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## NEWPORT PAPERS

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A Series of Point Papers  
from the Naval War College and the  
Navy Warfare Development Command  
For Senior Leadership  
In Response to Critical Issues

Strategy / CONOPS / Doctrine / Decision

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United States Naval War College  
Navy Warfare Development Command  
Newport, Rhode Island

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Newport Paper: 10

**POTENTIAL ADVERSARIES IN THE TERROR WAR:  
INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND STATES**

**Purpose:** To identify the most significant individuals, groups, and states—as well as the linkages among them—that may employ terrorism against the United States and its interests.

**Background:** In late September 2001, before the outbreak of the war against *Al Qaeda*, the Secretary of Defense ordered the Pentagon's senior military commanders to address who the United States will need to confront, the nature of the war against terrorism, and the options available for confronting terror worldwide. As the United States plans for a post-Afghanistan phase of the war against terrorism it is clear that it needs to carefully scrutinize the wide range of potentially hostile individuals, groups, and states that could employ terrorism against it and its global interests.

**Discussion:** There is no globally united terrorist entity that is centrally controlled under one leadership. Terrorist groups—some with the help of state sponsors—have targeted the United States since the early 1980s. Many groups, including the post-Afghan war remnants of *Al Qaeda*, may continue to do so well into the future as revenge for America's actions in Afghanistan. The amorphous and decentralized nature of extremist groups will make the war against terrorism difficult and protracted.

***Individuals***

Generally, individuals by themselves are not capable of being more than a nuisance. They neither have the infrastructure nor reach to sustain a concerted and devastating terror campaign. Few terrorists are "lone wolves" or free agents *per se*, though some like Ramzi Yousef—the mastermind of the attempt against the World Trade Center in 1993—and Ahmed Ressam—who sought to bomb Los Angeles Airport in 1998—come close to fitting the bill. Individual leaders are important, however, because of the role they play in setting up and maintaining a terrorist organization. Leaders matter. *Al Qaeda*, for instance, would not exist without Usama bin Laden. While a complete list of all potentially important terrorist leaders cannot be provided here, it is critical to focus attention on the likes of **Usama bin Laden** and his deputies (and potential successors)—particularly **Ayman al-Zawahiri**, **Abu Hafs al-Masri**, and **Abu Zubaida**—because of their important roles in *Al Qaeda*, their organizational abilities, and their proven track record of establishing extensive links with other terrorist organizations and of executing terrorist attacks.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Inconclusive reports indicate that Abu Hafs al-Masri and Ayman al-Zawahiri may have been killed in the U.S. aerial bombing campaign. It should be borne in mind that *Al Qaeda* leaders have proven to be masters of deception and misdirection.

The founders and leaders of terrorist organizations have been critical to their emergence, growth, and development. In order to ensure the continuation of their vision and work, they may well have also prepared others to take over in the event of their demise. The emergence of a possible second echelon leadership that may even be more motivated and have less compunction about committing ever more horrific acts of terror should be monitored. Unfortunately, without adequate intelligence, we may not know of a second echelon leadership until it commits an act of terror for which it claims responsibility.

### ***Terrorist Organizations***

***Al Qaeda*** is the most notorious terrorist organization confronting the United States. Its strength probably totals several hundred hardcore members and several thousand sympathizers. *Al Qaeda's* larger significance is that it serves as a nucleus and umbrella organization for a global financial and logistical organization that ties together many Sunni terror groups including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Filipino Abu Sayyaf Group. The 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States pulled together terrorists who had served other groups like Egypt's Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya or the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armee.

***Hizballah*** is a radical Shia group based in Lebanon and led by Sheik Hasan Nasrallah. It is committed to an Islamic state and the destruction of Israeli influence. With several thousand members, a legal political following inside Lebanon and heavy support from Iran, Hizballah is known to have been involved in many anti-American terror attacks, including the suicide bombing of the U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks in Beirut in October 1983 and the U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut in September 1984. Hizballah has cells in Europe, Asia, North American and, as the 1992 and 1994 attacks on the Israeli embassy and cultural center in Buenos Aires amply demonstrated, South America. Hizballah may well retaliate against U.S. interests should the United States decide to strike at its bases in southern Lebanon or if the United States is seen as continuing to provide Israel with near-unconditional support.

***HAMAS***, headed by Sheik Ahmed Yasin, and the ***Palestine Islamic Jihad***, led by Dr. Ramadan Shallah, are terror groups that are committed to an Islamist Palestine and the destruction of Israel. They employ suicide bombers against Israeli military and civilian targets in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon, and Jordan. The exact number of cadres is unknown; their sympathizers apparently number in the tens of thousands. They were very active during the Palestinian uprising that broke out in October 2000. There is considerable evidence that Hizballah, which is far better trained and more experienced, has provided support for HAMAS and Islamic Jihad over the course of the past year. HAMAS and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad still have very limited capabilities for strikes beyond Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian territories. Their modus operandi has been the suicide bomber, a tactic at which they have become very adept. Their limited reach may change if they develop stronger links with Hizballah and *Al Qaeda*. Given the animosity for the United States in the Middle East, it is possible that U.S. interests in the region may be targeted by these two groups in the coming years.

*Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya*, active since the late 1970s, is Egypt's biggest militant group. Dormant inside Egypt since 1998, it has an aggressive external wing with a worldwide presence. With their spiritual leader, Sheikh Omar Abd al-Rahman, imprisoned in the United States, the Islamic Group, under the *de facto* leadership of Mustafu Hamzqa, is believed to be aiming at U.S. and Israeli targets. The group signed bin Laden's 1998 *fatwa*.

*Al-Jihad*, a.k.a. Egyptian Islamic Jihad, has several hundred devoted members and is most notorious for its 1981 assassination of Anwar Sadat. *Al Jihad* like *Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya*, has observed a cease-fire inside Egypt for several years as a result of their less than successful terrorist campaigns; recent attacks have been aimed against external targets. For example, in 1998 *Al Jihad* planned an attack on the U.S. Embassy in Albania. This was thwarted and the assault team was captured and ultimately extradited to Egypt, where its members were executed after a trial. Today *Al-Jihad* is tightly bound to Al-Qaeda. One of its leaders—Ayman Zawahiri—emerged as Usama bin Laden's right hand man. He formally merged Al-Jihad with bin Laden's "Combined World Islamic Front against Jews and Crusaders." This is one of the most lethal terror organizations in the world. Its adherents are consumed by a deep-seated hatred for the United States, Israel, and the Mubarak regime. Many of its members are either former "Afghan Arabs" or ex-members of the Egyptian security services or military who have been discharged for extremist views. They are professional and well-trained; they may well participate in attacks against American interests.

Algeria's *Armed Islamic Group* (GIA) has struggled since 1992 to overthrow the secular, French-model regime in Algiers and replace it with an Islamic one. Since 1998, it has been joined in its violent methods by a splinter faction called the *Salafi Group for Call and Combat* (GSPC). Both groups target foreigners, including expatriates living in Algeria. More than 100 foreigners—chiefly Europeans—have been killed since 1992, most with their throats cut. Both groups have also been known to hijack aircraft and place bombs in public places, usually in France, which is regarded as a key supporter of Algeria's secular government. GIA has primarily focused on European targets in the past. There are few tangible American interests in Algeria; however, the possibility of GIA members targeting American interests in France cannot be discounted.

Support for India or even neutrality in the Kashmir dispute may draw attacks from *Harakat ul-Mujahidin* (HUM), a group based in Pakistan that operates mainly in Kashmir. HUM's secretary general signed bin Laden's 1998 fatwa calling for attacks on U.S. and Western interests. The group targets Indian troops in Kashmir and wields terrorism against civilian targets. It kidnapped and murdered five foreign tourists in 1995 and hijacked an Air India flight in December 2000. Several Harakat militants were killed in the 1998 U.S. cruise missile strikes on Afghan terrorist camps. HUM has several thousand armed supporters in Pakistani and Indian Kashmir, many are Afghan and "Arab Afghan" veterans. The group's terrorism is augmented by a more radical splinter group—*Jaish-e-Mohammed*—whose rhetoric is overtly anti-American, reflecting bin Laden's growing influence and the fact that many of its men trained in Afghanistan. A third Kashmiri terrorist group, *Lashkar-i-Tayyba*, sent thousands of volunteers to fight with

the Taliban. Until recently, all three groups were recognized as legitimate "freedom fighters" by the Pakistani government, which provided them with critical intelligence and even covering fire from regular army units. Popular support for Islamism remains high in Pakistan. "You in America will call me a terrorist," a 42 year-old Pakistani Islamist told the *Wall Street Journal*, in October 2001, "but I am a freedom fighter. You will pay for forgetting me." Given the support that the U.S. has extended to the Musharraf government in Pakistan and the warming of relations between the U.S. and India, the United States should be alert to the possibility of its citizens and interests becoming targets of these groups.

In the Philippines, the *Abu Sayyaf Group* (ASG) targets Americans to underscore its demand for an independent Islamic state in western Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. Founded in 1991 by Abdurajak Janjalani, a Filipino mujahed, returning from Afghanistan, ASG reportedly has 1,200 fighters and several thousand more sympathizers, many of whom are motivated as much by the prospect of ransom money as by Islam. The group, some of whose members trained in Afghanistan, operates largely in the southern Philippines but abducted foreign tourists from two different resorts in Malaysia during 2001. Its receipts from kidnapping and extortion are an estimated \$25 million and the group is solidly linked to *Al Qaeda*. The group attempted to kill Pope John Paul II when he visited Manila in 1995 and planned "Operation Bojinka"—"big bang"—an audacious plot to blow up eleven wide-bodied civilian airliners over the Pacific. ASG's amateurism is evident in its reliance upon kidnapping individuals and holding them for ransom. Its links with *Al Qaeda* may contribute to its "professionalization," whereby it will develop the capability to target Americans and U.S. interests on a far large scale than before. It is not clear that the security and intelligence services of the Philippines are sufficiently equipped or trained to deal with a "break-out" in terrorist activities. In early 2002, U.S. military advisors began arriving in the Philippines to assist government forces engaged in operations against the ASG.

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the agenda of Indonesia's *Laskar Jihad* reputedly calls for the elimination of Christians in the Moluccas and central Sulawesi and the establishment of an Islamic state. It was established in Central Java in 2000 and is lead by Jaffar Umar Thalib, a Yemeni religious leader who fought against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Another recent arrival on the scene is *Jemaah Islamiyah*, an organization that operates in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore and was established by Riduan Isamuddin and Abu Bakar Baasyir, two Indonesian clerics. According to Singaporean authorities, it has links to *Al Qaeda*—a charge denied by its leaders.

### ***State Sponsors of Terrorism***

State sponsors provide terrorist organizations with infrastructure, training, weapons, and diplomatic passports for their personnel. Such states do not often directly control terrorist organizations but there is a considerable coincidence of interests and enemies. The State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism* judged **Iran** "the most active state sponsor of terrorism in 2000," a verdict little changed in 2001. Main beneficiaries of Iranian logistical, military and intelligence assistance are the Lebanese Hizbullah and the Palestinian rejectionist groups, namely Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Ahmed Jibril's Popular

Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command. Iran apparently also aids terrorist movements in the Gulf, Africa, Turkey and Central Asia. Knowing that the international community reviles terrorism, Tehran masks much of its support to terrorists, but not all. Hizbullah, for example, is a flagrant Iranian protégé rendered respectable by its big political wing in Lebanon and its provision of social services to Shia communities. Iran may have been an advisor to the Khobar Towers bombing and cannot yet be excluded from involvement with *Al Qaeda*. Although President Khatami's reform movement has massive popular support, a diehard group of conservatives gathered around the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei controls the key military and security agencies that would support terrorists.

**Iraq** continues to sponsor the Abu Nidal Organization, whose Black September group achieved its greatest notoriety in the 1980s. Saddam Hussein also sponsors the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), one of the secular Palestinian guerrilla armies led by Abu Abbas, who masterminded the *Achille Lauro* hijacking in 1985. Iraq also supports the *Mujahedin-e-Khalq* (MEK), a guerrilla/terror organization which follows a peculiar mix of Islamic and Marxist ideas. This organization has sought—unsuccessfully—U.S. sympathy against the clerical regime in Iran. It has not attacked U.S. interests in recent years, but did so in the 1970s when the Shah was in power. If the United States and the regime in Iran were to substantially improve bilateral relations, there is a possibility that the MEK may once again target U.S. interests.

**Syria** harbors and supports several anti-Israel terrorist groups, including Ahmad Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, the Palestine Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. This involvement with terrorist groups points to President Asad's chief motivation, which is to regain the Golan Heights in its confrontation with Israel.

Although **Sudan** has turned against terrorists in the last several years, the country is still home to a number of bin Laden's profitable front companies and is used as a refuge for *Al Qaeda* as well as Egypt's Islamic Jihad and Al-Gama'a groups. Many Palestinian Islamic Jihad and HAMAS operatives are also believed to move freely about Sudan.

**Libya** has dramatically curtailed its sponsorship of terrorism. One of the most notorious sponsors in the 1980s, Libya today is "the rogue who came in from the cold." Still, Libya has yet to comply with all UN Security Council requirements on Pan Am 103—disclosing all it knows, renouncing terrorism altogether, and paying compensation. Although Libya expelled its branch of Abu Nidal in 1999, it maintains contact with the Palestine Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.

The case of the Kashmiri terrorist groups is murkier. When the United States considered listing **Pakistan** as a state sponsor of terrorism in 1990, Islamabad moved the most visible terrorist groups to eastern Afghanistan and charged Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Pakistan's oldest Islamist political party, with their care and feeding. When Usama bin Laden came to Afghanistan in 1996, he founded training camps at Khost for the Kashmiri

mujahedin, earning the gratitude and solicitude of the Pakistani government. It is against links like these through the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Pakistani army that President Musharraf is now campaigning.

### ***Terrorist-Sponsored States***

Countries with weak, failing, or nonexistent central authority are likely to provide terrorist organizations like *Al Qaeda* with fertile soil to establish themselves. While Afghanistan under the Taliban was the prime example of such a state, other potential terrorist-sponsored states such as Somalia, which has no effective central government, have now appeared on the U.S. radarscope because they are regarded as possible safe havens for bin Laden and the remnants of *Al Qaeda*. States with nonexistent or weak central governments and severe socioeconomic crises are attractive to terrorist organizations. For example, the Yemen government lacks control over huge expanses of its more remote and inhospitable territories where bin Laden allegedly has the allegiance of many; Pakistan does not exert effective central government control over its vast Northwest Frontier and Northern Tribal Areas. The United States has every reason to be worried by the problems afflicting countries such as Indonesia—the world's largest Muslim nation—and the Philippines—a country with a debilitating insurgency in a peripheral region.

**Recommendation/Action:** The United States must be fully cognizant of the wide array of individuals, organizations, and states—and the relationships among them—confronting it in the war on terror.