



Office of Intelligence and Analysis

**Homeland
Security**

**Federal Bureau
of Investigation**



Joint Homeland Security Assessment

(U//FOUO) Al-Qa'ida Media Campaign and Overseas Activities Sustain Heightened Threat to Homeland

28 September 2007

(U//FOUO) Prepared by DHS/Critical Infrastructure Threat Analysis Division and the FBI/Threat Analysis Unit.

(U) Key Findings

(U//FOUO) DHS and the FBI assess that al-Qa'ida and affiliated terrorist organizations continue to pose a heightened threat to the Homeland and U.S. interests abroad. The group's intent and operations remain focused on attacking key government, economic, and infrastructure targets, with the goal of inflicting mass casualties, costly economic damage, and fear throughout the U.S. population.

(U//FOUO) The recent unprecedented increase in al-Qa'ida media releases promising future attacks highlights the group's continuing determination to carry out strikes and to inspire a wider range of smaller Islamic extremist groups to plot and conduct attacks locally.

(U//FOUO) DHS and the FBI lack information indicating specific, near-term threats to the Homeland, and al-Qa'ida faces significant operational challenges in a heightened security environment. Nonetheless, DHS and the FBI assess that al-Qa'ida continues to plot against the United States. Even absent plotting on its own the group is at minimum trying to inspire adherence of their violent Islamic extremist ideology to conduct independent operations. As such, DHS and the FBI stress the need for continued vigilance on the part of U.S. authorities and the strengthening of security efforts to protect the Homeland.

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(U) Al-Qa'ida Threat Remains Serious

(U//FOUO) DHS and the FBI have no credible information regarding a specific, near-term threat of a terrorist attack against the Homeland. The Intelligence Community's judgments in the July 2007 National Intelligence Estimate, "Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland," coupled with continued evidence of terrorist plotting in the Homeland, Europe, and elsewhere, however, underscore the point that the al-Qa'ida network is and will remain the most serious terrorist threat to the Homeland and its interests abroad.

- (U//FOUO) This year's attacks in Algeria, Britain, India, and Pakistan; disrupted plots in September 2007 in Denmark and Germany; and the marked increase in recent weeks in al-Qa'ida media releases promising future attacks highlight al-Qa'ida's enduring intent to attack the United States and its allies.
- (U//FOUO) Arrests in the disrupted plots in Denmark and Germany likely had only minimal impact on the number and availability of terrorist operatives directed by al-Qa'ida or those who subscribe to its jihadist ideology.

(U//FOUO) Al-Qa'ida senior planners stress the importance of dramatic, high-impact attacks, which likely will require many participants and conspirators, lengthy planning, and extensive resources. This preference complicates al-Qa'ida's attack planning because it would require operations in the Homeland's non-permissive security environment.

(U//FOUO) Analysis of overseas attacks and foiled plots demonstrates that al-Qa'ida operatives are proficient in the use of conventional small arms and the manufacture and employment of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Operatives working in small groups have employed these less sophisticated attack methods—which require relatively little planning or rehearsal—and may be able to conduct such attacks despite security precautions.

(U//FOUO) Terrorists continue to demonstrate creativity and innovation in developing and employing new capabilities and tactics to overcome the enhanced security measures instituted in the Homeland and other countries since 2001. These include using insiders to gain access to targets, breaching or softening perimeter defenses through multi-stage attacks, and devising new deceptive measures in deploying IEDs. Al-Qa'ida's post-2001 practice of "franchising" or "inspiring," as opposed to directly controlling, terrorist operations has fueled local initiatives by smaller terrorist groups in planning attacks and in acquiring weapons, while minimizing risks of running afoul of tightened security controls in the Homeland and at international borders.

(U//FOUO) No major terrorist attacks have occurred in the Homeland since 2001, or in a Western nation since 2005, but a host of reporting indicates al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and inspired groups are patiently planning and waiting for optimal circumstances that will improve the chances of a successful high-impact attack against the West. Their intent

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and continued efforts to acquire the requisite attack capabilities pose a sustained threat environment that mandates continued vigilance on the part of U.S. authorities.

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