Yazid

Mustafa al-Yazid is by no means a new face amongst the al Qaeda leadership. Unlike many of the other emerging leaders who are in their 20s and 30s, al-Yazid, now in his 50s, is a well-seasoned veteran who was methodically assigned to a post in Afghanistan in order to reassure al Qaeda insurgents of the war's turning tide.

Much like al Zawahiri, al-Yazid, an Egyptian, got his start in the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Around this same time, or shortly before, al-Yazid became acquainted with al Zawahiri. After serving time in prison, al-Yazid was released and later made his way to Afghanistan, where he became a founding member of al Qaeda's Shura leadership council and a close confidant of Osama bin Laden.

Since that time, the senior leader has served in many capacities and locales for the al Qaeda organization. During the 1990s, al-Yazid was financial manager for Osama bin Laden's business enterprises while the organization was in exile in Sudan. It also has been suggested that he may have been involved in arranging funding for the failed June 1995 assassination plot against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Later, al-Yazid is said to have applied his business expertise to the 9/11 mission by supplying the mission's ringleader, Mohammad Atta, with the necessary funding. Due in part to this role, the September 11th Commission identified al-Yazid as al Qaeda's "chief financial manager" in its comprehensive report.

While there is evidence that al-Yazid initially opposed the strategy outlined for the 9/11 attacks, due mostly to a fear that a U.S.-led retaliation would negatively impact his close friend Mullah Omar's Taliban regime, it is clear that he has carried on as a loyal supporter of the organization's overall mission.

Al-Yazid's most recent appointment as "General Leader" in Afghanistan is significant in two ways. First off, al-Yazid's close relationship with Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, could help reassure locals that, unlike the case in Iraq under foreigner Abu Musab al Zarqawi, al Qaeda is focused on the interests of the locals in Afghanistan. In another regard, his appointment is important because it shows an overall confidence on the part of senior al Qaeda leadership that they are well on their way to winning out against the U.S. and NATO. In short, a well-entrenched and well-respected leader such as al-Yazid can handle problems in Afghanistan while bin Laden and al Zawahiri can focus attention on the larger-scale global strategy. Additionally, the public manner in which al-Yazid was appointed to his new role, via as-Sahab (al Qaeda's media production house), could suggest that he has assumed the more prominent position as liaison to other militant groups in Uzbekistan and along the Afghan-Pakistani border.

Recently, al-Yazid has emerged as a leader in charge of the Benazir Bhutto assassination plot late last year. According to various foreign news sources, al-Yazid personally called reporters to claim responsibility for the attacks. In one call to Asia Times Online, al-Yazid reportedly called Bhutto's killing the "first major victory against those...who have been siding with infidels...in a fight against al-Qaeda and declared a war against mujahideen." While these reports have not been verified by U.S. authorities, and the Pakistan Interior Ministry holds Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud responsible, it is clear that Mustafa al-Yazid is as relevant as ever before.

Atiyah Abd al-Rahman

Like many Libyans who have assumed senior leadership positions in al Qaeda, Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, like al Libi, is a veteran of the anti-Qaddafi LIGF and of the jihad against the Russians in Afghanistan. Born in Libya in 1968, al-Rahman is said to have first met bin Laden on the battlefields of Afghanistan in the years prior to the establishment of al Qaeda. After returning to Algeria for some time to fight in his homeland, al-Rahman came into conflict with the leadership of the Libyan Islamist movement and was kidnapped and detained. This experience led him to temporarily leave the movement once escaping from jail and the country.

However, al-Rahman proved that he could not stay away from the movement for long, and a few years later made his way back to Afghanistan, bin Laden, and the al Qaeda organization as a whole. In short time after 9/11, and the killing or detainment of former leaders, al-Rahman began to ascend up the al Qaeda ranks. It is at this point that he emerged as a senior operative and the organization's point person in Iran. He also had a great deal of interaction with AQI leader Abu Musab al Zarqawi in the days and months prior to al Zarqawi's death.

Intelligence reports state that, in his capacity as Iranian contact for al Qaeda, al-Rahman is in charge of forging ties between Iranian Islamist groups and the core leadership of the Sunni al Qaeda network. This work is vital to the mission of the Sunni organization, who sees as its first mission the ridding of infidels from Muslim lands and the destruction of Israel and so-called corrupt Muslim leaders. Only once this is achieved, the core adherents to the al Qaeda ideology believe that Sunnis should begin fighting the heretical Shias. As a point person in Shia Iran entrusted with bridging the gaps between Muslims against the common enemy, al-Rahman is a valuable asset for al Qaeda's leadership. His skill as a unifier, not to mention an explosives expert and Islamic scholar, separate him from the pack.

Al Rahman's adherence to the al Qaeda line is quite evident from his 2005 letter to Abu Musab al Zarqawi – the Jordanian fighter who, while operating under the al Qaeda name, was known to have had a rocky relationship with al Qaeda leadership due to his unwillingness not to attack Shiites in Iraq. In the letter, signed simply "Atiyah," al-Rahman reprimanded the leader for alienating rival insurgent groups in Iraq, rather than bringing them into the fold, and for attacking valuable Shiite partners. He sternly noted to Zarqawi that, if unwilling to fall in line, he could be replaced once a competent leader was found.

More recently, al-Rahman has returned to his roots by negotiating a pact with Libyan Islamists – successors to those that kidnapped and detained him – to fall under the al Qaeda umbrella.

Abu Obaidah al-Masri

Little is known about the identity of Abu Obaidah al-Masri, the shadowy Egyptian who is said to be amongst al Qaeda's inner-most circle. With an assumed name meaning only "Egyptian father of Obaidah," all that is known about al-Masri is that he is in his mid-to-late 40s and a veteran of the wars in Afghanistan. Al-Masri allegedly rose dramatically into al Qaeda senior leadership following the death of fellow Egyptian, Abu Hamza Rabia.

He has served as a field commander in the Afghan province of Kunar and may have traveled to Saudi Arabia to help organize an al Qaeda affiliate there. Prior to this, al-Masri is said to have fought in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Chechnya, where he lost two fingers in the fight. It appears that he later found his way to both Germany and Britain before returning in 2000 to Kabul, Afghanistan to teach aspiring jihadists at a terrorist training camp.

There is evidence to suggest that, at present, al-Masri serves as operations chief for al Qaeda. He is said to be connected to the 2005 London transit bombing cell as well as the failed transatlantic airliner plot in the United Kingdom in 2006. Those found to be in charge of plotting the latter attack, which called for detonating liquid explosives in the false bottoms of containers while the plane was airborne – were said to have reported to al-Masri.

Numerous attempts have been made to neutralize the threat posed by al-Masri; up until now, all appear to have been unsuccessful. In two such attempts, one on January 13, 2006 and the other on October 30th of the same year, al-Masri displayed his ability to avoid the fate of those assuming his position before him. His current status cannot be officially confirmed, and it is unknown for certain whether he is dead or alive.

The fate of al-Masri tells a great deal about the workings of today's al Qaeda network – regardless of where the truth lies. If he is, in fact, alive, al-Masri is living proof of the resilience of the al Qaeda network: an adept and competent individual who rose from a mid-level leadership position to fill the void left by those before him and who is dedicated to widening the war against the West. If he has perished in allied attacks, then by now, yet another shadowy figure has almost certainly risen to fill the void.

Khalid Habib

Khalid Habib, another member of the al Qaeda leadership's new guard, shares a great deal in common with Abu Obaidah al-Masri, including the fact that little is known about his personal life, nor his current status. What is known about Habib, who is also known by the alias Khalid al Harbi, is that he first emerged into the public spotlight in a November 2005 videotape entitled "Defeating the Cross," in which Habib was named commander of southeast Afghanistan alongside Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, who was given the reigns over the country's southwest region. The two were said to have worked closely together in crafting the resurgent al Qaeda insurgency in Afghanistan prior to al-Iraqi's capture and subsequent transfer to the Guantanamo Bay detainment camp – where he remains to this day.

Of unknown origin – possibly either Egyptian or Moroccan – Habib is said to be quite competent and experienced in insurgency; so much so, in fact, that CBS News reported last year that he has “replaced Khalid Sheikh Mohammed as the operations leader of al Qaeda.” The news report went on to quote a top FBI official who deemed Habib “one of the five or six most capable, most experienced terrorists in the world.”

Like al-Masri, Habib’s current status is unknown. While first reports showed that Habib was killed in the same January attack in Pakistan as al-Masri, later evidence suggested otherwise.

Al Qaeda in Iraq and Developing al Qaeda Affiliates

AQI has become the most powerful al Qaeda affiliate group aside from, perhaps, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). It has also been designated by al Qaeda leadership as a vehicle for the development of other al Qaeda affiliates in Jordan, Lebanon (where two al Qaeda affiliates have existed under the radar for some time), and the Palestinian Territories. Thus, it is important to be familiar with the rise of AQI and its goals – both short and long-term – in the greater Middle East.

Before the ongoing threat of AQI is examined it is important to address the effect of the invasion of Iraq on al Qaeda and its motives, as this matter is often misunderstood. The invasion of Iraq and the ensuing occupation has benefited al Qaeda in several ways, providing the group with a windfall in propaganda, recruits, and funding. Al Qaeda has been given the opportunity to direct attacks against American military personnel – attacks that they have infamously video taped and publicized. Through such acts, al Qaeda's prestige has risen somewhat, as they could portray themselves as heroically defending Muslim lands rather than launching offensive raids in non-Muslim lands (9/11). This affect has been countered in part, although not totally, by al Qaeda's incessant targeting of Iraqi civilians, both Sunni and Shiite, which has opened the door towards active collaboration between U.S. forces and former Sunni insurgent groups, weary of al Qaeda's tactics.

In light of such efforts, a precipitous withdrawal of American troops would serve to strengthen the narrative promoted by al Qaeda that the United States is a paper tiger that need not be feared. Such a withdrawal would be counterproductive, if not disastrous, as it would undoubtedly lead to more al Qaeda attacks and insurgencies against the United States and her allies in the region and beyond, such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Israel and possibly Egypt. Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, and other al Qaeda leaders have made this abundantly clear in many of their recent speeches. Al Qaeda recently released a strategy memo detailing how the resources of AQI will be directed toward Israel and the Palestinian territories upon American withdrawal.

To be sure, al Qaeda would be actively targeting the U.S. whether we invaded Iraq or not. The invasion of Iraq had no impact on the ideology and motivations of al Qaeda. While al Qaeda figures and publications often cite "grievances" over our military actions, their ideology is not dependent on it. In the eyes of al Qaeda, our most unforgivable crime is that we support un-Islamic systems of government at home, abroad, and especially in the Muslim world. This is a direct transgression against God because, according to their ideology, sovereignty in governance can belong only to God. Thus, any system of government anywhere in the world that recognizes the sovereignty of the people, such as a democratic republic, directly contravenes the will of God and must be fought until it is destroyed. To suggest that al Qaeda would be satiated by an American withdrawal from Iraq and adjustments to our foreign policy would be counterfactual. A precipitous American withdrawal from Iraq would only serve to strengthen al Qaeda further. Osama bin Laden has cited past American withdrawals from Somalia and Lebanon as proof of the fragility of American power.

Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)

Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the founder and late-leader of AQI, fled his Herat, Afghanistan-based training camp to escape the invading forces led by the U.S. in 2001. He had operated his training camp independently of Osama bin Laden, with whom he did not always have a cordial relationship. Al Zarqawi and his followers made it across Iran and regrouped in the camps of Ansar al Islam, a Kurdish terrorist group, in northern Iraq. Al Zarqawi began rebuilding his own group, which became dedicated to driving out the American occupation after the invasion in 2003 and replacing the Iraqi regime with an Islamic government. His group eventually became AQI, drawing upon resources and recruits from Ansar al Islam. It took more than year after the invasion of Iraq for al Zarqawi to pledge his loyalty to Osama bin Laden, but he still remained fairly autonomous, drawing criticism for his alienation of Sunni tribes and indiscriminate killing of Shiites from Ayman al Zawahiri and other al Qaeda leaders. Al Zarqawi built an effective terrorist network, drawing recruits from Europe, North Africa, and the Gulf Arab states, many of whom infiltrated into Iraq from Syria. In 2005, AQI turned its attention outside of Iraq, dispatching a cell to bomb hotels in Amman, Jordan. The attacks provoked a widespread backlash in Jordan against AQI and al Qaeda as the attacks killed 60 Arab Muslims, including guests at a Palestinian wedding. While AQI is likely to be more discriminating in its targets in the future, this attack indicated that AQI did not intend on limiting its operations to the Iraqi theater.

In January 2006, the Mujahideen Shura Council was founded as an umbrella organization led by al Qaeda for Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq. Al Zarqawi was killed in a U.S. air strike in June 2006, but the organization survived, strengthening its ties with al Qaeda's central leadership and cultivating leaders more in line with their strategy rather than the maverick tactics of al Zarqawi. In October 2006, the Mujahideen Shura Council was replaced by the Islamic State of Iraq. AQI has largely been defeated by U.S. forces and U.S.-sponsored Sunni tribal militias in the western al Anbar Province, which was formerly the stronghold of the group. Still, AQI remains a viable force in Iraq and is looked to by senior al Qaeda leadership as a vehicle to establish other al Qaeda affiliates in the Middle East. Just months before his death, al Zarqawi stated, "In Iraq we are very close to al-Aqsa Mosque of the Messenger of Allah, so we fight in Iraq and our eyes are on Jerusalem, which can only be restored by the guiding Quran and the sword of victory."³

In 2007, both Ayman al Zawahiri and the (possibly fictional) leader of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu Omar al Baghdadi, both claimed AQI would serve as a base for jihad throughout the Middle East.

Al Qaeda in Palestine

"Then He will help them (Allah Willing) to be the point of departure towards the blessed Aqsa Masjid, so the Mujahideen from outside Palestine will meet their brothers inside it iterate another Hitteen battle (Allah Willing), then the Muslims will be victorious."⁴

³ Abu Musab al Zarqawi, "A Message to the People," April 25, 2006.

⁴ Osama bin Laden, "The Way to Rescue Palestine," March 21, 2008.

Osama bin Laden recently released this call for the liberation of Palestine. This is one of a series of public statements that indicate a growing interest on behalf of al Qaeda to launch operations in Palestine. Al Zawahiri has focused on Palestinian issues in many of his recent speeches, criticizing Hamas for taking part in a nominally democratic system of government and condemning Fatah for supporting a two-state solution.

Earlier this year, al Qaeda released a strategy memo entitled, “The Timing of the Entrance of al-Qaeda Organization in the Palestinian Territories.” The memo laid out a three-year plan that began last year to establish an al Qaeda presence in the Palestinian Territories. Of this new affiliate organization, the memo stated that “attacks against the Jews will not be limited to occupied Palestine but will continue to reach all the areas in which Jews have a strong influence.” As the al Qaeda narrative insists that Jews have inordinate influence throughout the Western world, it is reasonable to state that Jewish individuals and institutions in the United States are possible targets.

In February 2008, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said, “I can say without doubt that al-Qaeda is present in the Palestinian territories and that this presence, especially in Gaza, is facilitated by Hamas.”⁵ His comments seemed to be supported by Israeli officials who have long said that al Qaeda was in Gaza and more members had entered the territory when Hamas blew up the security wall on its border with Egypt. In January, a group called the Army of Believers, al Qaeda in Palestine Organization, attacked the private American International School.

Al Qaeda in Lebanon: Fatah al-Islam and Asbat al-Ansar

May 2007 witnessed the emergence in the public consciousness of an al Qaeda affiliate in Lebanon which had been in existence for several years. Originating from several of the Palestinian refugee camps where Sunni extremists can more easily blend in with the local population, the presence of al Qaeda linked groups in Lebanon should come as no surprise.

Fatah al-Islam

Based in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr al Bard near the Lebanese city Tripoli, Fatah al-Islam (The Conquest of Islam) was formed in November of 2006, and designated by the State Department as a terrorist group in August 2007. Several months earlier, in May of 2007, Lebanese government forces had fought a pitched battle with Fatah al-Islam members in Nahr al Bard, which ended with the shelling of the refugee camp by the Lebanese army, in which as many as 39 Fatah terrorists were killed.

Fatah al-Islam’s leader, Shaker al Abssi, is a Palestinian from Jericho. Al Abssi was arrested by the Syrians in 2000, but was later released. He subsequently went to Iraq to fight alongside al Qaeda members, where his ties with the group are alleged to have strengthened. The Jordanians had sentenced him in absentia in 2004 for his role in the assassination of Laurence Foley. The Lebanese government claims that Al Abssi was killed by government forces in September 2007.

⁵ James Hider, “Al-Qaeda ‘in Gaza with Hamas help,’” The Times, February 28, 2008.

In September 2007, the head of Lebanese Army intelligence, Brigadier General George Khoury, asserted:

All the investigations have confirmed that the Fatah al-Islam organization is linked to Al-Qaeda and is in continuous link and contact with it. This connection to Al-Qaeda was revealed through all the investigations that were carried out with captured elements, communications that occurred between Al-Qaeda cells outside Lebanon and confessions of captured individuals.⁶

Al Mustaqbal, a Lebanese newspaper reported on March 26, 2008 that a man named Ahmad Mar'i, who was arrested with nine forged identity cards, confessed to being the liaison between al Absi, Syrian intelligence, and al Qaeda. Mar'i admitted to performing services for al Qaeda leader Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, profiled earlier in this testimony.⁷

Asbat al-Ansar

A lesser known, but older and more active group, Asbat al-Ansar, had led a campaign of terror in Lebanon since the mid-90's. The head of Asbat al-Ansar (League of Followers), Abu Sharif, has claimed that several of his followers had died fighting U.S. forces in Iraq, once threatened the U.S. directly from his then-base in the notoriously radical Palestinian Ain al-Hilwe refuge camp. The U.S. has long known that this group has been associated with al Qaeda.

⁶ Rim Ghazal, "Murr warns fresh political crisis could mar army's victory," Daily Star (Lebanon), September 5, 2007.

⁷ Al-Mustaqbal website, Beirut, in Arabic March 26, 2008, from BBC Monitoring Service, April 4, 2008

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

AQIM has a long pedigree in the global jihadist movement. It began with the outbreak of civil war in Algeria in 1992. National elections were set to take place, but when the Islamist party, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won a landslide victory in the first round of elections, the Algerian military intervened and cancelled the second round. Violence erupted and Algeria fell victim to a brutal civil war, with massacres on both sides of the conflict. FIS leaders who rejected peaceful settlement found the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) shortly after the civil war began. Algerians who had fought the Soviets in Afghanistan joined the GIA, and attacks were launched against civilians, civil servants, and European expatriates. The GIA quickly established a logistical support network in Italy, France, Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere in Europe that funneled supplies, money, forged documents, and weapons to their terrorist brethren. In 1994, GIA operatives hijacked an Air France flight from Algiers to Paris, killing three passengers before French antiterrorism police secured the plane. The next summer and fall brought GIA bombings to the streets of France. Larger attacks were planned, but failed, such as a plot to bomb a Christmas market in Strasbourg.

In 1997, the Algerian public, tired of brutal massacres against civilians, turned against the GIA. Other terrorist organizations around the Middle East also condemned the GIA. Hassan Hattab, a GIA commander who had left the organization the year before, stepped into the vacuum and founded the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in 1998. A captured GSPC operative claimed that he had witnessed telephone conversations between Hattab and Osama bin Laden during which the Saudi terrorist leader encouraged his Algerian brother to establish GSPC and even suggested the name. The GSPC inherited the vast logistical support networks of the GIA which spanned across the Europe and even to Canada.

While GSPC has targeted U.S. interests abroad, it is also one of the few al Qaeda affiliates that have attempted to launch attacks on the U.S. homeland. Rachid Boukhalfa, aka Abu Doha, was a high level GSPC operative until he was imprisoned in the United Kingdom. Abu Doha directed the operation that became known as the millennium bombing plot that targeted the Los Angeles International Airport (see insert below).

After the establishment of AQI, GSPC arranged to funnel newly trained recruits from North Africa to Iraq where they would fight or serve as fodder for suicide attacks.

In November 2005, the Moroccan security services revealed messages between an al Qaeda liaison in Europe and North African terrorists. One of the messages spoke of GSPC plans to pledge loyalty to al Qaeda, which had already happened in 2003, and alluded to plans to eventually unite all of the terrorist groups in North Africa under the umbrella of a group to be called al Qaeda in the Arab Maghreb Countries. This goal was officially realized in January of 2007, but Ayman al Zawahiri had sanctioned the merger months before in a videotape released on the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. While AQIM is spearheaded by GSPC veterans, it is also composed of remnants of the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group, the Tunisian Combatant Group, and the LIFG.

The Millennium Bombing Plot

Abu Doha supervised the millennium plot, managing the cell after having met Ahmed Ressam, the individual arrested at the Canadian/U.S. border, at an Al Qaeda training camp in Khalden, Afghanistan – a camp Doha founded with direct permission from Osama Bin Laden. Doha left Afghanistan and headed to the United Kingdom, settling in London, where he was arrested in 2001 in connection with a plot in Strasbourg, which was to bomb a Christmas market, after which Doha had planned to flee to Saudi Arabia.

British authorities searched Doha's home and found documents on bomb making materials and counterfeit identity documents. Doha had been facilitating the training and movement of Algerian jihadists to Afghanistan for placement in terrorist cells in Europe and Canada. Ahmed Ressam, while training at Doha's camp in Afghanistan, plotted along with other Algerians to rob Canadian banks to finance an American terrorist attack.

By 1998, Ressam, Doha and others had begun planning a bombing operation in the United States, set to target LAX. Abu Doha told Ressam that he would finance the operation and facilitate Ressam's return to Algeria after the attack. By September 1998, Ressam had left Khalden and moved on to another camp in Toronto, Afghanistan to complete his training. There, Ressam spent a month and a half learning how to manufacture and assemble explosives.

By February 1999, Ressam has returned to Canada, via Pakistan, and, ironically, Los Angeles. Ressam then settled – illegally, after having been denied asylum – in Montreal. By the summer of 1999, Ressam has begun the final preparations for his targeting LAX. According to Ressam, in September of 1999, he “started buying electronic equipment and electronic components, small electronic components that will be used in putting together electronic circuits” and then in November in Vancouver he “started collecting chemical materials [to concoct] an explosive substance similar to TNT.”⁸

In November 1999, Ressam and Abu Doha spoke by the telephone, Doha reconfirming his earlier pledges to pay for the plot and facilitate Ressam's escape back to Algeria.

On December 14, 1999, Ressam, in a rental car packed with explosives, was detained by customs officers at the Port Angeles, Washington border facility.

He drove a rental car packed with their explosives onto a car ferry that traveled from Vancouver to Victoria and then on to Port Angeles in Washington state. Once inside the United States, the plan was to take a train to Los Angeles, scope out LAX, and carry out the operation. He hoped to then return to Montreal and escape to Europe and eventually Algeria.

Source: Steven Emerson, *Jihad Incorporated* (Prometheus Books, 2006).

Since the official establishment of AQIM, the group has plotted many attacks, but thus far has only met limited success outside of Algeria. The largest of these attacks was a December 2007 suicide attack on the offices of the United Nations in Algiers, which killed 41 people. Most recently, the group claimed responsibility for kidnapping two Austrian tourists on March 10 in the Tunisian desert. The victims are likely being held in Mali. AQIM demanded the release of 10 terrorists held in Tunisia and Algeria and five million euros in ransom for their return. The group then changed their demands, asking for the release of a Muslim couple held in Austria and an end to Austria's participation in the occupation of Afghanistan, which consists of a presence of four Austrian military officers. They extended the deadline for their release to last Sunday.

⁸ *USA v. Mokhtar Haouri*, S4 00-CR-17. “Trial Transcript.” P. 576 (SD NY July 3, 2001).

When their demands were not met and the deadline expired, the group released a statement on the Internet that said, “We have done all we can but it seems that Austria is not serious about preserving the lives of its citizens and it is now ... alone responsible for the lives and the unknown fate of the kidnapped.”⁹

AQIM has kept up a steady tempo of attacks. In February 2008, AQIM claimed responsibility for an ambush on eight Algerian paramilitary police. On Christmas Eve 2007, four French tourists were killed in Mauritania by men who had trained in AQIM camps.¹⁰ In January, a vehicle bomb was driven into a police station in eastern Algeria, killing four people.¹¹

AQIM's European Infrastructure

As mentioned earlier, North African terrorist networks have been operating in Europe since the early 1990s. These networks are highly durable and provide logistical support, forged documents, weapons, funds and other resources. These networks could potentially become operational and launch attacks throughout Europe. AQIM has often criticized France and other European countries and expressed intentions to launch future attacks in Europe.

⁹ “Austria responsible for hostages' ‘fate’ – Qaeda,” *Reuters*, April 7, 2008.

¹⁰ Lydia Polgreen, “Shooters Are Sought in Israeli Embassy Attack in Mauritania,” *New York Times*, February 2, 2008.

¹¹ “Al-Qaeda Maghreb group claims Algeria bombing,” *Agence France Presse*, January 30, 2008.

Europe: The Main Battleground in the West

Europe has been and remains the main front in the West in the global struggle against al Qaeda, its affiliates and Islamic militancy. Al Qaeda and its affiliate groups have been launching attacks in Europe since the early 1990s. In the past year, several plots linked to al Qaeda have been discovered and dismantled. Several more with no direct links to al Qaeda have also been revealed.

As stated earlier, after the al Qaeda hierarchy was mostly destroyed in Afghanistan in 2001-2002, al Qaeda was forced to devolve from a group with a physical command-and-control structure into an ideological presence, outsourcing operational autonomy outward to various affiliate groups and to other willing parties. Al Qaeda's ideology spread like wildfire across the globe and its cause was adopted by extremists around the world, including those in the West. Since then, there have been a number of plots, some successful, by militant Islamists with no connection whatsoever to al Qaeda. The most famous network of this sort was the Hofstad group in the Netherlands. On the other side of the spectrum, there are an increasing number of operatives that have been dispatched by al Qaeda and her tribal allies in FATA to Europe to carry out attacks. Networks found somewhere in the middle of the spectrum have been responsible for most plots in Europe since 9/11. The cell that carried out the London transit bombings in July 2005 is a perfect example.

The London Transit Cell: Connections to al Qaeda

In a series of four coordinated suicide bombings, 56 people were killed and over 700 were injured. The bombers were Mohammad Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, Hasib Mir Hussain, and Germaine Lindsay. All of the bombers were Britons of Pakistani descent who had been born and raised in the United Kingdom, with the exception of Lindsay, a Jamaican by birth who had moved to England. As shown below, there was extensive al Qaeda involvement in their training and possibly in the planning of the actual attack, but Khan, Tanweer, Hussain, and Lindsay all radicalized autonomously and sought out al Qaeda and affiliated groups for assistance on their own accord.

All four of the bombers traveled to Pakistan – some more than once – where they made contact with terrorist organizations linked to al Qaeda (Lashkar e Taiba, Jaish e Mohammed, and Harakut ul-Mujahideen). Hussain spent time in Pakistan in mid-2004. Khan and Tanweer traveled to Pakistan individually and later spent three months there from late 2004 to early 2005. During Lindsay's trip to Pakistan, he may have crossed the border into Afghanistan. All four of the cell members claimed they had lost their passports upon their return home in order to keep their travel patterns hidden from authorities. Pakistani security officials claimed Khan and Tanweer attended an al Qaeda training camp. There, they were likely instructed in explosives by Abu Hamza Rabia, a prominent al Qaeda leader killed months after the London transit attack, and Abu Ubaida al-Masri, the infamous current al Qaeda external operations chief profiled earlier in this testimony. Authorities know Tanweer maintained contact with a stolen cellular phone in Pakistan up until three days prior to the transit bombings.

The main issue of concern regarding the Pakistan trips is the men with whom the 7/7 terrorists met and the organizations with whom those men are associated. Khan and Tanweer met with someone tied with al Qaeda in a hotel in Karachi at which the two stayed for a week upon their arrival in Pakistan. After leaving the hotel, they traveled to Lahore where Tanweer attended a madrassa that has been identified as having ties with militants. Pakistani authorities have claimed that Tanweer was in touch with terrorists from Lashkar-i-Taiba and Jaish-i-Mohammed, two terrorist groups affiliated with al Qaeda that chiefly strive for Kashmiri independence. It is also believed that Khan and Tanweer may have attended a training camp in Pakistan or Afghanistan during this trip where they were received instruction on explosives.

While Khan was in Pakistan, he met with Muhammed Junaid Babar, who pled guilty in the U.S. in 2004 to providing material support to al Qaeda. He has also admitted to setting up terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and aiding in a failed plot to bomb British pubs, train stations and restaurants in 2004. Babar was a main player in the Al-Muhajiroun terrorist group's cell in Queens, New York.

Al Muhajiroun was founded and led by Omar Bakri Muhammed in London in the mid 1990s and its leadership has repeatedly expressed solidarity with bin Laden. Omar Bakri Muhammed has even claimed to represent bin Laden on occasion. His organization has repeatedly referred to the 9/11 hijackers as "the Magnificent 19" and has insisted that the U.S. is a legitimate target for Muslims to attack with any weapons that may be available.

Khan and Tanweer also met with a Briton named Zeeshan Siddiqui in Pakistan. Zeeshan Siddiqui, who was arrested in May 2005 in Peshwar, Pakistan, is also a friend of Mohammed Junaid Babar. They spent two and a half months together in Lahore. Interestingly, Siddiqui's close friend in college in West London was Asif Hanif, a suicide bomber associated with Al-Muhajiroun who carried out the bombing in a Tel Aviv pub, Mike's Place, in 2003. Authorities found numbers of known al Qaeda terrorists and Islamists on Siddiqui's phone, many implicated in an August 2004 bombing plot in London. His diary also displayed knowledge of a nonspecific operation called "wagon" that may have been the 2005 London attacks, which some have speculated were scheduled for the spring, but postponed until July. This theory meshes with information garnered from Abu Faraj al Libbi, a Libyan who was captured in May 2005 in Pakistan and has been alleged to have been the third-in-command of the al Qaeda network. Authorities have claimed that al Libbi directed al Qaeda cells in London. During interrogation, he revealed knowledge of a plot to attack London's transportation system that was to take place in May 2005, but it was cancelled or postponed.

Another figure of interest in the 7/7 plot is Mohammed Naeem Noor Khan, a Pakistani in his mid-20s who has admitted to administering al Qaeda communication networks and websites. Noor Khan admitted to his Pakistani interrogators that he spent 25 days training at a terrorist camp in Afghanistan in June 1998. He was also in contact with the brother of the Jemaah Islamiyah figure, Riduan Isamuddin, AKA Hambali. Information obtained from his computer files and from his interrogation were instrumental in the investigation and apprehension of the eight men implicated in the August 2004 London bomb plot – the same men whose phone numbers were found with Zeeshan Siddique.

Consequences of al Qaeda Sanctuary in FATA for Europe

It seems that there are two main consequences of an al Qaeda sanctuary in FATA. The first is, tribal and Taliban militia leaders have taken to threatening Europeans in Afghanistan and in Europe itself. This demonstrates a global character to the motivations of groups that before were exclusively concerned with regional issues. The second consequence is a marked increase in Pakistani ties to terrorist plots in Europe, most famously demonstrated by the London transit cell as explained above. Recent plots in Europe have fit two patterns that both exploit the heavy presence of ethnic Pakistanis in Europe – especially in the U.K. where, as of 2001, the population numbered 750,000. The first pattern is characterized by Pakistanis with no direct ties to Europe, increasingly being dispatched to the Continent by al Qaeda and tribal allies for the express purpose of carrying out attacks. Speaking of such plots, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates noted on a recent trip to Europe:

Many who have been arrested have had direct connections to al Qaeda. Some have met with top leaders or attended training camps abroad. Some are connected to al Qaeda in Iraq. In the most recent case, the Barcelona cell appears to have ties to a terrorist training network run by Baitullah Mehsud, a Pakistan-based extremist commander affiliated with the Taliban and al Qaeda – who we believe was responsible for the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.¹²

In June 2007, a video of an al Qaeda/Taliban terrorist graduation ceremony was released on the Internet. It showed Taliban leader Mansoor Dadullah introducing teams that claimed to be from America, the UK, Canada and Germany. According to Dadullah, all had come to Pakistan to seek out terrorist training. Some analysts dismissed the video as propaganda, but others, such as Richard Clarke, believe we should not be so quick to dismiss it. The cases examined in this testimony clearly show that al Qaeda and the Taliban are training European Muslims and sending them back to Europe to execute attacks. It is possible that some of the men involved in these plots were members of this graduating class of terrorists.

Barcelona Plot

Recent arrests in Spain speak to a plot that fit the first pattern. In January, 14 men were arrested by Spanish authorities in Barcelona, 12 of whom were Pakistani. They were in possession of bomb making equipment and were part of a network allegedly planning attacks in Spain, France, Germany and Portugal. Six of the cell members were designated as suicide bombers – three of whom had arrived in Spain from Pakistan within four months prior to the arrests. One of the plotters reportedly told an informant, “If we attack the metro [in Barcelona], the emergency services can’t get there. Our preference is public transport, especially the metro.” Baitullah Mehsud, the Waziri Taliban leader addressed earlier in this testimony, was responsible for the operation. The informant claimed the cell leader told him, “Only the leadership of the organization knows what requests the emir [Mehsud] will make after the first attack, but if they are not carried out, there will be a second attack in Spain, and a third. And then in Germany, France, Portugal and the United Kingdom. There are many people prepared there.” Baltasar Garzon, the senior Spanish anti-terrorism magistrate, said of the cell, “That these people were ready to go into action as terrorists in Spain – that came as a surprise. In my opinion, the jihadi

¹² Jim Garamone, “Gates Connects NATO Afghanistan Effort With Terror Threat in Europe,” American Forces Press Service, February 10, 2008, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=48917&reason=0>

threat from Pakistan is the biggest emerging threat we are facing in Europe. Pakistan is an ideological and training hotbed for jihadists and they are being exported here.” When considering the impact of foreign policy on terrorist groups like al Qaeda, this case is significant. Spain famously pulled its military out of Iraq in the wake of the 2003 Madrid attacks, which shuttled a new government into power. However, this has not diminished the desire of Islamist terrorist organizations to strike at Spain.

German plot

The second pattern is characterized by Muslims from Europe – whether they be converts or Muslims by birth – who seek out training in Pakistan, as the 7/7 cell did. Another example of such a cell is that which allegedly targeted Ramstein Air Base and the Frankfurt International Airport last fall. Other targets may have included bars and nightclubs frequented by Americans. Two German converts, Fritz Gelowicz and Daniel Schneider, and a Turkish resident of Germany, Adem Yilmaz – had been making explosives in a small town north of Frankfurt when German authorities raided their home and arrested them. They had enough explosives to make bombs bigger than those used in the London transit bombings and the 2003 attack in Madrid. The three had been trained in an al Qaeda-affiliated camp in Pakistan by the Islamic Jihad Union, a splinter group of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and had attended schools in Syria and elsewhere.

Authorities have said that the radicalization of Gelowicz and others in the German cell traces back to a fundamentalist mosque in a poor suburb outside of Stuttgart. It is there that an Egyptian imam, Yehia Yousif, preached his vitriolic brand of Islam to a congregation of Turks, Arabs, and various German converts. It is thought that Gelowicz was eased into the extremist movement by friend, and German resident of Turkish descent, Tolga Duerbin. As has been feared for some time with Germany’s large Turkish population, Duerbin’s radicalization appears representative of the growing threat posed by radicalized Turks to the security of Western Europe – especially when taking into account Turkey’s natural geographic and ethnic connections to neighboring countries along the path to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Yet another member of the same cell, an ethnic Turk named Cueneyt Ciftci, became Germany’s first suicide bomber on March 17, 2008, killing two American soldiers in Afghanistan.

Adem Yilmaz was believed to have been a ringleader of the cell along with Gelowicz. Authorities believe Yilmaz had organized a recruiting network that funneled young extremists to the Pakistan-Afghan border for terrorist training. It was along this route that he sent Ciftci. Ciftci was born in Freising, Bavaria to a Turkish family that came to Germany in the 1960s. He never made an effort to become a German citizen. When he moved with his family to Nurembeg, Ciftci became increasingly religious and began attending a mosque that had already attracted the attention of the German authorities. He married and had two children with his wife. In April 2007, he quit his job and left the country with the help of Yilmaz.

The investigation into this cell began in November 2006 when the CIA was trying to find information on a man they knew only as “Muaz” who had lived in Germany and had been involved in training camps for the Islamic Jihad Union. The Agency believed that Muaz was involved in a plot to attack the Hanau U.S. Army base in Germany. They traced Muaz’s e-mails

to an Internet café in Germany at the same time another Turkish-German named Attila Selek, a friend of Gelowicz's, was online. It has been alleged that Selek and Gelowicz traveled to the army base and drove around it very slowly. Selek insists he is innocent.

Danish plot

On September 4, 2007, Danish Security Intelligence Service (PET) agents, along with armed police, arrested eight individuals suspected of planning a terror attack. In coordinated actions, eleven different locations were raided throughout the greater Copenhagen area. The detained men were described as "militant Islamists with international connections involving direct relations to Al Qaeda,"¹³ The eight suspects were between 19 and 29 years old, and of Pakistani, Afghani, Somali, and Turkish origin. One of the Pakistani-born suspects underwent terrorist training in Pakistan. Six of the eight suspects held Danish citizenship, while the other two held Danish residence permits. Six suspects were immediately released after questioning, while two suspects, both of Pakistani origin were remanded to custody for twenty-seven days. All of the suspects had been under surveillance for an extended period of time and according to the Danish police, investigators had liaised with security services in other countries. The suspects were arraigned on charges of planning a terrorist attack and accused of storing and manufacturing unstable explosives "in a densely built-up residential area of Copenhagen."¹⁴ Information about the possible targets and information on the suspects has been withheld due to the ongoing nature of the investigation, however, it has been speculated that the target was the Nørreport train station, Denmark's busiest that serves 300,000 people daily. After the arrests, Matas, Denmark's largest drug store chain, also announced that it was cooperating with PET, keeping tabs on the sale of certain chemicals and substances that could be used to make bombs for terrorist attacks.

In August 2006, twenty-five suspected Islamic radicals, all homegrown British Muslims, mostly London-based and mostly of Pakistani descent, were arrested by the London Metropolitan Police and Scotland Yard after a series of nighttime raids. The plotters were accused of planning to carry liquid explosives aboard several North American-bound aircrafts from Heathrow airport, and then detonate the bombs while the planes were above U.S. and Canadian cities. In the raids, British authorities uncovered bomb making materials and martyrdom videos. Several arrests were also made in Pakistan.

Eight of the alleged cell members are on trial in London as of the writing of this testimony. Prosecutors played for the jury the martyrdom video of alleged cell leader Ahmed Abudllah Ali, which invoked al Qaeda chief Osama Bin Laden. Ali stated that the attack would be payback for the West's failure to heed Bin Laden's warnings to leave Muslim lands. Cell members had purchased an apartment in Northeast London and transformed it into a bomb making factory. The plan was to smuggle hydrogen peroxide and other chemicals onto the planes in soft drink bottles and transform the bottles into bombs once on board the aircrafts. All of the flights were scheduled to take off within 2 ½ hours of each other, and the terrorists were planning to blow up the planes simultaneously. Several of the alleged cell members are said to have trained in

¹³ "Statement concerning terror-related arrests on 4 September 2007." *Politiets Efterretningstjeneste (PET) Danish Security and Intelligence Service*. September 4, 2007. <http://www.pet.dk/Nyheder/Pressconf.aspx>

¹⁴ *ibid.*

Pakistan with Abu Obaidah al-Masri, the al Qaeda leader mentioned above in the context of the 7/7 bombings.

It is clear that there is increasingly a Pakistani nexus in al Qaeda's efforts in Europe that are defined, and enhanced, by their sanctuary in FATA.

The Other Side of the Spectrum: The Hofstad Group

The Hofstad group is an example of an autonomous homegrown terrorist network. It was composed of young Muslims with no connections to terrorist organizations abroad. They radicalized in the Netherlands and sought to launch attacks against what they saw as an infidel system. The group began when a number of young men began meeting at a phone center in Schiedam, a suburb of Amsterdam, to discuss their views on Islam, world events, and the Netherlands. Two of the young men, Nouredine El-Fatmi and Mohammed Bouyeri invited everyone to their apartment and the meetings moved there. By the winter of 2002, these meetings had attracted the attention of Dutch authorities. In these meetings, the young men watch videos of terrorists and insurgents in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan and Chechnya. They cheered when non-Muslims were killed. Satellite meetings were held elsewhere in Amsterdam. By the summer of 2003, a core of fifteen to twenty members was established. *Submission*, the film directed by Theo van Gogh and written by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, enraged the Hofstad members.

In November of 2004, Bouyeri, shot filmmaker Theo van Gogh to death and, after unsuccessfully trying to decapitate him, pinned a letter to the victim's chest with a knife. The letter read:

Islam will conquer by the blood of martyrs. It will spread its light to every corner of this Earth and it will, if necessary, drive evil to its dark hole by the sword.
This unleashed battle is different from previous battles. The unbelieving fundamentalists have started it and Insh Allah, the true believers will end it.¹⁵

Days later, when authorities attempted to arrest some of the Hofstad members in an apartment, a fourteen-hour siege ensued that resulted in the injuries of four officers by a hand grenade thrown by one of the terrorists. Nine members of this homegrown network were convicted in March of 2006 on various charges, including attempted murder, membership in a terrorist group, terrorist activity, and possession of weapons. However, many of the network members remained either un-convicted or untried.¹⁶ In October of 2006, six Hofstad members went on trial for plotting assassinations and terrorist attacks against government buildings.¹⁷

There is another interesting dimension to the Hofstad group. Outman Ben Amar, a Moroccan national, was working at the Dutch intelligence service, AIVD, as a translator when he was arrested in September 2004, two months before Bouyeri murdered van Gogh. He was charged with betraying state secrets to the Hofstad group and was convicted in December 2005. This is

¹⁵ Mohammed Bouyeri, translated by Nesser Petter, "The Slaying of the Dutch Filmmaker – Religiously Motivated Violence or Islamist Terrorism in the Name of Global Jihad?" *Norwegian Defense Research Establishment (FFI)*, February 2, 2004.

¹⁶ Sebastian Rotella, "The World; Dutch Court Hands Down Terror Verdicts," *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 2006.

¹⁷ "Dutch Radicals Taken to Trial," *The Statesman* (India), October 17, 2006.

not necessarily a case of cut-and-dry infiltration as there is no evidence that Ben Amar was a member of the Hofstad group who intentionally went to work for AIVD in order to funnel information to the group. He was likely working for AIVD when he became a sympathetic ally to the budding terrorist network. Still, this raises questions about our own security screening processes as we recruit people from the Arab and Muslim world in our struggle against terrorist organizations.

This question becomes even more pressing in the case of Nadia Nadim Prouty, aka Nadia Nadim Al Aouar, the sister-in-law of Hizballah-linked fugitive Talal Chahine, who pled guilty in November 2007 to fraudulently obtaining her citizenship and using her illegally acquired status to attain employment with both the FBI and CIA. According to prosecutors in the Eastern District of Michigan, Prouty used FBI computers – absent authorization – to run searches on herself, her sister and her brother in law, Elfat Al Aouar and Talal Chahine, owners of the popular Michigan-based restaurant chain, La Shish.

In May 2006, Chahine and Al Aouar were charged with tax evasion, with some of the proceeds allegedly funneled to Hizballah. As part of that case, the government asserted, in a written proffer of evidence, that Chahine and his wife attended a fundraising event in Lebanon in August 2002 with Hizballah Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, a Specially Designated Terrorist, where the two men were the keynote speakers.¹⁸

¹⁸ U.S.A. v. Elfat El Aouar, Cr. No. 06-20248, EDMI, 5/22/2006

The Propaganda of Al Qaeda

The arena in which al Qaeda has been most active is in the production and distribution of propaganda. This is an enormous subject that can only be briefly addressed in this testimony. It is a subject that deserves congressional hearings of its own. It can be argued that al Qaeda has exploited the capabilities of the Internet better than any organization in the world. As-Sahab, al Qaeda's media production center, released 58 videos in 2006. In 2007, they released 83. The tempo of these releases is clearly increasing as al Qaeda leadership seeks to influence Muslims around the world and intimidate the United States, Europe, Israel, and secular Arab governments. There is also a steady stream of videotaped attacks against military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. The video releases are far from the only propaganda produced by al Qaeda. Al Qaeda also produces audio speeches, instructional pieces and a number of online magazines.

Ayman al Zawahiri

Al Zawahiri is perhaps al Qaeda's most effective public propagandist and ideologue. In a recent video release, al Zawahiri answered a number of questions submitted over the Internet. Most of the questions actually challenged al Qaeda's tactics and choices and al Zawahiri gave full and complete answers to most of them. Several questions addressed the December 2007 suicide attack in Algiers, asking why al Qaeda was killing innocents in Baghdad, Morocco and Algeria. The questioner challenged al Qaeda to order attacks in Tel Aviv. Al Zawahiri answered that al Qaeda has not killed innocents anywhere, but any innocents that were killed, died mistakenly or out of necessity under the doctrine of al Tatarrus, which allows mujahideen to take human shields. Al Zawahiri's answers often reference his writings, particularly a book he wrote called *The Exoneration* and a book by emerging al Qaeda leader Abu Yahya al-Libi (mentioned earlier in this testimony) entitled, *Al Tatarrus in Contemporary Jihad*. As to the challenge to launch attacks in Tel Aviv, al Zawahiri defended the terrorist group, saying they had attacked Jews in Tunisia and Israeli tourists in Kenya. He reiterated bin Laden's claim that after the United States withdraws from Iraq, they would turn their attention to Jerusalem. He countered that the questioner should ask jihadist organizations in Palestine why they have not come to the aid of Muslims in Chechnya, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Al Zawahiri reiterated his criticisms of Hamas throughout the video. Aside from scolding Hamas for taking part in a democratic election, al Zawahiri criticized Hamas for firing Qassam rockets into "Israeli colonies" because the rockets "don't differentiate between a child and an adult."¹⁹ This is hypocritical as al Qaeda is infamous for indiscriminate mass casualty attacks, particularly the 9/11 attacks, which killed children.

Interestingly, al Zawahiri dodged questions about Iran, referring people to a past interview in which he dealt with that subject.

¹⁹ "The Open Meeting with Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri, Part One," As-Sahab Media, 2008.

Al Qaeda's propaganda should be considered a national security threat for a few reasons. It can motivate Muslims to join and/or support al Qaeda. It can inspire Muslims living in the West to launch attacks against their host countries. It can also inspire Muslims to support ongoing jihads in Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya, Algeria, Israel/Palestine and Kashmir. Perhaps what is most troubling about al Qaeda's propaganda capability is it is far superior to any strategic communications program run by the United States.

Border and Immigration Security

There are several key gaps in our immigration policy and border security that demand congressional attention. From an immigration and border security point-of-view al Qaeda's efforts to recruit western/European operatives (confirmed recently by CIA Director Michael Hayden) are troubling. These operatives can be used for the purpose of infiltrating not only Europe but ultimately the United States via the utilization of European passports and the exploitation of the U.S. Visa Waiver Program. That, combined with the virtual non-existence of the departure control half of the US-VISIT system, causes significant problems in what is supposed to be our border and immigration control and security processes.

The current Visa Waiver program allows foreign nationals who are citizens of 27 countries, mostly western and northern European nations as well as Japan and Australia, to enter the U.S. as a temporary visitor for up to 90 days without applying for or receiving a US visa abroad. The program is being strongly considered for expansion to numerous other countries, primarily Eastern European nations from the former Soviet Union. Visa Waiver entrants generally have their names screened in U.S. security databases shortly before they depart from foreign airports, but that is the extent of pre-entry screening. If the name/passport of such an entrant is "clean" in those databases, most likely the entrant will be admitted into the country. Visa Waiver precludes any other significant pre-admission screening by the U.S. Government. There is no face-to-face interview with U.S. consular or security officers that would allow for an in-person evaluation of the applicant's demeanor and credibility. There is no filing of a visa application that would produce potential self-provided intelligence, biometric evidence, handwriting/printing exemplars, or evidence for potential fraud prosecution utilization post-admission in what could otherwise be a sterile visa fraud prosecution against a terrorism suspect. These law enforcement and intelligence benefits are lost to the Visa Waiver program, a program begun in the 1980s to facilitate international tourism.

US-VISIT was created shortly after the 9/11 attacks and is the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration-border entry and departure information "control" system for foreign nationals. Most non-immigrant entrants, including Visa Waiver entrants, are subject to the US-VISIT system. After significant "fine tuning," the entry half of US-VISIT finally works essentially the way it should: capturing required identity, biometric and documentary information and comparing it to numerous existing U.S. intelligence and security databases. The departure-control half of the system, however, is virtually non-existent and non-functioning. Sadly, Congress first legislatively initiated a departure-control requirement in 1996. Yet, now 12 years later and nearly 7 years after the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. Government is nowhere close to implementing this critically important segment of its border and immigration security apparatus. A March 31, 2008 Government Accountability (GAO) report cites that not only has DHS made no meaningful progress in implementing the departure control segment of US-VISIT, but DHS is not even close to completing such implementation plans. Essentially, per GAO, DHS done little with departure-control after 12 years of Congress telling it (and the DHS predecessor DOJ/INS) to get it done.

Departure control under US-VISIT could potentially provide the U.S. Government with a treasure trove of intelligence related to possible security threats, if properly processed and

analyzed. But how is that to be done? What agencies should be involved? What systems to query? Should allied foreign services be included? How do commercial carriers (airlines and cruise ships) fit into the process? What to do with what will be huge numbers of identified violators? Over 40% of the illegal alien population entered the U.S. originally with a “legal” temporary visa status and eventually overstayed their status or otherwise violated that status. This included a plethora of foreign terrorists and terrorist support operatives who entered the U.S. with ostensibly legitimate documents and visas (some later were determined to be fraudulent) and were ultimately arrested and prosecuted, or otherwise dealt with. These included Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives and leader Mazen al Najjar, Bashir Nafi and Ramadan Shallah. They included several of the first World Trade Center bombing operatives, including Ramzi Yousef and the murderer of CIA employees Mir Aimal Kasi. They included, of course, the 19 al-Qaeda terrorist hijackers who committed the 9/11 attacks.

US-VISIT's departure control system, when implemented, would certainly identify very many such violators in short order. How will those leads be processed and disposed of? The system, since it has been collecting entry information and presumably interfacing with systems identifying those obtaining legal extensions and legal changes of status would already possess a huge backlog of known violators within the database. What to do with that existing stockpile of known violators? Again, this is potentially a gold mine of intelligence – if properly utilized and analyzed – but the U.S. Government hasn't yet figured out how to do that or even if it wants to do that.

There have been a number of cases of foreign national terror suspects who have surreptitiously crossed U.S. borders who have subsequently been captured, prosecuted and/or deported. Several of these were cited in an article by Todd Besman.²⁰ Among these men were: Mahmoud Youssef Kourani, a Hizballah operative snuck across the US/Mexican border; Nabil al-Marabh, one of the most wanted terrorist in the world who was mistakenly deported never to be seen again; Gazi Ibrahim Abu Mezer, who snuck across the northern border and plotted to bomb a New York City subway; Ahmed Ressam, mentioned earlier in this testimony as plotting to bomb Los Angeles International Airport; and Abdelghani Meskini and Abdelhakim Tizegha, Ressams coconspirators.

These are vital flaws in our immigration and border security systems that are being specifically targeted and exploited by terrorists and their organizations. This is something that has been occurring for decades. It should come as no surprise that al Qaeda is recruiting and utilizing western/European operatives in an attempt to defeat an already weak U.S. border control and immigration system. There is also really no difference between terrorists defeating our border defenses in the hinterlands via surreptitious entry or at a port-of-entry with fraudulent or illegitimately used “clean” identity and travel documents. The result is the same: terrorists succeed in entering the United States. The fact such flaws still exist so many years after Congress identified a need for a fix, and years after the 9/11 attacks, is what is so incredible.

²⁰ Todd Besman, “Have Terrorists Crossed?” ToddBesman.com, March 25, 2008.

The Bigger Picture

Islamist Ideology and its Modern Origin

Al Qaeda is clearly the most significant operational terrorist threat to this country and the issues examined above deserve a great deal of attention by decision-makers, but al Qaeda must be seen in the context of what drives it – an extremist ideology based on a puritanical interpretation of Islam. The biggest flaw in this nation’s national security policy is that it is focused specifically on countering acts of terrorism and not countering the Islamist worldwide ideology that has spawned al Qaeda. This ideology is intrinsically hostile to secular democracies that value pluralism, separation of church and state, free speech, minority rights, and freedom of religion. One need only look back at the history behind the formation of al Qaeda and nearly all Sunni terrorist groups that exist today to find a common parent to their ideology: the Muslim Brotherhood.

Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun)²¹ was founded as an Islamic revivalist movement in the Egyptian town of Isma’iliyya in March 1928 by school teacher Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949).²² The Brotherhood’s goal has been to promote the implementation of traditional Islamic sharia law.²³ Early in its history, the Brotherhood focused on education and charity. It soon became heavily involved in politics and remains a major player on the Egyptian political scene, despite the fact that it is an illegal organization. It has grown exponentially, from only 800 members in 1936, to over 2 million in 1948, to its current place as a pervasive Sunni Islamist movement, with covert and overt branches in over 70 different countries.

“I did not want to enter into competition with the other orders,” al-Banna once said. “And I did not want it to be confined to one group of Muslims or one aspect of Islamic reform; rather I sought that it be a general message based on learning, education, and *jihad*.”²⁴ According to al-Banna, “It is the nature of Islam to dominate, not to be dominated, to impose its law on all nations and to extend its power to the entire planet.”²⁵

²¹ They are also known as the Muslim Brothers, The Brothers (*al-Ikhwan*), or the Society of Muslim Brothers (*Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*).

²² Born in Mahmoudiyya, Egypt, Hassan al-Banna was the son of the prominent Imam Sheikh Ahmad al-Banna. He studied at Al-Ahzar University and joined a Sufi order there. He then moved to Cairo as a school teacher in 1932 establishing the Muslim Brotherhood branch there. Al-Banna was assassinated by the Egyptian government on February 12th, 1949 as part of an Egyptian government crackdown on the Brotherhood.

²³ *Sharia'h* is the dynamic body of Islamic religious law. It primarily based on the Koran and the *Sunnah* (the Muslim way of life based on the life of the Prophet Muhammad), developed by the *hadith* (the oral traditions relating the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad).

²⁴ Hassan al Banna, quoted in, Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 207.

²⁵ Compare this to the words of Osama bin Laden, who, in a letter to Saudi intellectuals, wrote “In fact, Muslims are obligated to raid the lands of the infidels, occupy them, and exchange their systems of governance for an Islamic system, barring any practice that contradicts the sharia from being publicly voiced among the people, as was the case at the dawn of Islam... Thus they make claims and speak about Allah without understanding. They say our sharia does not impose our particular beliefs upon others; this is a false assertion. For it is, in fact, part of our religion to impose our particular beliefs upon others.”

That helps explain the Muslim Brotherhood's motto: "God is our objective, the Quran is our Constitution, the Prophet is our leader, jihad is our way, and death for the sake of God is the highest of our aspirations."

The Brotherhood has reached global status, wielding power and influence in every state with a Muslim population. Additionally, the Brotherhood maintains political parties in many Middle-Eastern and African countries, including Jordan, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and even Israel. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood attempted to overthrow the Syrian government in the 1980s, but the revolt was crushed. Aside from the Muslim Brotherhood in Israel proper, the terrorist organization Hamas was founded as the Palestinian chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Since its founding, the Muslim Brotherhood has openly sought to reestablish puritanical Islam as the primary endeavor of human civilization through the establishment of Sunni Islamic governments that rule according to the strict and specific tenets of shariah (Islamic law drawn from the Quran and the Sunnah) and the unification of these regimes under the banner of the Caliphate.

According to al-Banna, the Caliphate must govern all lands that were at one time under the control of Muslims. He stated:

For we want the flag of Islam to fly over those lands again, who were lucky enough, to be ruled by Islam for a time, and hear the call of the muezzin praise God. Then the light of Islam died out and they returned to disbelief. Andalusia, Sicily, the Balkans, Southern Italy and the Greek islands are all Islamic colonies which have to return to Islam's lap. The Mediterranean and the Red Sea have to become internal seas of Islam, as they used to be.²⁶

Once that is accomplished, the Caliphate is to be expanded to cover the entire globe, erasing national boundaries under the flag of Islam. This concept was elucidated by the Brotherhood luminary, Sayyid Qutb, who wrote in his seminal work, *Milestones*, that Muslims are not merely obliged to wage jihad in defense of Islamic lands, but must wage offensive jihad in order to liberate the world from the servitude of man-made law and governance.

The Muslim Brotherhood has provided the ideological model for almost all modern Sunni Islamic terrorist groups. Richard Clarke – the chief counterterrorism adviser on the U.S. National Security Council under Presidents Clinton and Bush – stated before the Senate in 2003 that "...the issue of terrorist financing in the United States is a fundamental example of the shared infrastructure levered by Hamas, Islamic Jihad and al Qaeda, all of which enjoy a significant degree of cooperation and coordination within our borders. The common link here is the extremist Muslim Brotherhood – all these organizations are descendants of the membership and ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood."²⁷

²⁶ Hassan al Banna, quoted in: Egon Flaig, *Der Islam will die Weltheroberung*.

²⁷ Statement of Richard Clarke. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, October, 22, 2003.

To ensure that the sharia would be the “the basis controlling the affairs of state and society,”²⁸ al-Banna laid out a seven-step hierarchy of goals to be implemented by the Brotherhood for the Islamization of society. The first step is to educate and “form” the Muslim person. From there the Muslim person would spread Islam and help “form” a Muslim family. Muslim families would group together to form a Muslim society that would establish a Muslim government. The government would then transform the state into an Islamic one governed by sharia law, as voted by the Muslim society. This Islamic state would then work to free “occupied” Muslim lands and unify them together under one banner, from which Islam could be spread all over the world.²⁹

As the late Robert P. Mitchell, professor of Near Eastern History at the University of Michigan, explained in his seminal work on the Brotherhood, quoting original Brotherhood sources, these goals would be carried out in three stages. Starting with “the first stage through which all movements must pass, the stage of ‘propaganda, communication, and information.’”³⁰ In this stage, the Brotherhood would recruit and indoctrinate core activists. The next stage consisted of “formation, selection, and preparation.”³¹ In this stage, they would endear themselves to the population by creating charities, clinics, schools, and other services. More importantly, they would prepare for the third and final stage: the stage of “execution.”³² Of this stage, al-Banna stated:

At the time that there will be ready, Oh ye Muslim Brothers, three hundred battalions, each one equipped spiritually with faith and belief, intellectually with science and learning, and physically with training and athletics, at that time you can demand of me to plunge with you through the turbulent oceans and to rend the skies with you and to conquer with you every obstinate tyrant. God willing, I will do it.³³

In addition to al-Banna’s founding philosophy, the works of Sayyid Qutb (1909-1966) also had a major impact on the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. Beyond that, his books sent shockwaves throughout the entire Islamic world. His most influential works were *Fi zilal al-Qur’an* (“In Shades of the Koran”)³⁴ and *Ma’alim fi al-Tariq* (“Milestones” or “Signposts”). *Milestones* has come to be Qutb’s most popular work and has influenced Islamic extremists such as former Brotherhood member Ayman al Zawahiri,³⁵ Abdullah Azzam, Osama bin Laden and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed.

²⁸ IkhwanWeb. “The Principles of the Muslim Brotherhood”. June 13, 2007, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=813&LevelID=2&SectionID=116> (accessed October 2, 2007).

²⁹ IkhwanWeb. “Muslim Brotherhood Initiatives for Reform in Egypt”. June 13, 2007. <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=797&SectionID=116> (accessed October 9, 2007).

³⁰ Mitchell, *Society of Muslim Brothers*, p. 13.

³¹ Risalat Al-Mu’tamar al-khamis (Message of the Fifth Congress), quoted in Mitchell, *Society of Muslim Brothers*, p. 14.

³² *ibid*, 15.

³³ *ibid*.

³⁴ This work, written while Qutb was languishing in an Egyptian jail cell (1954-1964), is a 30 volume commentary (*tafsir*) on the Koran. A highly popular work, Qutb in his commentary advocates for *sharia* to be implemented in all Muslim societies. It also contains significant amounts of vitriol directed primarily at Jews.

³⁵ Zawahiri, also a member of the Brotherhood since the age of fourteen (1965) became familiar with Qutb’s writings while he was in Saudi Arabia. There he came under the tutelage of Sayyid’s brother Muhammad Qutb, who fled Egypt in 1972 and began teaching his brother’s philosophy while a professor at King Abdel-Aziz University in Jeddah and the Umm al-Qura University in Mecca. Osama Bin Laden also reportedly attended Muhammad Qutb’s lectures.

Written while Qutb was in prison in Egypt,³⁶ *Milestones*' central thesis was that the world had degraded into a state of "ignorance" (as existed before the advent of Islam) or jahiliyyah and Islam was the solution. In addition to Hassan al-Banna's ideas, Qutb was influenced by the writings of Indian Islamist Sayyid Mawlana Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979)³⁷ and the medieval scholar Taqi ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328). However, Qutb radically expanded on their ideas of jahiliyyah and jihad.

While both Mawdudi and Ibn Taymiyyah used jahiliyyah to describe their contemporaries, Qutb described the whole of the Muslim community to be in jahiliyyah, as "the Muslim community has long ago vanished from existence."³⁸ Since Arab secular leaders did not follow the sharia, they were considered to be in "apostasy" (takfir) for violating God's sovereignty (al-hakimiyya) on earth. In fact, "any place where the Islamic Shari'ah is not enforced and where Islam is not dominant becomes the Abode of War (Dar-ul-Harb)."³⁹ Jahiliyyah now included all non-Islamic states, whether ruled by Muslims or not.

To achieve his vision, Qutb advocated for the creation of a vanguard (tali'a), its members modeling themselves after the Prophet Muhammad's companions (sahaba). This vanguard would then fight jahiliyyah and its influences through "methods of preaching (daw'a) and persuasion for reforming ideas and beliefs; and it uses physical power and Jihad for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the jahili system which prevents people from reforming their ideas."⁴⁰ The vanguard would not "compromise with the practices of jahili society, nor can we be loyal to it," Qutb wrote. "Jahili society, because of its jahili characteristics (described as evil and corrupt), is not worthy to be compromised with."⁴¹

These ideas radically expanded the scope of jihad, especially that of jihad bis-said (jihad by the sword). Qutb argued for a more aggressive and offensive definition of jihad as a means to combat the dar al-Harb (Abode of War),⁴² synonymous with the jahiliyyah. This was in order to not only protect the dar al-Islam (Abode of Islam) but also to enhance it and spread it "throughout the earth to whole of mankind."⁴³ Adherence to the sharia would free mankind from the jahiliyyah influences. This struggle would not be a temporary phase "but an eternal state, as

³⁶ Qutb spent ten years in prison from 1954 to 1964 after being arrested for being a member of the Brotherhood (he joined in 1953) when Nasser outlawed the organization in 1954. *Milestones* was published when Qutb emerged from prison in 1965, even though Qutb was arrested and jailed again for preaching for an Islamic state in Egypt. He was executed on August 29th, 1966 with excerpts from *Milestones* used against him during his trial. After his execution he became a "Martyr" (*Shaheed*) to his followers.

³⁷ Also written as Mawdudi or Maudoodi. He founded the Pakistani Islamist party *Jamaat-e-Islami* in 1941 with the goal of establishing an Islamic state in Pakistan. He headed the party until 1973 and was well known for his writings on Islam.

³⁸ Qutb, Sayyid. *Milestones*. (Syria: Damascus, Dar al-Ilm), 9.

³⁹ *ibid*, 124.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 55.

⁴¹ *ibid*, 21.

⁴² The *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of Conflict) traditionally is considered to be countries and places where Islam is not predominant or areas not ruled by Muslims. Traditional views of physical jihad or jihad by the sword explain it as primarily a call to defend Muslim lands, Muslims, and Islam from military aggression and oppression. The "abode" of non-Muslims, except in matters dealing with Muslims or Islam, is largely ignored primarily to focus on internal matters.

⁴³ *Milestones*, 72.

truth and falsehood cannot co-exist on this earth.”⁴⁴ Qutb, in addition to his strongly anti-secular and anti-Western ideas,⁴⁵ was particularly venomous in his denunciation of Jews. He accused them of conspiracies and stated that “the Jews are behind materialism, animal sexuality, the destruction of the family and the dissolution of society.”⁴⁶

The Brotherhood Today

Many Muslim Brotherhood branches around the world claimed to have renounced the use of violence, but the reality is quite different. The Brotherhood continues to be driven by al-Banna’s belief that Islam is destined “to impose its law on all nations and to extend its power to the entire planet.”⁴⁷ The Brotherhood’s declared principles remain “the introduction of the Islamic sharia as the basis controlling the affairs of state and society” and “unification among the Islamic countries and states ... liberating them from foreign imperialism.”⁴⁸ This includes “spreading Islamic concepts that reject submission to humiliation, and incite to fighting it” while “reviving the will of liberation and independence in the people, and sowing the spirit of resistance.”⁴⁹

In the Fall of 2007, the Brotherhood wrote its first official platform in decades. The platform explains, in plain terms, the agenda of the Brotherhood in Egypt and the Islamic world. It maintains that its fundamental principle is the imposition of Islamic law. It calls for: “Spreading and deepening the true concepts of Islam as a complete methodology that regulates all aspects of life.”

The Brotherhood in the United States

In the United States, the Brotherhood has had an active presence since the 1960s. An internal Brotherhood memorandum, released during the terror-support trial of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) in July 2007 shows that the Brotherhood’s jihad can take more subtle and long range approaches. Dated to May 22, 1991, the memo, entitled, “An Explanatory Memorandum on the General Strategic Goal for the Group in North America,” states, under the heading, “Understanding the role of the Muslim Brother in North America”:

The Ikhwan must understand that their work in America is a kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and ‘sabotaging’ its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated and God’s religion is made victorious over all other religions.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 66.

⁴⁵ Qutb studied in the United States from 1948-1950 at the Colorado State College of Education in Greeley, Colorado. He despised his experience in America, railing against American culture and history in his book, *Amrika allati Ra’aytu*, (“America that I Saw”).

⁴⁶ Milestones., 18.

⁴⁷ Neil MacFarquhar, “Egyptian Group Patiently Pursues Dream of Islamic State.” *New York Times*, January 20, 2002.

⁴⁸ IkhwanWeb. “The Principles of the Muslim Brotherhood”. June 13, 2007. <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=813&LevelID=2&SectionID=116> (accessed October 2, 2007).

⁴⁹ Ikhwanweb. “Reading into the Muslim Brotherhood’s Documents”. June 13, 2007. <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=818&LevelID=2&SectionID=116> (accessed October 2, 2007).

⁵⁰ U.S. v. Holy Land Foundation, 04-CR-240 Government exhibit 3-85.

Appended to this memo is a list of all Brotherhood affiliated organizations in North America (See appendix). Included on the list are the Muslim Students' Association (MSA), North American Islamic Trust (NAIT), Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Islamic Association for Palestine (which was succeeded by the Council on American Islamic Relations [CAIR]), the Muslim Arab Youth Association (MAYA), the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), and other prominent American Muslim organizations.

The theme in this Muslim Brotherhood strategy memo was picked up four years later by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a Muslim Brotherhood spiritual leader attending a conference in Toledo, Ohio. Al-Qaradawi has been offered the post of General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood twice, but has turned it down in favor of building and managing several Islamist organizations in the West and the Middle East associated with the Brotherhood. At the Ohio conference hosted by MAYA, he said, "Our brothers in Hamas, in Palestine, the Islamic resistance, the Islamic Jihad, after all the rest have given up and despaired, the movement of the Jihad brings us back to our faith."⁵¹

He later added:

What remains, then, is to conquer Rome. The second part of the omen. "The city of Hiraq [once emperor of Constantinople] will be conquered first," so what remains is to conquer Rome. This means that Islam will come back to Europe for the third time, after it was expelled from it twice... Conquest through Da'wa [proselytizing], that is what we hope for. We will conquer Europe, we will conquer America! Not through sword but through Da'wa.

...

But the balance of power will change, and this is what is told in the Hadith of Ibn-Omar and the Hadith of Abu-Hurairah: "You shall continue to fight the Jews and they will fight you, until the Muslims will kill them. And the Jew will hide behind the stone and the tree, and the stone and the tree will say: 'Oh servant of Allah, Oh Muslim, this is a Jew behind me. Come and kill him!' The resurrection will not come before this happens." This is a text from the good omens in which we believe.⁵²

The Brotherhood plays an active role today in promoting terrorism against American interests. The Brotherhood actively supports Hamas to "face the U.S. and Zionist strategy" in the Occupied Territories and supports their "legitimate resistance."⁵³ In August 2004, the Brotherhood issued a public appeal of support for those fighting coalition forces in Iraq,⁵⁴ and the following month, Muslim Brotherhood spiritual leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi issued a fatwa deeming it a religious duty for Muslims to fight America in Iraq.⁵⁵ While the Brotherhood claims to have renounced violence to achieve political goals, the Islamist strands inherited from Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb endure and stand in direct contradiction to their non-violent public pronouncements.

⁵¹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, MAYA Conference, 1995, Toledo, Ohio.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ IkhwanWeb. "The Principles of the Muslim Brotherhood". June 13, 2007. <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=813&LevelID=2&SectionID=116> (accessed October 2, 2007).

⁵⁴ "The Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Support of Fighting Americans Forces in Iraq," MEMRI Special Dispatch Series, September 3, 2004.

⁵⁵ Cleric Says It's Right to Fight U.S. Civilians in Iraq," Reuters, September 2, 2004.

Failures of U.S. Outreach Efforts

American efforts at rapprochement with the Arab and Muslim world after 9/11, largely led by former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes, has been nothing short of a disaster, often choosing to embrace the very people who foment and foster high levels of anti-American sentiment in the Muslim world.

During her tenure, Hughes and her staff held meetings with the very people who should be avoided and denounced for their public, anti-American and pro-terrorist stances; embraced individuals and groups with long histories of support for terrorists and sought advice from individuals who are on the record as being supportive and friendly with terrorists and terrorist causes.

The recent decision to appoint an American observer to the Organization on the Islamic Conference (OIC), a group with a history of support for terrorist organizations and the causes championed by terrorists, rather than denounce the OIC for what it is, is extremely troubling.

Under Karen Hughes, the State Department has met with leaders of various Muslim Brotherhood-front organizations in the United States, including ISNA, currently an unindicted co-conspirator in a major Hamas fundraising case in Dallas HLF. ISNA publications have consistently supported Hamas and specifically top Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzook. Hughes has also worked with the Muslim Students' Association, an organization founded by the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1960s.



Figure 2: DHS booth at an ISNA Convention next to a Hizb ut-Tahrir booth⁵⁶

⁵⁶ “ISNA Conference: Hizb ut-Tahrir rubs shoulders with Homeland Security,” JihadChat.com, September 6, 2007, <http://www.jihadchat.com/index.php?showtopic=6188>

But the problem goes beyond the State Department, and is systemic in almost all government outreach programs. The Department of Justice has partnered with ISNA, despite another branch of the same organization labeling ISNA as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and an unindicted co-conspirator in the HLF trial. The Department of Homeland Security has also attended ISNA conventions, recently having a booth right next to the radical Islamist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, which seeks to reestablish the Caliphate.

Despite the fact that the DOJ has labeled CAIR as a member of the Palestine Committee of the Muslim Brotherhood and, in addition to ISNA, as unindicted co-conspirators in the HLF trial, and has stated that CAIR has “conspired with other affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood to support terrorists,”⁵⁷ various FBI field offices still insist on partnering with CAIR, allowing the Islamist group to instruct FBI agents and analysts on “sensitivity training.” FBI Headquarters has also refused to issue directives preventing its field offices and agents from attending CAIR events, hosting town hall meetings with CAIR and seeking alternative voices to administer “sensitivity training.”

The U.S. government generally, and the State Department in particular, needs to seek out genuine moderates throughout the Arab and Muslim world, rather than just embrace and promote those who claim to speak for all Muslims, but instead parrot the themes of anti-Americanism, victimology and grievances that seek to place the blame for all the world’s ills on U.S. foreign policy.

Arab and Muslim voices which promote accountability, democracy, human rights and freedoms must be elevated and embraced. Short of that, organizations, individuals and institutions in the Muslim world that are knee-jerk anti-American, and pro-terrorist, or, at a minimum, apologists for terrorism, should be denounced and avoided. The U.S. should not seek to embrace or promote the “least worst option” for lack of a better solution. All organizations with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood need to be treated for what they are: fascistic, paternalistic organizations that seek the return of the Caliphate, and organizations that are apologists for radical Islam and terrorism, and are not prepared to be responsible actors in democratic systems, and will not support the future pluralistic liberal institutions which much be built throughout the Muslim world in order to strengthen the promotion of democracy.

Rather than countering the ideology promoted by the Muslim Brotherhood and the terrorist groups that it has spawned, the U.S. has empowered the Muslim Brotherhood and, by extension, its uncompromising message by reaching out to the group itself in a poorly targeted effort to find allies in the Muslim world. Domestically, government agencies, departments, and officials at the federal, state, and local levels have unwittingly empowered front groups of the Muslim Brotherhood by making them the dominant focus of their outreach to the Muslim community and thus anointing groups with an extremist bent and a documented ulterior agenda as the gatekeepers to the Muslim-American community. This policy, which continues to this day despite the criminal connections of many of these organizations, can only end in disaster for the interest of the United States both domestically and abroad.

⁵⁷ U.S. v. Benkahla, 07-cr- 4778, “Brief for the United States,” pg. 58, 4th Cir., December 2007, http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/542.pdf.

Current and future U.S. outreach efforts need to be viewed through this lens, as the promotion and legitimacy of dangerous elements needs to be avoided at all costs, lest we allow short term and short sighted efforts of outreach, that mostly serve our goals only for the sake of appearances, yet do much damage to legitimate and genuine moderates by promoting elements which seek to exclude moderate voices, trump the more important long term needs and goals of the region, and U.S. national security.

A Case Study in Infiltration: Alamoudi

The evidence of Islamists operating on U.S. soil – exploiting American freedoms while expanding the global jihad movement from within our borders – is not fear-mongering, as some may suggest, but a clear and present threat. Extremist groups threaten the U.S. beyond any outright attack in that they have used the United States to fundraise, to train, and to build public support, all the while flying beneath the radar of law enforcement and intelligence officials. This fact is made all too clear when examining the case of Abdulrahman Alamoudi – president of the American Muslim Council (AMC) from 1990 until 2003, and held out to be the moderate face of Islam in the U.S.

Throughout the 1990s, Alamoudi was invited routinely to the White House, was sent abroad by the Department of State on numerous occasions, was honored in Congress, and had access to the FBI and the CIA. A spokesman for FBI Director Robert Mueller is on record as referring to Alamoudi’s AMC as the “most mainstream Muslim group in the United States”.⁵⁸ Seen by many as the model American Muslim leader, Alamoudi came off as a true Muslim partner who had significant political access, including meetings with President Clinton and then-candidate for President, George W. Bush.⁵⁹

All of this came crashing down in 2004, when Alamoudi pleaded guilty to “three felony offenses: one count of violating the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) by traveling and engaging in dealing with Libya; one count of false statements made in his application for naturalization; and a tax offense involving a long-term scheme to conceal from the IRS his financial transactions with Libya and his foreign bank accounts and to omit material information from the tax returns filed by his charities”.⁶⁰ He also acknowledged that he was involved with two al Qaeda-linked agents in a colorful plot manufactured by Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to assassinate then-Saudi Prince Abdullah.⁶¹

Long before any of this came to light, Alamoudi got his start in the public sphere as acting president of the Muslim Students’ Association (MSA) National (1982-1983),⁶² Founder and President of the American Muslim Foundation (AMF) (1990),⁶³ Regional Representative for the

⁵⁸ Shawn Macomber, “Eyes Wide Shut.” *The American Spectator*. December 17, 2003.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ U.S. Announces Plea in Terrorism Financing Case,” Dept. of Justice Press Release, July 30, 2004, <http://www.fbi.gov/dojpressrel/pressrel04/alamoudi073004.htm> (accessed April 7, 2008).

⁶¹ Glenn Frankel, “Exiled Saudi Is Dissident to Some, Terrorist to Others,” *Washington Post*, July 7, 2004.

⁶² Resume of Abdurahman M. Alamoudi, 2.

⁶³ Abdurahman Alamoudi, Guest CV, IslamOnline.net,

<http://www.islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Guestcv.asp?hGuestID=7he3oT> (accessed August 13, 2007).

Washington DC-area for the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) (1986-1990),⁶⁴ and Member of the Executive Committee of the Islamic Society of Boston.⁶⁵ However, his true rise to prominence came with the founding of his greatest legacy, the American Muslim Council (AMC), in 1990,⁶⁶ which, ostensibly, was to lobby politicians on behalf of Muslims in the United States. In addition to its other work, the AMC and AMF, and more specifically, Alamoudi, became involved with the selection of Muslim chaplains for the U.S. military through the American Muslim Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Council (AMAFVAC), which Alamoudi co-founded in 1991.⁶⁷

Alamoudi's work did not end there. Though serving as an Islamic advisor and "roving 'Goodwill Ambassador' to the United Nations"⁶⁸ for the Clinton Administration, Alamoudi also had a long history of links to terrorist organizations. From 1994 to 1999 he served as Director for the United Association for Studies and Research (UASR), based in Springfield, Virginia.⁶⁹ UASR has numerous links to Hamas and was co-founded by Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzook.⁷⁰ Hamas operative Mohammed Salah referred to UASR as "the political command" of Hamas in the United States.⁷¹

As the moderate guise that he had so carefully crafted began to fall apart, the pieces of the Alamoudi puzzle began to come together. Alamoudi's résumé indicated that he served simultaneously as an executive assistant to the president of SAAR⁷² and as an officer⁷³ of the Success Foundation, a sister organization of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) in Virginia.⁷⁴ IIRO's Virginia office has contributed to other charities suspected or convicted of financing terror, including contributions to the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF),⁷⁵ and the Taibah International Aid Association.⁷⁶ The Bosnian Branch of Taibah International was named a specially designated global terrorist on May 6, 2004, for financing al Qaeda.⁷⁷ Alamoudi served as Vice President of Taibah International in 1999.⁷⁸

⁶⁴ *ibid*; Resume of Abdurahman M. Alamoudi, 1.

⁶⁵ Islamic Society of Boston, Form 1023, 1983.

⁶⁶ American Muslim Council, Form 1024, 1990.; Abdurahman Alamoudi, Guest CV, IslamOnline.net, <http://www.islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Guestcv.asp?hGuestID=7he3oT> (accessed August 13, 2007).

⁶⁷ Testimony of Dr. Michael Waller before the United States Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security, October 14, 2003, http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:1RGzzN-9jc8J:judiciary.senate.gov/testimony.cfm%3Fid%3D960%26wit_id%3D2719+%E2%80%9CHamas+is+not+a+terrorist+group%22+and+%22i+have+followed+the+good+work+of+hamas%22&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=us (accessed April 6, 2008).

⁶⁸ Shawn Macomber, "Eyes Wide Shut." *The American Spectator*. December 17, 2003.

⁶⁹ United Association for Studies and Research, Form 990, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998.

⁷⁰ Articles of Incorporation, United Association for Studies and Research, Secretary of State for the State of Illinois, September 18, 1989.

⁷¹ Judith Miller, "Israel Says That Prisoner's Tale Links Arabs in US to Terrorism," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1993, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9FOCFDF133FF934A25751C0A965958260> (accessed April 6, 2008).

⁷² Abdurahman M. Alamoudi curriculum vitae: Freedom of Information request.

⁷³ Success Foundation Forms 990, 1999 and 2000. (showing Alamoudi as secretary)

⁷⁴ Success Foundation Form 990, 2000, line item 80. (showing IRO as related organization)

⁷⁵ International Relief Organization, Inc., Form 990, 1996, 1997.

⁷⁶ International Relief Organization, Inc., Form 990, 1995, 1996.

⁷⁷ "Treasury Designates Bosnian Charities Funneling Dollars to Al Qaida." US Department of the Treasury press release, May 6, 2004, <http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/js1527.htm> (accessed January 24, 2006).

German police files also show that Alamoudi had meetings in the fall of 2000 with Mohammed Belfas, an elder from the Islamic community in Hamburg who had ties to many of the 9/11 hijackers and who had shared an apartment with the suspected “20th hijacker,” Ramzi bin al Shibh.⁷⁹

The Alamoudi tale also took on an added dimension once the U.S. Treasury Department found that Alamoudi had raised money for the al Qaeda-tied Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA) Foundation in the United Kingdom. Authorities at the Treasury noted that his arrest “was a severe blow to al Qaida, as Alamoudi had a close relationship with al Qaida and had raised money for al Qaida in the United States”.⁸⁰

Once thought by many in the highest echelons of government to be the moderate Muslim partner they had long sought, Alamoudi proved in the end to be something very different. Operating not in Baghdad or Kandahar, but in Northern Virginia, Alamoudi subverted and deceived from within and funded those intent on bringing harm upon us and our interests abroad. A supporter of violent jihad and financier of al Qaeda, all the while enjoying the ear of the President of the United States and members of Congress – the story of Abdurahman Alamoudi’s infiltration cannot be forgotten because this infiltration is, indeed, clear and present. This can, and will, continue to occur unless those in power begin to look more closely at just who they are partnering with in the U.S.

Overlooked Victims of Islamism

As noted above, it is imperative that we realize that we cannot defeat al Qaeda without acknowledging that the terrorist organization cannot be decoupled from the Islamist ideology that has spawned it. When considering this matter, it is important and instructive to consider the Danish Cartoons Crisis. In reaction to the Danish Cartoons Crisis, the West abdicated the tenet of free speech, no matter how offensive, in an effort to appease the Muslim world. Free speech, the bedrock of western civilization, was suddenly thrown out the window at the first sign that many in the Muslim world were offended and retaliatory violence was possible. With the exception of a handful of courageous news outlets, the American media refused to republish the cartoons, claiming that “respect for religious values” overrode the principle of free speech. The truth was much different: journalists simply did not want to have to look at the rear view mirror when they went home at night. Ironically, more publications and media outlets in the Arab and Muslim world ended up publishing the cartoons than in the United States. The U.S. State Department denounced the publication of the cartoons as “unacceptable.”

If such “respect” for religious values was such a prominent principle of our society, why have we tolerated U.S. museum exhibits showing Jesus Christ painted with feces? Why has the West been largely silent about the near constant, and incredibly hypocritical, stream of anti-Christian

⁷⁸ Taibah International IRS Form 990, 1999.

⁷⁹ “Who, and What, Does He Know? New evidence suggests that a leading Muslim spokesman in the U.S. associated with terror suspects.” *Newsweek*. October 1, 2003.

⁸⁰ “Treasury Designates MIRA for Support to Al Qaida.” US Treasury Department Press Release. July 14, 2005 <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/js2632.htm> (accessed May 8, 2006).

and anti-Semitic dogma and propaganda emanating from many segments of the Muslim world? The truth is, religious respect is not the issue.

Moreover, critics of Islamism and extremism who have written books, spoken out, or published cartoons deemed “offensive” to Islam, have had their lives permanently changed – facing death threats and being forced underground or behind the protection of 24-hour security details. Ayan Hirsi Ali, the former Dutch parliamentarian and a friend of Theo Van Gogh (the Dutch filmmaker murdered for producing a film deemed “offensive” to Islam) has been forced to live under 24-hour a day protection and in hiding in her homeland and in the United States, where she stayed for a year. Geert Wilders, another Dutch parliamentarian, produced a short film called “Fitna” that included images of the Quran being burned and has called for the banning of the Quran. For this, admittedly offensive to some, but protected, transgression, Mr. Wilders has had to live in hiding under around the clock protection. His film was blocked by various websites, although anti-Christian and anti-Semitic films can be seen on YouTube and thousands of other sites routed through servers in the United States and Europe.

Congressman Peter Hoekstra, ranking Republican of this committee, put it best when he wrote in an op-ed of the Wall Street Journal (March 26, 2008):

Reasonable men in free societies regard Geert Wilders's anti-Muslim rhetoric, and films like ‘Fitna,’ as disrespectful of the religious sensitivities of members of the Islamic faith. But free societies also hold freedom of speech to be a fundamental human right. We don't silence, jail or kill people with whom we disagree just because their ideas are offensive or disturbing. We believe that when such ideas are openly debated, they sink of their own weight and attract few followers.

In Canada, Irshad Manji, a courageous female Muslim writer has received death threats for daring to speak out against Islamic extremism. And here in the United States, Ms. Wafa Sultan who has debated Islamist clerics on Al Jazeera and courageously condemned violence tolerated and sanctioned by Islamic scholars, has recently been forced to go into hiding in the United States. Ms. Sultan, a Syrian born Muslim, who emigrated to America years ago, has been condemned by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood mentioned earlier in this testimony, as someone who “has insulted Islam.” An Arabic newspaper recently published an advertisement sponsored by a group called “The Messenger of Allah Unites Us.” The advertisement shows faces of nine people, including Wafa Sultan (deemed a “villifier of the Divine Being, the Holy Religion and the True Religion”) and Fleming Rose (cultural editor of the Danish newspaper that published the Danish cartoons) under the banner “Wanted for Justice.” Though the ad did not say “Dead or Alive,” the implication was clear: These are “enemies of Islam” who are marked for death. A copy of the ad is attached to this testimony.

All too often, our own policymakers try to appease Islamism by treating their “grievances” as “legitimate.” For example, State Department policy enunciated by Ambassador Dell C. Dailey of the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, has stated as follows: “Al-Qaida exploits many Muslims around the world whose grievances are legitimate. The international community, governments and international organizations, politicians, academics, religious and community leaders, in general, needs to do better at disputing terrorist propaganda and misinformation. We need to tackle head on the false narrative that the West is at war with Islam with both our words and our deeds.”

The truth of the matter is that Islamist grievances are not legitimate. These “grievances” include the very existence of Israel, the separation of church and state, secularism, pluralism, the absence of Islamic hegemony, the classification of Hamas and Hizballah as terrorist groups, and any perceived “insult” against Islam. It is true that the Islamist narrative states that there has been a war against Islam since the Crusades, but the responsibility for changing the false narrative falls only on the heads of the Islamist groups in the Muslim world and the West, including those here in the United States that routinely portray the U.S. at war with Islam. Unless we are prepared to accept severe restrictions on free speech, legitimize terrorist groups, allow the introduction of Islamic law in the U.S., prohibit any criticism of Islam, and propose the destruction of Israel, nothing we do will satisfy the “grievances” of the radical Islamic believers. And unless we recognize that the threat of al Qaeda cannot be decoupled from the larger radical Islamic threat, a counter-terrorist focus on al Qaeda only is destined to fail.

Recommendations

- Congress should encourage close cooperation between the United States and the new Pakistani regime – particularly on the intelligence and military fronts. The new government will likely pursue a policy toward FATA and NWFP that is detrimental to U.S. security concerns, Pakistan’s internal security, and regional stability, but this will change once the Taliban, al Qaeda, and their tribal allies prove themselves, again, to be unreliable, irrational, and irrepressibly violent. The U.S. must maintain friendly relations and use soft power to influence and modify Pakistan’s frontier policies over time in order to seek to deny FATA and NWFP as sanctuaries for al Qaeda and various Taliban groups.
- According to my sources, the CIA has become risk averse in carrying out HUMINT operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Congress should encourage the CIA and other agencies in the Intelligence Community to take more active and aggressive measures to gather intelligence and act against al Qaeda and Taliban militias in FATA and NWFP. These measures will likely entail higher risk, but also have the potential of higher reward. Al Qaeda and its allies have been able to act with impunity in these regions and our Intelligence Community should be doing more to challenge them with covert action and aggressive information campaigns.
- Pressure must continue on our NATO allies to take a larger role in counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan.
- Congress should require the lead agencies and departments in the Global War on Terrorism (most notably the FBI, CIA, and DHS) to fully and formally educate all counterterrorism personnel in the proclaimed Islamist ideology of al Qaeda the global Islamist movement. This ideology is easily accessible in Islamic religious texts and treatises such as Sayyid Qutb’s *Milestones*. This has not been instituted at any agency. More than six years after 9/11, this is inexcusable.
- In a related matter, the Muslim Brotherhood movement should be considered a strategic enemy of the United States. It should be designated as a foreign power and a threat, from a counterintelligence point-of-view, to the national security of the United States. The Muslim Brotherhood has stated clearly that it considers the United States to be its enemy, despite claims by some commentators that there exists a moderate wing of the movement that somehow does not support the movement’s core goals and ideology.
- The United States government should fully exploit internal Muslim Brotherhood documents released in the course of the 2007 Holy Land Foundation trial as evidence as a widespread and sophisticated Islamist subversive movement in the United States.
- As noted in this testimony, procedures for the U.S. Visa Waiver Program and US-VISIT’s departure control need to be reviewed, updated and enhanced to remove any remaining loopholes that might be exploited by terrorists, including a reassessment of how adding new countries into the fold will increase the chances of terrorist elements infiltrating the United States, as well as implementing safeguards which take into account

al Qaeda's stated approach of recruiting and Western converts to radical Islam who may have European and non-traditionally Muslim identities to more easily slip through the system.

«انا كفييناك المستهزئين»

“Surely we will suffice you against the scoffers”

حملة «رسول الله يوحنا»

“The Messenger of Allah Unites Us” Campaign



The Messenger of Allah Unites Us

WANTED FOR JUSTICE

مطلوبون للعدالة

Wanted for Justice



Esbeth Knudsen



Carsten Juste



Arne Ullum



Wafaa Sultan

وهاء سلطان

شائعة التات الالهية الرسول الكريم الدين المصنف على شاشة الجزيرة

Villifier of the Divine Being,
the Holy Messenger,
and the True Religion on the
screen of Al Jazeera



Kurt Westergaard

كورت هينتر جورد

اول من تجرا ورسم الصور المسببة للرسول الاعظم

The first who dared to draw
the evil pictures of the
Greatest Messenger



Flaming Rose

هلامينغ روس

محرر الشؤون الثقافية لصحيفة جيلاندس بوستن الدنماركية

Culture editor of the
Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten



Faisal Al Qasem



Poul Madsen



Toger Seidenfaden