“Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government. Today, that task has changed dramatically. Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us.”

President George W. Bush, 2002 National Security Strategy

**Terrorism**

**Smuggling across the Somalia-Kenya Border**

With the help of French, German, and British spy planes, the U.S. military is increasing its efforts to control the smuggling of drugs, people, and even missiles across the elusive Kenya-Somalia borders, but the job is proving very difficult. The region falls in the middle of a 2,000-mile arc stretching from Pakistan to Mozambique, which has been in use by travelers and traders, mostly via small sailing boats, for centuries. Border patrol officers in Kenya often lack the munitions to deter smugglers coming from Somalia and prefer to take bribes to let them through. To further complicate the difficult task of foreign intervention, much of the coastline is inhabited by tight-knit Muslim communities that adhere to tribal links and are unwilling to trust foreigners.

Missiles fired in December at an Israeli passenger jet in Mombassa, and a bomb in a hotel responsible for 16 deaths, are thought to have been smuggled from Somalia, possibly by a group traveling by boat. A possible suspect is Al-Itihaad, a Somali group many believe has ties to Al Qaeda and whose goal is to establish an Islamic state in Somalia. The United States is also keeping its eye on the Somalia Islamic Fundamentalist group Akhwan, which controls southern Somali territories and is believed also to have ties to Al Qaeda. In the Somali capital of Mogadishu, where hundreds of civilians were killed in an American attempt to capture a Somali warlord, support for bin Laden abounds. The president of Somalia’s transitional and very weak government claims, however, that “there are no terrorist groups in Somalia. We have invited America to come and look for itself.” (Jerusalem Post / New York Times)

**Remotely Detonated Car Bombs in Colombia**

Colombian rebels have started using new technologies to detonate bombs via remote control, a technique they most likely learned through contacts with terrorist organizations such as the Irish Republican Army or Spain’s ETA. Prompted by a car bomb explosion in a grocery store parking lot that injured 65 people in December, police investigations turned up plots by FARC members to detonate remote control cars containing 300 kg of dynamite. Five such cars intended to attack police, military, and civilian targets were discovered by police in the capital before they could be used. (Combined dispatches)

**South Africa’s Terrorist Haven**

In the aftermath of September 11, numerous Al Qaeda cells in Europe and the United States are believed to have been disrupted, leaving the organization on the lookout for new areas to establish themselves. South Africa may be an ideal place for Al Qaeda to take root and regroup owing to its radical Muslim community, overstretched law enforcement, and excellent communications, says Gideon Jones, the head of the...
Criminal Intelligence Unit of the South African Police Service. South Africa is also rich in commodities like diamonds and gold, and its good economic infrastructure, accessible transportation, broad civil liberties, and location easily accessible to the Middle East make it an ideal foundation for money laundering, smuggling of commodities and cash, and recruitment for terrorist groups. There is evidence that Hamas has been active in South Africa since 1992; Hezbollah paramilitary members were trained there in 1999, and in 1997 Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzi visited to preach Al Qaeda’s pro-Taliban, anti-American message. In 2001, Mohamed Suleman Vaid and his wife were caught smuggling 1.2 million rand to a contact in Mozambique believed to be connected with Islamic extremists in Africa and the Middle East. Vaid, who was carrying the money in his underwear, was stopped by chance when a policeman noticed him “walking awkwardly.” (Wall Street Journal)

**Dutch Arrest Mullah Krekar**

The arrest of Iraqi Kurd Mullah Krekar in Amsterdam is an indication of the world’s growing cooperative efforts in America’s war against terrorism. Mullah Krekar was arrested as he arrived via airliner to join his wife and children, who have refugee status in the Netherlands. Krekar, the leader of the 500-member Ansar Al-Islam group of Islamic militants that is based in Northern Iraq and appears on Washington’s list of terrorist organizations, is thought by some to have ties with Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, but not everyone is convinced.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, a long-time enemy of Ansar and of Saddam, is the primary source of information linking them together in a network of chemical weapons, explosives, and vehicle exchange. Saddam’s son Uday has of course denied the connection. Other theories have emerged to explain the source of financial support; Islamic charities in Norway, the narcotics trade, and the Iranian government. The latter speculation is of particular interest, as it was Iran that turned Krekar in.

In April, Ansar made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Barham Salih, the prime minister of the eastern sector of Iraqi Kurdistan, killing five bodyguards. The United States is also looking for further information on Abu Wael, an Ansar senior member whose ties with bin Laden and Hussein are again unclear. Although Krekar was trained in Pakistan with an early mentor of bin Laden and members of Ansar were trained in Afghanistan in the 1990s, Krekar denies current ties with Osama, saying, “I did not see it as right or just to be connected to other places, or to be active outside Kurdistan.” To his friends, he is a religious teacher, to his enemies a terrorist leader, leaving us to wonder who Krekar is. (Straits Times / Los Angeles Times)

**South America Receives Aid of $1 Million for Counterterrorism Financial Monitoring**

Through a $1 million counterterrorism assistance program, the Bush administration is helping the tri-border area of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay to track and eliminate funding being funneled to the Lebanon-based Hezbollah and Palestinian Hamas terrorist groups. The affluent South American region, which has long been known for its contraband and smuggling activity, is home to 20,000 immigrants from the Middle East. Although most of these immigrants have no affiliation with terrorist organizations, groups exist that gather contributions for legitimate humanitarian purposes, and some divert funds to the Middle East. The assistance program would allow South American officials to train officers to monitor financial transfers of these groups, to guard against their being used to aid terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas. (Combined dispatches)

**Maritime Surveillance Increases**

Intelligence officials who captured Al Qaeda nautical strategist Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri last month also identified 15 coastal vessels believed to be controlled by Al Qaeda’s terrorist network and used to transport operatives, bombs, money, or commodities. The CIA has increasingly targeted Al Qaeda’s maritime activities. Since Sept 11, 2001, the United States has increased its surveillance of cargo, ships and seamen, using satellites, surveillance planes, and the cooperation of navies and customs officers worldwide. Though for years Al Qaeda has used ships to transport harmless goods such as cement and sesame seeds, the increase in maritime
attacks since the suicide bombing of the USS Cole off the coast of Yemen in 2000 put U.S. officials on the alert for suspicious maritime activity. The U.S. Navy and Coast Guard are working to reorganize corporate papers for the world’s 120,000 merchant ships and collect information on thousands of seamen around the world. (Sydney Morning Herald)

Malaysia, the Birthplace of JI?

Despite the Malaysian government’s desire to downplay their connection to Jemaah Islamiah (JI), the ICG reports that JI, “the Southeast Asian link of Al-Qaeda,” was actually started in Malaysia.

In a speech at the United Nations University of Tokyo, Prime Minister of Malaysia Mohamad Mahathir reported that he recognized the link between Al Qaeda and a small radical Malaysian group that has been identified and apprehended. Mahathir claims the Malaysian group had been trained by Afghans to fight against the Soviets and were later urged to return to their own country with the intent to overthrow the government if they deemed it too moderately Islamic. This may be an understatement, according to the International Crisis Group’s report, “How the Jemaah Islamiah Terrorist Group Operates,” which reports that JI was formed in Malaysia in 1995 by Bashir, a Muslim who was living there in exile and who is now under arrest in Indonesia. (Asia Times)

Money Laundering

Laundering Money through Insurance Companies

Five Colombian men were arrested after a two-year investigation for laundering more than $80 million through an insurance scheme. Using illegal drug profits, the men bought life insurance policies that they cashed in prematurely, often at a penalty of up to 25 percent, but that provided them with legitimate funds. Indicating the growing need for the public and private sector to work in tandem to increase security, the U.S. Treasury Department is requiring insurance companies to set up anti-laundering programs and inform the government of any suspicious activity. (Agence France Presse)

Diamond Trade and Al Qaeda

A European investigation has found evidence that President Charles Taylor of Liberia and President Blaise Campaore of Burkina Faso harbored Al Qaeda operatives while they cornered the West African diamond market in a $20 million dollar buying extravaganza. Al Qaeda began the plan to bury assets in commodities six weeks after the bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998, in response to the U.S. move to freeze $240 million of Taliban assets. Al Qaeda also invested in tanzanite and established charity networks to fortify its financial structure. Suspicion arose when Ibrahim Bah, who made arrangements in Liberia for Al Qaeda officer Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, approached the diamond-trading agency ASA Diam, enticing it into $14 million worth of sales in 2000 after the company had lain dormant for two years. By the middle of the following year, Al Qaeda buyers, intent on hiding their assets rather than making a profit, were paying 15 percent to 30 percent above the going rate for stones, cornering the Sierra Leonian and Liberian markets, which produce some of the world’s best stones, and leaving local merchants unable to buy. Suspicions were raised again when the diamonds did not arrive in Antwerp to be cut and polished. Aziz Nassour, an associate of ASA Diam who worked with Bah and Abdullah in the diamond-buying plot, now lives in Beirut and was also allegedly involved in smuggling activities, while his cousin Samih Osailly was arrested in Belgium for diamond smuggling and selling illegal weapons. (Washington Post)

Organized Crime

Kaliningrad

Kaliningrad, Russia’s most active hub of organized crime may cater to an even greater market after 2004 when the neighboring countries of Poland and Lithuania are scheduled to enter the European Union. The increased security and more stringent regulations will be in stark comparison to Kaliningrad’s low salaries and poor infrastructure. Kaliningrad’s position as an island within Europe is Russia’s furthest western territory, which makes it an ideal location for bringing stolen cars from the rest of Europe into Russia, where stolen Audis, BMW’s and Mercedes are sold for a fifth of the market
price. It is estimated that up to 600,000 cars are in Russia, most unrecognizably illegitimate because of the incredible maze of theft, document forgery, and bribery. Russian goods such as sugar, vodka, and cigarettes are smuggled out of the country, where a few sales on the black market can earn the equivalent of a month’s salary in Russia. (Guardian Weekly)

Drug Trafficking

Jamaican Drug Mules Pack British Prisons

Female Jamaican drug smugglers account for more than 10 percent of convicted women held in UK’s jails, indicating the growing exploitation of women as mules in the drug trade. The women, many of whom are poor, single mothers, are often forced to carry the drugs and are promised large rewards for cooperating. The women transport potentially lethal amounts of drugs wrapped in swallowed cellophane or condoms. It is estimated that 1 in 10 passengers on Jamaican flights are carrying narcotics. The usage of scanners to detect drug particles in the body, a technique recently implemented in Jamaica, has increased the identification of potential drug smugglers twelve-fold, but remains costly. (Sunday Times, London)

U.S. Heroin Use Increases with Growth in Colombian Narcotics Trade

Heroin users in the United States have increased to 1 million, up from 630,000 in 1992, according to Rogelio E. Guevara, chief of operations of the DEA. Between 14 tons and 19 tons of heroin are consumed in the United States each year. East of the Mississippi, most heroin comes from Colombia, a country that has long been a supplier of cocaine, but has only recently seized the heroin market in the United States from Asia, which once dominated the market. Colombian heroin, which is also more potent than other varieties, causes increased likelihood of overdose and makes heroin the most cited drug in emergency room cases. It can also be inhaled, making it more popular among drug users who prefer not to inject.

The increase in Colombian heroin also highlights the continuing and devastating problematic relationship between a terrorist organization and drug traffickers,