



Situational Awareness Bulletin

31 May 2011

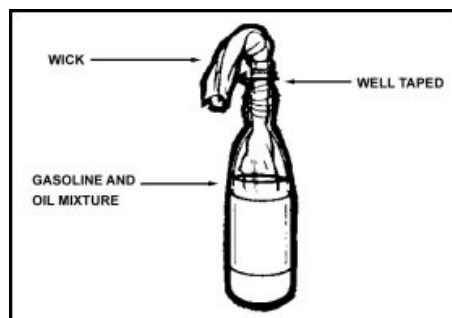
Forum Chatter: Online Jihadist Calls for Arson Attacks



Past statements from al-Qa'ida Central, as well as their franchise groups, highlight the importance of targeting the U.S. economy as part of their strategy of confronting the West. Most recently, militant propagandists, such as Adam Gadahn, American mouthpiece for Al-Qa'ida in Pakistan, have made statements advising Muslims in the West to *"...undermine the West's already struggling economies with...targeted attacks on symbols of capitalism which will shake consumer confidence and stifle spending"*. Additionally, in November 2010, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula introduced the "strategy of a thousand cuts", where they encouraged their mujahideen brothers to *"attack the enemy with smaller, but more frequent operations...the aim is to bleed the enemy to death"*.

In December 2010, Abu Suleiman al-Nasser, a prominent member of the *Shumukh al-Islam* [Arabic] forum, advised that the U.S. economy is at its weakest and he called on the *"Mujahideen Brigades"* to attack the *"soft underbelly of the enemies"*. On 30 May 2011, Abu Suleiman posted another article urging Muslims to carry out arson attacks on buildings, farms and forests. He also advised them not to forget to target gas stations, storage tanks and gas lines as well.

Abu Suleiman goes on to say that setting fires is a simple action and with the summer months coming up the fires will spread easily. He also stated that in order to fight these fires, huge sums of money would have to be spent from the West's already collapsed economies. He concludes his article by providing simple instructions for manufacturing Molotov cocktails to use in facilitating the arson attacks and he signed the article "Abu Suleiman Al-Nasser, Support of Global Jihad".



[ANALYST COMMENT] Abu Suleiman al-Nasser, a prominent member of several top tier al-Qa'ida Arabic forums is known for his recent 'calls to action' against financial institutions, U.S. infrastructure, and Coptic Christians, as well as, a call for hoax threats. Earlier this year, Abu Suleiman became a member of the *Al Mojahden English Network* and posted an article entitled "To the brothers who want to join jihad". In his article, he advises Muslims that if they want to be a good Muslim and obey the rules of Allah, they should prepare themselves to participate in jihad. He ends his posting by stating: "*Whatever you do my brother, remember you do that for Allah. Be brave my brother and stand up..it is the time of work..it is the time of Jihad*". Additionally, on 4 May 2011, Abu Suleiman al-Nasser released an audio statement calling for an "*immediate call to mobilization*" to Muslims worldwide in response to news of Osama bin Laden's death.

[Translation of Audio Message] | Translation Provided by Joseph Srour

"And prepare against them all you can of power, including steeds of war to terrorise the enemies of Allah and others besides whom you may not know, but Allah does know" [Qur'an 8:60]

THIS IS AN IMMEDIATE CALL TO MOBILIZATION TARGETING THE U.S. AND ITS INTERESTS AND ALL ITS SUPPORTERS WORLDWIDE, PARTICULARLY NATO

We call on all Muslims worldwide to participate in open attacks in Europe and the U.S. and to be key parts of jihadi raids, soon, Allah willing.

We warn all Muslims in Muslim nations to avoid being near any American establishments and all infidel embassies and their interests and when the mujahideen release a confirmation to the martyrdom of Osama bin Laden this should be the signal to commence all jihadi operations.
****NOTE** AQ released their official statement regarding OBL's death on 6 May 2011**

Everyone who believes in monotheism knows that jihad is a religious obligation on all of us and all backers thereof must make the martyrdom of the mujahideen leaders and emirs a trigger to resume jihad and to walk on the path that these leaders paved and to prove to the infidel nations that if they in fact killed Osama, among us we have thousands of Osama's.

The idea of "forest jihad", or utilizing arson attacks against the West, is not a new tactic and has been suggested by online jihadists for several years. On 26 November 2007, Abu Thar al-Kuwaiti, a member of the now defunct *Al Ikhlas Islamic Network*, posted an article urging other forum members not forget the "forest jihad". It was a lengthy posting that provided historical references from the writings of AQ military strategists such as Abu Mus'ab al-Suri to back up the assertion of arsons attacks as a viable tactic to use against the West and it also provided operational instructions and expected outcomes.

[Excerpt] *This call goes out to Muslims in Europe, in the United States, in Australia, and in Russia to start forest fires...The targeted forests are those that belong to those countries that are at war with Muslims...Typically these fires take months rather than days to fully extinguish, which means that this terror will haunt them for an extended period of time. The element of summer months will aid in*

spreading the fires due to the drop in rain levels...Go, and set forth on your jihad and once more plant join in the hearts of your Muslim brothers.

A more recent example of online jihadists encouraging the use of arson attacks can be seen in a posting from Emerson Begolly, a Penn State student who blogged and posted on the Islamist forums under the name "Asadullah al-Shishani" prior to his arrest in January 2011:

[Excerpt] *Arson, forest fires, building fires, you name it. Look at the recent fires in Russia, and the past deadly fires in California and Australia. A wild fire is hard to blame on anyone, and fires started in abandoned buildings are usually blamed on "those damn kids again". Fires can be deadly and cause millions of dollars in damage.*

IMPLICATIONS

Arsons have the potential to become an appealing tactic for extremists groups and individuals seeking to carry out attacks that would have a major impact on the economy, as well as, furthering their global agenda and long-term strategic objectives. This type of attack is simple to perform, has relatively no cost and is a very low security risk, but at the same time yields large scale destruction and frequently draws media attention.

The general motivation mentioned by the online jihadists for utilizing arson attacks is to achieve the following objectives:

- Heavy financial impact on the West's weakened economy
- Potential for human losses
- Creating fear and panic amongst the general population
- Exhausting the resources of first responders and military personnel

As "would be" jihadists, online and in the real world, continue to share potential methods of attack and "lessons learned" with other like-minded individuals, it will likely become increasingly more difficult for law enforcement and members of the intelligence community to identify those individuals who are who may be in the pre-operational phase of an attack. Because of the perceived randomness and simplicity of carrying out this type of attack, it could be appealing to those who are inspired by al-Qa'ida's ideologies and desire to fulfill their obligation of "individual jihad".

CFIX is unaware of any specific threats as a result of this forum posting; however, this bulletin is being provided for situational awareness as jihadi forum chatter is encouraging attacks against the United States. Law Enforcement, as well as other Region 5 partners, are encouraged to remain observant and report any suspicious activity to the Central Florida Intelligence Exchange (CFIX) at 407-858-3950 or CFIX@ocfl.net.

Entities and agencies outside of the Central Florida Region should report suspicious activity to the appropriate investigative agency and their regional or state fusion center.