

Threat Assessment:



Female Suicide Bombers

03-10-TSTA

March 2010

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Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March 2010

Female Suicide Bombers

03-10-TSTA 2

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20229



Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March 2010

Foreword (U/FOUO)

(U/FOUO) In an effort to provide situational awareness reporting to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) field managers, analytical, and targeting units, the Terrorism and Strategic Threat Awareness Branch of the Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination (OIOC) is focusing this report on the threat from female suicide bombers which could potentially affect CBP operations.

(U/FOUO) In the aftermath of the Christmas Day suicide bombing attempt over Detroit, it has become apparent that terrorist organizations continue to scrutinize and attempt to circumvent border security procedures by using a variety of methods. One such method that has not been fully analyzed is the possible use of female operatives. The media has recently reported information suggesting that al-Qa'ida will expand the scope of the female suicide bomber outside of Iraq to include western airliners.

(U/FOUO) The main focus of this assessment is to explore possible operational means and methods that could be utilized by female suicide bombers. A *female suicide bomber* is knowingly and readily willing to blow herself up using explosives attached to her body for a terrorist purpose or cause. She usually requires significant psychological preparation, yet relatively little operational training.

3



Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

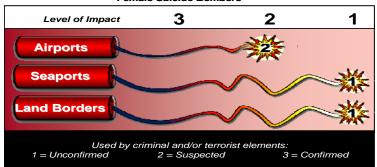
March 2010

Snapshot (U/FOUO/LES)

Impact Meter (U/FOUO/LES)

(U//FOUO//LES) The Impact Meter provides an OIOC assessment of the threat on travel and trade in the CBP mission environments.

Female Suicide Bombers



Key Judgments (U/FOUO)

- (U/FOUO) While the majority of suicide bombers have been men, there have been in excess of 262 women suicide bombers since 1985.
- (U/FOUO) Open source reporting states that "al-Qa'ida terror cells have trained a group of female suicide bombers to attack Western targets including airliners. These women may have a non Arab appearance and may be traveling on Western passports."
- (U) More stringent security measures and procedures in airports have led terrorists to seek alternative methods to circumvent explosive detection measures, which could possibly include the use of female attackers.
- (U/FOUO) Al-Qa'ida, reportedly, is considering using breast implants as a means to conceal explosives, which would be detonated by a liquid filled syringe that would replicate diabetics injecting insulin. Diabetic supplies (insulin and syringes) are not prohibited items on airliners.

Faces of Terror



1985

First known female suicide bomber - Sara's Yoursef Mehanili (16). Member of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. She drove a truck into an Israeli Defense Force convoy and killed two soldiers.





First female Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) suicide bomber. Assassinated former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gendhi. (LTTE has used more female suicide bombers than any other militant group).

1996



First female Kurdistan Workers' Perty (PKK) saicide bomber. Target against Turish military and police together 1996 -1999. First to strap explosives to stomach to

2000



First female Chechen militants (Black Widow) suicide bomber Attacks against Russian military target on subways, at concerts and on airliness 2000 - 2004 Chechen hostage operations (2002 seizure of Moscow Theater and 2004 seizure of a school in Restan)



2005 European-Belgium First female "al-Qaida in Iraq" suicide bomber. Attack at wedding reception in the Radisson hotel in Amman Jordan. Also first European female suicide bomber attack on same day in Baghdad.

2008



Shift in Iraqi in surgent tactics using women suicide bombers to avoid detection at U.S.-Iraci military chedopoints. These were 31 attacks by 35 female spicide bombers in

2010



A female suicide bomber walking among Shifte pilgrims in Baghdad detonated an explosives belt killing 41 and wounding more than 105.

03-10-TSTA

4

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20229



Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers March 2010



Report: Female Suicide Bombers

03-10-TSTA 5

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20229

Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March 2010

Scope (U)

(U) This assessment provides a strategic overview of the female suicide bomber, the potential for new methods of attack, and the possible implications to the Homeland.

Background (U)

(U) While the majority of suicide bombers have been men, there have been a large number of female suicide attacks since 1985. Open source reporting indicates that the development of more stringent security measures and procedures in international airports have led terrorists to seek alternative means and methods for implementing suicide bomber operations. This includes the possibility of surgically implanting explosives in women as a means of executing terrorist attacks.

Executive Summary (U/FOUO)

(U/FOUO) Since the first known female suicide bomber attack in 1985, there has been a rise in the number and intensity of female suicide operations in Middle Eastern countries. The latest attack occurred in early February 2010 when a female suicide bomber detonated her vest in a crowd of women and children in Northern Baghdad. Eighteen women and 12 children were among the 54 Iraqis killed in the blast. Another 117 Iraqis were wounded, some seriously. While female suicide bombers have previously struck in Iraq and Israel, security sources regard the use of women for al-Qa'ida attacks on Western targets outside the Middle East as 'inevitable'. Additionally, open source reporting states that British Intelligence is warning of new methods of developing explosives that can be surgically implanted inside a woman's body in an attempt to avoid detection by security personnel.

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6 03-10-TSTA

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Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination

Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March 2010

Findings (U/FOUO)

History of Female Suicide Bombers (U/FOUO)

(U/FOUO) The use of women in suicide bombing operations dates back to the mid-1980s when a 16-year-old female drove a truck into a military convoy and killed two soldiers on behalf of a secular terrorist organization in Lebanon. Since that time, extremists operating in some countries have come to accept the use of female suicide bombers representing a shift in insurgent tactics. For example, in 2003, Osama Bin Laden endorsed the recruitment of women to attack U.S. interests. In 2004, Hamas which initially forbad the use of female operatives, sponsored female suicide attacks



Source: Reuters
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acknowledging female suicide bombers as fellow martyrs. Reportedly, Hamas has created a unit specifically designed for female fighters which offers suicide bombing training as well as other

The continued use of female suicide bombers indicates that terrorists judge this tactic (female suicide bombers) as effective in increasing defenses and thwarting security measures?

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terrorist skills. According to a 2008 DHS/FBI assessment, the continued use of female suicide bombers indicates that terrorists judge this tactic as effective in increasing defenses and thwarting security measures, referring to the advantage that female suicide bombers have over male counterparts in their ability to conceal explosives as well as their capacity to approach their targets with less scrutiny.

Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March 2010

Method of Operation (U/FOUO)



The package of the PETN explosive powder used on the failed plot to blow up the airliner over Detroit on December 25, 2009.

Source: ABC News UNCLASSIFIED

(U/FOUO) Open source reporting indicates that in the aftermath of the Christmas Day bomb plot where suicide would-be bomber. Umar Farouk Ablulmutallab attempted use explosives manufactured by al-Qa'ida to blow up a flight over Detroit, Abdulmutallab later stated that "many more are ready to strike". Additionally, open source reporting states that, "al-Qa'ida terrorist cells have trained a group of female suicide bombers to attack Western targets including airliners. These women may have a non-Arab appearance and may be traveling on Western passports. They most likely have been prepared and trained for their missions by the same group (al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula or AQAP) responsible for the failed Christmas Dav suicide bomb plot."

(U/FOUO) According to open source reporting, stringent security procedures in international airports have prompted terrorists to seek alternative ways of developing, concealing and detonating explosives. This was evident in the Christmas Day suicide plot where Abdulmutallab used 80 grams of Pentaerythritol Tetra Nitrate (PETN) sewn into his underwear, to avoid detection. According to authorities, the explosives could have blown a hole in the side of the Detroit-bound aircraft if it had been detonated. On August 28, 2009, Saudi Arabian Deputy Minister of Interior Prince Mohammed bin Nayef survived a suicide bombing attack launched by an al-Qa'ida cell based in Yemen utilizing the same method of concealment (in attacker's underwear), as well as the use of PETN explosive, and the origin of the bomb.

(U/FOUO) Previously used explosive devices concealed on female suicide bombers had the following characteristics:

 A simple toggle or push-button switch commonly used to complete an electronic circuit. If the individual was

Pentaerythritol Tetranitrate (U)

(U//FOUO) *Pentaerythritol Tetranitrate (PETN) is a compound related to nitroglycerin used in the military. It is a main charge explosive. It is stable and flexible, making it easy to smuggle. It is more difficult to detonate than primary explosives, so dropping or igniting it will typically not cause an explosion. A liquid initiator can consist of a filled plastic syringe similar to those used by diabetic patients who inject insulin.

03-10-TSTA 8

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20229



Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March 2010

hesitant, the device could be triggered remotely allowing an experienced cadre to retain control until the desired detonation time

- Included shrapnel, such as nails, glass fragments, marbles or other small metal pieces. In many suicide attacks, the dispersal of fragments is the primary mechanism that causes death.
- Closely attached to the body by use of a vest or belt. Explosives have also been concealed in a backpack or pocket book.



Source: howstuffworks.com UNCLASSIFIED

(U/FOUO) While previous assessments have indicated that "Middle Eastern looking" women would be the likely choices for al- Qa'ida

female suicide bombers, recent reporting appears to indicate a shift toward using women with a more Western look, including attire.

(U/FOUO) The use of female suicide bombers will continue to grow as a terrorist tactic as it involves less expense and is operationally effective. From a cultural standpoint in countries where there have been successful female suicide bombers, women have typically aroused less suspicion than men, and received less scrutiny during screenings or security checks. A fatwa issued by Egyptian cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who was forced from Egypt for his views, endorsed the use of Palestinian women in suicide attacks. Al-Qaradawi suggests that women may do what is impossible for men to do---allowing female suicide bombers to violate religious teachings, avoid wearing the veil, and be without a male escort when conducting a suicide attack.

(U/FOUO) Additionally, reporting indicates that with the "successful" uses of PETN, terrorist organizations will continue to use it as a primary explosive (main charge) in future attacks. According to open source reporting, one of the possible new methods of hiding explosives will be to surgically implant the explosive inside the body cavity of the individual carrying out the attack. Open source reporting states that Britain's MI5 intelligence service discovered that doctors have trained at Britain's leading hospitals and have returned to their own countries to fit individuals with surgical implants filled with explosives. Reportedly, al-Qa'ida has already experimented with placing PETN in plastic bags and surgically implanting them in female's

03-10-TSTA 9

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20229

Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March 2010

breasts to give the impression they have undergone breast augmentation. Other tactics include surgically implanting plastic bags of explosives in the stomach, upper thighs, or buttocks. (*Note: Surgical implants have been used in the past by drug trafficking organizations as a means to smuggle cocaine*). The bag of explosive would be subsequently detonated with a liquid filled syringe replicating diabetic injections of insulin. Reportedly, surgeons at Britain's National Health Service confirmed the feasibility of the explosive implant. To date, there are no regulations against diabetics carrying supplies (insulin and/or syringes) onboard an airliner.

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Motivation and Demographics (U/FOUO)

(U/FOUO) Research indicates that there is no specific overriding motivation for women to become suicide bombers. It is more a number of aspects (commitment, patriotism, and religious duty) working in concert with each other.

(U/FOUO) The motivation for some would-be male bombers has been the promise that in the after life they will find six dozen maidens of modest gaze, whom no man has touched. Likewise, some would-be female suicide bombers appear motivated by becoming chief of the six dozen maidens, the fairest of the fair. Also, some have been told husbands would never grow bored with their wives.

(U/FOUO) Some sources indicate that women are sometimes persuaded to become bombers as a means to avenge the loss of family members, particularly males who may have died in combat. Others may feel that they have brought a degree of shame upon the family and are convinced by extremists that becoming a martyr would restore the family's honor.



Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March 2010

(U/FOUO) Open source information indicates that Hamas attempts to recruit female suicide bombers by offering a lifetime stipend of \$200 per month to their families. The stipend is \$400 per month for a male suicide bomber.

<u>Characteristics/Traits (U/FOUO)</u>

(U/FOUO) The following commonalities have been identified among female suicide bombers:

- The majority of female suicide bombers are young, primarily between the ages of 17 and 24, however; the overall range in age for female suicide bombers is from 15 to 64.
- Female suicide bombers come from various educational, religious, social and personal backgrounds.
- Education plays a role, with the "more educated" females such as lawyers, paramedics, or students accounting for the greatest percentage of suicide attacks.
- Most tend to be of average economic status and are rarely impoverished.
- Some may be dishonored through sexual indiscretion, or unable to produce children.
- Some appear motivated by revenge or grief of losing husbands or children as in the woman who killed 15 people in Diyala province on December 7, 2008. Her two sons joined al-Qa'ida in Iraq and were killed by security forces.

Recognizable Behavior (U/FOUO)

(U/FOUO) Male and female suicide bombers may portray many of the same indicative behaviors to include:

- The appearance of being nervous. May seem preoccupied or have a blank stare.
- Focused, intent, and vigilant. Such an acute focus may result in lack of response to verbal questions or commands.
- An awkward attempt to blend in. Behavior may seem odd or overtly out of place.
- Avoidance behaviors toward authority. If security is present, the suicide bomber tries to be inconspicuous.
- May be praying fervently to him/her self.
- Behavior may be consistent with that of a person without any future such as presenting a
 one-way ticket, or being unconcerned about receiving change for a purchase.
- Profuse sweating that is out of synch with weather conditions.

03-10-TSTA 11

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20229

Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination

Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March 2010

Conclusion (U/FOUO)

(U/FOUO) The attempted suicide bomber event on Christmas Day, reporting of increasing acceptance of female suicide bombers, and the possible training of female suicide bombers in Yemen, provide reasons for concern that terrorists are continually thinking of innovative ways to attempt to circumvent our present security methods.

(U/FOUO) Since 1985, reporting indicates there have been in excess of 262 women suicide bombers—using themselves as human detonators for explosive material strapped tightly to their bodies. According to open source reporting, while there have been fewer recorded suicide bombing attacks by women, the attacks themselves have resulted in higher casualties than the same number of attacks by male suicide bombers. One reason for this is that women have an advantage over their male counterparts in their ability to gain closer proximity to their targets. According to a 2008 DHS/FBI assessment, one advantage of female suicide bombers is their ability to carry explosives in ways men can not, such as in prosthetic devices that mimic the look of a pregnant woman.

(U/FOUO) Recent open source reporting indicates that terrorists may be exploiting the use of women suicide bombers in order to circumvent security procedures by concealing explosives in surgically implanted bags in women's breasts to replicate breast augmentation.

(U/FOUO) Additionally, while a suicide attack attracts wide media coverage, a *female* suicide bomber has an added emotional media aspect which encourages terrorists to capitalize on the sensationalism.

Intelligence Gaps (U/FOUO)

- (U/FOUO) Intelligence regarding the effectiveness of surgically implanted explosives.
- (U/FOUO) The effectiveness of body scanning on surgical implants.

Actions/Follow Ups (U)

• (U) CBP OIOC will continue to monitor reporting regarding the threat.

12

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Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March 2010

Sources (U/FOUO)

- (U/FOUO) Intelligence Report "Female Suicide Bombers: Wolves in Sheep's Clothing" CBP-107-04
- (U) Joseph Farah's G2 Bulletin, "Bosom Bombers; Women Have Explosive Breast Implants" February 2010
- (U) U.S. Agencies Warn of Female Suicide Bombers http://edition.cnn.com/2008/US/02/12/suicide.bombers
- (U) Female Suicide Bomber http://en.wikipedia.org
- (U/FOUO) Joint Homeland Security Assessment (DHS/FBI) Female Suicide Bombers Threat, February 2008
- (U) Reuters-Deadliest Bomb Attacks in 2007
- (U) ABC News-Richard Clark-Female Suicide Bombers May Be Heading Here From Yemen
- (U) Stratfor Global Intelligence On the Cusp: The Nest Wave of Female Suicide Bombers Sept.2007
- (U)World News-Al-Qaeda has trained female suicide bombers to attack West, US officials warn http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/7062745/
- (U) OIOC Weekly Intelligence Notes Latest Terror Ploy: Surgically Implanted Bombs (Al-Arabiya TV; The Age)
- (U) Yorkshire Post Many more like me, says man accused of jet terror http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news
- (U) Annapolis, MD Capital Newspaper www.captialnews.com
- (U) Urban Warfare Analysis Center (UWAC), October, 2008.
- Inspiration

www.intelink.gov/inteldocs/actions.php?kt_path_info=ktcore.cchors.document.view&doccumentID=111124

• (*U*) http://www.meforum.org/646/the-garadawi-fatwas

13



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Threat Assessment: Female Suicide Bombers

March

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