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Terrorists: Recruiting and Operating Behind Bars (C)

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Summary (U)

Terrorist groups, including al-Qa'ida, use incarcerated members to recruit and train new members, and in some cases run terrorist organizations and manage or facilitate terrorist attacks. A review of intelligence reporting and interviews with prison officials reveal that terrorists do not view prison as a major obstacle because they face similar challenges in the outside world—carrying out clandestine activity, facing a hostile security service, and creating or joining tight-knit groups to survive. As one US Government official summed up the situation, "a prison is a city." (C)

Some terrorist groups, including al-Qa'ida, not only encourage members to organize in prison but also provide training on how to create a network that closely parallels terrorist cell structures. Reporting from Guantanamo Bay Naval Base (GTMO) suggests al-Qa'ida members there are trying to put their training into practice by establishing cellblock leaders and dividing responsibility among deputies for greeting new arrivals, assessing interrogations, monitoring the guard force, and providing moral support to fellow detainees, among other tasks. Several other terrorist groups ranging from the leftist Turkish Revolutionary People's Liberation Part/Front (DHKP/C) to HAMAS have adopted similar organizational structures in prisons whenever possible.

> In an example of a worst-case situation, Turkish terrorist groups virtually ran many prisons. The groups had formed cells that controlled cellblocks linked to a prison-system-wide organization and dictated to prison authorities how cell members would be handled. Prison authorities originally had facilitated this system as a way of keeping the peace and allowing the inmates to help improve prison conditions. (S//NF)

Terrorists have succeeded in using the organizations they built in prisons to conduct operations as they would on the outside.

Recruitment. Many terrorist groups depend on prison recruitment success to swell their ranks. Inmates recruit fellow inmates directly as well as spot and assess others for later recruitment upon their release. Group members still on the outside work on recruiting additional inmates by sending visitors to the prison and targeting former inmates.

Training. Similar to the conditions in external training camps, the more territory the terrorists control inside the prison, the greater the variety of training—including military training—they can provide.

Terrorist Operations. Some terrorist leaders—including members of HAMAS, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya, People Against Gangsterism and Drugs, and the DHKP/C—have used links to outside contacts to run terrorist networks and operations from their prison cells. Such operations include bombing campaigns, kidnappings, and intimidation of and revenge attacks against prison officials, guards, and judges. Other leaders have provided more general direction for their groups or issued propaganda.

Military Operations. Some terrorists have staged large-scale military attacks as a means of facilitating inmates' escape from prison. (S//NF)

The most successful countermeasures to impede the terrorists from organizing and communicating with the outside are the traditional types of counterterrorist operations that create obstacles to human contact among inmates.

The most successful tactical countermeasures appear to be those that involve early identification of leaders and individuals with key specialized skills, such as lawyers and imams, followed by measures to isolate them from the general prison population to undercut their authority and cut off their links to the outside.

After terrorists have formed a substantial network inside prison, harsher disruption efforts are required to blunt the threat they pose. Such actions temporarily contain, but do not eliminate, the problem unless more severe measures are taken. Options include transferring inmates to another prison—which may require military force to gain physical control before inmates can be moved—relocating inmates within a prison, and cutting communication links among inmates and between them and their outside associates. (S)

Reviews by several foreign government services suggest that in prisons where terrorists have gained the most ground, counterterrorism measures were weak or non-existent. Inadequate staffing and pay, lack of interservice cooperation, and poor or no intelligence collection inside prisons were responsible for most failures.

Lack of communication between prison authorities and security officials outside the prison also can result in general terrorism trends going undetected.

Many foreign services recruit assets and conduct surveillance inside prisons, using standard covert tradecraft practices. US personnel at GTMO noted the difficulty of monitoring communication and organization among the detainees at Camp Delta without the benefit of sources inside. (S//NF)

Terrorists: Recruiting and Operating Behind Bars (C)

Organizing in Prison (U)

Terrorists approach incarceration as an opportunity to advance the interests of their groups through forming new connections or reinforcing existing ones. Prison culture is conducive to these goals because institutional life is similar to the outside operating environment where they conduct clandestine activity, face a hostile security service, and are forced to create or join tight-knit groups to survive. As one US Government official summed up the situation, "a prison is a city."

> The universal operating "code" among prison inmates is familiar to terrorist groups—align with a group as a "brotherhood," don't snitch, mind your own business, get even, and present a false face to authorities. US military personnel at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base (GTMO) have noted detainees enforcing this code of conduct.

> Terrorist leaders also are able to avoid detection in the same way as other "brotherhood" leaders by using surrogates to conduct business so that their real identity remains unknown to prison authorities. GTMO authorities have noticed this behavior as well. (C)

Terrorist and guerrilla groups attempt to build up their organizational network inside prisons through carefully developed practices. Some terrorist groups, including al-Qa'ida, provide training on how to organize within prison, recommending a structure that closely parallels terrorist cell structures. In a few cases, terrorist groups have established organizations that span several prisons.

An al-Qa'ida training manual from 1996 detailed the hierarchy and tasks required of a clandestine prison network, a structure adopted by detainees at GTMO to the extent possible.
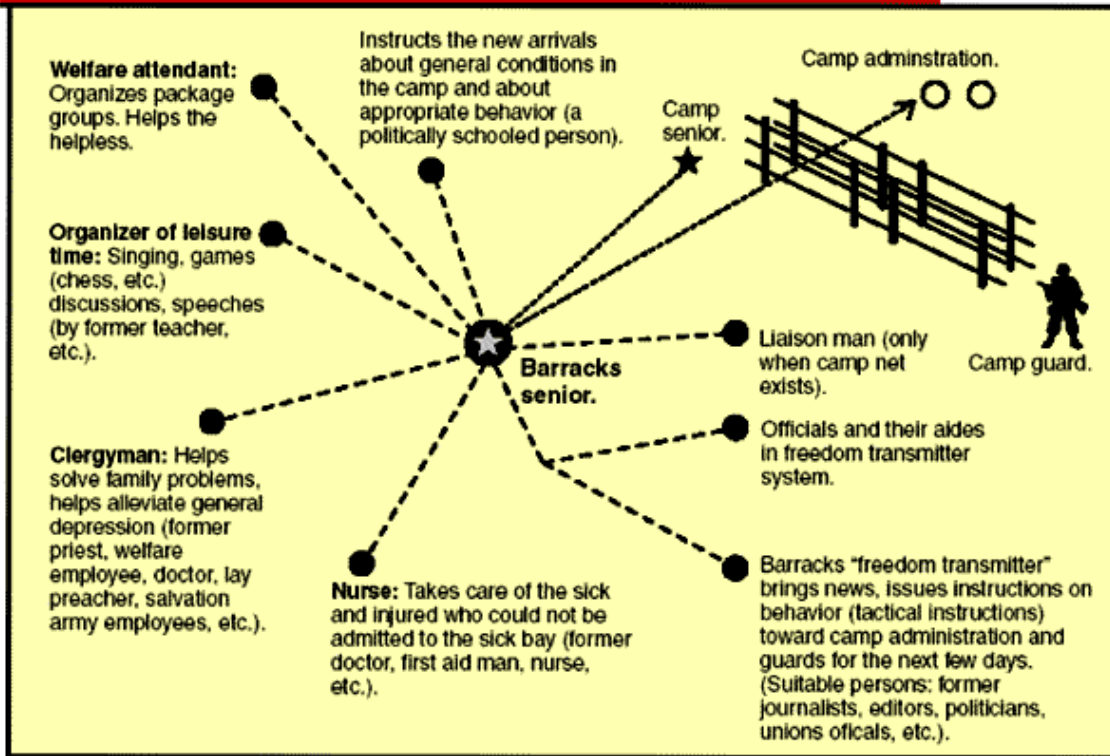
Turkish terrorist inmates formed a prison-system-wide organization, Central Prison Coordination (CMK).

Several terrorist groups also have ex-inmate organizations. An ex-inmate committee in Lebanon threatened the families of two inmates allegedly spying on their fellow terrorist inmates, according to press reporting. (S//NF)

Terrorists' success in establishing prison networks varies greatly and depends heavily on differences in the quality of the prison-system guard force and the physical layout of the facility. Terrorists have been most successful where they moved freely in open cellblocks and corrupted sympathetic guards or intimidated or manipulated understaffed and under-educated guard forces.

> In a worst-case example, Turkish terrorist groups virtually took over the prison system by forming cells that controlled cellblocks and dictated to prison authorities how they should treat group members. (S//NF)

This assessment was prepared by the DCI Counterterrorist Center's Office of Terrorism Analysis with a contribution from the Office of Transnational Issues. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Strategic Terrorism Assessments/Alternative Analysis Group, OTA, on (703) 482-3828 or 52498 secure. (U)

Organization of Barracks Net (U)

Welfare attendant: Organizes package groups. Helps the helpless.

Instructs the new arrivals about general conditions in the camp and about appropriate behavior (a politically schooled person).

Camp adminstration.

Camp senior.

Organizer of leisure time: Singing, games (chess, etc.) discussions, speeches (by former teacher, etc.).

Barracks senior.

Camp guard.

Liaison man (only when camp net exists).

Clergyman: Helps solve family problems, helps alleviate general depression (former priest, welfare employee, doctor, lay preacher, salvation army employees, etc.).

Officials and their aides in freedom transmitter system.

Nurse: Takes care of the sick and injured who could not be admitted to the sick bay (former doctor, first aid man, nurse, etc.).

Barracks "freedom transmitter" brings news, issues instructions on behavior (tactical instructions) toward camp administration and guards for the next few days. (Suitable persons: former journalists, editors, politicians, unions oficals, etc.).

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Insiders Striving for Full Operational Capability (U)

Terrorists use their prison organizations to operate as much as possible as they would on the outside—seeking to recruit and train members, finance their activities, and run terrorist operations. Success is linked to factors similar to those that determine success outside prison—ability to communicate with each other, control of territory, access to material, contact with groups in other areas, and corruptibility of government officials. (S)

R&R: Recruit and Refit.
Many terrorist and extremist groups view prisons as an especially attractive recruiting ground because they provide a pool of vulnerable people with little option but to join a group to survive. Some members

of the extremist Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) released from prison in 1996 viewed their accomplishments in recruiting fellow inmates as having made their time in prison worthwhile, according to sensitive reporting. (S//NF)

Many imprisoned extremists seek to recruit fellow inmates for general purposes based on opportunity, but, in some cases, they target specific populations or recruit individuals for a specific purpose.

Mahmud Abu Halima and Nadil Ayyad, imprisoned for their roles in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, appeared to have attempted to radicalize and take over prison prayer groups, according to US officials. It was not clear if they were attempting to recruit for a terrorist organization.

Al-Qaʻida Training Manual Teaches Organization in Prison (S)

A training manual obtained from an al-Qaʻida member in 1996 suggests that al-Qaʻida trains at least its senior operatives in how to develop an organization inside prison to keep up morale, resist interrogation, recruit new members, and keep in touch with the group outside prison. (S//NF)

A diagram "Organization of Barracks Net" showed 10 informal positions and their responsibilities. The manual advises that operatives make use of skilled individuals to fill the positions if possible. Authorities at GTMO noted that detainees while at camp X-Ray created this structure and took on these roles.

Barracks chief and deputies.

Greeters to meet and instruct new arrivals and to help them resist authorities when they are most vulnerable.

Welfare Attendant to organize equitable distribution of goods from families and aid organizations.

Morale Officer to organize leisure time, including singing and discussion groups.

Clergy, presumably to attend to spiritual needs as well as to recruit new adherents to their faith.

Nurse to organize a clinic if authorities do not provide adequate medical care; the manual noted that the psychological impact of trying to provide care is more important than actual effects.

Several personnel in a "Freedom Transmitter System" to communicate with the outside and pass news.

Liaison to the camp administration. (S//NF)

The manual also provided instructions for thwarting and co-opting prison guards.

Speak with individual guards, not groups, to convince them you are not what they were told and to offer them moral guidance.

Issue guidelines about what to discuss with the guards.

Refuse niceties, claim abuse, and protest treatment. (S//NF)

Islamic extremist groups as diverse as the Algerian FIS and Armed Islamic Group (GIA), Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), HAMAS, the South African People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD), Jamaʼat al-Fuqra, and the Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces have targeted specific prison populations for recruitment, including veterans of the Afghan war, members of criminal gangs, ethnic minorities, and other individuals from geographic areas where the groups wanted to operate, according to various reporting.

The Revolutionary People's Liberation Part/Front (DHKP/C) successfully recruited fellow inmates to become suicide bombers upon their release, according to a foreign government service. (S//NF)

Many groups also recruit inmates by sending associated clerics, lawyers, aid workers, and other individuals into prisons to meet with inmates. According to military reporting, a French study of North African Islamic extremist groups recruiting in prisons found that the role of outside imams in recruiting was particularly important.

Attempted shoe bomber Richard Reid was recruited in prison by radical cleric Abdul Ghani Qureshi, who visited him in prison as his spiritual adviser, according to press reporting.

Iran recruited imprisoned black Americans through visits by pro-Khomeini clerics.

Former FIS members in Ouagadougou, Burkino Faso, were given permission in 1999 to preach and bring meals and aid into the central prison. (S//NF)

When recruiting inside the prison is difficult or dangerous, terrorist groups have focused on evaluating potential recruits among inmates and then arranging for them to contact group members after their release. They also have sought out former inmates who attend extremist mosques.

Former inmates who believed themselves to be wrongly imprisoned or brutally treated while in prison may be more vulnerable to recruitment pitches. Young Algerian men imprisoned for little cause see prison as a badge of honor and sometimes join terrorist groups after serving their time to convince others they did not cooperate with authorities to gain their release, according to State Department reporting. In the mid-1990s, HAMAS's Izz el-Din al-Qassam Brigades recruited former inmates who were sexually abused.

Tunisian al-Qa'ida-trained operative Kemal Bin Hamouda recruited former fellow inmates attending a mosque in Stockholm, according to a foreign government service. (S//NF)

Training.
The prison environment also is conducive to indoctrination and training, providing, as do training camps, a closed environment full of like-minded individuals. Also resembling external conditions, the more territory the terrorists control, the greater the variety of training they can provide.

Venue for Cross Fertilization (U)

Prisons also provide a venue for contacts and cooperation between disparate terrorist groups that could prove valuable later, although it is unclear if such contacts have promoted lasting cooperation between the groups.

Italian officials noted in the late 1980s that elements of the extreme right and left were coming closer together in prison.

Authorities intercepted mail from a Red Brigades member in prison to DHKP/C members in London discussing the creation of a shared ideological platform.

Imprisoned HAMAS leader Aruri tried to build relations with fighters from other Palestinian groups in the mid 1990s, according to sensitive reporting. (S//NF)

Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru converted cellblocks into free zones where they conducted military training and indoctrination. The group posted a picture on their web site in 1991 of their troops marching in uniform in a prison yard.

The DHKP/C provided bombmaking training, according to military reporting. Turkish authorities found large arms caches in the prisons when they were raided in 2000. PIJ operatives also received advanced military training in prisons as of 1998, according to foreign government service reporting. (S//NF)

Command, Control, and Intelligence for Prison-Based Terrorist Operations.
Some inmates run terrorist networks and operations from their prison cells. The most important factor in their success appears to be regular and reliable communications with the outside, whether established with the complicity of corrupt prison officials or through legal channels. (S//NF)

Directing Terrorist Operations. Imprisoned terrorists have directed or facilitated bombing campaigns and kidnappings and also have targeted prison officials, guards, and judges to intimidate them or for revenge.

In the mid 1990s, imprisoned DHKP/C leaders bribed prison officials to obtain non-Turkish GSM phones, which they subsequently used to direct terrorist attacks, according to a foreign government service. The DHKP/C also communicated using computers in prisons before December 2000, according to military reporting.

Islamic extremist al-Sayyid Nusayr, imprisoned in 1990 on charges related to the assassination of Israeli Knesset member Meir Khahane, later was convicted for facilitating the 1993 World Trade Center (WTC) bombing and related conspiracies from his prison cell. WTC conspirator Ahmad Ajjaj also facilitated the attack from his jail cell, having been imprisoned upon entry into the US in September 1992.

The South African Government in 1999/2000 charged imprisoned PAGAD leader Abdul Salam Ebrahim with directing a bombing campaign from his prison cell, according to State Department reporting.

Five Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) inmates in Port Said, Egypt, in 1994 instructed followers to assassinate policemen and government officials, according to State Department reporting. The Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) used lawyers to pass information about guards to the group outside, according to a foreign government service. (S//NF)

Managing Terrorist Organizations. Some Egyptian and Palestinian terrorist leaders have run their organizations from their prison cells.

Egyptian Colonel Abud al-Zumur, serving a life sentence for his role in the assassination of President Anwar Sadat, led an EIJ faction from his jail cell, according to press reports. He smuggled out messages calling for attacks on Egyptian Government officials and sought to unite extremist groups.

In April, the US Government indicted four individuals for trying to maintain al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya (IG) spiritual leader Shaykh Abd al-Rahman's influence over the IG by violating rules against specific types of communication with him while in prison. The four conspirators included his lawyer and interpreter, according to press reports.

Leaders of HAMAS's military arm, the Izz el-Din al-Qassam Brigades, imprisoned since the mid-1990s, continued to play a role in running the group, according to a foreign government service. Reporting from 1995 through 1999 indicates that one leader, Salah Aruri, probably was recruiting and running cells from prison, including organizing kidnappings on the outside to gain release of inmates. (S//NF)

Issuing Propaganda. Terrorists in prison influence others inside and outside prison through disseminating propaganda and providing general guidance.

Jordanian extremist Isam Muhammad Tahir al-Barqawi, for example, continued to write books and other extremist publications while in prison. Some of these publications were found in Afghanistan in 2002, and the Saudi nationals convicted for bombing the Office of the Program manager/Saudi National Guard in Riyadh in 1995 claimed to have been inspired in part by Barqawi, according to press reports.

Hardcore leftists in Italian prisons in 1988 drafted documents arguing against a political solution and laying the foundation for renewing terrorism in Italy, according to a foreign government service. (S//NF)

Some Groups Using Military Operations (U)

Terrorist groups that are also insurgent groups—and so have large military organizations with significant command of territory and military resources—have staged military attacks on prisons and instigated large-scale prison riots to effect escape of imprisoned members or to protest prison conditions and specific actions by authorities.

To protest the transfer of an imprisoned group leader, Brazil's Primeiro Commando da Capital in 2001 staged a prison uprising that involved 29 prisons and included 23,500 inmates taking action within 48 hours. They communicated using cell phones and took 7,000 hostages, according to press reports.

Two bombs set off inside a Colombia prison in April 1998 freed 34 inmates, including several Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia members, according to a foreign government service.

In 2000, the National Liberation Army (Colombia) staged a series of diversionary attacks near a prison that culminated in a car bomb exploding at a prison gate while explosions took place inside. Authorities deactivated two other car bombs in the area, according to military reporting.

Sendero Luminoso and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement coordinated three disturbances in 1998 over prison conditions, according to a foreign government service. A related individual also smuggled out a hand-drawn sketch of the interior of one of the prisons to a leftist youth organization. (S//NF)

Al-Qaʻida Manuals Provide Instructions for Prison Breaks (S)

Several al-Qaʻida-related training manuals discuss how to arrange an escape from prison. The manuals outline what is needed to storm a prison or prison transport—which one manual suggests is among the most difficult operations, requiring "all operational training and means." The manuals recommend the following:

Outside supporters should collect information from guards by offering rides to or from the prison or by sitting next to them on public transport, talking to their relatives, or inciting guards to supply information.

Supporters should form teams to collect intelligence, prepare and conduct the attack, provide protection, "remove the enemy", and provide backup.

One manual included information on Delta Force procedures to storm prisons and assault prison transports. (S//NF)

Countermeasures: Preempt, Disrupt, Defeat (U)

Most authorities' actions to counteract terrorist inmates' activities resemble traditional disruption operations, focusing on inhibiting their ability to organize other inmates and to communicate with outside contacts. As with disruption operations on the outside that are constrained by countries' need to follow the rule of law and other typical investigative hurdles, it may be possible only to mitigate, not prevent, terrorist use of prisons for their own purposes. (S//NF)

Preempt: Prevent Organization. The most successful tactical countermeasures remain those employed to prevent terrorists from forming lasting bonds or organizations in prison.

US Government officials emphasized the need to identify early the terrorist leaders and individuals with valuable specialized skills, such as lawyers and imams, and take action to impede their contact with fellow inmates. As the al-Qa'ida manual demonstrates, terrorists hope their chosen representatives will serve as liaison between inmates and authorities, thereby giving the groups more control over prison conditions and fellow inmates. Skilled individuals also can provide terrorist-related training that can be used by members upon their release. Common countermeasures to undercut leaders include relocating and isolating them.

Some authorities advocate countering the terrorists' message by providing competing influences. For example, moderate imams hired by prison managers to work with inmates can provide a counterpoint to radical Islamic teaching. (S//NF)

Disrupt: Break Up The Organization. Harsher disruption efforts are needed once terrorists have established a substantial prison network. The actions have the same effects inside prison as they do when practiced on the outside—they temporarily blunt, but do not cure, the problem unless followed by other measures.

Military force. Turkey, Brazil, and Peru sent their armed forces into prisons that had been nearly taken over by the terrorists to forcibly remove the inmates and transfer them to other prisons.

Relocation. In addition to transferring inmates to other prisons, authorities in most countries relocate them within a prison to break up cellblocks before military intervention is required.

Cut off communications. Peru cut off all communications to prevent riots, prison breaks, and intimidation of judges. The United States set up special rules to govern IG Shaykh Umar Abd al-Rahman's communications. GTMO detainees have been moved from Camp X-Ray to Camp Delta, where the layout better restricts communication among the detainees and appears to have at least temporarily disrupted their attempts to network. (C)

Security and Resources Key to Defeating Terrorist Prison Networks. To undermine a terrorist group's ability to develop and operate their organization in prison, security forces require sufficient resources, which include funding for staffing needs, appropriate training, and regular intelligence exchanges on terrorist group activities inside and outside the prison system.

Studies by several governments pointed to severe **understaffing and low pay** as reasons prison security proved inadequate. At the time of the 2001 uprising in Brazil's prisons, they were "massively overcrowded and understaffed," according to press reports. Corrections officers also require training in cultural norms and religious doctrines to help them spot aberrant behavior.

Governments pointed to a lack of **interservice cooperation** as impeding possible efforts to thwart terrorist planning and attacks in or on prisons. Additionally, a lack of communication between prison authorities and security officials outside the prison, can result in terrorism trends—such as the sudden swelling of a terrorist group's ranks through prison recruitment—going undetected.

Poor intelligence collection, including inadequate tradecraft, also has been blamed for prison security failures. For example, a lack of police surveillance in Turkish prisons led to the loss of control, according to a foreign government service. Many services recruit assets and conduct surveillance in prisons, using tradecraft practices such as covert meetings, deaddrops, and witting or unwitting cutouts. US personnel at GTMO noted the difficulty of monitoring communication and organization among the detainees at Camp Delta without the benefit of such inside sources. (S//NF)