

## PENNSYLVANIA ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN #85

### TARGETED ACTIONABLE MONITORING CENTER

14 MAY 2010

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## STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

### 1. **Globalization, Al-Qaeda Style**

Several recent jihadist communications, actions and communiqués have provided additional evidence of the extensive internationalization of **Al-Qaeda (AQ)**. In addition to formally affiliated AQ branches in many regions, the jihadist terror organization has established operational, propaganda and economic links with kindred, Islamic groups for cross-pollination and support. Furthermore, there exists another circle of force multipliers for AQ consisting of terrorist organizations that unilaterally declare their association or fealty to AQ leadership, particularly Osama Bin-Laden.

A recent example of the AQ "globalization" is the recently publicized claim by **AQ of the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)** that they were responsible for the failed assassination of the British ambassador in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, on 26 April 2010. Declaring that the operation was the work of the **Al-Sheikh Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi Brigades**, AQAP said the British ambassador was targeted as representing a nation leading the war against the Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula. Additionally, the communication notes, Britain is the main ally of the United States in the war against Islam in Afghanistan and elsewhere, as well as being responsible for previous imperial plots that divided the Muslim world (specifically cited were the London Conference and the Balfour Declaration).

In naming the **Al-Sheikh Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi Brigades** after one of two major AQ leaders killed in Iraq, AQAP was indicating that it, as well as other AQ branches, was currently seeking to perpetrate attacks that can be portrayed as "revenge" operations. The attempted

assassination and claimed responsibility are indications of AQ seriousness, as well as its ability to coordinate terror attacks in one region, through one branch, in reaction to events in a different region, affecting another branch altogether.

In what is another example of the globalization of AQ activities, a recent jihadist communication intercepted by ITRR researchers makes passing reference to an AQ presence in the Maldives Islands. The communication is part of an exchange of intelligence ahead of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. In response to the observation that some sports teams have expressed fear due to jihadist threats, an Islamist writes: "Now Al-Qaeda has local groups almost in every corner of the world, even in the Maldives Islands."

ITRR analysts note that the reference above is to cells that identify with AQ and may serve as sleeper cells for the organization. As of this writing, Indian and other intelligence inputs indicate a potential use of the Maldives Islands or Sri Lanka as a thoroughfare for **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)** terrorists attempting to infiltrate the Indian sub-continent. LeT, while not a formal branch of AQ, is considered to be within its sphere of influence and to have individual links with it.

In a different manifestation of AQ globalization, an August 2009 declaration by Nigeria's anti-Western **Boko Haram (BH)**; a.k.a. **Nigerian Taliban**) Islamist group formally placed it at the service of AQ. As subsequently noted by ITRR analysts in PAIB No. 43, the linkage between jihadist elements in the African continent has shown signs of increasing. In the last several months that linkage has grown further, as noted in PAIB Nos. 63 and 64, with jihadists throughout Africa and across the strait in Yemen, AQAP, collaborating and encouraging one another.

Additionally, recent events (e.g., the attempted bombing of a US airliner on Christmas Day and the apparent Yemeni jihadist links of the Ft. Hood shooter, as well as the Times Square bombing) have proven that certain AQ branches and "fellow-traveler" organizations are able to conduct attacks far from their base of operations.

In light of the continuing international links AQ has established, including autonomous cells willing to identify themselves as "Al-Qaeda-affiliated," ITRR analysts foresee a heightened period of risk in response to counterterrorism successes in any theater in which AQ has a presence. These attacks will likely continue to take the form of lethal suicide attacks, improvised explosive devices (IED) and vehicular-borne IED targeting Western interests and assets.

## SECTOR-SPECIFIC THREATS, INDICATORS AND/OR WARNINGS

### Sectors: COMMERCIAL FACILITIES, EMERGENCY SERVICES AND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

#### 2. *Jihadists Discuss 'Crying Wolf' as a Tactic*

Fresh jihadist communications intercepted by ITRR researchers focus on the benefits of false alarms and bomb threats, especially involving suspicious objects, as a multi-purpose terror tactic. Specifically, the tactic is advised for those who "live in the USA and want Islam to succeed, but don't know how to accomplish that."

To create public and security mayhem in order to further jihadist goals, the communication advises:

"What you need to do is to put a case packed with books that has a secret code (that will be hard to open and will look very suspicious) in public areas, restaurants, malls, the Metro station in New York, or in one of the main squares."

ITRR analysts believe this is referring to the use of a locking suitcase or briefcase. The communication continues:

"It's better if you have someone you trust call the authorities and report the suspicious object. In a few minutes you will hear it on the news - shutting down one of the main squares or stopping the New York Metro for a few hours due to a suspicious object."

The communication then elaborates on the goals of such a seemingly harmless operation. It will initially raise alert levels, "cause ... hysteria and fear within the security forces, and among the public in America and in the West." However, the jihadist writer explains, "After a while, the fear and hysteria will turn into apathy after several false reports of suspicious objects. This could be an advantage for the jihad fighters when they place a real device or a car bomb; the authorities won't take it seriously because of all the past false alarms."

Of note, is that the communication offering the above guidance comes from an individual named Abd Al-Hamid Al-Irlandi, literally the Irish Abd Al-Hamid, which is the same moniker that was adopted by American Taliban John Walker Lindh.

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS \*\*\*\*\*

T/I/W Rating: MODERATE

Calling in false bomb threats can serve to test security services and police response times and tactics, in order to identify weaknesses and learn procedures. It is a tactic that can also tire response teams and induce complacency, due to the natural decline in alertness that comes from "crying wolf" a sufficient number of times. When the adversary finally acts, they will have the advantage of full preparedness and awareness, while their opponent's reaction time may have degraded.

In addition, the suspicious harmless object can be followed by a real secondary device, targeting first responders. Alternately, repeat false alarms may serve as tactical misdirection -

drawing attention to a particular theater or asset in order to pull security resources away from the actual intended target.

Initiating a string of false alarms using suspicious objects placed at strategic points can be an effective tactic for extremist groups and jihadists of all sorts. Even without an actual attack, such groups would have already won a media and economic success:

- Intense media coverage of the event (such as in Times Square or in the case of the "underwear bomber," in which no innocents were seriously harmed) puts the attackers claiming credit for the incident on the global map. This can lead to growing power and influence due to an increase in recruitment, money and weapons.
- A series of false alarms that succeed in shutting down an airport, Times Square, train stations or any major public facilities will have been a success in terms of the jihadists' economic attrition war on the West. Attacking the American - and Western - economy is one of the main agenda items for Osama Bin-Laden and AQ. They feel that such an approach will ultimately psychologically and economically exhaust the countries that fight them, with the public putting pressure on their respective governments to cease the War on Terror.

ITRR analysts note that the easiest methods are often the most powerful tools for terrorists. Even as security forces are trying to figure out what novel terror methods may be used, the terrorists want to simplify their tactics. The goal is to reach the maximum outcome even if the attack never really materializes. In this way, the adversary "wins" under all circumstances.

While such bomb threats may in some cases be someone's idea of dark humor, a personal vendetta or obsession, there is a real possibility that such incidents, if systematically repeated, represent a terrorist probing tactic. Terrorists are clearly trying to think in asymmetric concepts ITRR analysts explain, which may turn out to be a surprise for the West. ITRR analysts further feel that the terrorists' communications dealing with such probing actions is displaying a greater understanding of Western thought processes.

## Sector: GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

### 3. *South African Strike Turns Dangerous With Train Derailment*

Three locomotives and four diesel tankers were derailed between Durban and Johannesburg, in KwaZulu-Natal, on Wednesday in what was apparently an act of sabotage. Some South African officials have blamed striking union workers for the attack, which did not cause any human injuries but led to the loss of 10,000 liters of fuel. The line was shut down for many hours as a result of the derailing.

The tactic used by the saboteurs to derail the train involved loosening railway plates along 100 meters of the targeted line. A government spokesman noted that the derailing interfered with the transportation of goods, but more ominously it was "geared to destroying our economy."

One day before the derailing, striking workers damaged 18 locomotives in rioting, with rocks pelting some of the train cars and fires set in others. Thirteen people were arrested during a strike rally in Durban on Monday.

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS \*\*\*\*\*

T//W Rating: MODERATE

Students, faculty and researchers attending South African educational institutions should be made aware of the additional specific risk associated with rail travel in the Natal province. This especially applies to those taking part in the **University of Pennsylvania's Intensive Intermediate-Advanced Zulu Group Project Abroad**, in the targeted KwaZulu-Natal area, as well as in **Pennsylvania State University's** joint projects with the University of Cape Town, and others.

#### 4. *Courthouse Protest in Harrisburg*

A prisoners' rights organization, the Human Rights Coalition (HRC), is planning to hold a rally in support of Ravanna Spencer on Monday, 17 May 2010, at the **Harrisburg Courthouse**. Spencer has brought claims of abuse and assault against several employees of the **Pennsylvania Department of Corrections**, specifically at **SCI Camp Hill** and **SCI Fayette**.

In the same communications forum announcing the protest, the HRC calls for a phone campaign targeting **SCI Dallas** (Pennsylvania) for alleged torture and assaults by prison staff. At least sixteen corrections officers are named by HRC as alleged violators of prisoners' rights. Several of the prisoners who made the allegations upon which HRC bases its reports and action items are still imprisoned at SCI Dallas. (Note: the Pittsburgh chapter of the HRC is known as FedUp!)

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS \*\*\*\*\*

T//W Rating: LOW-to-MODERATE

ITRR analysts believe the 17 May HRC protest in Harrisburg may include an attempt to obstruct access to courthouse or to jam the courtroom. ITRR is not aware of police permits obtained for the Harrisburg event. However, in any event, law enforcement is advised to be prepared for the need to maintain crowd control, as well as identifying and isolating individuals intent on disrupting proceedings or physically occupying part of the court premises.

**No actionable intelligence at this time for the following sectors:**

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD  
BANKING AND FINANCE  
CHEMICAL  
COMMUNICATIONS  
CRITICAL MANUFACTURING  
DAMS  
DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASES  
ENERGY  
HEALTHCARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
NATIONAL MONUMENTS AND ICONS  
NUCLEAR REACTORS, MATERIALS AND WASTE  
POSTAL AND SHIPPING  
WATER

Compiled by NR

THREAT / INDICATOR / WARNING RATING	DESCRIPTION
<b>LOW (Level 4)</b>	Available intelligence and recent events indicate that hostile elements currently have little capability or intent to take action against the target. It is assessed that, although it cannot be ruled out, an attack or action is unlikely to be mounted based on current available intelligence.
<b>MODERATE (Level 3)</b>	Available intelligence and recent events indicate that hostile elements have the capability to take action against the target and that such action is within the adversary's current intent. It is assessed that an attack or action is likely to be a priority and might well be mounted.
<b>SEVERE (Level 2)</b>	Available intelligence and recent events indicate that hostile elements have an established capability and current intent to take action against the target and there is some additional information on the nature of the threat. It is assessed that an attack or action on the target is a priority and is likely to be mounted.
<b>CRITICAL (Level 1)</b>	Available intelligence and recent events indicate that hostile elements with an established capability are actively planning to take action against the target within a matter of days (up to two weeks). An attack or action is expected imminently.

**END-CLASSIFIED-TAM-C-**

**For additional information, please contact the TAM-C of the Institute of Terrorism Research and Response at: +1.215.922.1080 or [info@itrintel.org](mailto:info@itrintel.org)**

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