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Strategy for Eliminating the Threat from the Jihadist Networks of al Qida: Status and Prospects

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1. Summary

The al Qida terrorist organization lead by Usama bin Ladin has stitched together a network of terrorist cells and groups to wage jihad. Al Qida seeks to drive the United States out of the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere in the Muslim world. It also seeks to overthrow moderate governments and establish theocracies similar to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The al Qida network is well financed, has trained tens of thousands of Jihadists, and has a cell structure in over forty nations. It also is actively seeking to develop and acquire weapons of mass destruction.

The United States' goal is to reduce the al Qida network to a point where it no longer poses a serious threat to our security or that of other governments. That goal can be achieved over a three to five year period, if adequate resources and policy attention are devoted to it.

Toward that end, the United States has developed a comprehensive and coordinated strategy that employs a variety of tools including: diplomacy, covert action, public information and media, law enforcement, intelligence collection, foreign assistance, financial regulation enforcement, and military means to affect al Qida to its core.

2. The Threat

Al Qida ("the base" or "the foundation") is both an independent terrorist organization and a sponsor and coordinator of a network of other semi-independent terrorist groups. The Al Qida network provides its members as well as its affiliates with a broad range of support:

--sophisticated media propaganda, through use of internet sites, videos, magazines, brochures, and speakers throughout the world

--substantial funding from its own investments and from a fund raising network throughout the world

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- global recruitment and covert transportation of trainees through safe houses with false documentation

- advanced training in espionage, sabotage, weapons, and explosives at a series of al Qida camps in Afghanistan

- a multi-national pool of trained terrorists and Jihad fighters available to support Jihad in countries other than their own

- a global cell structure available to assist transport of terrorists, acquisition of materials, attack operations, and provide safe havens

The organizations substantially sponsored by the al Qida network include:

- al Ittihad in Kenya and Somalia

- Egyptian Islamic Jihad

- the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

- the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines

- the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group

- the Abayan Islamic Army of Yemen

- the Chechnyan Mujaheedin

- the Palestinian Asbat al Ansar

- the Armed Islamic Group (GIA)

Al-Qida has recently increased its contacts with the Palestinian rejectionist groups, including Hizbollah, Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad. There are substantial cells of Moroccans, Tunisians, Saudis, Pakistanis, and Algerians operating on a global basis supported by al Qida. In addition to the Arab and Central Asian nations, al Qida supports cells in the United States, Canada, Ireland, England, Israel, Italy, Turkey, Germany, Spain, Belgium, and Thailand. The cells include "sleeper agents" who marry into the local community, find local employment and

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engage in criminal activity to raise funds (cell phone number cloning, credit card fraud, etc.) to sustain themselves and help support the international network.

al Qida developed beginning in the late 1980s as an outgrowth of the international jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The avowed purpose of the organization is to evict the United States from the region and to replace "unholy" governments with Islamic fundamentalist regimes.

Initially, the group's chief targets were Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The group's leader and some of its central infrastructure were located in Sudan, although the training camps were in Afghanistan. Following successful diplomatic pressure on Sudan, al Qida moved its headquarters to Afghanistan in 1996. As their network grew, al Qida began to focus more attention on supporting operations in Bosnia and Central Asia (Chechnya, Dagestan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan), while their targeting of the US, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt continued unabated.

o Direct Attacks on US: In retrospect, we have discovered ties between what we now understand to be the al Qida network and a series of high profile attacks on the US in the early 1990s. al Qida played a role in the attempted attack on US Air Force personnel in Yemen in 1992. There are indications that al Qida played a role in the World Trade Center bombing and the attack on US forces in Mogadishu, both in 1993. Sheik Rahman and the cell arrested in New York and New Jersey for planning to destroy the NY-NJ tunnels were also linked to al Qida. In fact, the Sheik's son is now a major al Qida network commander. It also appears likely that the Manila cell that was preparing bombs for six US flag 747s in 1993 was funded and trained by al Qida.

In 1998, Usama bin Ladin publicly declared war on the United States. In August, 1998 al Qida launched attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Attacks were also planned on US embassies in Albania and Uganda that year, but were disrupted. During 1998-99, al Qida cells were disrupted in several countries. Intelligence indicated that the al Qida network planned these attacks around the first of January, 2000, including: an al Qida network cell in Jordan where three attacks were to occur at sites where US citizens would be present; an al Qida network cell in Yemen was to attack a US Navy ship; and in December, a Canadian-based al Qida cell aligned with former GIA members was engaged in smuggling of bombs into the United States. All three sets of attacks were disrupted or failed, but the attack on a US Navy ship in Yemen was attempted again, successfully, in October, 2000.

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o Presence in the US: al Qida is present in the United States. al Qida has been linked to terrorist operations in the U.S. while also conducting recruiting and fundraising activities. U.S. citizens have also been linked to al Qida.

Two al Qida members key to the planned multi-site attacks on Americans in Jordan (December 1999) were naturalized American citizens who had lived in Los Angeles and Boston. The plot to smuggle bombs from Canada to the US in 1999 revealed connections to al Qida supporters in several states. The 1993 World Trade Center and NY-NJ Tunnels conspiracies revealed an extensive terrorist presence, which we now understand was an early manifestation of al Qida in the US. A suspect in the East Africa bombings (former US Army Sergeant Ali Muhammad) has informed [REDACTED] US that an extensive network of al Qida "sleeper" agents currently exists in the US.

o Subversion of Other Governments: Jihadists trained at al Qida network camps in Afghanistan are among those engaged in terrorism against several governments, notably Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Uzbekistan, and the Philippines. The al Qida network-sponsored religious and Jihadist propaganda is spread throughout the Gulf (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE) and Arab communities in Europe. The propaganda links the US and Israel to moderate Islamic regimes, making it more difficult for some governments to cooperate openly with the US. While al Qida alone cannot overthrow a government, it can substantially assist in the creation of a climate driven by propaganda where trained indigenous oppositionists supported by al Qida will engage in violence at their behest. Up to 50,000 Jihadists from over three dozen nations have been trained in al Qida camps in Afghanistan and then returned to their home countries.

o Weapons of Mass Destruction: Numerous sources have reported that al Qida is attempting to develop or acquire chemical or radiological weapons. The al Qida acquisition network in Europe and the former Soviet Union have repeatedly attempted to obtain WMD components. Al Qida's Derunta camp near Jalalabad in Afghanistan has been identified as a development and testing facility for poisons and chemical weapons and poisons. [References to [REDACTED] nerve gases) have been founded on captured computers. [Operational detail, removed at the request of the CIA]

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3. The US Goal: Roll Back

The United States goal is to roll back the al Qida network to a point where it will no longer pose a serious threat to the US or its interests, as was done to previously robust terrorist groups such as the Abu Nidal Organization and the Japanese Red Army. In order to significantly reduce the threat al Qida poses to US interests, every element of its infrastructure must be considerably weakened or eliminated, most notably:

--the significant camp and facility infrastructure for training and safehaven sanctuary in Afghanistan

--access to large amounts of money and the ability to disperse it internationally to support cells and affiliated terrorist groups.

--multiple active cells capable of launching military style, large-scale terrorist operations

--a large pool of personnel willing to risk being identified as al Qida members and willing to reside at al Qida facilities.

The United States actively seeks to reduce al Qida to such a rump group in the next three to five years through a steady and coordinated program employing all relevant means.

4. Implementing the Strategy: The Record to Date

To implement this strategy, the US has used diplomacy, intelligence collection, covert action, law enforcement, foreign assistance, force protection and diplomatic security in a coordinated campaign against al Qida:

o Intelligence Collection: Beginning in 1996, the al Qida network was singled out for special treatment within the US counter-terrorism community. A "Virtual Station" was created by CIA, an organization modeled on a CIA overseas station dedicated to collection and operations against al Qida. NSA and CIA made collection against the al Qida network a major requirement, with higher priority given only to support of on-going US military operations.

o Sanctuary Sudan Eliminated: The US placed significant diplomatic pressure on Sudan, resulting in a decision by the Sudanese government to request

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bin Ladin to abandon Khartoum and move his headquarters to the camps in Afghanistan. US diplomacy with Saudi Arabia resulted in the Kingdom depriving bin Ladin of his Saudi citizenship and taking steps to deny him access to financial assets held in his name.

o Diplomacy with Pakistan and the Taliban: Repeated diplomatic efforts with Pakistan gained some limited law enforcement and intelligence cooperation against al Qida. The Pakistani government requested that the Taliban cease to provide sanctuary to al Qida, but the Pakistanis did not condition their support of the Taliban on compliance. Similarly, frequent direct diplomatic contact with the Taliban by the US has failed to gain any cooperation on ending the al Qida presence in Afghanistan. Beginning in late 1998, the US has repeatedly told the Taliban leadership that their complicity in harboring al Qida makes them equally culpable for al Qida operations against us. While some in the Taliban leadership appear willing to cooperate with the US, the ruler (Mullah Omar) has prohibited any action against al Qida.

o Saudi Support Gained: By 1997, CIA was identifying al Qida cells in several nations and working with local security services to disrupt them. Also that year, the Saudis disrupted a plot by the al Qida cell in the Kingdom [REDACTED]. Operational detail, removed at the request of the CIA [REDACTED].

Subsequently, the Saudis began taking the al Qida threat seriously and pressured the Taliban to check bin Ladin's activities. Saudi Arabia then joined in demanding bin Ladin's arrest by the Taliban and, when Saudi efforts failed, they severed diplomatic ties and terminated direct assistance to the Taliban.

o UN Security Council Sanctions: By 1999, the Saudis and others joined us in sponsoring limited UN sanctions on Afghanistan because of its harboring of bin Ladin. The US seized over \$250,000,000 in Taliban funds. At the end of 2000, the United States and Russia co-sponsored a further round of UN sanctions that included a one sided arms embargo (only on the Taliban, not on the Northern Alliance) and expanded UN demands to include closure of the terrorist infrastructure in Afghanistan. The resolution passed 13-0-2, China and Malaysia abstaining.

o Renditions and Disruptions: With two, nearly simultaneous, suicide truck-bomb attacks, al Qida destroyed the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. The US stepped up the al Qida cell disruption effort. In addition to disrupting cells, the US found and brought to the US for trial al Qida operatives in Jordan, Egypt, Pakistan, Malaysia, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Germany, and the

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United Kingdom. Other al Qida operative^s not indicted in the US were brought to [REDACTED] countries [REDACTED] where they were wanted by authorities.

o Building Partner Capability: Through the CIA's Counter-terrorism Center (CTC) and State's Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program (ATA) the US has enhanced the capabilities of several nations to collect intelligence on al Qida and to disrupt their operations. [REDACTED] Operational detail, removed at the request of the CIA [REDACTED]

Counter-terrorism training and equipment have been provided to several nations' security forces. As a result of these partnerships, simultaneous disruptions of over twenty al Qida cells were conducted in December, 1999 to prevent possible Millennium celebration period attacks. The FBI has also greatly strengthened counter-terrorism cooperation with foreign counterparts, including stationing of FBI personnel overseas and training partner organizations at home and abroad.

o Inside Afghanistan: CIA developed sources inside Afghanistan who were able to report on the activities and locations of al Qida commanders. One group was developed as a covert action team designed to forcibly apprehend al Qida commanders and hand them off to US arrest teams. An Intelligence Finding authorized the use of lethal force as part of operations against the al Qida commanders. Several efforts to apprehend or attack the al Qida leadership using Afghan personnel were unsuccessful. [REDACTED] A foreign government unit was trained and equipped for a similar mission, but has not yet been employed in an operation.

The Afghan Northern Alliance is engaged in civil war with the Taliban. al Qida has been a major source of the Taliban's success, providing the best fighting unit (the 55th Brigade) and literally buying the support of provincial leaders. The Pakistani Army has also provided the Taliban with advisors, intelligence, training, equipment, and placed personnel in Taliban units. The US has provided very limited intelligence and non-lethal equipment to the Northern Alliance, in exchange for intelligence on al Qida. The Northern Alliance has not yet been able to mount an apprehension operation against al Qida commanders.

o Military Operations: In August, 1998 the US struck al Qida facilities in Afghanistan and an al Qida associated chemical plant in Sudan. Subsequent to those attacks, follow-on attacks were considered and military assets deployed on three occasions when the al Qida commanders were located in Afghanistan by Humint sources. The Humint sources were not sufficiently reliable and a lack of second source corroboration prevented US military action. Thus in September,

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2000 the CIA began covert flights into Afghanistan using the Predator UAV operating out of Uzbekistan. On three occasions, the UAV provided video coverage of what appeared to be gatherings involving the senior al Qida leadership. The UAV operations were suspended but plans are now being developed to allow operations to recommence in late March. The Spring flights may be able to incorporate a new capability: Hellfire anti-tank missiles mounted aboard the Predators. This new capability would permit a "see it/shoot it" option. Operational detail, removed at the request of the CIA

o Better Self-Defense: Defense, State, and CIA have all taken steps to enhance our capability to defend US installations abroad against al Qida attacks. Physical security measures have been greatly enhanced at likely target facilities. Additional security personnel have been deployed, including covert counter-surveillance units. Intelligence reports indicate that al Qida considered attacks on several facilities, but decided that the enhanced defensive measures would prevent those attacks from succeeding. Ambassadors have been encouraged to take steps, including temporary closing of embassies and consulates, based upon intelligence without waiting for Washington approval. Embassy Dushanbe and Embassy Khartoum have been closed for security reasons. Embassy Doha was relocated on an emergency basis. New, more secure embassies are under construction or planned at several locations as part of a multi-year plan, but further funding is needed.

o Financing: Al Qida and several of its affiliates are legally designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations under US law, making it a felony to transfer money to them through US institutions or to raise money for them (or their front organizations) in the US. Moreover, the US can take banking sanctions against foreign banking institutions which facilitate terrorist finances. CIA has been able to collect numerous reports about alleged al Qida investments, companies, and transactions. Treasury has had pledges of cooperation from several nations, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait. Based on the absence of actionable intelligence, however, Treasury has not been able to make specific requests to these countries. State has taken action against several Islamic NGOs which appear to be fronts for al Qida.

5. Bringing the Strategy to Completion – The Next Three to Five Years

The programs initiated in the last three years lay the basis for achieving the strategic goal of rendering the al Qida network as a non serious threat to the US,

but success can only be achieved if the pace and resource levels of the programs continue to grow as planned.

Continued anti-al Qida operations at the current level will prevent some attacks, but will not seriously attrit their ability to plan and conduct attacks. Absent additional resource, cells that are disrupted will continue to be replaced, the organizational presence in the US will not be uncovered fully, and the overall capability of the al Qida networks may be held in check or may continue to grow, but will not be dismantled.

In order to implement the overall, global strategy while undermining the ability of al-Qa'ida to utilize Afghanistan, CIA has prepared a program that focuses on eliminating it as a safehaven, disrupting the mujahidin support infrastructure that connects Afghanistan to the global network, and changing the operational environment inside Afghanistan.

Possible steps include:

Safehavens

- Massive support to anti-Taliban groups such as the Northern Alliance led by Ahmad Shah Masood. This effort would be intended primarily to keep Islamic extremist fighters tied down in Afghanistan.
- Identify and destroy camps or portions of camps run by known terrorists while classes are in session. To take advantage fully of this initiative, we would need to have special teams ready for covert entry into destroyed camps to acquire intelligence for locating terrorist cells outside Afghanistan. This effort would require either a commitment from JSOC or a liaison force capable of conducting activity on-the-ground inside Afghanistan.
- In order to integrate the above elements and to fully exploit proposed new capabilities, we would need to continue and expand the Predator UAV program. If testing prove successful, we could also introduce armed UAVs into Afghanistan in the Spring.

Mujahidin Support Infrastructure

- Continue and expand efforts to arrest and disrupt recruiter, travel, and false document facilitators, and those who run the waystations and guesthouses abroad.

Operational detail, removed at the request of the CIA

Operational Environment Afghanistan

- Explore possible efforts to remove the more extreme wing of the Taliban from power. This could involved a combination of propaganda and covert action to further divide the Taliban by amplifying and exploiting divisions within the leadership.

CIA's program would require funding [REDACTED] over five years.
In addition, other U.S. assets must be incorporated into the effort.

-- State Department programs for Anti-terrorism Assistance and a new information media effort;

-- Treasury's new interagency Terrorist Asset Tracking Center;

--a significant US role in multilateral counter narcotics operations aimed at the Afghan heroin trade, requiring increased State and DEA resources; and

-- FBI's programs to translate and analyze material obtained from domestic surveillance authorized under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) and to operate multi-agency Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) in major metropolitan areas. And recent funding to support Customs, IRS, and INS participation in the JTTFs must be sustained and expanded.

o Near Term Policy Decisions: In addition to program above, there are also several key policy decisions on steps that hold significant prospects for reducing

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the al Qida threat. These policy decisions relate to attacking al Qida's center of gravity: sanctuary in Afghanistan under Taliban sponsorship.

-- Covert US assistance to the Northern Alliance to oppose the Taliban militarily. Such assistance could include funding, intelligence support, and [REDACTED] equipment. [REDACTED] proposed a twelve month program [REDACTED] that would allow Masood to stay in the fight with the Taliban and al-Qida as a credible, conventional threat;

-- Covert US assistance to Uzbekistan [REDACTED]

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--Continued Predator UAV operations, resuming in March.

--Overt US military action to destroy al Qida command/control and infrastructure and Taliban military and command assets.

Considerations with Pakistan

These decisions involve consideration of US policy toward Pakistan. Like almost all of Pakistan's foreign and security policy, their approach to the Taliban and to terrorism flows from [REDACTED] concerns [REDACTED] with seizing Kashmir and redressing its defeat by India in three wars. Support for the Taliban has run through three Pakistani governments – Bhutto, Sharif, and now Musharraf – and is predicated on the concept of "strategic depth," i.e. ensuring a friendly government in Kabul that will not pose a threat in the event of another war with India. The Pakistani military has consistently believed the Taliban was the best means of achieving that goal. Russian and Indian support for the Taliban's only remaining military opponent reinforces Pakistan's tendency to view Afghanistan through an Indo-Pakistani lens.

Pakistan's acquiescence in the Taliban's hosting of terrorist camps and bin Laden is a product of the nexus between Afghanistan and Pakistan's proxy war in Kashmir. [REDACTED]

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Support for bin Laden comes also from a small but dedicated cadre of Islamist leaders whose electoral influence in Pakistan is minimal but whose street power has intimidated successive governments into fostering Islamic causes. Bin Laden has benefited as he ostentatiously supports Islamic causes as far afield as Bosnia and Chechnya.

As we seek Pakistani cooperation, we need to keep in mind that Pakistan has been most willing to cooperate with us on terrorism when its role is invisible or at least plausibly deniable to the powerful Islamist right wing. Pakistan's rendition to the US of Ramzi Yousef and Mir Aimal Kansi and to Jordan last year of Khalil Deek were sharply criticized by the Islamic parties. Overt Pakistani support for U.S. action against bin Laden, who is a hero especially in the Pushtun-ethnic border areas near Afghanistan, would be so unpopular as to threaten Musharraf's government.

We do have levers with the Pakistanis, despite the deleterious effect of overlapping sanctions (Pressler, Glenn, military coup, MTCR) that we imposed beginning in 1990:

- The blunt instrument of UNSC sanctions – Pakistan wants to be seen as a responsible member of the international community and will attempt to comply, in whole or in part
- Increasing domestic opposition to [redacted] clandestine campaigns. The Afghan camps train Sunni extremists whose bloody warfare against Pakistan's Shi'a community ultimately threatens the nation's future. Similarly, the fundamentalism fed by the madrassas of Pakistan and by Taliban hard-liners is anathema to the moderate military and civilian leaders of Pakistan
- Economic leverage. As Musharraf implements the economic rescue policies he hopes will pull Pakistan out of its steep decline, he needs our moral and practical support in the IMF for a medium-term economic support package.

We are already pursuing policies that have the effect – but only over a very long term – of encouraging Pakistan's distaste for its Taliban adventure:

- Lending our support to a fair but non-violent settlement of Kashmir;

- Demonstrating that there are alternatives to the Taliban (e.g., traditional leaders chosen through the Loya Jirga process) that serve Pakistan's national interests; and
- Helping to build up a secular educational system that ends rural Pakistan's exclusive reliance on the fundamentalist madrassas.

Chief Executive Musharraf has been clear in his discussions with American officials that:

--he opposes terrorism and al Qida and believes that the spread of such fundamentalism threatens Pakistani internal stability;

--Pakistan requires a Pashtun majority government in Afghanistan and the repatriation of refugees, which can best be achieved through support to Taliban;

--but there are influential radical elements in Pakistan that would oppose significant Pakistani measures against al Qida or the Taliban;

--Pakistan has been unable to persuade the Taliban to yield up bin Ladin and close the sanctuary and is unwilling to do more to persuade them.

In the wake of the attack on the USS Cole, Pakistan has called upon the US not to violate Pakistani airspace (again) to launch punitive strikes in Afghanistan.