

Some-Time, Part-Time and One-time Terrorism

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Terrorism is an ancient weapon, but one with many faces. In our lifetimes we've seen terrorism perpetrated by nations at war. We've seen it generated by environmental, animal and human rights activists. Terrorism is commonly used as a coercive tactic by so-called freedom fighters, and we've seen nations use remotely controlled terrorist surrogates to cause anonymous mayhem in other nations.¹ Today, al Qaeda is probably the most visible face of terrorism. This is a face that represents yet another facet of the terrorist threat—one more lethal than we've seen in the past, one that operates at a distance, and, importantly, one less homogenous than that which we've seen before.

All that suggests a threat difficult to counter, and indeed it is, but not an impossible one. Despite their successes in the past few years, there have also been significant defeats.² We may fear the ability of terrorist to operate at large and at will, but terrorists operate at one inherent and significant disadvantage. When they attack, they emerge and are exposed to attack, potential capture and/or intelligence and law enforcement investigation. Accordingly, the threat al Qaeda poses will be eliminated in due course as its members

continue to be tracked down one-by-one.³ Usama bin Laden (UBL) is not ten feet tall, he's a mere mortal—and al Qaeda members are relatively few in number. Still, the Western world should take care not to think that the disruption, or even the demise of al Qaeda will eliminate the terrorist threat that al Qaeda brought to American shores. It won't, and the reasons are vexingly simple. Since the 9/11 attacks it has become increasingly evident that many are willing to commit acts of anti-Western terrorism whether sponsored by a terrorist group or acting alone.

The world today hosts a very large number of malcontents who dislike the West in general and the United States in particular. Radical Muslims have taken great care to de-legitimize the West, portraying Westerners as infidels who corrupt their culture and invade their lands. By portraying the United States and westerners in general as illegitimate interlopers and infidels, they assume the role of the down-trodden and imbue themselves with a righteousness that legitimizes their violent behavior.⁴ Of course, enmity of an underclass toward a powerful elite is a repetitive fact of history, but the reaction of this underclass transcends historical experience.

What renders terrorism a crisis in the twenty-first century is the fact that never before have so few possessed such an unpredictable capability to cause catastrophic harm on a global scale. In large measure, that capability stems from the technological progress that we've all witnessed in our lifetimes. How many of us today do not have cell phones and e-mail accounts?⁵ Who of us has not transferred money electronically? How easy is it quickly to transit multiple time zones, crossing borders with but a cursory inspection of travel documents?⁶ Never had demolitions or chemical/biological warfare training? Not to worry, the Internet has all the information you need to know. However, technology does not explain all; another era and events in another part of the world are key to understanding both the phenomenon and the complexity of fighting the brand of terrorism that al Qaeda brought to our shores.

AFGHANISTAN

During the decade-long Soviet/Afghan conflict, anywhere from 10,000 to 25,000 Muslim fighters representing some forty-three countries put aside substantial cultural differences to fight alongside each other in Afghanistan. The force drawing them together was the

Islamic concept of “umma” or Muslim community. In this concept, nationalism is secondary to the Muslim community as a whole. As a result, Muslims from disparate cultures trained together, formed relationships, sometimes assembled in groups that otherwise would have been at odds with one another and acquired common ideologies. They were also influenced by radical spiritual and temporal leaders, one of whom has gained prominence on a global scale—Usama Bin Laden.

Following the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, many of these fighters returned to their homelands, but they returned with new skills and dangerous ideas. They now had newly-acquired terrorist training because guerrilla warfare had been the only way they could combat the more advanced Soviet forces. They also returned with new concepts of community that had little to do with, and perhaps even denied nationalism. Those concepts of community fed naturally into a fierce opposition to the adoption, or even the toleration of western culture. As a result, many of the Arab-Afghan returnees united, or reunited, with indigenous radical Islamic groups they had left behind when they went to Afghanistan. These Arab-Afghan mujahedin, equipped with extensive weapons and explosives training, infused radicals and already established terrorist groups, resulting in the creation of significantly better trained and more highly motivated cells dedicated to jihad.

Feeding the radical element was the social fact that this occurred in nations where there was widespread poverty, unemployment and little popular control of government. The success of the Arab intervention in Afghanistan was readily apparent, so when the Afghan fighters returned home they discovered populations of young Muslims who increasingly were ready and even eager to view radical Islam as the only viable means of improving conditions in their countries. Seizing on widespread dissatisfaction with regimes that were brimming with un-Islamic ways, regimes that hosted foreign business and foreign military, many young Muslim males became eager to adopt the successful terrorist-related activities that had been successfully used in Afghanistan in the name of Islam. It was only a matter of time before these young Muslim males began to seek out the military and explosives training that the Arab-Afghan returnees possessed. In turn, the incipient fanaticism bred in Afghanistan provided a platform for a charismatic leader to step into a patriarchal role to urge terrorism against the West.

USAMA BIN LADEN

Usama bin Laden gained prominence during the Afghan war in large measure for his logistical support to the resistance. He financed recruitment, transportation and training of Arab nationals who volunteered to fight alongside the Afghan mujahedin. The Afghan war was clearly a defining experience in his life. In a May, 1996 interview with Time Magazine, UBL stated: “in our religion there is a special place in the hereafter for those who participate in jihad. One day in Afghanistan was like 1,000 days in an ordinary mosque.”⁷

Although bin Laden was merely one leader among many during the Soviet-Afghan conflict, he was a wealthy Saudi who fought alongside the mujahedin. In consequence, his stature with the fighters was high during the war and he continued to rise in prominence such that, by 1998, he was able to announce a “fatwa” (religious ruling) that would be respected by far-flung Islamic radicals. In short, his fatwa stated that it is the duty of all Muslims to kill Americans: “[I]n compliance with God’s order, we issue the following fatwa to all Muslims: the ruling to kill the Americans and their allies, including civilians and military, is the individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.”

Bin Laden was not alone in issuing this fatwa. It was signed as well by a coalition of leading Islamic militants to include Ayman Al-Zawahiri (at the time the leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and later UBL’s deputy), Abu Yasr Rifa’i Ahmad Taha (Islamic Group leader) and Sheikh Fazl Ur Rahman (Harakat Ul Ansar leader). The fatwa was issued under the name of the International Islamic Front for Jihad on the Jews and Christians. This fatwa was significant as it was the first public call for attacks on Americans, both civilian and military, and because it reflected a unified position among recognized leaders in the radical Sunni Islamic community. In essence, the fatwa reflected the globalization of radical Islam and revealed the fact of a terrorist network of extremists that has been evolving in the murky terrain of Southwest Asia. Those extremists use radical views of Islam to justify terrorism. Al Qaeda is but one facet of this network.

AL QAEDA

Although Al-Qaeda functions independently of other terrorist organizations, it also functions through some of the terrorist organizations that operate under

its umbrella or with its support, including: the Al-Jihad, the Al-Gamma Al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group—led by Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, better known as the “Blind Sheik” and later by Ahmed Refai Taha, a/k/a “Abu Yasser al Masri”), Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and a number of jihad groups in other countries, including the Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bosnia, Croatia, Albania, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, the Philippines, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, the Kashmiri region of India, and the Chechen region of Russia. Al-Qaeda also maintained cells and personnel in a number of countries to facilitate its activities, including in Kenya, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States.

By networking with other groups, Al-Qaeda proposed to work together against the perceived common enemies in the West—particularly the United States which Al-Qaeda regards as an “infidel” state that provides essential support for other “infidel” governments. Al-Qaeda responded to the presence of United States armed forces in the Gulf and the arrest, conviction and imprisonment in the United States of persons belonging to Al-Qaeda by issuing fatwas indicating that attacks against U.S. interests, domestic and foreign, civilian and military, were both proper and necessary. Those fatwas resulted in attacks against U.S. nationals in locations around the world including Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Yemen, and now in the United States. Since 1993, thousands of people have died in those attacks.

THE TRAINING CAMPS

With the globalization of radical Islam well begun, the next task was to gain adherents and promote international jihad. A major tool selected for this purpose was the promotion of terrorism training camps that had long been established in Afghanistan. It is important to note, that while terrorist adherents to what we have come to know as al Qaeda trained in the camps, many others did as well. For example, according to the

convicted terrorist Ahmed Ressam, representatives of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and its offshoot the Salafi Groups for Call and Combat (GSPC), HAMAS, Hizballah, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and various other terrorists trained at the camps.

Ressam, who was not a member of al Qaeda and, therefore, may not have fully accurate knowledge, also reports that cells were formed, dependent, in part, on the timing of the arrival of the trainees, rather than

on any cohesive or pre-existing organizational structure. As part of the training, clerics and other authority figures advised the cells of the targets that are deemed valid and proper. The training they received included placing bombs in airports, attacks against U.S. military installations, U.S. warships, embassies and business interests of the United States and Israel. Specifically included were hotels holding conferences of VIPs, military barracks, petroleum targets and information/technology centers. As part of the training, scenarios were developed that included all of these targets.

Ressam, who, again, was not a member of al Qaeda, has stated that the cells were independent, but were given lists

of the types of targets that were approved and were initiated into the doctrine of the international Jihad. Ressam explicitly noted that his own planned terrorism attack did not have bin Laden’s blessing or his money, but he believed he would have received UBL’s support had he asked for it. He did state that UBL urged more operations within the United States.

THE INTERNATIONAL JIHAD

In the 1970s, and even in the 1980s, terrorism centered on hierarchical organization with chains of command. Many had identifiable leaders who personified the group. For example, the German Red Army was more commonly known as the Baader-Meinhof group, so called for their leaders, Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof. Today’s terrorist tends to be networked, but



Millions of these wanted posters appeared in store windows in 1971 across the German Federal Republic in an effort to find the members of the elusive Baader-Meinhof Gang - aka the German Red Army.

not necessarily grouped. Formal ties are increasingly less common, and that is a logical outgrowth of the evolution of terrorism from being primarily motivated by politics to being primarily motivated by religion or ideology. Networking has proved to be an extremely effective experiment in cooperation by Islamic extremists.⁸ Especially when using the Internet, it permits a degree of anonymity, diffused command and control, a small footprint and even support for terrorism on a part-time basis if desired.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the suicide hijackers of September 11, 2001 took advantage of networking, staying below the radar screen and merging with American society. One even reported a theft to the police. What we know of them today does not support a theory centered on a traditional terrorist organization, but it does support a theory of networked radicals supported by al Qaeda. It is also reasonable to conclude that they acted in support of the 1998 fatwa which, in turn has proved to be eloquent evidence of the international jihad. During 1997 UBL described the “international jihad” as follows:

“The influence of the Afghan jihad on the Islamic world was so great and it necessitates that people should rise above many of their differences and unite their efforts against their enemy. Today, the nation is interacting well by uniting their efforts through jihad against the U.S. which has in collaboration with the Israeli government led the ferocious campaign against the Islamic world in occupying the holy sites of the Muslims...[A]ny act of aggression against any of this land of a span of the hand measure makes it a duty for Muslims to send a sufficient number of their sons to fight off that aggression.”

In May of 1996, UBL gave an interview in which he stated “God willing, you will see our work on the news...” The following August the East African embassy bombings occurred. That was bin Laden speaking, but it should be remembered that the call to harm America is not limited to al Qaeda. Shortly after September 11 Mullah Omar said “the plan [to destroy America] is going ahead and God willing it is being implemented...” Sheikh Ikrama Sabri, a Palestinian Mufti, said in a radio sermon in 1997, “Oh Allah,

destroy America, her agents, and her allies! Cast them into their own traps, and cover the White House with black.”⁹ Ali Khameine’i, in 1998, said “The American regime is the enemy of [Iran’s] Islamic government and our revolution.” There are many other examples, but the lesson to be drawn is that al Qaeda is but one faction of a larger and very amorphous radical anti-western network that uses al Qaeda members as well as others sympathetic to al Qaeda’s ideas or that share common hatreds.

Information from a variety of sources repeatedly carries the theme from Islamic radicals that expresses the opinion that we just don’t get it. Terrorists worldwide speak of jihad and wonder why the western world is focused on groups rather than on the concepts that make them a community. One place to look at the phenomenon of the “international jihad” is the web. Like many other groups, Muslim extremists have found the Internet to be a convenient tool for spreading propaganda and helpful hints for their followers around the world. Web sites calling for jihad, or holy war, against the West are not uncommon.

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One of the larger jihad-related Internet sites, Azzam.com, offers primers including “How Can I Train Myself for Jihad,” which is available in more than a dozen languages. Traffic on this site, increased 10-fold following the attacks, according to a spokesman for the site. Founded in 1996, Azzam Publications was named for a mentor to Osama bin Laden. The “flavor” of the site is evident from the spokesperson’s description of its goal to provide news of jihad and stories about martyrs.¹⁰

The lesson to be taken from this is that al Qaeda is far less a large organization than a facilitator, sometimes orchestrator, of Islamic militants around the globe. These militants are linked by ideas and goals, not by organizational structure. The intent, taken at face-value, is establishment of a state, or states ruled by Islamic law and free of western influence. Bin Laden’s contribution to the Islamic jihad is a creature of the modern world. He has spawned a global network of individuals with common, radical ideas, kept alive through modern communications and sustained through forged documents and money laundering

activities on a global scale. While some may consider extremist Islam to be in retreat at the moment, its roots run deep and exceedingly wide.

In the final analysis, the International Jihad movement is comprised of dedicated individuals committed to establishing the umma through terrorist means. Many of these are persons who attended university together, trained in the camps together, traveled together, but whose relationships to each other are premised on individual commitment rather than on bureaucracy or hierarchy. The result is that not only Al Qaeda, but international terrorists without affiliation as well, remain focused on the United States as their primary target. The United States and its allies, to include law enforcement and intelligence components worldwide have had an impact on the terrorists, but they are adapting to changing circumstances. Investigation of individuals who have no clear connection to organized terrorism, or tenuous ties to multiple organizations, is increasingly difficult. At least when one searches for a needle in a haystack, the location of the haystack is a given. Not being associated with an organization that generates a larger footprint, the lone individual can effectively disappear, utilizing today's technology to maintain necessary contacts. The magnitude of the threat then multiplies with the number of "needles." In Israel, we see the difficulty of meeting terrorist threats even in a confined area. When the area we have to be concerned with is the entire world, the difficulty of countering the threat becomes incalculable, but counter it we must.

MEETING THE THREAT

Many view the events of 9/11 as an intelligence failure. There have been reasonable and unreasonable arguments on both sides of that issue, but that is not a focus of this article. Nonetheless, those who criticize the intelligence community commonly proceed from the assumption that the Government should have been able to penetrate the terrorist organization that carried out those acts of destruction, or at least to have been able to analyze current events to predict the events. That sort of criticism turns a blind eye to the nature of the threat. The 9/11 hijackers were not an organization. Nor did they associate themselves overtly with

al Qaeda, which sponsored them. And this proves the point! The larger threat is not al Qaeda, but the person who, while otherwise leading a normal life somewhere in the world, decides to become a terrorist. That is the proverbial needle in a haystack. That is the occasional, or the part-time, or the one-time terrorist on whom we have limited ability to focus intelligence efforts. The fundamental truth is that more than just haystacks will have to be sifted if we are to intercept the one-time terrorist who decides to become active. To detect and prevent individuals like the 19 hijackers presupposes a capability that may be developed, but one that must also include luck to be successful.

Vulnerabilities are obvious; we are an open society with porous borders and uncountable rich targets to attract terrorists. We also have far-flung equities; military and diplomatic personnel, foreign-based businesses, missionaries and tourists all represent external vulnerabilities. Whether internal or external, the ability to guard and fortify these vulnerabilities is de minimis; therefore, this is a threat that must be countered, not one we

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can be satisfied to punish after a terrorist success. To counter the terrorist threat, we need to learn of terrorist plans, disrupt terrorist cells, take known terrorists off the street and attack terrorist strongholds. To be effective in any of these requires a robust flow of information. We have to collect, analyze, disseminate and use information effectively, which is even more difficult than it is trite.

For example, if the purpose is to gather information on Hizballah there is a focus for the effort. If the purpose is to gather information on UBL, there is a focus for that effort. If, however, the purpose is to gather information to guard against the type of terrorism we now see to have developed since the end of the Soviet-Afghan War, there is, at best, an attenuated focus. We have learned, belatedly, that not all terrorism is organized and not all terrorists are members of terrorist organizations. Rather, there are terrorists leaders, terrorist facilitators, terrorist financiers and many, many disaffected individuals willing to commit acts of terrorism. While terrorist leaders will be associated in groups, the others may have no special affiliation to any terrorists organization – or they may have contacts with many.

In Israel we've seen unaligned Muslims, including promising youth with a future, both male and female, conduct suicide bombings on their own initiative with no more than logistical support from terrorist organizations. The 9/11 hijackers apparently enjoyed the fiscal and perhaps logistical support of al Qaeda,¹¹ but there is no clear indication that they were other than a group of radicals who came together for a single terrorist event. This is the problem of the International Jihad. Terrorism today still bears elements of traditionalism, but it also is decidedly untraditional. The International Jihad signals the advent of the occasional, some-time or even the one-time terrorist. The contemporary terrorism threat, spawned largely out of Afghanistan, effectively seeded large areas of the world with potential terrorists. The training camps prepared the student, the merchant, and perhaps even the government official for terror-on-demand. Any of those who were trained, and any who might want to emulate might, at any time, decide to seek out an opportunity for martyrdom.

The challenge to prevent terrorism from the unaligned terrorist is perhaps the greatest challenge ever given to the law enforcement (LE) and intelligence communities (IC). LE and IC are now required to look world-wide, including within the United States, for any number of those "needles." That will require more than just a collection effort, it will require that every agency of the U.S. Government perform its job with a view towards terrorism. More than that, it will require the Government to bring more "eyes on target" than ever before. The experience of a customs agent may be vital to understanding the information collected by the FBI. The analysis of Homeland Security may provide meaning to information collected by INS. Enforcement of laws unrelated to terrorism already have proved to be a necessary element of prevention.

Sharing information will become vital for the future, but this is a task that will challenge more than collection and analysis. It will also challenge legal and social values, both domestic and international. There is no doubt but that this must be done and there is no doubt but that it can be done properly. Still, we need to be mindful of the domestic social values of this nation that brought about the Privacy Act, Freedom of Information Act and Executive Orders regulating the IC. We need to remember the terribly disruptive nature of the Church Committee and strive to avoid improprieties that could occasion another such debacle. Those who call for increased surveillance powers correctly understand the limitations placed, decades ago, on LE and IC organizations. Those who disapprove those increased

powers correctly understand the reasons for the limitations. Neither is incorrect, but both camps need to understand that we can, and will, accomplish what is needed within legal and social limits. Neither cry of "wolf" is appropriate. ■

E N D N O T E S

1. The number of states sponsoring terrorism has diminished in recent years, primarily as a result of the "fall of the wall," and a firm U.S. stand against rogue states. See, Ely Karmon, "Intelligence and the Challenge of Terrorism in the 21st Century," a paper presented at the conference "A Counter-Terrorism Strategy for the 21st Century: The Role of Intelligence" at the Morris E. Curiel Center for International Studies of Tel Aviv University, November 1-2, 1998.
2. In a wide-ranging interview with CNN, FBI Director Mueller stated, on December 14, 2002, that "tens of attacks, probably close to a hundred around the world" have been thwarted in the previous fifteen months. <http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/12/14/mueller.ap/index.html>.
3. Recently several significantly important al Qaeda members have been captured. Among those captured are Abu Zubaidah, al Qaeda's overall operational planner, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, chief of operations in the Persian Gulf region and a key planner in the October, 2000 bombing of the USS Cole, and Ramzi bin al-Shibh, widely believed to have been an intended twentieth hijacker. See, e.g., Jerry Seper, "Senior al Qaeda chief in custody of U.S.," *The Washington Times*, November 21, 2002 (<http://www.washtimes.com/upi-breaking/20021121-035030-7529r.htm>); "Pakistan say investigation into Bin al-Shibh arrest complete," <http://www.usatoday/news/world/2002-09-16-bin-al-shibh.x.htm>; "Ramzi bin al-shibh," <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0905807.html>
4. Radical Islamists and Islamic movements have succeeded over the past few decades in posing the idea that there is a global conspiracy ongoing against Islam as a religion, culture and way of life. Where this message succeeds, it is a short step to view terrorism and political violence as religious duties. See, e.g., Reuven Paz, "Radical Islamist Terrorism: Points for Pondering."
5. Like many other groups, Muslim extremists have found the Internet to be a convenient tool for spreading propaganda and communicating at a distance. See, Stephanie Gruner and Gautam Naik, "Extremist sites under heightened scrutiny," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, October 7, 2001.
6. Kathy Gannon, "Smugglers, Politicians And Spies Move Al-Qaida, Taliban Fugitives In And Out Of Afghanistan," *Associated Press*, November 27, 2002. "If you have money you can go anywhere, without any problem," quoting Fazul Rabi Said Rahman, a former Taliban corps commander.
7. *Time* "The Paladin of Jihad," May 06, 1996
8. See generally, Michael Whine, "The New Terrorism," from the annual report of the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University: *Antisemitism Worldwide 2000/1*.
9. See at www.io.com/~jewishwb/iris/archives/990.html
10. Karmon, *supra*, n.1.
11. Although there is no evidence to support the thesis, it seems likely that they must also have had some support from a rogue state in order to gain experience on large commercial aircraft.