

“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*

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Terrorism

Threat of Homegrown Terrorists to Europe

Europe increasingly faces a dual challenge of identifying and understanding the new terrorist profile on the continent, as well as coping with terrorist threats from various sources. Increasingly, Europe’s main focus is the second and third generation of European Muslims, while an external terrorist threat also remains significant. European counterterrorism officials are looking more closely at the complex process of radicalization that is seen as part of the emerging terrorist threat.

The Dutch intelligence service, AIVD, reported in March that “combating terrorism starts with countering the radicalization processes. Preventing, isolating or curbing radicalization are important means to combat terrorism now and in the future. Traditional counterterrorism without a focus on radicalization processes and prevention will prove to be less effective in the long run.”

Counterterrorism officials across the continent share a common view that the skills of Islamists in various corners of Europe have lessened the dependence of

homegrown cells on groups from abroad. Moreover, the Madrid train bombings on March 11, 2004, showed that terrorist operations can be inexpensive: the terrorists used “petty crime, credit card fraud and hashish dealing” to raise about 10,000 British pounds for the attack. The terrorists were not trained abroad nor did they have links with any of the Al Qaeda camps.

According to Siebrand von Hulst, director of AIVD, young Islamists generally seem to be radicalized on their own with the Internet providing the stimulus for them. The Netherlands itself faces real threats from a number of networks present in the country: it is believed that there are about 1,000 young Muslim extremists in the Netherlands. Reportedly, a member of a terror organization called the Hofstad group, who murdered the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in November 2004, had links with extremist groups in Switzerland, Morocco, and Spain.

According to a UK security official, who spoke last August of the radicalization of Pakistani Muslims in the country, “It is not a threat that we have imported. . . . They [Islamists in Britain] are young, British, educated and the sort of people that years of policy have been intended to try to bring into the fold. They are part of a new generation that has emerged since September 11.” (*Combined dispatches*)

Al Qaeda’s Africa Card: Nigeria

A recent UN investigation revealed that Al Qaeda is expanding its training and recruiting bases in Nigeria. Author Douglas Farah, who documented Al Qaeda’s growing influence in Africa, suggests the continent’s appeal to terrorists resulted from a shift of Western

attention and resources elsewhere and lawlessness that attracts subversive forces. “The U.S. intelligence involvement in West Africa, particularly after the collapse of the Cold War, was minimal.... The sub-Saharan African bureaus of the CIA were cut to the bone. So you are talking about a huge cut in our ability to monitor these areas of the world.... This is one of the reasons why U.S. intelligence failed to anticipate the stunning spread of radical Islam across Africa,” said Farah. According to Paul Marshall, a human rights activist, the Saudi-funded Wahhabi branch of Islam is fortifying Islamist radicalism in Nigeria.

Nigeria appears to be a good venue for terrorists to expand their activities. Princeton Lyman, former U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, stated that Nigeria attracts terrorists for three main reasons. First, it is the most densely populated country with over 60 million Muslims; second, Nigerian Muslims maintain a long history of tension with Nigerian Christians; and third, it is one of Africa’s main oil producing countries, making it one of the top sources of oil for the United States. “Twenty percent of the new oil coming on the market over the next decade is going to come from West Africa, and U.S. companies alone are going to be investing about \$50 billion up and down West Africa. Nigeria is a major part of that,” says Lyman.

Over the past year, Al Qaeda–related groups attacked several oil-rich countries, including Nigeria. CIA director Porter Goss has expressed concern over the growing number of Nigerian Muslims joining the ranks of radical Islamists.

The U.S. Department of Defense has begun putting more resources into intelligence gathering in Africa. The United States has also initiated several military training missions in countries with high terrorism potential. General Charles Wald, who is in charge of the U.S. military’s European Command (which covers most of Africa), said: “We are developing information sharing...and we are helping train those countries to do a better job of actually policing their borders.” (*Combined dispatches*)

... Mauritania

The Mauritanian police reported that Al Qaeda has been giving large amounts of money to mosques and

religious teachers in Mauritania to spread its network message among the youth. According to the police commission spokesman, Yahsdou Ould Amar, young Mauritians are recruited by a “criminal organization ... which has sacrificed them on the front lines of other wars, notably in Iraq and Afghanistan.” A recent attack, “on a police station in Aioun and the theft of a vehicle belonging to the Christian charity WorldVision,” were allegedly committed by Al Qaeda and are “a taste of future operations planned for Mauritania,” according to Ould Amar.

Mauritania also faces a challenge from other fundamentalist groups. Seven Islamist radicals were charged on May 9 for trying to create a branch of the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which has connections with Al Qaeda. A number of Islamist militants were detained in April, while Mauritania’s Islamist movement claimed “it is strictly non-violent and favors democratic pluralism.”

The International Crisis Group claims in a recent report that President Maaouiya Ould Taya has manipulated the terrorist threat in order to crack down on his political opponents. Some political figures, who were imprisoned and released after being charged for a failed coup in June 2004, are included on a list of some 70 people that police have been told to arrest. (*Combined dispatches*)

... and Somalia

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia told the Associated Press that it was common knowledge that an Al Qaeda terror cell has been present in Mogadishu, Somalia’s capital, citing lawlessness, lack of central government, dire poverty, and social dislocation for swarming terrorists present in the country. Zenawi said, “we have a very active terrorist cell in Mogadishu, which has been involved in terrorist activities in Kenya.”

Security agents believe that a recent suicide bombing attempt on Prime Minister Mohamed Ali Gedi of Somalia, resulting in 8 deaths and 28 injuries, is linked to two terror groups—al-Ittihad al-Islam and al-Takfir W’al Hijra—affiliated with Al Qaeda and its close ally in Iraq, Musab al Zarqawi. Reportedly, Zarqawi began setting up new terror cells in Somalia and Kenya, where al-Ittihad al-Islam and al-Takfir W’al Hijra are alleged to maintain their operational bases. Gedi played down the incident,

claiming that the “blast was purely accidental” and that he was not the target. The FBI, CIA, and Kenya’s National Security Intelligence Service (NSIS) are currently investigating the incident and the possible involvement of the two terror gangs in it.

Somalia lost its central government after the overthrow of Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. Since, the country has degenerated into clan-based warfare, wreaking havoc among the country’s 7 million people. About 10,500 armed rebels operate in Mogadishu.

The UN Counter Terrorism Committee’s Executive Directorate visited Kenya to assess the country’s ability to combat terrorism, and it is reported that the operatives of al-Ittihad al-Islam and al-Takfir W’al Hijra created havens along the Kenyan coastal strip and northeastern province. In Somalia, terror cells are reportedly based in Kismayu, Puntland, Bossassu, and Mogadishu, whereas in Ethiopia they are present in Ogadiena and Gedo. (*Combined dispatches*)

Yemen Prosecutes Group Linked to Al Qaeda

On May 9, eight members of an organization called “General Organization of Unification Battalions” with ties to Al Qaeda were brought before a Sanaa security court by Yemeni authorities for orchestrating attacks on the United States and European Union, as well as Western interests in Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

The targets, which included military bases in Tabok and Taif in Saudi Arabia, restaurants and banks visited by foreigners, schools, fast food chains, and several companies, were documented in intercepted plans, maps, and drawings. According to the prosecutors in Yemen, the suspects also planned to strike British and Italian embassies, an American institute, a French cultural center, as well as assassinate senior Yemeni officials. Attacks were to be carried out by rocket-propelled grenades and surface-to-air missiles acquired from a Saudi military supply to which the suspects maintained access.

Six of the defendants were arrested in Saudi Arabia and two in Syria and were extradited to the Yemen for trial. (*Combined dispatches*)

Drug Trafficking

Australian Police Break Up Major Drug Ring

Police in Sydney are convinced that they have dismantled a big drug-smuggling group after arresting 11 people and raiding 15 homes across the city on May 9. One of the detainees was a 50-year-old former policeman. According to agent Mike Phelan from the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the syndicate planned to transport cocaine in suitcases from South America to Australia.

Police believe that Sydney Airport luggage handlers were “very willing participants” in the syndicate’s smuggling of cocaine worth U.S.\$11.5 million (9 million). It is not yet clear whether any of the detainees were baggage handlers. In addition, the former head of operations for the AFP’s internal investigations, Ray Cooper, claims that several state and federal policemen had a history of collusion with the smugglers. The AFP itself was blamed for failing to accurately investigate alleged drug smuggling at local airports since serving officers involved in these crimes became known.

Phelan said, “it is not so much the amount of 20 or 30 kilos [that were seized during the raids], it is the actual syndicate itself and their propensity to be able to bring in large amounts of narcotics over an extended period of time. So we are very confident that through the results of the joint investigation between the AFP, the New South Wales police and indeed the crime commission, we have actually been able to close down the syndicate.” (*Combined dispatches*)

Iraq Main Transit Route for Afghan Narcotics

The UN International Drug Control Organization announced on May 12 that Iraq has turned into a major route for Afghan drugs that enter the country from Iran bound for Europe. Jordanian authorities complained that the narcotics problem increased over the last year with the growth in the seizure of drugs and drug production materials on the border with Iraq. Commenting on Iraq’s growing narcotics predicament, the country’s interior minister, Nouri Badran, noted that there has been a noticeable rise in drug abuse among youths. Meanwhile, the Afghan government warned that the drug problem in the country may soon reach a point where it threatens the very existence of the country.

The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) stressed that intense insurgent activity and widely uncontrolled borders made Iraq a perfect channel for drug trafficking. INCB president Hamid Ghodse emphasized that traffickers work together with terrorists and insurgents, aggravating the conditions in Iraq. Ghodse noted “drug trafficking groups are said to enter Iraq’s holy cities disguised as pilgrims to go about their business.”

While INCB did not provide specific figures on the quantity of drugs trafficked via Iraq, last month officials confiscated 3 million pills of Captagon (an amphetamine-like medication) on the Iraqi-Jordanian border, as well as large quantities of cannabis resin and chemicals necessary for processing opium into heroin. Ghodse said that although the INCB was not aware of the extent of pre-war drug problems in Iraq, the country was not then “one of the hottest spots.”

Cooperation between the international community and Iraqi leaders, encouraged by the INCB, is necessary before the problem becomes deeply rooted and adds to the instability and crisis in Iraq. (*Combined dispatches*)

Vietnam Cracks Biggest Ever Drug-trafficking Syndicate

Vietnamese authorities arrested 31 of their citizens on May 17 for smuggling over 3,000 cakes of heroin (1 cake weighs 0.35 kilogram) from the country’s bordering regions of Laos and Cambodia. The 60-member syndicate is accused of smuggling heroin and opium across the borders. Local law enforcement authorities began the investigation in June 2003, and they are trying to arrest all other members of the ring. The syndicate sold heroin to wholesale buyers in Ho Chi Minh City, where it was resold to distributors in the city and neighboring provinces.

One of the arrested men, Le Hong Qui, 32, a leader of a transnational drug smuggling syndicate, admitted that he transported 20 cakes of heroin from Laos to Vietnam. Qui fled Laos three years ago where he was wanted for drug trafficking.

On April 29, Vietnamese border guards arrested three suspected drug smugglers and intercepted 300 grams of heroin and drug-related tools, along with guns,

grenades, money, and mobile phones. The country recorded 12,068 drug-related crimes, confiscated 234.4 kilograms of heroin, and arrested 18,260 suspects last year. (*Combined dispatches*)

Guyanese Timber Possible Drug Trafficking Conduit

The United States suspects that drug smugglers are using Guyana’s timber industry to carry out their trafficking. The U.S. government received complaints from business leaders and Guyana’s opposition People’s National Congress party that drug groups increasingly rely on hiding drugs in timber exports. Last year, British law enforcement arrested seven people and seized 260 pounds (120 kilograms) of cocaine hidden in emptied out timber logs from Guyana. Timber constitutes one-fifth of Guyana’s foreign export earnings after sugar, gold, bauxite, and rice.

Drug trafficking through timber exports is now an additional challenge posed to this South American country in its struggle to cope with existing drug problems. Last year, the U.S. State Department announced in its International Narcotics Control Strategy Report for 2003 that Guyana was a “prime target for money laundering and drug trafficking given weak laws, corrupt law enforcement and the continuing political stalemate.” The report noted that the Guyanese government was criticized for failing to cooperate in preventing “the implementation of needed reforms to the Guyana Police Force.”

There have been arrests of drug couriers in airports, many of whom were foreigners, though most have been Guyanese. Reportedly, key drug seizures in 2003 in Great Britain, Trinidad and Tobago, Canada, Ghana, and the United States included narcotics that came from Guyana. (*Combined dispatches*)

Human Smuggling

Traffickers Exploit Slovakian Border

Slovak Republic police uncovered a Slovak-Polish criminal group in the eastern towns of Trebisov and Michalovce and in Dunajska Streda in western Slovakia. The group smuggled immigrants, mostly Chinese nationals, through Ukraine and Slovakia to Western Europe. Police representative Martin Korch stated that

since 2004, the criminals reportedly made about 4.5 million koruna (115,560; U.S.\$145,990) from human trafficking. Police arrested 14 suspects and found money, an illegal weapon, and mobile phones after searching nine homes.

The enlargement of the European Union to include 10 new member countries from Central and Eastern Europe has made Slovakia a magnet for immigrants and asylum seekers who try to use the country as a transit point to Western Europe.

Jurij Lechman, deputy police chief of the largest police checkpoint along the Slovak-Ukrainian border, said “We need help and technology to patrol the borders that run through the countryside. There are 98 kilometers of border between Slovakia and Ukraine. What are we supposed to do? Stand side by side, holding hands?” The EU’s new external border control agency plans to do just that—provide training, manpower, and technology to stop the smuggling.

The EU enlargement to the east also puts a strain on the Slovakian asylum system. Asylum applications in the old EU member states are reported to have fallen by over 20 percent last year, while rising 4 percent in the new member states. Slovakia is one of the countries that is overwhelmed by asylum seekers.

The EU’s Dublin Convention stipulates that “it is the country into which a migrant first enters or claims asylum that must take responsibility for their case, and even if the migrant tries to reach another country, he or she can be sent back to this first point of entry.” This means that many asylum seekers end up coming back to Slovakia from other European countries if their applications are turned down there. With limited resources, Slovakian law enforcement is unable to process all applications and can only deport migrants upon rejection of their petitions, which has not been very successful. Only 130 applicants were expelled last year. (*Combined dispatches*)

Money Laundering

Syria’s Money Laundering Challenge

The United States has been threatening Syria that it will restrict currency to Damascus if it fails to do more

to eradicate money laundering and terrorism. In particular, the United States has been targeting the Commercial Bank of Syria, which is the country’s main holder of U.S. currency, as a “primary money laundering concern.” Stuart Levey, under secretary of the treasury in the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, expressed dismay over Syria’s failure to return over \$250 million of Iraqi assets to the new government in Baghdad.

The director general of the Commercial Bank of Syria, Durayd Dirgham, noted that the bank increased its profits recently, which has been due to “revenues of interests, commissions, transactions of currencies, loans, in addition to increasing the price of currency.” Responding to the accusations of the bank’s involvement in money laundering, Dirgham said they were “unfair, [that] the reasons behind those allegations were not banking and...the persons behind them couldn’t present any proofs.” Seconding his opinion, Finance Minister Mohammed al-Hussein said “there [were] absolutely no accounts for terrorist individuals or organizations in Syria.”

These statements come after President Bashar Assad has initiated new banking laws directed against money laundering and terrorist funding. This initiative establishes a monitoring body, which will be empowered to probe “suspicious assets in complete secrecy.” The new laws will apply to all banks operating in Syria and its free trade zones. Hussein said the new rules are intended to make the Syrian banking system “more transparent and to establish bridges of confidence with its economic and financial partners.” (*Combined dispatches*)

Terrorist Funding

Fund-raising for Terrorists Increasingly Difficult

Testifying before the U.S. House of Representatives on May 4, Stuart Levey, under secretary of the treasury for terrorism and financial intelligence, said that terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and Hamas are finding it more and more challenging to raise and transfer money from one country to another, which has prompted terror networks to move from formal financial systems to cash smuggling. Levey attributed this change to the “Bush administration’s unrelenting efforts” to stem the

financing of terrorist operations.

According to Levey, the United States made some progress with several Middle Eastern countries in addressing money laundering and terror financing issues. Despite some success in reducing terrorist financing, there is more to be done to address the problem. Assets of multiple charities in the United States with ties to Al Qaeda have been frozen and the U.S. State Department has agreed with countries, including Saudi Arabia, to bring some Muslim charities to the UN Security Council for designation as supporters of terrorism. However, charities, as well as informal hawala sectors and cash smugglers, still remain subject to exploitation by rogue elements seeking to raise funds.

Levey pointed out that the newly created Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENA FATF) will serve as an important tool to fight money laundering and terror funding, as it will establish compliance standards for signatory states. The success of MENA FATF, however, will largely depend on each country's individual efforts to address problems domestically. These include passing their own money laundering and terrorist financing laws, setting up financial intelligence units (FIUs), and controlling hawala groups. Most Middle Eastern and North African countries have not taken any of these measures. (*Testimony of Stuart Levey, under secretary, Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, U.S. Department of the Treasury, before the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and the House International Relations Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, May 4, 2005*)

Correction: *TNT Update*, Volume 3, Number 6, April 2005, "Growing Rate of Human Trafficking Worldwide": "At least 10,000 people are held in slavery within the United States, the majority of whom end up in prostitution, domestic servitude and agriculture, according to Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick, an outreach coordinator for Free the Slaves."

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