

The Incompetency of Jihad

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The Incompetency of Jihad

In war, each opponent's effectiveness is judged not only on its military capabilities but on its ability to achieve overall objectives in multiple areas. This scrutiny has been sorely lacking in previous examinations of the overall effectiveness of the terrorist group Al-Qaeda (AQ). Part of the contributing factor for this has been the media's tendency to credit AQ with any and all terror related incidents thereby attributing power and means to the terrorists that are non-existent. Despite not exercising direct operational control over the media, AQ is nonetheless well served as the media's laziness and failure to do proper investigative journalism enhances the terror group's Information Operation (IO) campaigns.

AQ's main tactic is to use perceived threats to generate fear. It desperately needs the media to craft and deliver that message. Below is the definition of terrorism that sums up this particular view:

"Terrorism is intended to strike psychological fear into the hearts of their intended victims, whether that is a specific group of people or a larger audience, and to affect a change of the targeted group".¹

Although AQ has left much destruction and death in its wake, the movement has failed to accomplish its stated goals. This paper will examine four distinct areas where AQ has not succeeded.

Tactical Objective Failures

To judge whether or not a tactical objective was achieved, one first has to look at the operational goal behind the objective. Given the media's propensity to label any AQ terrorist operation a success, this critical analysis is provided to determine the actual end state of the mission.

World Trade Center 1993

The World Trade Center (WTC) was always an attractive terrorist target due to its location, its symbolic nature as an American engineering marvel and its recognizability. This was not lost on those protecting the WTC when they conducted a number of studies examining the feasibility of a terrorist attack.² On February 26, 1993, a bomb, planted in a rented yellow van, exploded in the underground parking garage of the WTC.³ Six people were killed, and more than one thousand were injured. The explosion also destroyed the communications system, the police area and operations control center, and vital utility systems, including water and electrical, and fire standpipes.⁴ The destruction of the communications center led to the failure of proper evacuation procedures and was one of the contributing factors to smoke inhalation injuries. The actual objective of the terrorists was to topple one of the WTC towers. This goal was not met and is summed up by an FBI explosives expert who says, "If they had found the exact architectural Achilles' heel or if the bomb had been a little bit bigger, not much more, 500 pounds more, I think it would have brought her down."⁵

The terrorists associated with the WTC bombing include Ramzi Yousef, Khaled Shaikh Mohammed, Abdul Rahman Yasin, Mohammed A. Salameh, Nidal Ayyad, Mahmud Abouhalima, and Amad Mohammad Ajaj. Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, who happens to be the uncle of Ramzi Yousef, financed the operation and was the mastermind of the second

terrorist incident involving the WTC on 9/11. The tactical objective was to have one tower crash into the other resulting in the deaths of over 250,000 people.⁶

The Jihadis, in this case, only missed their tactical goal by 249,994 innocent civilians. The real incompetency reveals itself in the way that the terrorists were actually captured. The break in the case came when Mohammed Salameh tried to collect the deposit on the van by claiming that the Ryder rental had been stolen while in his possession.⁷ The entire WTC terrorist cell was captured because Salameh wanted his \$400 deposit back. No honor among thieves?

Richard Reid, "The Shoe Bomber"

On December 22, 2001, an American Airlines passenger flight made its way from Paris to Miami. An attempt was made by a terrorist to explode a bomb, concealed in a shoe, that would have resulted in the loss of 197 lives.⁸

A British citizen, Richard Reid, was sitting in a window seat of the flight. He tried unsuccessfully to ignite a fuse that stuck out of his sneakers. The bomb was made up of triacetone triperoxide and chemicals from plastic explosives that would have created a hole in the hull of the plane causing it to crash.⁹ Reid's radicalization has been attributed, in part, to meeting militant elements in the notorious Finsbury Mosque in England. During his travels to Pakistan and other countries, Reid eventually came to the attention of AQ. He is reported to have received explosives training at an Al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. Richard Reid plead guilty to eight charges: attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction; attempted homicide; placing an explosive device on an aircraft; attempted murder; two counts of interference with flight crew and attendants; attempted destruction of an aircraft; and using a destructive device during a crime of violence.¹⁰ "I don't care. ... I'm a follower of Osama bin Laden. I'm an enemy of your country and I don't care," Reid said in court when pleading guilty to the charges.¹¹

The initial reporting indicated that the smell of sulphur is what tipped off the passengers and flight service personnel to Reid's conduct. The jihadi's nervousness rendered him incapable of lighting the fuse. The excessive sweating of his hands, known as palmer hyperhidrosis, dripped down on the matches causing them to go out. It was only on his sixth attempt that a flight attendant and passengers became aware of his activities and subdued him.

So, Al-Qaeda sends a terrorist to blow up a plane that requires the successful lighting of a fuse. The only person they have to send is someone who has excessively sweaty hands and feet. AQ could not afford to buy their man a Zippo lighter to ensure the tactical success of the mission? If successful, other terrorists would have used the same methodology. The wreckage of the first bomb would have been on the bottom of the ocean floor costing investigators considerable time and money when determining the exact cause of the destruction.

Kenya Embassy Bombing

The simultaneous bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa left 257 people dead and injured over 5000 people. The identical truck bombings happened in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on August 7, 1998. The U.S. Embassy in Kenya was the largest embassy in the region. This particular embassy was chosen because of the female ambassador,

Prudence Bushnell. The group felt that the death of a female ambassador would generate the proper amount of media attention.¹²

Some of those involved in the Kenya bombing include Wadih El Hage, Mohamed Sadeek Odeh, and Mohamed Rashed Daoud Al-'Owali. The plan was for the terrorists to load up a truck with explosives and accelerants, gain access to the embassy compound and destroy the embassy. After surveilling the embassy, the terrorists decided to attempt to gain entry through the rear gate. The driver and the passenger were armed and, if necessary, would order the guards to open the gate. Once inside the compound, they would park the vehicle next to the embassy and detonate the explosives.

In a series of blunders reminiscent of the "Keystone Kops," the actions of AQ's operatives resulted in the massacre of innocent Kenyans. A driver, known only as "Azzam," was the driver and Al-'Owali was the passenger of the explosives-laden truck. When the truck approached the back gate, Al-'Owali got out and started to yell at the guard to open the gate. The guard, sensing that something was amiss, refused to open the gate. When Al-'Owali complained to Azzam, he told Al-'Owali to use his 380 caliber-pistol to get the guard to open up the gate. Due to his nervousness, Al-'Owali had left his gun in the vehicle and instead threw a stun grenade. Azzam started to fire his gun and Al-'Owali, in his panic, fled, only to be injured by the blast. He suffered minor cuts and was treated at the M.P. Shah hospital.

The explosion rocked the back of the embassy, shattering windows and sending glass flying throughout the structure, but failed to take down the building. Instead the nearby Ufundl Cooperative Building, which housed 400 Kenyan office workers having nothing to do with the American embassy, was completely demolished. A commercial bus carrying Kenyan passengers was also obliterated by the blast. The Cooperative Bank House was also affected by the blast with windows being blown out and shards of glass claiming other victims. Ironically, the bombing missed Ambassador Bushnell who was attending a meeting in the nearby Bank House. How did the plot unravel? The terrorists were caught because Al-'Owali hid three bullets in a hospital toilet where he was being treated. The munitions were discovered by a janitor who turned the bullets over to the authorities. The FBI had already recovered a gun slide for a 380-caliber pistol from the area and knew that it was linked to the terrorist. When Al-'Owali was questioned he revealed all. He went so far as to admit being recruited and trained by Al-Qaeda.

How did AQ view its operation? As one of the cell members revealed in court, they thought the bombing was a blunder due to the high number of civilian casualties.¹³ Mohamed Sadeek Odeh even blamed his fellow terrorists for not having parked the truck in the proper position. According to Odeh, this resulted in higher civilian casualties.¹⁴ In review, AQ missed their tactical target, killed Kenyan civilians, and had one of its members give up the entire operation when pressed by authorities. Although AQ's actions resulted in chaos and terror, at no point can this operation be considered a tactical success as the operational objectives were not achieved.

Uprising in Pakistan

Al-Qa'ida has been targeting Pakistan and Musharraf for the last several months with pleas to the Pakistani people to overthrow the government.¹⁵ However, if we probe a little deeper, Usama Bin Laden (UBL) has been advocating the overthrow of Pakistan for over five years without any results.¹⁶ When it looked like AQ would get no support from the Pakistani

candidates running for office, it decided to assassinate Benazir Bhutto.

"We terminated the most precious American asset which vowed to defeat mujahideen," revealed AQ's top commander for Afghanistan operations, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid.¹⁷ The commander went on to state that the death squad consisted of Punjabi associates of the underground anti-Shi'ite militant group, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, operating under Al-Qaeda orders.¹⁸

AQ hoped the death of Bhutto would hinder the elections and put the people of Pakistan on alert as to what would happen to them if they did not support AQ. The exact opposite happened as the people reacted with horror to the assassination of their beloved Bhutto. Left behind was a galvanized base to continue with her political plans. Over 100,000 supporters of Bhutto gathered for a political rally despite being targeted by terrorists.¹⁹

"We will avenge the blood of Benazir. We don't have bombs. We are not terrorists, but we have political power and we will capitalize on this political power to avenge the death of Benazir," said Haji Jaffar, 75, a retired teacher. "The passion and love for (her party) has increased after Benazir's assassination".²⁰

Asif Ali Zardari, the husband of Bhutto, took up his wife's political cause and continued her message of fighting the Islamists. The key question is "are we ready to become a Taliban state? And the answer is: 'No, we're not. That means we are fighting our own battle, we are fighting our own war,"²¹ Zardari declared. He went further pressuring his companions to persuade Pakistanis that the fight against Islamic militancy is "our own war," not just America's.²²

Well the Pakistani people spoke during their election process, amid the threats of violence, and Bhutto's party, Pakistan People's Party (PPP), won and formed an alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N). In fact some of the religious parties were voted out of office. This should come as no surprise given the lack of popularity among the Pakistani people for the Taliban and AQ view of the world.²³ The immediate answer from the Taliban and AQ was silence. It seems that their plans for Pakistan actually backfired on them.

Social Movement

Al-Qaeda released their plan to take over the world in seven easy steps back in 2005.²⁴ The aim was to assure the worldwide Jihadi movement that AQ had a strategic vision. The main goal was to reestablish the Caliphate and Islamic dominance over the world. The phases were planned out in a succession of years. By 2005, AQ was demonstrating that their 20-year plan was well underway. The plan was divided into phases; phase one, 2000 – 2003, "The Awakening Phase" in which Al-Qaeda would provoke the West (via 9/11) to declare war on the Islamic world; phase two, 2004 – 2006, "The Opening Eyes Phase" in which Al-Qaeda would become a social movement and experience a huge recruitment drive; phase three, 2007 – 2010, "The Arising and Standing Up Phase" which will focus AQ operations in Syria, Turkey, Jordan and Israel; phase four, 2010 – 2013, "The Unification Phase" which will be aimed at the collapse of the near enemy (the Middle Eastern) governments; phase five, 2013 – 2016, "The Caliphate Rising Phase" in which Al-Qaeda will be able to declare a Caliphate due to the loss of US influence over the Middle East and the powerlessness of Israel; phase six, 2016 – 2018, "The Total Confrontation Phase" in which the empowered Caliphate will use its Islamic Army to fight the unbelievers; and the final phase, 2018 – 2020, "The Definitive

Victory Phase” in which the world “unbelievers” will be defeated after a two year war by a unified Muslim army of 1.5 billion men.

The above represents AQ’s most ambitious plans to date. Currently, the world’s foremost terrorist organization is running about 8 years behind in implementing its master plan. Iraq was to be the operational center for the jihadi army during the “Opening Eyes Phase.” Al-Qaeda in Iraq is on its heels with the loss of its declared capital of Ramadi. Although, foreign fighters continue to fill the ranks of AQI, the Iraqi people have not joined the group in droves as AQ predicted. Even in Pakistan, which is still seen as AQ friendly, support continues to waver. A report by MSNBC shows UBL's popularity has dropped by 50% in 5 months.²⁵

Information Operations Failures

The impact of Information Operations has been detailed in a previous NGIA, Inc. In-Depth Analysis report entitled “Al-Qaeda’s Reality.” The attention the media gives to terrorist incidents unfortunately emboldens the terrorists. For the most part, AQ has a very effective message laden with propaganda that gets unprecedented airplay. To get this type of exposure, a company would have to spend millions. A careful examination of the media coverage reveals a redundant analysis of terrorist incidents and what they mean without questioning the terrorist’s message.

Palestinian Cause

To the Arab world, the cause of the Palestinians and their war against Israel must be won at all costs. However, since the establishment of AQ on the global stage, the media has tended to concentrate on bin Laden’s cult of personality. It is only when the Palestinians attack Israel that the media turns its attention back to the Palestinians. The only other time the Palestinians are mentioned is when an American administration decides to try to force peace upon the Middle East.

Palestine is where the foreign fighter veterans of the Soviet-Afghan War were supposed to end up. After the defeat of the Soviets, Abdullah Azzam, then leader of what would become AQ, wanted to take all his fighters and head to the Palestinian lands. The course of terrorist history was changed when a car bomb, which no group ever took credit for, exploded, killing Azzam and placing the mantle of leadership squarely on Bin Laden. The new terror leader changed the focus of the group to the “far enemy” and the Palestinian cause was put on the back burner.²⁶

The latest queries that Ayman Al-Zawahiri fielded in his worldwide “town hall meeting” demonstrate that many question the commitment of AQ to Palestine. UBL and Zawahiri have deflected this by claiming that AQ operations in Afghanistan and Iraq are proxy wars that help the Palestinians. The leadership promises to help the Palestinians as soon as AQ has accomplished its own agenda. One of the answers that Zawahiri gives indicates that he reviles the leadership of the Palestinian groups (Hamas, Hezbollah, and Fatah) as corrupt and implores those seeking Jihad to join the true believers, AQ, in Iraq.

AQ is not interested in the Palestinian cause as long as it has to compete with other organizations. They have created a terrorist “niche” for themselves by fighting the entire West. To fight the Israelis would mean undue competition and taking AQ’s struggle off the world stage. Although there have been reports of an AQ presence in Palestine, this alone does not demonstrate a commitment to the cause.

AQ has done a good job of sympathizing with the Palestinians while never making an actual effort to support the cause. Indeed, the Palestinian cause may have actually been negatively impacted by AQ’s actions. Since the inception of the War on Terror, the West has realized that terrorist groups cannot survive without vital financial support. The West has systematically shut down these streams of revenue for the terrorists. Many Palestinian revenue streams flew under the radar before the scrutiny by western governments. The Palestinians have to ask themselves whether or not they are better off since the emergence of AQ?

USS Cole

The USS Cole bombing resulted in 17 American sailors killed and 39 others injured. The October 12, 2001 attack occurred when the ship pulled in for refueling in the Yemeni port of Aden. A small rubber dinghy was loaded with explosives and detonated when the terrorists pulled along side the ship. The attack on the USS Cole represented AQ's concerted effort to target a U.S. naval ship that visited the port of Aden. Although Yemen was considered a high-risk environment, no threats were indicated since U.S. naval operations began in January 1999.

Jamal Ahmed Mohammed Ali al-Badawi, Fahd al-Quso along with Hassan al-Khamri and Ibrahim al-Thawar (a.k.a. Nibras) made up the terrorist cell for AQ's first attempt at maritime terrorism. Hassan and Nibras were the suicide captains of the boat. Al-Badawi coordinated the entire operation including procuring the safe houses in Aden and purchasing the 35 foot dinghy. Al-Badawi planned the attack based on the UBL fatwa to drive the Americans from the Peninsula.

The USS Cole bombing was not the first time AQ had tried to hit an American ship off the Yemeni coast. AQ experienced a significant tactical failure when its terror cell tried to attack the USS Sullivan as it pulled into port in January of 2000. The terrorists loaded the boat with so much explosive that it actually sank before it could be detonated. The terrorists called off the mission, recovered the boat and explosives and targeted the USS Cole instead. The CIA later concluded that had the terrorists executed the Cole attack with greater precision they would have sunk the ship and killed 300.²⁷

In this case, the great informational operation failure was the lack of any videotaping of the attack. AQ wanted the USS Cole attack videotaped so they could use it in their propaganda and recruitment videos. The IO was so important to AQ that they procured an apartment overlooking the harbor to capture the event. Al-Quso was trained to videotape the terrorist's triumphant moment, but slept through his alarm. Taking a taxi to try and get into position to film the event proved too little, too late as al-Quso actually missed the bombing.²⁸

Egyptian Jihad

As evidenced by the number of questions that Zawahiri chose to respond to in his "town hall" Q&A session, Egypt is a matter of concern for the greater Muslim community. The country of Egypt has been under attack by Islamic militants since the inception of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in 1928.

The founder of the organization was a school teacher named Hassan al-Banna. Al-Banna's message was one of Islamic revival calling for a return to the version of Islam as practiced by the first followers of Mohammad. The Brotherhood pushed an idea of nationalism, which would erase class divisions in Egypt while instilling Islamic values. The MB is responsible for establishing a Sharia compliant finance system. Prior to the 1930s, no such system existed. Here is the creed of the MB:

Allah is our objective.

The messenger is our leader.

Quran is our law.

Jihad is our way.

*Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.*²⁹

The Brotherhood stood up social and educational programs to indoctrinate members throughout Egypt. By 1939, the organization had become a political entity advocating for a government based solely on Sharia law. In 1945, the Brotherhood's Parliamentary candidates were defeated in an election that the MB claimed was rigged.³⁰ During this time, the group expanded its branches and membership beyond the Egyptian borders. However, its downfall in Egypt occurred in 1948 when the Brotherhood assassinated the Prime Minister and was outlawed in the country soon after. The MB gained favor from the Egyptian government when it supported Gamal Abdel Nasser's Free Officer's overthrow of King Farouk. However, the new relationship was doomed when Nasser did not implement the Sharia law as his government's foundation. The MB tried to assassinate Nasser, which led to yet another banning of the organization. One of the leaders of the Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb, wrote a number of books calling for the destruction of any government that is secular. This infusion of violent ideology, coupled with the idea that Muslims were supposed to be the saviors of mankind, provided a higher, more spiritual calling for the MB. The crackdown on the Brotherhood lasted until the death of Nasser and the appointment of Anwar Sadat as the Egyptian President. Sadat released the MB members still in jail in 1971. President Sadat's moves towards stabilized relations with the Israelis, reliance on U.S. economic aid and expulsion from the Arab League provided the MB with the reasons it needed to oppose his government.³¹ The MB assassinated Sadat in 1981 and was supposed to overthrow the government as it was recoiling from the plot. The coup did not happen and the MB was quickly rounded up and jailed. One of the members at the time was Zawahiri. The assassination resulted in the ascendancy of Mubarak and another crackdown on the organization. Since that time, the Brotherhood has been in disarray and has theoretically abandoned its militant ways to pursue a more modernized political agenda.

This is why Zawahiri is answering so many questions about possible Egyptian jihad. Egypt represents Zawahiri's personal vendetta. By "selecting" so many Egypt related questions, Zawahiri is trying to show that there is an active need for jihad in Egypt. This is probably one of the best hoaxes in AQ's IO. Zawahiri is reinstilling the "plight" of the Egyptians into the global jihadi mindset. This will allow him to call for jihadis to go to Egypt to help out their brethren later on. When Zawahiri was a part of the MB, he believed that Egypt would be the epicenter of the Islamic world in the fight against the West.³²

Using Unaware Jihadis

A disturbing tactic has emerged among AQ and its franchisees. A good illustration of the method is found in the use of Rabah Bechla as a suicide bomber by AQ in Africa (called Al-Qaeda Committee in the Islamic Maghreb or AQCIM). Bechla, a 64-year old terminal cancer patient, drove a pickup truck laden with explosives into a UN building. Rabah Bechla's body was so ravaged by cancer that he may have had only days to live.³³

The recent use of two mentally disabled women, who were remotely detonated in Baghdad markets, shows the level of "courage" being exhibited by al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Reports are circulating that these pawns were unaware that they were being used as weapons.³⁴ This revelation comes on the heels of Bhutto's assassination by 15-year old suicide bomber, Aitezaz Shah. Shah had already been planning a bombing attack on a religious festival.³⁵

So the once "*great warriors*" of AQ and its franchisees have been reduced to carrying out

operations with cancer-ridden old men, handicapped women and children. Where are the throngs of young men that Bin Laden had promised would swell his ranks to challenge the evil West? The use of the men, women and children was an effort to demonstrate the undying Muslim commitment to the AQ terrorist ideology. The people in these cases were supposed to generate a litany of discussion that would once again give Al-Qaeda unprecedented media coverage. The outrage that should have accompanied the use of the handicapped women would have made good propaganda fodder for AQ. Unfortunately for them, it was only a blip in the media ocean.

Afghanistan Mujahideen

One of the greatest Information Operations that AQ ever pulled off was stealing the credit for the Afghan Mujahideen.

The Soviet Union invaded the country of Afghanistan in 1979 and fought a costly war for 10 years before retreating in defeat. The countrymen of Afghanistan fought the Soviets with guerilla warfare and the latest in American technology. The foreign fighters that went through the camps that Bin Laden was associated with were focused on training and not necessarily on participating in the conflict. Most of the Saudis that went through the camps used this as a way of proving their manhood but left after only a couple of months.

In speeches given since the Afghan victory, Bin Laden always uses the term Mujahideen to describe his terrorist fighters. The Mujahideen were the Afghans that actually fought the Soviets and liberated the country. One of the few times that AQ committed forces to the Mujahideen was in support of the Taliban's civil war against other Afghan warlords after the Soviet departure.

While UBL has always claimed that the victory over the Soviets was because of his Mujahideen, it should be recalled that he was a low level financier responsible mainly for housing and feeding non-Afghan participants. Although he was a regional commander at one time, he was minimally involved in firefights. Given that the liberators of Afghanistan were the native Mujahideen backed by the latest in American weaponry and intelligence, UBL's claim of AQ liberating the country is a lie that perpetuates itself and serves to reinforce terrorist propaganda to this day.

Osama bin Laden and Zawahiri Split

While there has been no overt announcement of a split between the leaders of AQ, careful examination reveals a deepening schism.

The belief about AQ is that the two leaders are united in their ideology and support each other unquestioningly. Zawahiri has been a vital part of the AQ organization since its inception and has been an important ally of bin Laden since 1986. The Egyptian doctor became the de facto 2nd in command through years of operations with Al-Qaeda.

What most analysts have failed to recognize is the significance of a couple items in the IO campaign of AQ. The first is that every time UBL releases a tape, Zawahiri seems to immediately follow up with his own message. This keeps the focus on the message of Zawahiri and moves UBL out of the spotlight. Second, in Zawahiri's Q&A session, he mentions his writings on twenty-one separate occasions. He refers to these writings to clarify answers that he is providing. The mention of his writings is being used to establish a

scholarly expertise for the Ummah to recognize. By referring to the publication of his new book 14 times, Zawahiri is trying to influence a potential future global jihad. It can be surmised that Zawahiri is usurping the ideology of AQ from UBL by publishing the book. The third item is that the AQ leader and his deputy do not agree on how to handle the followers of the Shi'a religion. UBL has supported and taken support from Iran in the past while Zawahiri calls the Shi'a nation the Ummah's greatest traitors. Expect this particular rift to continue as sides will have to be chosen when it comes to the Shi'a.

Control Failures

One of the other areas where Al-Qa'ida has failed is in keeping control over those who have adopted the AQ name. As AQ has expanded its ranks by taking other organizations under its banner and re-branding them with the AQ name, control becomes an issue. This happens in any organization as it grows rapidly and takes on other projects. The leaders in these respective franchises must make decisions that benefit the local group and sometimes ignore the main HQ's directives. These failures are evident and are demonstrated by the activities of AQI and the Al-Qa'ida Committee in the Islamic Maghreb (AQCIM).

Al-Qa'ida Committee in the Islamic Maghreb (AQCIM)

AQCIM is a good example of how a regional terrorist group evolves into an AQ franchisee. These terrorists were formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).

Although the GSPC allied themselves with AQ in 2004, it was not until September 2006 that the organization officially merged with AQ and became AQCIM. In announcing the group, Zawahri hoped the alliance would work against Western interests including the US and Algeria's colonizer, France.

Last year, Abu Musab Abdulwadood, the newest leader of the GSPC, said that "America and France are looting [Algeria's] treasures and taking control over our destinies after the thief Abdelaziz Bouteflika [the Algerian president] collaborated with them".³⁶ If you look at the core issue of the Algerian insurgency, you will see that the United States has nothing to do with the insurgents and their government. Just as with Usama Bin Laden's attempt to focus on the US, as opposed to governments closer to home, the message resonates with its followers.

Zawahiri had to answer questions about the indiscriminate killing of innocent Muslims by the AQCIM. The doctor walked a fine line and danced around the issue saying that he believed the Algerian terrorists when they said they only targeted unbelievers. The real problem is that AQ has no control over their affiliate AQCIM. They were glad to accept the terrorist group under its umbrella because it makes AQ seem larger and more powerful.

The reason the AQCIM is affiliated with AQ is because of the benefit of increased media exposure. The terrorists' hope is that the issue of Algeria will be on the global stage. AQCIM is a local, not a global movement. This is the same course of action the original insurgency group, the FLN, used to gain Algerian independence from France. The expectations for AQCIM are that it will continue to prioritize the targets it goes after with little input from AQ. As AQCIM gains notoriety from their attacks, it may even challenge AQ for media supremacy and provide a new direction for the global jihad.

Jordanian Attack

Al-Qa'ida in Iraq and its former, now deceased, leader Abu Musab Zaraqawi, posed a number of control problems for AQ. One incident that incensed many AQ supporters was the attempt by Zaraqawi to open up a terrorist front in Jordan.

Zaraqawi held particular disdain for the monarchy in his homeland and took every opportunity to attack his country. These attacks include a 2003 car bomb at the Jordanian Embassy and

the 2004 arrest of Zarqawi's teams when they attempted to blow up the headquarters of Jordan's intelligence service with 20 tons of explosives laced with chemicals.³⁷ Zarqawi's people had a tactical objective failure when they tried to hit U.S. Navy ships with missiles but missed.³⁸ While none of these actions drew the ire of the people of Jordan, Zarqawi overstepped his boundaries when his network blew up three Jordanian hotels. The casualties in these terrorist attacks were mainly Jordanians, who took to the streets calling for the death of the AQI leader. One of the hotels that was bombed was holding a wedding reception which resulted in the deaths of men, women and children. The killing of innocent Muslims created a stir in many countries and evoked this from a relative of one of the bombers, "We were shocked when we saw on TV the number of civilians killed in the operation because we thought the killed would be Americans and Jews, but they were Muslims, regrettably".³⁹

This heinous act of terrorism even spurred denunciations from Zarqawi's relatives:

Fifty-seven members of his al-Khalayleh clan, including his brother and first cousin, took half-page advertisements in Jordan's leading newspapers to revile the militant leader. "We denounce in the clearest terms all the terrorist actions claimed by the so-called Ahmed Fadheel Nazzal al-Khalayleh, who calls himself Abu Musab al-Zarqawi", wrote the family members who proclaimed "homage" to the Hashemite throne and "to our precious Jordan." "We announce, and all the people are our witnesses, that we - the sons of the al-Khalayleh tribe - are innocent of him and all that emanates from him, whether action, assertion or decision."⁴⁰

The problem with Jordan was solved when Zarqawi was killed by Coalition Forces in Iraq. Zarqawi may have read the Al-Qa'ida grand plan and may have decided to attack Jordan earlier than the designated timeframe of "The Arising and Standing Up Phase" from 2007 to 2010. This was not the only issue of control that Zarqawi posed for AQ.

Sectarian Violence in Iraq

The other major control problem that Zarqawi embodied was the start of the sectarian violence in Iraq. Zarqawi negotiated with UBL and AQ for over a year to become the leader of AQI. The Jordanian Zarqawi felt that the Shi'a populace of Iraq was primarily responsible for the lack of support for AQ. In Zarqawi's view, the Shi'a were apostates and should be as much of a target for AQ as the Americans and the Coalition Forces. UBL wanted Zarqawi to concentrate his effort on the Americans and a compromise was made that Coalition Forces would take top priority.

Unfortunately for AQ, Zarqawi immediately stepped up attacks against the Shi'a community, dividing the Iraqi populace along religious lines. In a letter intercepted by friendly forces in Iraq, Zawahiri chastised Zarqawi for the violence against the Shi'a:

For that reason, many of your Muslim admirers amongst the common folk are wondering about your attacks on the Shi'a. The sharpness of this questioning increases when the attacks are on one of their mosques, and it increases more when the attacks are on the mausoleum of Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib, may God honor him. My opinion is that this matter won't be acceptable to the Muslim populace however much you have tried to explain it, and aversion to this will continue.

Indeed, questions will circulate among mujahedeen circles and their opinion makers about the correctness of this conflict with the Shi'a at this time. Is it something that is unavoidable? Or, is it something can be put off until the force of the mujahed movement in Iraq gets stronger? And if some of the operations were necessary for self-defense, were all of the operations necessary? Or, were there some operations that weren't called for? And is the opening of another front now in addition to the front against the Americans and the government a wise decision? Or, does this conflict with the Shi'a lift the burden from the Americans by diverting the mujahedeen to the Shi'a, while the Americans continue to control matters from afar? And if the attacks on Shi'a leaders were necessary to put a stop to their plans, then why were there attacks on ordinary Shi'a?

Won't this lead to reinforcing false ideas in their minds, even as it is incumbent on us to preach the call of Islam to them and explain and communicate to guide them to the truth? And can the mujahedeen kill all of the Shi'a in Iraq? Has any Islamic state in history ever tried that? And why kill ordinary Shi'a considering that they are forgiven because of their ignorance? And what loss will befall us if we did not attack the Shi'a? And do the brothers forget that we have more than one hundred prisoners - many of whom are from the leadership who are wanted in their countries - in the custody of the Iranians? And even if we attack the Shi'a out of necessity, then why do you announce this matter and make it public, which compels the Iranians to take counter measures? And do the brothers forget that both we and the Iranians need to refrain from harming each other at this time in which the Americans are targeting us?

All of these questions and others are circulating among your brothers, and they are monitoring the picture from afar, as I told you. One who monitors from afar lacks many of the important details that affect decision-making in the field.

However, monitoring from afar has the advantage of providing the total picture and observing the general line without getting submerged in the details, which might draw attention away from the direction of the target. As the English proverb says, the person who is standing among the leaves of the tree might not see the tree.

One of the most important factors of success is that you don't let your eyes lose sight of the target, and that it should stand before you always. Otherwise you deviate from the general line through a policy of reaction. And this is a lifetime's experience, and I will not conceal from you the fact that we suffered a lot through following this policy of reaction, then we suffered a lot another time because we tried to return to the original line.⁴¹

Zarqawi's actions lead one to believe that he threw out the number one rule of an insurgency; guerrillas must have support of the people. Instead Zarqawi believed the people must be more afraid of him. He needed to instill the belief that the Iraqi government was incapable of protecting them. AQI tried to bring all the Sunni insurgents together as a national unified insurgency, but their offers were rebuffed. AQI re-launched themselves as the Mujahideen Shura Council in late 2005. The Council would unite the Sunnis, but again offers to consolidate the forces were rebuffed by other insurgent groups. The Mujahideen Shura Council then appointed an Iraqi as its leader to try to change its image as a foreign led organization. The other Sunni groups still did not join the organization. Zarqawi became so infuriated by the other Sunnis that he murdered a number of the tribal shieks. By the time

Zarqawi was killed by U.S. Forces in 2006, the AQI leader had made enemies out of most of the population.

Zarqawi's violence led Iran to back the Shi'a militants in Iraq. AQI's actions against the Sunnis allowed for the formation of the "Awakening Council" and the turning of the insurgents against the terrorist group. AQI eventually became the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and claimed sovereignty over 12 Iraqi provinces. The organization's limits were exposed when it was revealed that their leader was a fictitious creation aimed at securing local support. Furthering the damage was the group's failure to occupy the designated capital of the ISI lands in the Anbar Province. All these operational failures were a direct result of AQ's inability to maintain control of just one of its many field commanders.

Failures of the “Inspired” Next Generation Jihadis

Another aspect of failure in the global jihad involves the next generation of Islamic terrorists. The new generation consists of individuals and groups who came together to battle the West without the benefit of formal terror training in the camps of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq or elsewhere. As we have seen, the trained jihadis have major problems, so let us examine incidents by the untrained, but inspired, terrorists.

Fort Dix 6

Six Muslim immigrants were arrested when they plotted to kill U.S. soldiers at Fort Dix, New Jersey. How were they apprehended? These “wannabes” went to Circuit City to have a VCR tape of their jihadi training and celebration converted into a DVD format. On the 90-minute tape the men are seen shooting weapons while yelling the now familiar refrain preferred by suicide Islamic jihadists, 'Allahu Akbar' ('God is Great!'). The clerk alerted his bosses, who called the FBI.

The investigation led to the arrest of Mohamad Shnewer, 22, Serdar Tatar, 23, and Albanian brothers Dritan Duka, 28, Shain Duka, 26, and Eljvir Duka 23. All were charged with conspiring to murder U.S. military personnel. A sixth man, Agron Abdullahu, 24, was charged with aiding and abetting the others. It was later learned that Abdullahu had been a sniper in Kosovo.

An FBI informant was able to penetrate the group and gathered intelligence and evidence from inside the organization. During the sixteen month investigation, the men were recorded plotting to attack the Army base with rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) with the goal of killing at least 100 soldiers. A secondary target was a nearby U.S. naval base in Philadelphia. The terrorists were to strike during the annual Army-Navy football game.

“You know where the stadiums are in Philadelphia?” Shnewer is quoted as telling a confidential FBI informant on March 16, 2007, according to the affidavit. “There is the Navy base and every year they have the Army-Navy ball game and they come and stay one or two weeks ... the Navy base will then be full of people ... You see this is an opportunity, and the beauty of this location, specifically, if you have the proper weaponry, is that you can hit it from where, do you know? From New Jersey.”⁴²

To this end, the men procured weapons, conducted surveillance of the fort and engaged in firearms training at ranges in Pennsylvania. The leader of the cell, Shnewer, gave his personal laptop to the FBI informant, who was then told to review DVD files which contained the last will and testament of two of the September 11 hijackers along with images of Osama bin Laden exhorting followers to join the jihadist movement.⁴³

The group was tripped up because they wanted to make a video showing their commitment to jihad. The need for media attention and the recognition of peers is what led to their downfall. It should be remembered that the importance of media coverage has been instilled in the movement by the massive media propagation efforts of AQ, Usama bin Laden and other jihadis.

UK/Glasgow Bombers

Another group of would-be terrorists failed in their attempt to blow up car bombs at London's West End and the Glasgow airport. Police foiled a car bomb plot in central London discovering explosives packed into two Mercedes that had been loaded with petrol, gas canisters and nails in an area teeming with nightlife. One of the cars was discovered when it was towed away and the impound crew inspected the car. The Glasgow plot failed because the driver could not get his vehicle through the airport security doors. The driver attempted to drive his car through the doors and barriers a number of times before getting the car stuck.

The cars in Glasgow were filled with petrol and propane canisters. As the Jeep Cherokee tried to plow through the security doors, the vehicle became engulfed in flames and the occupants jumped from the car on fire. One of the occupants died from the burns that covered 90% of his body. The Glasgow attack happened because the London bomb plot failed.

London has an extensive camera monitoring system that helped identify the people and other vehicles involved in the London plot and capture all those involved in the Scottish plot. These terrorists demonstrated a fundamental lack of tactical awareness and knowledge of the security measures at the airport.

Nick Reilly

A new ploy in the extremist plan to attack the West is to recruit vulnerable individuals for terrorism. The latest case surfaced in May of 2008 when a British national, 22 year old white Muslim convert, Nick Reilly, tried to detonate a homemade nail bomb in an upscale restaurant in Exeter. Instead of a successful terrorist incident, the man, who was mentally ill and possibly suffered from autism, was caught in a blast as he tried to emplace the explosive device.

Nick Reilly changed his name to Mohammed Rasheed after converting to Islam four years ago. Mr. Reilly was a loner due to his mental condition and was recruited by some Muslims who he met at a local fish and chip restaurant. The young man had a history of suicide attempts and spent a lot of his free time on the computer. It is believed that somebody posed as a girl on the internet to entice Nick to carry out the mission. Nick received a text message right before he left for the mission and said that he would do anything for his internet girlfriend. Kim Reilly, his mother, claimed that the Muslims Nick hung out with helped him meet his new girl.⁴⁴

This demonstrates a push by AQ to try and recruit "western looking" persons who can fly under the radar of law enforcement. The recruiting trend is in stark contrast to the original organization that UBL envisioned when he was in Afghanistan in the early years. UBL believed that AQ should only be made up of Saudis who were the true followers of the Islamic faith. As reality sets in with the loss of a viable base in Afghanistan and operational control in Iraq, UBL and AQ now have to expand the criteria for membership in the terrorist organization. Expect this trend to continue as AQ has a driving need to fill its ranks. The terror group's membership goals can only be met by allowing for a more diverse recruiting class.

Conclusion

As this report clearly points out, the terrorist organization known as Al-Qa'ida is not as invincible as previously believed. Although the AQ name continues to instill the psychological fear associated with terrorism, the task of completing operational objectives has not always been successful. The organization failed to topple the World Trade Center in 1993, failed to blow up a transatlantic flight, failed to bring down the U.S. embassy in Kenya, failed to create an uprising in Pakistan during a period of political instability and failed to create the mass social movement that would unite the Muslim Ummah according to the group's 20 year time table. AQ's information campaign is riddled with failures as well. Some of the more egregious examples include failing to take up the Palestinian cause, botching the filming of the attack on the U.S.S. Cole, failing to inspire another Egyptian Jihad, the recruiting of the mentally and physically disabled, taking credit for the Afghanistan Mujahideen victory and the philosophical split between Usama and Zawahiri. Control failures over the expanding ranks of AQ include the atrocities being conducted by AQCIM and Zarqawi's attacks on Jordan and the Shi'a population of Iraq. Lastly, the newest generation of AQ inspired terrorists has failed to carry out successful attacks under the AQ banner. These follies include the failed Fort Dix 6 plot, the UK/Glasgow airport bombing and the recruitment of a mentally challenged man to plant nail bombs.

The most critical element uncovered is the noticeably growing rift among the leadership concerning the direction of the group. The New York Times reports that UBL sought out the Iranians during the 1990s.⁴⁵ There was a meeting in the mid-1990s where the Iranians called for a halt to the fighting between Islamist-terrorist groups in order to forge greater cooperation against the West. UBL represented Sunni terrorists during the meeting.⁴⁶ This is one of the reasons that AQ finds sanctuary in Iran where some of their leadership is still under "supposed" house arrest. UBL did not welcome the sectarian violence that gripped Iraq under Zarqawi's leadership. UBL is a uniter and Zawahiri has called out all the other terrorist groups because he seeks the ascendancy of AQ in the terrorist pyramid. AQ is probably fractured into two camps over the notion as to whether the Shiites are apostates or allies. Expect that Zawahiri will continue to release a message after each new UBL message. This will continue the subtle undermining of who speaks to, and for, al-Qa'ida. One wonders whether UBL will become a martyr due to a mysterious explosion like his former mentor Abdullah Azzam? Or, will Zawahiri wait for the sick UBL to pass naturally before the doctor takes control of AQ?

About the Author

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Foot Notes

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