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**New York State Office of Homeland Security
Focus Report:**

The Post 9-11 Terrorist Training Infrastructure

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Although UNCLASSIFIED, unauthorized disclosure of this information may give al Qaeda and affiliated jihadists an understanding of US Government efforts to counter its terrorist plans and operations against US interests.

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“Military training is an obligation in Islam upon every sane, male, mature Muslim, whether rich or poor, whether studying or working and whether living in a Muslim or non-Muslim county.”

-- Azzam.com, Al Qaeda website

Until shortly after 9/11, when the U.S. military launched an invasion intended to destroy Al Qaeda's infrastructure and sanctuary, the vast majority of the terror network's training camps were located in Afghanistan. According to the 9/11 Commission, between 1996 and 2001, a total of 10,000 to 20,000 individuals trained for jihad at camps such as Al-Farooq, Khalden, and Derunta. Other sources, such as former Senator Bob Graham,¹ cite an estimate from the CIA's Counterterrorism Center that, in fact, between 70,000 and 120,000 passed through Al Qaeda's Afghan camps. A significant number of those attendees were Western citizens. For example, open sources report that in January 2002, British military intelligence discovered the names of 1,200 British citizens who trained with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. U.S. citizens, such as Jose Padilla, John Walker Lindh, and the Lackawanna Six, also traveled to Afghanistan for training.

At these camps, operatives honed their deadly craft. As then-Deputy Attorney General James Comey detailed in a 2004 press briefing, Al Qaeda's training regimen included instruction on “AK-47, on G-3, M-16, Uzi and other machine guns. Training on topography; communications; camouflage; clandestine surveillance; explosives, including C-4 plastic explosives, dynamite and mines; as well as physical fitness and religious training.” Ahmed Ressay, convicted of plotting to blow up Los Angeles International Airport on the eve of the Millennium, testified in federal court that advanced warfare skills were also taught. Ressay noted that trainees learned “how to blow up the infrastructure of a country...[e]lectric plants, gas plants, airports, railroads, large corporations,” as well as “how to mix poisons with other substances...designed to be used against intelligence officers and other VIPs.” Reflecting the advanced training offered to select recruits, the U.S. government has alleged that in Afghanistan Jose Padilla “learned how to seal an apartment to trap the natural gas and to prepare an explosion using that gas that would have maximum yield and destroy an apartment building.”

In addition to learning the lethal tools of jihad, operatives also plotted attacks and made valuable contacts.² As the 9/11 Commission documents, attacks ranging from the 1993 World Trade Center bombing to 9/11 can be traced to Afghanistan; post-9/11 plots can also be linked to those camps. For example, according to the U.S. government, Jose Padilla and Adnan El-Shukrijumah's plan to simultaneously blow up as many as twenty apartment buildings in the U.S. came together in Afghanistan, as the men strengthened ties initially forged in a South Florida mosque.

In the wake of the U.S. military invasion of Afghanistan, Al Qaeda's training infrastructure has been weakened, but still remains robust. Displaying remarkable resourcefulness and utilizing a pool of Afghan training camp veterans as instructors, the terror network has operated camps in an array of lawless areas in countries such as Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Mindanao, and Indonesia. Operatives in Europe, Australia, and the United States have even managed to train for jihad in their own countries, frequently exploiting rural areas to gain experience with

¹ Graham served as head of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and co-chairman of the Congressional Joint Inquiry on 9/11.

² In the words of former CIA official Paul Pilar, “the Afghan experience was important for traditional training, indoctrination and networking.”

explosives and weapons. Would-be Western jihadis have also devoted considerable time to martial arts training and have practiced military tactics by playing paintball. Moreover, jihadis have placed volumes of training manuals on the Internet to further compensate for the vacuum created by the destruction of the Afghan infrastructure. Although the Internet has made this instructional material available to a wide range of potential operatives, web-based training has notable flaws. Nonetheless, utilizing a cadre of Afghan-trained instructors, Al Qaeda has effectively ensured that a new generation of trained terrorists is ready to carry on the network's global jihad.

Arguably Al Qaeda's most extensive post-9/11 training infrastructure exists in Pakistan, where the government struggles to exercise control over several remote and restive areas. In July 2005, open sources reported that fifty-five jihadi training camps were operating in Pakistan.³ Commenting on the camps, a senior Indian official told the media, "the number of terrorists in these camps, to receive arms and explosive training, is estimated to be between 2,000 and 2,500. Apart from training jihadis for Jammu and Kashmir, these camps often also house terrorists headed for other parts of the world." While it is unclear how many camps are actually operating in Pakistan and how many operatives are being trained, the U.S. government has confirmed the existence of terrorist training camps in Pakistan. Prior to his March 2006 visit to Pakistan, U.S. President George W. Bush asserted that he would discuss "the need to dismantle terrorist training camps" with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.⁴

One month later, a federal court in California convicted Hamid Hayat of Lodi for providing material support to terrorists. Hayat admitted to FBI agents that he attended a jihadist training camp in Pakistan for approximately six months in 2003-2004.⁵ An FBI affidavit filed in the case noted that "Hamid...confirmed this camp was run by Al-Qaeda. Hamid described the camp as providing structured paramilitary training, including weapons training, explosives training, interior room tactics, hand to hand combat, and strenuous exercise." Court documents further asserted "that during his weapons training, photos of various high ranking U.S. political figures, including President Bush, would be pasted onto their targets. Hamid...stated that he and others at the camp were being trained on how to kill Americans...Camp attendees were given the opportunity to choose the country in which to carry out their jihadi mission including the United States, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir and other countries." At the camp, the U.S. government noted, "Hamid observed hundreds of attendees from various parts of the world."

³ Media sources further reported that at least fifteen of these camps were destroyed by the massive earthquake that rocked Pakistan in October 2005.

⁴ According to press reports, shortly after President Bush's departure, Pakistani security forces attacked a training camp near the Afghan border, killing three dozen.

⁵ According to open source reporting, Hamid Hayat and his father, Umer, claimed that at least six other Lodi men trained in jihad camps in Pakistan.

Other Western jihadis have also found their way to Pakistani terror camps following 9/11.⁶ Most notably, 7/7 suicide bomber Mohammed Sidique Khan reportedly attended a Pakistani camp in 2003, accompanied by Queens, New York resident Mohammed Junaid Babar. Babar pled guilty in New York City in 2004 to providing material support to Al Qaeda and admitted that he “agreed with others to organize a jihad training camp where training in military skills, explosives, and weapons was given.” Babar further admitted providing a London terrorist cell with bomb-making material that was intended for use in an aborted 2004 plot to blow up bars, restaurants, and train stations in England. In March 2006 testimony before a British court, Babar asserted that six members of that London cell accompanied him to a training camp in Malakand,⁷ a mountainous region in northern Pakistan. At the camp, Babar’s British associates were allegedly joined by Ottawa resident Momin Khawaja, who was arrested in Canada in March 2004 on terrorism charges. While in Malakand, the men carried out test explosions and filmed their activities, intending to use the footage for a recruitment video. Mirroring pre-9/11 patterns in Afghanistan, the camp also strengthened ties between operatives, for Khawaja and his British comrades stayed in contact and he eventually traveled to England to assist them with a remote detonation device.



M. Khan



M. Babar



M. Khawaja

Complementing the extensive training infrastructure in Pakistan, Al Qaeda currently maintains a robust training network in Iraq. As former CIA Director Porter Goss commented in January 2005 testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, “those jihadists who survive will leave Iraq experienced in and focused on acts of urban terrorism” and could form “a potential pool of contacts to build transnational terrorist cells, groups and networks in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and other countries.” In addition to gaining on the ground experience in assassinations, kidnappings, and car bombings, terrorists have also been able to set up a number of training camps in Iraq.⁸ For example, in March 2005, Iraqi and U.S. forces raided a camp in Samarra, killing 85 terrorists. According to an Iraqi government statement and open sources, “the commandos netted explosives, vehicles, various computers, documents, and heavy weaponry,” as well as training manuals. As one Iraqi officer commented in the press, “this was a serious military camp with a living section and guard posts.”

⁶ For example, in 2004, Sydney medical student Izhar Ul-Haque was arrested and charged with receiving three weeks of weapons training from Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) during a 2003 visit to Pakistan. Further, a group of Northern Virginia men was convicted for traveling to a LeT camp shortly after 9/11. According to the U.S. government, the men “went to the Lashkar-e-Taiba camp to obtain combat training for the purpose [of] engaging in violent jihad in Afghanistan against...American troops.” And in March 2006, prosecutors indicted Georgia Tech engineering student Syed Ahmed for providing material support to terrorists. Ahmed and another Georgia resident, Ehsanul Sadequee, allegedly traveled to Canada where they met with Islamic extremists connected to a cell dismantled in June 2006. According to a FBI affidavit, “the assembled group developed a plan for traveling to Pakistan where they would attempt to receive military training at one of the several terrorist-sponsored camps. Ahmed later traveled to Pakistan in an attempt to receive just such training.”

⁷ Babar stated that he was accompanied by 15 to 20 “brothers,” mostly from Britain.

⁸ Al Qaeda videos provide independent documentation of the existence of these camps. Further, in April 2006, open sources, citing a commander of Iraq’s border police, reported that Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps had set up a new terrorist training camp in Eastern Iraq for Iraqi mercenaries tasked with assassinating Sunni Iraqis.

Similarly, in 2003, open sources reported on a strike against a camp in Rawa, Iraq in which nearly 70 individuals were training. In an audiotape posted on a jihadi website in April 2006, Abu-Mohammed al-Salmani, described as a jihadi commander in Iraq, provided considerable insight into the Rawa camp. Modeling the camp on its Afghan predecessor, al-Salmani stated, “we first begun by gathering all the information we could on Al-Ansar Den in Afghanistan... We have read everything that has been written about the camp in Afghanistan.” He added, “after the camp was set up, Muslims from everywhere started pouring in... Afghan Arabs were the first to join the camp.” According to al-Salmani, training sessions lasted between 30 and 45 days and quickly Rawah “became the starting point of jihad in Iraq.”

Even prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Al Qaeda-linked terrorists were reportedly operating training camps in Iraq. Based along the Iran-Iraq border, Ansar al-Islam, which the U.S. Treasury Department asserts received between \$300,000 and \$600,000 in seed money from Osama bin Laden,⁹ ran a string of training camps that were destroyed by U.S. and Kurdish forces in 2003. When U.S. forces searched the camps, they allegedly discovered documents belonging to jihadis from Sudan, Egypt, Qatar, Europe, and even the U.S. Significantly, U.S. troops discovered a notebook in one of the camps that listed the name, address, and telephone number of Yassin Aref, an Albany, New York mosque official who was indicted in September 2005 for providing material support to terrorists. Aref was allegedly involved in a plot to smuggle a missile into the U.S. that would be used against a Pakistani diplomat in New York City. One of the Ansar camps was reportedly linked to current Al Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. According to the U.S. Treasury Department, Zarqawi’s “network... established a poison and explosives training camp in the area of northeastern Iraq... controlled by Ansar al-Islam.” At the camp, “Zarqawi’s lieutenants” taught “operatives how to produce ricin and other poisons.”

Following 9/11, Zarqawi was also linked to training camps in the Pankisi Gorge, a remote area near the Chechen border that has long served as a refuge for Chechen terrorists. According to press reports, Zarqawi dispatched Abu Atiya, a former instructor at an Afghan camp, to teach trainees about toxic gases and poisons. Individuals who trained in the Pankisi Gorge have been tied to a number of thwarted plots, including alleged poison attacks in Europe.

For example, in 2002, French authorities arrested a number of operatives and reportedly seized a chemical suit, cyanide, a cyanide antidote, sulfuric acid, hydrogen peroxide and glycerin. Commenting on the arrests, Gilles Leclair, the French Interior Ministry’s anti-terrorism coordinator, stated, “they are coming from the same region, most of them are Algerian, trained [in] the same place, in some camps in Afghanistan, and at the same time in Georgia in the Pankisi Gorge. They have the same trainers.” Following arrests in an alleged ricin plot targeting England, French anti-terrorism judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere asserted, “there has been a change of sanctuary and a change of strategy. We know that some of the suspects were trained with chemicals in Georgia and Chechnya. The Chechens are experts in chemical weapons. And Chechnya is closer to Europe than Afghanistan.”

⁹ The U.S. Treasury Department further notes that “Al came into being with the ‘blessing’ of bin Laden after its leaders visited al-Qa’ida in Afghanistan in 2000 and 2001.”



Al Qaeda Trainees at a Saudi Camp

Just as terrorists have exploited lawless and isolated areas in Pakistan, Iraq, and the Pankisi Gorge in the post-9/11 era, they have similarly taken advantage of Saudi Arabia's vast deserts to establish training camps. An Al Qaeda video filmed in 2003 and released on the Internet depicted masked trainees in a Saudi camp learning to use RPG's, anti-tank missiles, and explosives. The video also featured one of the attendees reading a martyrdom will and pleading for the destruction of America. These camps were reportedly organized by Al Qaeda operatives Turki Nasser al-Dandani¹⁰ and Yousef Al-Ayyiri,¹¹ a former instructor at an Afghan camp and one-time bodyguard for Osama bin Laden. Operatives under Al-Dandani's control allegedly carried out the May 12, 2003 Riyadh bombings that killed 34, including nine Americans.

Following 9/11, a U.S. citizen even received terrorist training in Saudi Arabia. According a Department of Justice filing, between September 2002 and June 2003, Virginia resident Ahmed Abu Ali "received training from Al Qaeda cell members in Saudi Arabia in weapons (including hand grenades), explosives, and document forgery." Abu Ali's controllers, Ali al-Faqasi¹² and Sultan al-Qahtani, both of whom had attended Afghan training camps, hoped Abu Ali could be utilized in a strike against the U.S. Court filings submitted by the U.S. government document that al-Faqasi and al-Qahtani discussed an array of plots with Abu Ali, including "crashing airplanes leaving from [Latin] America," "striking nuclear stations in America," "assassinating members of Congress," "blowing up military airplanes on the ground at their bases," "bombing nightclubs and public gathering places in America," and a plot "like the [U.S.S.] Cole operation, but at American ports against American warships." On March 29, 2006, a federal judge in Virginia sentenced Abu Ali to 30 years in prison for conspiring to kill President Bush and joining an Al Qaeda cell.

In the wake of the destruction of the Afghan camps, the jungles and remote islands of Southeast Asia have also been exploited by Al Qaeda-linked terrorists. For example, in November 2005, Ambon¹³ Lt. Col. Leonidas Braksan told the media that authorities had recently discovered a training camp in Indonesia's Maluku province. Run by graduates of the Afghan camps, the camp taught jihadis from throughout Indonesia "the tactics of war, including using weapons and making bombs." As Braksan noted, "the place was very isolated and difficult to get to." One month later, Philippine Lieutenant-General Edilberto Adan reported that the Al Qaeda-affiliated¹⁴ Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) had conducted as many as 80 training sessions

¹⁰ Al-Dandani killed himself when surrounded by Saudi authorities in July 2003. Open sources describe him as the "head of Persian Gulf operations for Al Qaeda, responsible for land and maritime attacks on U.S. and Western interests throughout the region." He also reportedly fought U.S. troops in Afghanistan and was a close associate of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

¹¹ Al-Ayyiri died in a June 2003 clash with Saudi security forces.

¹² According to the 9/11 Commission Report, Al-Faqasi was "to have been part of the planes operation [9/11] but was held in reserve by Bin Ladin for a later, even larger operation."

¹³ Ambon is located in Indonesia.

¹⁴ According to the 9/11 Commission Report, Osama bin Ladin has "provided equipment and training assistance to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front."

on Mindanao Island since January 2005. Adan commented, “there had been decentralized and specialized training activities with the purpose of enhancing the military skills of its members and maintaining their war-fighting preparedness.” In May 2006, open sources reported that Jemaah Islamiyah, the Al Qaeda-linked group responsible for the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings, was also running training camps on Mindanao Island.¹⁵ Well aware of the immense value of these remote camps, Western Al Qaeda operatives have flocked to them in droves. Most notably, a September 2003 U.S. Treasury Department statement asserted that Parlindungan Siregar, an Indonesian engineer linked to the Madrid bombing cell, “arranged for several hundred Al Qaeda operatives from Europe...to travel to Indonesia for training” between 1997 and 2001.

In addition to the extensive training infrastructure established by terrorists in Southeast Asia, Pakistan, and Iraq, jihadists have reportedly operated an array of training camps in Africa post 9/11. For instance, in February 2005, a United Nations investigation determined that Al Qaeda training camps were operating in Nigeria. Camps have also been identified in Mali, Chad, Algeria, Sudan, and Somalia¹⁶ at various times since 9/11.

While the camps in Africa, Southeast Asia, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Pankisi Gorge have operated without official sanction, other camps have been facilitated by state sponsors of terror since 9/11. According to press reports, Iran and Syria (along with Syria’s long time proxy, Lebanon)¹⁷ have hosted a number of camps following 9/11. In May 2006, Jordanian government spokesman Nasser Joudeh told reporters that “ Hamas was attempting to recruit elements in the Jordanian arena and trying to recruit elements from abroad to send to Syria and Iran to get military training.” Months earlier, in February 2006, open sources asserted that Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was running 20 training camps in Iran. Purportedly the government of Iran financed camps in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley wherein Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives trained in the use of rockets and missiles, as well as in underwater suicide operations. Reflecting the potential consequences of “bleed out” from such camps, French police dismantled a cell plotting attacks in Paris in October 2005 whose members had trained in camps in Syria and Lebanon. One unnamed French official told the media, “we’re finding camps in Syria and Lebanon...[they are] training in explosives and chemical weapons, which is an obsession of the jihadists.”¹⁸

Even without the assistance of state sponsors and the existence of vast, lawless areas, terrorists in Western countries have also managed to secure training since 9/11 by demonstrating tremendous ingenuity and resourcefulness.

In February 2005 Senate testimony, FBI Director Robert Mueller commented, “efforts by extremists to obtain training inside the U.S. is [sic]...an ongoing concern.” What’s more, a September 2005 FBI bulletin stated, “there are instances of U.S. persons engaging in paramilitary training within the United States. In addition, available reports suggest Al Qaeda is interested in training operatives at overseas camps, who can, in turn train individuals within

¹⁵ In April 2006, Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty warned that Al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah cells were sharing expertise at terrorist training camps in Southeast Asia.

¹⁶ A March 2005 UN report portrayed Somalia as home to an “army” of jihadi fighters supported by a network of at least seventeen terrorist training camps.

¹⁷ In May 2006, the State Department wrote, “Although Syria withdrew its military forces in April, it continued to maintain a covert intelligence presence in Lebanon...Given that the Government of Lebanon does not exercise authoritative control over areas in the Hizballah-dominated south and inside the Palestinian-controlled refugee camps, terrorists can operate relatively freely in both locations.”

¹⁸ Also of note are reports that Al Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi met with leaders of Hezbollah at a training camp in South Lebanon in 2002.

targeted countries, including the United States.” Not surprisingly, the terrorists’ strategy has largely centered on exploiting remote locations.¹⁹ (See: **OHS Focus Report, “Terrorist Activity in Rural & Suburban Areas,” December 5, 2005**)

In April 2006, federal prosecutors alleged that three Georgia men went “into the mountains of Georgia to conduct military training exercises.” Court papers assert that two of those men, Syed Ahmed and Ehsanul Sadequee, both of whom have been indicted on federal charges, “discussed strategic locations in the United States suitable for a terrorist strike, to include oil refineries and military bases” and planned to travel to Pakistan to get military training at a terrorist camp. Notably, U.S. authorities have established that Ahmed and Sadequee traveled to Toronto in 2005 to meet with “like-minded Islamic extremists” and had been in contact via computer with some of the terror suspects connected to a Canadian cell dismantled on June 2, 2006. According to press reports, that cell, which acquired three tons of ammonium nitrate in preparation for an attack, attended a training camp on an isolated property in a tiny central Ontario tourist community.²⁰ On the sprawling property, the men reportedly set up tents, obstacle courses, and firing ranges and trained with automatic weapons.

Earlier in 2006, the U.S. government unsealed an indictment against Mohammad Zaki Amawi, Marwan Othman El-Hindi, and Wassim Mazloum of Toledo, Ohio charging them with conspiring to kill U.S. military personnel in Iraq and with conspiring to provide material support to terrorists. According to federal prosecutors, Amawi and a confidential informant (CI) “engaged in an instructional session on the construction and use of IEDs and timing devices.” Amawi, Mazloum, and the CI also allegedly discussed training with real explosives on July 4th, 2005 “when the sounds of the explosions would not raise undue suspicion.” Further, Mazloum, the CI, and others allegedly practiced with firearms at an indoor shooting range in Toledo, Ohio.²¹ Also in 2006, FBI reporting stated, “a United States person who currently resides in the Jacksonville, Florida area reportedly received explosives and weapons training recently with other Muslim men in the Miami, Florida area. The U.S. person supports the Hezbollah doctrine.”



Mohammad Zaki Amawi



Wassim Mazloum

¹⁹ There is considerable precedent for these training activities, dating far before 9/11. For example, in addition to drilling with improvised explosive devices and in hand-to-hand combat in western Pennsylvania, the 1993 World Trade Center bombing cell trained with AK-47s, Uzis, and other heavy weapons in the Naugatuck forest in northern Connecticut. Al Qaeda-linked terrorists have even attempted to establish formal training camps within the continental U.S. In 1998, indicted terrorist Babar Ahmed traveled to Arizona and met with associates of Osama bin Laden in the hopes of opening a training camp there. Further, according to federal court documents, convicted Al Qaeda operative James Ujaama scouted land in Bly, Oregon in 1999 in the hopes of providing “a place where Muslims could receive various types of training, including military-style jihad training, in preparation for a community of Muslims to move to Afghanistan.” In Ujaama’s words, the property in Bly was located in a pro-militia and fire-arms state that “looks just like Afghanistan.”

²⁰ One town resident told the media, “I would see, like, eight of them at a time usually, sometimes as many as a dozen...they were all wearing camouflage gear and carrying big bags of equipment...coming and going at all times of the day or night.”

²¹ A jihadi website stated, “in some countries of the world, especially the USA, firearms training is available to the general public. One should try to join a shooting club if possible and make regular visits to the firing range.”

Counterterrorism officials have observed similar patterns in Europe, where terrorists have exploited mountainous and remote regions in an array of countries including France, Italy, and Spain.²² For instance, from the late 1990's through 2002, Al Qaeda operatives held outdoor exercises at rugged training camps at seven sites across France, including one in the southeastern Alps and another in the Fontainebleau forest south of Paris, in order to test the physical aptitude of potential jihadists.²³ This training camp network was allegedly run by men involved in the conspiracy to assassinate anti-Taliban leader Ahmed Shah Massoud in Afghanistan on September 9, 2001. Moreover, when British authorities raided the infamous Finsbury Park mosque in 2003 in search of evidence in a ricin plot targeting England, they discovered weapons, a stun gun, chemical weapons protection suits, and gas masks. Worshipers allegedly were sent to jihad training camps that convicted terrorist Abu Hamza al Masri organized in both England and Scotland.²⁴ Media sources report that former British soldiers, some of whom fought in Bosnia, were recruited as trainers. More recently, in 2005, Nourredine Fatmi, a member of the Hofstaad network that murdered Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, conducted machine gun training in a forest outside of Amsterdam, according to court testimony.²⁵

Terrorists have been equally creative in Australia, where they reportedly trained for jihad at camps in Victoria's remote bush land and at a New South Wales cattle station. Individuals who trained at those camps were arrested in November 2005 in Sydney and Melbourne while allegedly plotting a terrorist attack. Following the arrests, New South Wales' Police Commissioner Ken Moroney commented, "I am satisfied that we have disrupted what I would regard as the final stages of a terrorist attack or the launch of a terrorist attack in Australia."

Even when unable to train with explosives or firearms, Western terrorists have pursued other avenues to prepare for jihad. Terrorists have demonstrated a particular affinity for paintball, as the Virginia Fusion Center noted in a January 2006 bulletin: "The Virginia Fusion Center has received information suggesting that terrorist elements in Virginia may be interested in the use of paramilitary training, specifically in the use of paintball gaming." Throughout 2001, a Northern Virginia-based cell affiliated with the Pakistani terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba practiced small unit military tactics at a paint-ball war games facility on a woodsy plot of land in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. When one of the cell members pled guilty in 2003, he admitted that the paintball exercises were "conducted as sort of a military training." And following the 7/7 London bombings, investigators determined that suicide bomber Mohammad Sidique Khan regularly played paintball with a group of radical associates "immediately after watching extremely violent videos depicting Muslim suffering around the world."²⁶ Open sources also

²² In December 2005, open sources reported that jihad training camps were operating in Bosnia as well. Further, two of the four 7/7 bombers, Mohammad Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer, participated in what many believe was a team-building white-water rafting trip just prior to the attacks.

²³ A posting on an Al Qaeda website stated, "the majority of the time spent in Jihad is learning to cope with harsh, physically and mentally demanding living conditions... The best way to learn these [survival] skills is to go camping into the outdoors with a small group of brothers."

²⁴ Media sources report, "it is not clear where these were, but speculation... has centered around remote parts of Wales, in particular the Brecon Beacons, and national parks such as those in the Highlands, Yorkshire Dales or Lake District."

²⁵ As one unnamed U.S. official told the media in 2003, "you can have a three-day intensive firearms course if you need it. You pick a backwoods location, use it and lose it."

²⁶ The official British government report on the 7/7 bombings states, "Camping, canoeing, white-water rafting, paintballing and other outward bound type activities are of particular interest because they appear common factors for the 7 July bombers and other cells disrupted previously and since... It is worth noting that for some extremist activities – e.g. fighting overseas – physical fitness and resilience are essential. They [such trips] may also be used to

report that Ottawa resident Momin Khawaja, who was arrested in Canada in March 2004 on terrorism charges, also readied himself for jihad through paintball games with likeminded friends.

Since 9/11, Western terrorists have eagerly pursued martial arts training, an activity which has long been emphasized in Al Qaeda literature. A posting on the Al Qaeda website Azzam.com stated, “It is vital to join a martial arts club as part of the training for Jihad. In addition to teaching you how to defend yourself and strengthen your body, martial arts develop self-discipline and controlled aggression.”²⁷ In May 2005, federal agents indicted Tarik ibn Osman Shah, a martial arts expert from Bronx, NY, and charged him with conspiring to provide material support to Al Qaeda. According to court papers, Shah told a confidential informant that he had trained many “brothers” and had even done so at a mosque in Beacon, New York in 2001. Labeling himself a “professor” of the “martial arts” and expressing his desire to “pass” knowledge on to “brothers,” Shah scouted a Long Island warehouse to determine its suitability as a training facility for Al Qaeda operatives. Shah even intended to make a demonstration video that would be used to train jihadists. Shortly after Shah’s arrest, federal prosecutors indicted his former student, Mahmud Faruq Brent of Gwynn Oak, Maryland, for conspiring to provide material support to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Also notable is the fact that 7/7 suicide bombers Mohammed Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer both took martial arts classes to prepare for jihad.

To supplement the training provided in camps throughout the world, as well as the skills gleaned through paintball and martial arts, jihadis have populated the Internet with an array of training materials. These materials range from videos detailing the step-by-step process by which one makes a suicide bomb vest to manuals explaining how to manufacture explosives and poisons. Fully aware of the significance of posting training materials on the Internet, the Saudi Arabian branch of Al Qaeda began publishing *Al Battar* in 2003. Named after Yousef Al-Ayyiri, who organized the camps in the Saudi desert in 2003, the online magazine stated, “Oh Mujahid brother in order to join the great training camps you don’t have to travel to other lands. Alone, in your home or with a group of your brothers, you too can begin to execute the training program. You can all join the Al-Battar Training Camp.” One issue of *Al Battar* notes, “you will find basic lessons in the framework of a military training program...so that you will be able ... to fulfill the religious obligation that Allah has set upon you...”



“Martyrdom Operation Vest Preparation” Video Distributed on Jihadi Websites

help with bonding between members of cells already established, or for more direct indoctrination or operational training and planning.”

²⁷ To supplement martial arts training, an Al Qaeda website urges basic physical fitness training: “The basis of all Jihad training is something that can be done in every country of the World: physical training. This requires little or no equipment and is something that one can fit round one’s daily routine.” Another jihadi website states, “fitness is the most important thing a mujahidin needs on the fields of battle.”

Terrorists from around the world have accessed training manuals such as *Al Battar*, as well as instructional videos, to ready themselves for jihad. Highlighting this threat, the February 2006 indictment of Zaki Amawi, Marwan Othman El-Hindi, and Wassim Mazloum in Toledo, Ohio asserts that “conspirators would gather and view training materials, including those found on secure and exclusive web sites, and download and copy training videos and materials for use in jihad training sessions. Such training materials included videos on the productions and use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and suicide bomb vests, among others.” The indictment further notes that Amawi “downloaded a video on the construction of a suicide bomb vest, entitled ‘Martyrdom Operation Vest Preparation,’ for use in the jihad training.”²⁸ Similarly, in a February 2006 court filing, federal prosecutors charged that University of Memphis student Mahmoud Maawad “was either planning or participating in a potential terrorist event inside the United States.” A computer seized from Maawad’s apartment showed he was “linking to web sites...associated with Ansar Al-Islam” and searching for information on car bombs, as well as on how guns and bombs could be smuggled past airport security.

Despite the plethora of available online training material, there are limitations inherent in such “virtual” instruction. As an analysis posted on the CIA’s Open Source Center website notes, “many of the instructional materials lack sophistication or the kind of intensity of detail that would be needed for an amateur to successfully follow them...Such materials may not inspire enough confidence in their integrity for amateur jihadists to take the risks involved in mixing dangerous chemicals to make explosives or poisons. Though jihadists appreciate the Internet for the anonymity it provides, this anonymity means that they cannot be sure about the origin of the explosives or poisons recipes they are downloading, and therefore may lack confidence in the safety or efficacy of the instructions.” The analysis further states, “even if certain members have real experience and the desire to help guide others, fears of surveillance, especially in non-password protected forums, may keep them from sharing their most prized and valuable tactics and techniques.” What’s more, as another open source analysis observes, “while some basic skills and concepts...can be learned...over the Internet, taking that information and applying it to a real-world situation, particularly in a hostile environment, can be exceedingly difficult. The application often requires subtle and complex skills that are difficult to master simply by reading about them: The behaviors of polished tradecraft are not intuitive and in fact frequently run counter to human nature.”

Regardless of the flaws in Internet training materials, jihadis have clearly responded forcefully and effectively to fill the vacuum created by the destruction of the Afghan terror camp infrastructure. Taking advantage of an array of lawless and remote areas, jihadists have operated training camps throughout the globe since 9/11, including in Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Pankisi Gorge, Somalia, Iran, Lebanon, and Indonesia. While the heightened security environment has deterred some potential trainees,²⁹ Western operatives have attended these camps in significant numbers. Particularly troubling is the extensive network of camps operating in Pakistan, which has provided training to 7/7 bomber Mohammed Sidique Khan, convicted California operative Hamid Hayat, and alleged Canadian terrorist Momin Khawaja, among others. Even when Western operatives have been unable to travel to overseas, they have displayed tremendous resourcefulness, preparing for jihad in creative ways in the U.S., Europe,

²⁸ This video can be viewed at <http://www.globalterroralert.com/video/1204/suicidevest1204.wmv>.

²⁹ According to court records, indicted terrorist Mahmud Faruq Brent told Tariq Shah that it would be “a risk” to travel overseas to a training camp. Brent allegedly explained how difficult it was to make the trip since it was difficult to “trust” people in the current climate and noted that “we don’t know who is who.”

and Australia. Complementing their hands-on explosives and firearms training sessions, these Western operatives have also played paintball and participated in martial arts to further prepare. A virtual limitless supply of Internet-based training materials supplements a terrorist's training regimen in the post 9/11 world.

While on patrol in rural or remote areas, local law enforcement should remain cognizant that terrorists remain committed to securing training with firearms and explosives within the United States. This desire creates significant opportunities for interdiction by local law enforcement. On September 29, 2001, members of the "Portland Seven" Al Qaeda cell traveled to a gravel pit on private land in Skamania County, Washington, a rural county located in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge. At the gravel pit, the men took target practice with a shotgun, assault rifle and other firearms before they were reprimanded for trespassing by a Skamania County Deputy Sheriff. One the members of the Al Qaeda cell, Jeffrey Battle, later told an informant, "We were going to 'pop' the cop if he wasn't cool." The information later provided by that Deputy Sheriff was instrumental in solving the case. In announcing the indictment of the Portland Seven, then-Attorney General John Ashcroft stated, "[t]oday's case is a textbook example of the central role that cooperation among local, state and federal law enforcement plays in the prevention of terrorist attacks.... The information provided by Sheriff Bryan and his Deputy Sheriff Mercer helped lead Oregon authorities to the individuals arrested today." Years earlier, an alert police officer who observed the 1993 World Trade Center bombers training with heavy weapons in the Naugatuck forest in northern Connecticut supplied information that proved critical to the investigation.

The FBI has issued the following list of indicators and reportable items of potential terrorist training:

- Suspected terrorist ownership of large areas of land modified for training activity (e.g., setting up obstacle courses, target ranges, makeshift structures, or shielding visible areas from view).
- Suspected terrorist ownership of property outfitted for or capable of sustaining training and with high traffic flow.
- Secretive training location or use of guards, lookouts, or other security measures during training.
- Instruction of suspected or known extremists by individuals with military or law enforcement backgrounds and expertise.
- Unadvertised training by instructors with little means of visible support or a history of extremist views.
- Identity concealment by trainers and trainees.
- Concealment of training activity and equipment after use.
- Criminal activity involving acquisition of weapons, supplies, explosive components, or hazardous materials that could support paramilitary training.
- Stockpiles of weapons, supplies, explosive components, or hazardous materials at suspected extremist training facilities.
- Reports of explosions, gunfire, or unexplained fires in remote, rural, or vacant industrial area.
- Persons displaying burns or chemical exposure symptoms with vague or irrational explanations as to the circumstances surrounding the injuries.

Notes of Interest

- Until shortly after 9/11, when the U.S. military launched an invasion intended to destroy Al Qaeda's infrastructure and sanctuary, the vast majority of the terror network's training camps were located in Afghanistan.
 - In addition to learning the lethal tools of jihad, operatives also plotted attacks and made valuable contacts.
- In the wake of the U.S. military invasion of Afghanistan, Al Qaeda's training infrastructure has been weakened, but still remains robust.
 - Displaying remarkable resourcefulness and utilizing a pool of Afghan training camp veterans as instructors, the terror network has operated camps in an array of lawless areas in countries such as Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Mali, Chad, Algeria, Sudan and Mindanao.
 - Arguably Al Qaeda's most extensive post-9/11 training infrastructure exists in Pakistan, where the government struggles to exercise control over several remote and restive areas. A number of Western jihadis, such as 7/7 suicide bomber Mohammed Sidique Khan, have found their way to Pakistani terror camps following 9/11
- Operatives in Europe, Australia, and the United States have even managed to train for jihad in their own countries, frequently exploiting rural areas to gain experience with explosives and weapons.
 - In February 2005 Senate testimony, FBI Director Robert Mueller commented, "efforts by extremists to obtain training inside the U.S. is [sic]...an ongoing concern."
 - Would-be Western jihadis have also devoted considerable time to martial arts training and have practiced military tactics by playing paintball.
- Moreover, jihadis have placed volumes of training manuals on the Internet to further compensate for the vacuum created by the destruction of the Afghan infrastructure. These materials range from videos detailing the step-by-step process by which one makes a suicide bomb vest to manuals explaining how to manufacture explosives and poisons.
 - Although the Internet has made this instructional material available to a wide range of potential operatives, web-based training has notable flaws. As an analysis posted on the CIA's Open Source Center website notes, "many of the instructional materials lack sophistication or the kind of intensity of detail that would be needed for an amateur to successfully follow them."
- While on patrol in rural or remote areas, local law enforcement should remain cognizant that terrorists remain committed to securing training with firearms and explosives within the United States.
 - This desire creates significant opportunities for interdiction by local law enforcement.



The preceding report was formulated from various sources. To request a list of references or for questions and comments, please contact the Office of Homeland Security at info@security.state.ny.us or (212) 867 - 7060.