



For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
July 17, 2007

## Fact Sheet: The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland

What The Administration Is Doing To Protect America From The Persistent, Evolving Threat From Al-Qaeda

[DNI.gov: National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland \(7 pages, 171 kb, PDF\)](#)

[Press Briefing by White House Homeland Security Advisor Fran Townsend](#)

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**Today, The Director Of National Intelligence (DNI) Presented To The President And Congress A National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) On The Terrorist Threat To The U.S. Homeland.** This NIE provides a broad, strategic, and coordinated framework for understanding the terrorist threat to the United States over the next three years. It provides the Intelligence Community's baseline judgments in order to help policymakers develop and prioritize the government's response.

- **This NIE Reinforces The Seriousness Of The Terrorist Threat Against The Homeland.** The NIE found the main terrorist threat to the United States comes from Islamic terrorist groups and cells, especially al-Qaeda. Their intent to attack the U.S. is undiminished, and they continue to adapt and improve their capabilities.
- **The DNI Released Unclassified Key Judgments Of The NIE, Which Included Findings That:**
  - Increased worldwide counterterrorism efforts since 9/11 have constrained the ability of al-Qaeda to attack the U.S. again and have led terrorist groups to perceive the U.S. as a harder target to strike than it was on 9/11.
  - Al-Qaeda has protected or regenerated three of the four key elements of homeland plotting: a safe haven in the Pakistan Federally Administered Tribal Area, operational lieutenants, and its top leadership.
  - Al-Qaeda will leverage the contacts and capabilities of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), its most visible and capable affiliate and the only one known to have expressed a desire to attack us here.

### We Are Confronting The Threat From Al-Qaeda And Degrading Their Capabilities

**On 9/11, The President Resolved That We Would Go On The Offense Against Our Enemies.** We have built new institutions to better coordinate homeland defense and intelligence collection, developed new tools to monitor and track terrorists and their finances, and marshaled all national resources to attack the terrorist enemies at war with us.

**The United States And Our Allies Have Captured Or Killed Senior Al-Qaeda Leaders And Disrupted Numerous Plots Against The United States And Our Allies:**

- **Abd al-Hadi:** Osama bin Laden tried to send Iraqi-born terrorist Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi to Iraq. Abd al-Hadi had been a senior advisor to bin Laden and served as his top commander in Afghanistan. He also directed plots to assassinate those opposed to al-Qaeda, such as Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and a Pakistani United Nations official. Abd al-Hadi never made it to Iraq. He was captured in late 2006.
- **Passenger Airplane Plot:** In January 2006, bin Laden warned the American people: "Operations are under preparation and you will see them on your own ground once they are finished." Seven months later, British authorities broke up the most ambitious known al-Qaeda threat related to the U.S. since the 9/11 attacks: a plot to blow up passenger airplanes flying to America. Our Intelligence Community believes that this plot was just two or three weeks away from execution. If it had been carried out, it could have rivaled 9/11 in death and destruction.
- **Zarqawi:** In January 2005, bin Laden tasked Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to form a cell to conduct terrorist attacks outside Iraq – with America as the number one priority. To help in this effort, bin Laden tasked one of his top operatives, Hamza Rabi'a, to send Zarqawi a briefing on al-Qaeda's external operations, including information about operations against the U.S. In December 2005, Rabi'a was killed in Pakistan. Several months after that, in June 2006, U.S. and Iraqi forces killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and killed or captured several of his top lieutenants, including his Baghdad chief of operations and his top bomb-maker.

### **We Remain On The Offense Against Terrorists Abroad, While We Defend Against Attacks On The Homeland, U.S. Interests Abroad, And Our Friends And Allies.**

- **Constantly Evaluating The Threat:** Every day, the U.S. government's intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security communities review current threats and how to address them. Every week, senior counterterrorism officials meet at the White House to review the current and strategic threat and to organize efforts to wage the War on Terror. The President continues to receive regular al-Qaeda-related intelligence briefings and homeland security updates from his top Administration officials.
- **Leveraging Resources Strategically:** As we have done during other periods of heightened threat, we are focusing our resources strategically. In this case, we have established an Interagency Task Force under the leadership of the National Counterterrorism Center to develop additional options and measures for acquiring information and disrupting potential terrorist attacks on the U.S. The task force evaluates new intelligence and considers measures that may help disrupt the threat. The group regularly reports to White House officials and shares information with other counterterrorism elements.
- **Adapting To The Threat:** Homeland security and law enforcement agencies have been reviewing their current operations and are enhancing, where necessary, efforts to better respond to and address the heightened threat environment.
- **Amplifying Our Cooperation With Key Allies:** We are working with key partners to undermine al-Qaeda's attempts to access and co-opt regional networks for their own strategic purpose.
  - In Pakistan, we continue to work with President Musharraf and the Government to capture key al-Qaeda operatives and pressure al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The Pakistanis understand the threat that al-Qaeda and violent extremism pose to their country, and we will continue to work with them to deny Pakistan as a safe haven for terrorists.
  - In North Africa, we are working with our partners to counter al-Qaeda's expansion into the Maghreb – evident in the emergence of "al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb" (AQIM). This group has claimed responsibility for recent terrorist bombings in Algeria, including the April 11 and July

11 attacks against civilians in Algiers.

- In the Persian Gulf, we continue to strengthen efforts to dismantle terrorist cells, stem terrorist financing, and undercut the ideology used by al-Qaeda and its supporters to justify the murder of innocents.
- In Europe, we continue to build strong relationships to increase information sharing and counterterrorism cooperation while also building awareness of the nature of the threat and the challenges posed to Europe as terrorists exploit existing infrastructures to support their operations.
- We are looking at additional ways of disrupting al-Qaeda's network, including even more aggressively countering al-Qaeda's violent message and the group's attempts to exploit the grievances and suffering of local groups for its own benefit.

### **Since 9/11, America Is Safer – But We Are Not Yet Safe**

**Our Enemies Have Not Succeeded In Launching Another Attack On Our Soil, But They Have Not Been Idle.** Since 9/11, al-Qaeda and those inspired by its hateful ideology have carried out terrorist attacks in more than two dozen nations. They have plotted against the U.S. but have thus far not succeeded in attacking us – in part because we have taken bold action at home and abroad to keep our people safe.

**We Remain Vigilant And Are Taking Necessary Steps To Protect The American People.** We have asked the American people to remain vigilant as well and to report suspicious activity.

**We Will Continue To Work With Congress To Ensure That We Have The Necessary Tools And Resources To Protect The Homeland.** This includes passing a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) Modernization bill that will make America safer by improving our intelligence capabilities while protecting privacy interests. This 1978 law should be updated to take into account the sweeping telecommunications advances that could not have been anticipated by Congress and that will allow the FISA Court and law enforcement officials to concentrate attention and resources on appropriate communications.

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