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**Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council
NEWSLETTER**



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Ridge creates Task Force to boost security

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Tom Ridge 19 April announced plans to form an inter-governmental agency tasked with bolstering security for critical infrastructure and for upcoming high-profile public events, the Associated Press and Reuters reported. Ridge said that DHS officials would be collaborating with representatives from nine Cabinet-level agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Defense, Energy, Transportation, Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency. "This group will reach out to mayors, governors and officials at every level of government, as well as the private sector," Secretary Ridge announced during a National Association of Broadcasters meeting in Las Vegas. Ridge said the impetus for forming the "working group" was not exclusively the elections but the potential lure for terrorists to use several forthcoming special events, including the Memorial Day weekend, the Republican and Democratic National Conventions, the Group of Eight industrialized nations (G-8) meeting to be held in Georgia, and July 4th celebrations. He said DHS was relying on its authority to form the task force from two homeland security directives issued by President Bush. The secretary also said that DHS did not expect to raise the nation's threat level from yellow, elevated.

ANALYSIS:

The formation of the task force is the latest in a series of moves the government, specifically DHS, has done to bolster security in preparation for potential attacks throughout the remainder of the year. On 5 April, DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) issued a joint memo to first responders and law enforcement agencies that warned terrorists could target the nation's mass-transit railway systems this summer. DHS has already established a pilot program to test rail security in Maryland. Ridge said he intends to use the task force as a tool to coordinate between government agencies to help increase security where authorities see vulnerable areas. He specifically mentioned the country's vast chemical facilities, noting the department had identified over 300 chemical sites as potential targets. The two directives Secretary Ridge was most likely referring to are Homeland Security Presidential Directive-7 (HSPD-7) and HSPD-8. The former established a national policy for Federal departments and agencies to identify and prioritize United States critical infrastructure and key resources and to protect them from terrorist attacks while HSPD-8 established policies to strengthen the preparedness of the United States to prevent and respond to threatened or actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies by requiring a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal, establishing mechanisms for improved delivery of Federal preparedness assistance to State and local governments, and outlining actions to strengthen preparedness capabilities of Federal, State, and local entities. The latter directive is a companion to HSPD-5, which identified steps for improved coordination in incident response. President Bush also issued a directive early February that was meant to devise a national plan "to defend the agriculture and food system against terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies."

Related reporting:

Ridge forms new terrorism task force

http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2004-04-19-ridge-new-force_x.htm

Key U.S. political dates seen as potential terrorism targets

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/news/politics/8470662.htm>

www.terror.net

How modern terrorism uses the Internet



The great virtues of the Internet—ease of access, lack of regulation, vast potential audiences, and fast flow of information, among others—have been turned to the advantage of groups committed to terrorizing societies to achieve their goals. Today, all active terrorist groups have established their presence on the Internet. Our scan of the Internet in 2003–4 revealed hundreds of websites serving terrorists and their supporters. Terrorism on the Internet is a very dynamic phenomenon: websites suddenly emerge, frequently modify their formats, and then swiftly disappear—or, in many cases, seem to disappear by changing their online address but retaining much the same content. Terrorist

websites target three different audiences: current and potential supporters; international public opinion; and enemy publics. The mass media, policymakers, and even security agencies have tended to focus on the exaggerated threat of cyberterrorism and paid insufficient attention to the more routine uses made of the Internet. Those uses are numerous and, from the terrorists' perspective, invaluable. There are eight different ways in which contemporary terrorists use the Internet, ranging from psychological warfare and propaganda to highly instrumental uses such as fundraising, recruitment, data mining, and coordination of actions.

Full report: <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr116.html>

Al Qaeda goes regional: Basra, Riyadh bomb blasts coordinated with thwarted chemical strike in Amman



For the first time since the September 11 attacks in the United States, Osama bin Laden's network is operating on a regional scale. Its original plot included Amman and the Adam border crossing from Jordan into Israel and the West Bank. These two targets were singled out for al Qaeda's first chemical attack, which Jordanian security authorities foiled earlier this month when they intercepted one of the pickups loaded with explosives and poison gas containers after it crossed in from Syria. That capture led to more team members being apprehended.

Full story: <http://www.debka.com/article.php?aid=832>

Related reporting:

Jordan chemical bomb plot foiled

<http://www.canada.com/calgary/calgaryherald/news/story.html?id=7affbb32-dd4c-45c2-88a3-81a1f2b4a7df>

King Abdullah: Al-Qaida WMDs Came From Syria

<http://www.newsmax.com/archives/ic/2004/4/17/141224.shtml>

Terrorist threat center to lead intelligence analysis, collection efforts

The Bush administration on Tuesday announced that a new intelligence analysis center has expanded its mission to improve communications among intelligence agencies. The one-year-old Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC) is now the lead government entity responsible for analyzing intelligence related to international terrorism and tasked with collecting and analyzing terrorism-related intelligence by other agencies, including the CIA, FBI and Homeland Security Department.

Full story: <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/042004tdpm2.htm>

TSA plans rail security pilot program

The Transportation Security Administration will launch a pilot program in May to test technologies that could be used to screen passengers and baggage within the rail and commuter train industry. The pilot marks the first time TSA and the rail transit industry have teamed to examine how passenger and baggage screening activities that have become commonplace at the nation's airports might be applied at train stations.

Full story: <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/041904c1.htm>

U.S. turns critical eye to railway security

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Thursday's railway explosion in North Korea and the terrorist attacks in Madrid last month have officials turning a critical eye to safety and security on the U.S. rail network. Are the rails truly safe to ride? Each year, there are about 2 million hazardous material rail shipments in the U.S., according to the Federal Railroad Administration. Each of these shipments could kill thousands of U.S. residents if there were an accident or a terrorist attack. "Ten bombs in Madrid killed a total of 200 people," said Fred Millar, a transportation consultant. "Just one chlorine tanker car, if released over a crowded event, can produce a cloud that will kill 100,000 people in an hour."

Full story: <http://www.investors.com/breakingnews.asp?journalid=20863484&brk=1>

Islamic Terrorists Linked to Italy Mafia Group

Italian investigators have found a link between Islamic terrorist groups and the Camorra, one of Italy's main organized crime groups, a top anti-Mafia investigator said Monday. "We have evidence that groups of the Camorra are implicated in an exchange of weapons for drugs with terrorist groups," Pierluigi Vigna, Italy's national anti-mafia prosecutor, told reporters at the foreign press club. Vigna, whose Rome-based office coordinates the work of magistrates investigating organized crime in Italy, said he could not give more details. Pressed further, he suggested the cooperation came about after a member of the Camorra, the Naples-area version of the Sicilian Mafia, converted to Islam and met in prison with Muslims who had been arrested in Italy. Asked what kind of terrorist groups, he said: "Islamic terrorist groups."

Full story: <http://www.reuters.com/newsArticle.jhtml?type=worldNews&storyID=4868958>

Terrorism conference warns big targets aren't only targets

What if a terrorist were to attack your community? That's the question an expert in counterterrorism posed Monday to a group of about 50 law enforcement officers during a Counter-Terrorism Conference sponsored by Gibbs College of New Jersey at the North Maple Inn. The conference featured counterterrorism experts from around the world. Urging them to "put on their black hats," Saulius Puzikas, an international security consultant who began his career in the Soviet Special Forces, challenged the law enforcement officers not to think in terms of nightmare scenarios -- such as sabotage of a nuclear power plant -- but in terms of terrorist strikes that could be carried out with limited training, human resources and finances. Stating that large-scale facilities are no longer easy targets because they are so well-protected,

Puzikas sketched out a frightening scenario in which terrorists simultaneously attack 12 or 15 "soft" targets, such as schools, hospitals, senior citizens centers, shopping centers, restaurants and churches in towns or small cities throughout the country.

Full story: <http://www.c-n.com/news/c-n/story/0,2111,947979,00.html>

FBI still fears threat from crop-dusters

The FBI has questioned more than 3,000 pilots and aircraft owners, most of them in the past year, amid persistent concerns that terrorists might use crop-dusting planes to mount a biological or chemical attack, newly released documents show. The interviews have not produced any arrests, according to a senior law enforcement official who spoke on condition of anonymity, but have resulted in terrorism investigations that are still under way. The effort, outlined in documents submitted to the commission investigating the Sept. 11 attacks, is more extensive than previously disclosed and underscores how seriously the threat is viewed by U.S. authorities. The level of overall terrorist threats against the United States remains extremely high, Attorney General John Ashcroft told reporters Thursday. He echoed the assessments of other top Bush administration officials that the summer months present a number of opportunities for attacks, ranging from the Olympics in Greece to the presidential nominating conventions in Boston and New York. "There is without a doubt in my mind a very serious level of activity in terrorism which concerns me greatly," Ashcroft said at the Justice Department.

Full story: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4808551/>

Tanker terror: Gulf's oil routes under threat

As extremists widen war against US, analysts fear maritime interests could be targeted. Chokepoints such as the Straits of Malacca, the Suez Canal and the Bab el-Mandeb Straits are high-risk zones for terrorist strikes

There are growing concerns that the global energy industry, particularly in the Middle East, could become the focus of terrorist attacks. Osama bin Laden has identified energy facilities as targets in his war against the West. In the second and concluding article on this issue, The Daily Star examines the dangers at sea. Admiral Thomas Fargo, the top US military commander in the Asia-Pacific region, said last month that the Americans were considering deploying Marines and Special Forces troops on high-speed vessels to protect the strategic Straits of Malacca, which links the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The fastest route around the southernmost tip of continental Asia, it is a vital energy artery from the Middle East to Asia.

Full story: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=3&article_id=2597

Oil Terminals Targeted

Suicide attackers detonated three explosives-laden speedboats near Iraqi oil terminals about 100 miles off the coast of Um Qasr, killing two U.S. sailors who were attempting to board their boats and wounding at least five others. Coalition spokesmen said neither the Al-Basra nor the Khor Al-Amaya terminals sustained any damage in the blasts, which marked the first sea-borne attacks on coalition troops or Iraqi oil facilities since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq began last March. Iraqi authorities evacuated the Al-Basra terminal due to power cuts and fears of further attacks, saying operations will not resume until at least April 26. Around 1.5 million barrels of oil are exported from the vital terminals daily - out of the roughly 2 million barrels of daily exports from Iraq. Coalition officials said they have yet to determine if the attack was launched from Iraq, Iran or perhaps Kuwait. Insurgents have attacked onshore oil facilities and pipelines hundreds of times over the past year, costing Iraq millions of dollars in leakages and export disruptions.

ANALYSIS:

Several factors suggest foreign Islamic militants might have played a role in planning, if not executing, the latest attacks. Al-Qaeda linked terrorists have carried out two sea-borne bomb attacks and attempted at least one other elsewhere in the region in the past four years. Western intelligence agencies claim Al-Qaeda militants crashed an explosives-packed speedboat into the USS Cole off the coast of Aden in 2000, killing 17 U.S. sailors. Al-Qaeda is also blamed for a thwarted plot to bomb U.S. and U.K. military ships in the Straits of Gibraltar in June 2002 and the bombing of a French oil tanker off the coast of Yemen in

October 2002. Furthermore, Al-Qaeda spokesmen have repeatedly threatened to target Arab oil interests in an effort to harm regional governments and disrupt the global economy.

Italian police seize shipment of weapons headed to Georgia company

Authorities in southern Italy seized about 7,500 Kalashnikov assault rifles and other combat-grade firearms from a ship headed for New York, officials said Tuesday. The weapons - AK-47s, AKM rifles and machine guns worth more than \$6 million - were found mixed in with properly labeled guns in cargo containers on board a Turkish-flagged ship that docked at the port of Gioia Tauro, a police official said.

Full story: <http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/mld/ledgerenquirer/news/politics/8483597.htm>

Global terror sweep foils several attacks

From Amman to Stockholm, police and intelligence agents have in recent weeks foiled attacks plotted by al-Qaida and other terrorist groups against targets around the world: U.S. embassies in the Middle East and Asia. American forces in Iraq. Shopping malls in Manila. And, possibly, a soccer stadium in Manchester. The global sweep shows that anti-terror cooperation is spreading, and pressure increasing against Islamic extremists after the March 11 bombings in Madrid.

Full story: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,1280,-4013591,00.html>

Hamas and Hizballah connection attracts negative attention

In a heated April 21 discussions with Foreign Minister Jean Obeid, U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Vincent Battle urged the Lebanese government not to allow Hamas Politburo chief Khaled Mashaal to visit Lebanon or meet with Hizballah officials. The message is but the latest U.S. warning that such activities could harm Lebanon in the future. Reports of the meeting were followed by an April 24 report in *Al-Jazeera* that Mossad (Israeli intelligence) agents had arrived in Lebanon in recent days to attempt to assassinate Mashaal and senior Hizballah leaders.

ANALYSIS:

The Israeli government has repeatedly warned that Hamas and Hizballah are increasing their level of cooperation and that the issue is becoming a growing concern for Israel. Therefore Israel reserves the right to take action to stop these activities. This is an indication that Israel may take direct action against Hizballah positions in Lebanon if the activity continues. Israeli officials have also said that they will carry a targeted assassination of Mashaal if the opportunity presents itself. Such an operation will be easier to undertake in Lebanon as opposed to Syria or Jordan. In light of this, the U.S. warning to Lebanon should be seen as a sign that Israel is sending Lebanon a message that it is rapidly approaching the point at which an Israeli military operation against Hizballah is likely unless the government steps in and stops the Hamas-Hizballah cooperation. As Lebanon can ill afford an Israeli attack on its territory at this time - something that will undermine the perception of Lebanon as a stable country - Israel hopes that the Lebanese government will heed the warning and stop such cooperations.

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