



Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

Harvard Kennedy School

79 JFK Street

Cambridge, MA 02138

Fax: (617) 495-8963

Email: belfer_center@harvard.edu

Website: <http://belfercenter.org>

Design and Layout Tim Duffy

Copyright 2010 President and Fellows of Harvard College

Printed in the United States of America

AL QAEDA WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION
THREAT: HYPE OR REALITY?

BY ROLF MOWATT-LARSEN

Foreword by Graham Allison



HARVARD Kennedy School
BELFER CENTER for Science and International Affairs

JANUARY 2010

FOREWORD

by Graham Allison

How serious is the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) terrorism? When asked, “What is the single most serious threat to American national security?” President George W. Bush answered: nuclear terrorism. On this issue, President Obama agrees with his predecessor. In his words, “The single most important national security threat we face is nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists.”

The only Secretary of Defense to have served under both Republican and Democratic presidents, Secretary Robert Gates, was asked recently, “What keeps you awake at night?” He responded: “It’s the thought of a terrorist ending up with a weapon of mass destruction, especially nuclear.”

Skeptics, however, abound. They say that WMD terrorism is far beyond the capability, and even the intent of terrorist groups such as al Qaeda. Some claim that the likelihood of a non-state actor acquiring such weapons is virtually zero.

The individual in the U.S. intelligence community who is widely recognized as the leading analyst of WMD terrorism is Rolf Mowatt-Larssen. After more than three decades in public service in CIA operations, and most recently Director of Intelligence and Counterintelligence at the U.S. Department of Energy, he retired in January 2009. Mowatt-Larssen has now compiled a comprehensive chronology that addresses the skeptics head-on, by presenting, in unclassified form, al Qaeda’s roughly 15-year quest to acquire WMD. By assembling the best publically- available evidence in an authoritative, readable account, he offers a must-read advance in our understanding of the threat. This record provides an essential grounding for serious thought about how to combat a defining threat of the 21st Century.

This chronology teaches us four important lessons. First, al Qaeda’s top leadership has demonstrated a sustained commitment to buy, steal or construct WMD. In 1998, Osama bin Laden declared that “acquiring WMD for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty.” In December 2001, bin Laden’s Deputy Ayman Zawahiri stated, “If you have \$30 million, go to the black market in the central Asia, contact any disgruntled Soviet scientist and a lot of dozens of smart briefcase bombs are available.” A few months later, al Qaeda announced its goal to “kill four million Americans.”

Second, al Qaeda was prepared to expend significant resources to cultivate a WMD capability even during the planning phases of 9/11. In the years leading up to September 2001, we see that bin Laden’s organization never lost its focus on WMD, even while

coordinating the 9/11 attacks, orchestrating the simultaneous bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998, and successfully striking the U.S. warship (USS Cole) in 2000.

Third, a clear hallmark of al Qaeda's WMD approach is to pursue parallel paths to procure these deadly materials. Multiple nodes of the network were assigned to different tasks of the overall WMD effort, acting and reporting independently, ensuring that failure in one cell did not jeopardize the entire operation. By taking into account possible operational set-backs and intelligence breaches, al Qaeda has displayed deliberate, shrewd planning to acquire WMD.

Fourth, al Qaeda has taken part in joint development of WMD with other terrorist groups. This collaboration between the most senior members of separate organizations demonstrates that interest in and motivation to possess WMD are not limited to a single group.

Notably, this chronology is merely a snapshot of al Qaeda's long-term hunt for the world's most destructive weapons. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject, understandably much has been omitted. The bottom line, however, is clear: al Qaeda and its network of affiliates have been determined to acquire WMD.

President Obama recently said that al Qaeda remains the greatest threat to the United States. In his words, "If an organization like al Qaeda got a weapon of mass destruction on its hands—a nuclear or a chemical or a biological weapon—and they used it in a city, whether it's in Shanghai or New York, just a few individuals could potentially kill tens of thousands of people, maybe hundreds of thousands." Organizing a coherent strategy to prevent this nightmare from occurring begins with a clear recognition that WMD terrorism is a real and imminent threat.

Several terrorist groups have actively sought weapons of mass destruction (WMD) of one kind or another. In particular, the Japanese cult group Aum Shinrikyo, al Qaeda and its associates—notably the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Jemaah Islamiya and Lashkar al Tayyib—figure most prominently among the groups that have manifested some degree of intent, experimentation, and programmatic efforts to acquire nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. To date, however, al Qaeda is the only group known to be pursuing a long-term, persistent and systematic approach to developing weapons to be used in mass casualty attacks.

Osama bin Ladin's assertion in 1998 that it was his Islamic duty to acquire weapons of mass destruction ensured that the fulfillment of this intent would become a top priority for his lieutenants in the ensuing years. In an effort to explain his thinking to his followers, and to help guide their efforts, the al Qaeda leader has offered a number of statements that provide a need and rationale for using weapons of mass destruction as a means of achieving the group's concrete and ambitious goals. Most recently, he promised in a 2007 video release to “escalate the killing and fighting against you (Americans)”—on grounds of destroying an international conspiracy to control the world—adding, “The capitalist system seeks to turn the entire world into a fiefdom of the major corporations under the label of globalization in order to protect democracy.”

These statements should not be interpreted as empty rhetoric and idle threats: Osama bin Ladin has signaled a specific purpose for using WMD in al Qaeda's quest to destroy the global status quo, and to create conditions more conducive to the overthrow of apostate regimes throughout the Islamic world. His argument is essentially that even weapons of mass destruction—which are outlawed under Islam—are a justifiable means of countering US hegemony. Osama bin Ladin's morality-based argument on the nature of the struggle between militant Islamists and the US-led coalition of secular forces focuses the group's planning on the acquisition of strategic weapons that can be used in mass casualty attacks, rather than on the production of tactical, more readily available weapons such as “dirty bombs,” chemical agents, crude toxins and poisons.

In this light, it is not surprising that the group's top WMD priority has been to acquire nuclear and strategic biological weapons. Considering the potential that such weapons hold in fulfilling al Qaeda's aspirations, their WMD procurement efforts have been managed at the most senior levels, under rules of strict compartmentalization from lower levels of the organization, and with central control over possible targets and timing of prospective attacks. In this sense, their approach has been “Muhammed Atta-like”—similar to the modus operandi Khaled Sheikh Mohammed employed in making preparations for the 9/11 attacks—as opposed to resembling the signature characterizing most terrorist attacks to which the world has become accustomed.

Al Qaeda's patient, decade-long effort to steal or construct an improvised nuclear device (IND)

flows from their perception of the benefits of producing the image of a mushroom cloud rising over a US city, just as the 9/11 attacks have altered the course of history. This lofty aim helps explain why al Qaeda has consistently sought a bomb capable of producing a nuclear yield, as opposed to settling for the more expedient and realistic course of devising a “dirty bomb,” or a radiological dispersal device.

Another 9/11-scale operational plot managed by the al Qaeda core leadership was the development of anthrax for use in a mass casualty attack in the United States. The sophisticated anthrax project was run personally by al Qaeda deputy chief Ayman Zawahiri, in parallel to the group’s efforts to acquire a nuclear capability; anthrax was probably meant to serve as another means to achieve the same effect as using a nuclear bomb, given doubts that a nuclear option could be successfully procured. Notably, al Qaeda’s efforts to acquire a nuclear and biological weapons capability were concentrated in the years preceding September 11, 2001. Based on the timing and nature of their WMD-related activity in the 1990’s, al Qaeda probably anticipated using these means of mass destruction against targets in the US homeland in the intensified campaign they knew would follow the 9/11 attack. There is no indication that the fundamental objectives that lie behind their WMD intent have changed over time.

On the other hand, the pursuit of crude toxins and poisons appears to have been of little interest to the al Qaeda leadership, even though the production of such weapons is easier and thus might seem more attractive for potential use in attacks. Although experimentation and training in crude chemical agents and pathogens was standard fare in al Qaeda’s camps in Afghanistan before 9/11, their use in attacks appears to have been left to the initiative of individual cells and planners outside the direct supervision of the al Qaeda core leadership. Prominent examples of small-scale chemical- and biological- related activity include Midhat al-Mursi’s (aka Abu Khabab) basic training for operatives in the al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan before 9/11; the Abu Musab al Zarqawi network’s plotting to use ricin and cyanide in multiple attacks planned in Europe in late 2002-early 2003; and a Bahraini terrorist cell’s plot to use a crude cyanide gas device called the “mobtaker” (an Arabic word roughly meaning “invention”) in an attack on the New York City subway in the same time frame.

In each of these cases, the evidence suggests that the al Qaeda senior leadership was not directly involved or apparently even aware of attack preparations until late stages of planning. Moreover, there is no evidence that the al Qaeda leadership regarded the use of crude toxins and poisons as being suitable for conducting what would amount to pin prick attacks on the United States; on the contrary, Zawahiri canceled the planned attack on the New York City subway for “something better,” suggesting that a relatively easy attack utilizing tactical weapons would not achieve the goals the al Qaeda leadership had set for themselves.

So, why hasn't a terrorist WMD attack happened since 9/11?

There are many plausible explanations for why the world has not experienced an al Qaeda attack using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons, but it would be foolish to discount the possibility that such an event will occur in the future. To date, al Qaeda's WMD programs may have been disrupted. This is in fact one likely explanation, given a sustained and ferocious counterterrorist response to 9/11 that largely destroyed al Qaeda as the organization that existed before the fateful attack on the US. If so, terrorists must continue to be disrupted and denied a safe haven to reestablish the ability to launch a major strike on the US homeland, or elsewhere in the world.

Or perhaps, al Qaeda operational planners have failed to acquire the kind of weapons they seek, because they are unwilling to settle for anything other than a large scale attack in the US. It would surely be hard for al Qaeda to lower the bar they set on 9/11: what would constitute a worthy follow-up to 9/11, on their terms? What would they achieve through another attack? There are few weapons that would meet their expectations in this regard. It is extremely difficult to acquire a functioning nuclear bomb, or to steal enough weapons usable material to build a bomb. And as al Qaeda probably learned in trying to weaponize anthrax, biological pathogens may seem simple enough to produce, but such weapons are not easy to bottle up and control. To complicate matters further, an attack on the scale of 9/11 is more difficult to accomplish in an environment of heightened security and vigilance in the US.

But if Osama bin Ladin and his lieutenants had been interested in employing crude chemical, biological and radiological materials in small scale attacks, there is little doubt they could have done so by now. However, events have shown that the al Qaeda leadership does not choose weapons based on how easy they are to acquire and use, be they conventional or unconventional weapons. They choose them based on the best means of destroying the specific targets that they have in mind. Al Qaeda's reasoning thus runs counter to analytic convention that equates the ease of acquisition of chemical, biological or radiological weapons with an increasing likelihood of terrorist use—i.e., a terrorist attack employing crude weapons is therefore more likely than an attack using a nuclear or large scale biological weapon. In fact, it is the opposite: If perpetrating a large-scale attack serves as al Qaeda's motivation for possessing WMD, not deterrence value, then the greatest threat is posed by the most effective and simple means of mass destruction, whether these means consist of nuclear, biological, or other forms of asymmetric weapons.

An examination of the 9/11 attack sheds light on al Qaeda's reasoning behind the selection of specific weapons, and how that may apply to the role WMD plays in their thinking. Al Qaeda opted to pursue a highly complex and artfully choreographed plot to strike multiple targets requiring

the simultaneous hijacking of several 747 jumbo passenger aircraft, because using airplanes as weapons offered the best means of attacking the targets they intended to destroy. If conventional wisdom on assessing WMD terrorism threats had been applied to considering the likelihood of the 9/11 plot, analysts may well have concluded it never would have happened; at the time, it was simply hard to believe any terrorist group could pull off such an elaborate plot utilizing novel, unpredictable weapons that were so difficult to acquire.

Yet, WMD terrorism skeptics abound, and for understandable reasons. There is widespread suspicion in America and abroad that WMD terrorism is another phony threat being hyped for political purposes, and to stoke fears among the public. It is difficult to debunk this allegation, given the US government's lack of credibility in the case of Iraqi WMD. That said, WMD terrorism is not Iraqi WMD. The case that the WMD terrorism threat is real bears no association with the Iraqi intelligence failure whatsoever, in terms of the reliability of the sources of intelligence, the quality of the information that has been collected, and the weight of the evidence that lies at the heart of our understanding of the threat. If anything, the biases in WMD terrorism analysis tilt towards treating the absence of information as an absence of threat; this could become a vulnerability in the defenses, considering the very real possibility that there may be a terrorist plot in motion that has not been found.

On the other side of the spectrum, even for the most ardent believers in the threat posed by WMD terrorism, it must be acknowledged that much of the rhetoric expressed by the top levels of the group might be just that: mere saber rattling in an increasingly desperate bid to remain relevant, to frighten their enemies, and to rally their followers with promises of powerful weapons that will reverse their losses on the battlefield. It is also possible that al Qaeda may be engaging in a classic deception ruse, hoping to misdirect their foe with fears of mass destruction, in order to preserve the element of surprise for the fulfillment of their true intentions.

There may be kernels of truth in each of these reasons as to why the world has not yet witnessed a terrorist WMD attack, which is at least a mild surprise, considering all that has come to pass since 2001. However, for purposes of making a clear-headed assessment of the threat, it may be useful to separate al Qaeda's WMD activity into two streams, one consisting of the strategic programs managed under the direct supervision and management of the al Qaeda core leadership, and the other consisting of tactical chemical, biological and radiological weapons development that was decentralized and pursued autonomously in various locations around the world as part of the "global jihad." On this basis, a more precise determination can be made on the actual threat posted by al Qaeda, and other groups in each of these cases.

Fortunately, there is a body of historical information that provides a useful starting point for such

an inquiry. Hopefully, an examination of WMD-associated information that is pertinent, but no longer sensitive, can help bridge the gaps in perceptions between the diehard believers and skeptics as to the true nature of the problem and the threat it may pose, not just in an al Qaeda context today, but in the future as WMD terrorism takes on new forms involving new actors.

In June 2003, the US government issued a warning that there was a high probability of an al Qaeda WMD attack sometime in the next two years. This report represented a high water mark in concerns related to al Qaeda's WMD planning going back to the founding of the group. Why didn't an attack happen in the next two years? Was the threat hyped for political purposes? Was the intelligence assessment wrong? Or, was the threat neutralized? Some perspective into why the report was issued can be gleaned by examining some of the evidence that was available to US and international policymakers by the summer of 2003 concerning roughly fifteen years of al Qaeda's efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Presenting this chronology will hopefully allow the reader to develop a better feel for the threat posed by al Qaeda's interest in WMD at that time, and use it as a basis to help determine whether the WMD terrorism threat is real.

UNITED NATIONS, June 10, 2003

US: Al Qaeda WMD Risk Remains

Report Says There's A 'High Probability' Of Attack In Next Two Years

(CBS) There is a "high probability" that al Qaeda will attempt an attack with a weapon of mass destruction in the next two years, the U.S. government said in a report Monday.

The report to a U.N. Security Council committee monitoring sanctions against the terrorist group did not say where the Bush administration believes such an attack might be launched.

But the United States said it believes that despite recent setbacks, "al Qaeda maintains the ability to inflict significant casualties in the United States with little or no warning."

"The al Qaeda network will remain for the foreseeable future the most immediate and serious terrorism threat facing the United States," the report said. "Al Qaeda will continue to favor spectacular attacks but also may seek softer targets of opportunity, such as banks, shopping malls, supermarkets, and places of recreation and entertainment."

The report said the terrorist organization "will continue its efforts to acquire and develop biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons."

"We judge that there is a high probability that al Qaeda will attempt an attack using a CBRN weapon within the next two years," it said.

1988

Al Qaeda is founded by Osama bin Ladin. Key founding members include Jamal Fadl, Abu Ayoub al Iraqi, Abu Ubaidah al Bانشiri, Dr. Abdel Moez, Ayman al Zawahiri, Abu Faraj al Yemeni, Dr. Fadhl el Masry, Abu Burhan, Al Khabir, Mohammed Luay Bayazid (who served as the group's note taker) ¹

END OF 1990-APRIL 1991

Osama bin Ladin and his associates relocate to Khartoum, Sudan²

FEBRUARY 26, 1993

A car bomb is detonated under the World Trade Center in New York City. According to Federal Judge Kevin Duffy, the goal of mastermind Ramzi Youssef was to “engulf the victims trapped in the North Trade Tower in a cloud of cyanide gas.” However, the explosion incinerates the gas, greatly decreasing the number of casualties.³

LATE 1993-EARLY 1994

Al Qaeda tries to acquire uranium in Sudan to use in a nuclear device.⁴ This is the earliest evidence that Osama bin Ladin made a decision sometime after the first bombing of the World Trade Center to purchase nuclear material in order to construct a crude nuclear device, also known as an “improvised nuclear device” (IND). Jamal al-Fadl, who defected from al Qaeda in 1996 and became an FBI/CIA source, testifies in a New York court in 2001 that Mohamed Loay Bayazid and former Sudanese President Saleh Mobruk were involved in a transaction to help al Qaeda acquire uranium, supposedly of South African origin. He based his testimony on the inscription on a container that purportedly contained the material. Fadl, who said he did not see the nuclear material inside the container, provides testimony that he heard later the uranium, which al Qaeda acquired for \$1.5 million and was tested in Cyprus, was “genuine.”⁵

1996

Ayman Zawahiri, emir of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (subsequently merged into Al-Qaeda) and al Qaeda deputy chief, is detained in Russia and subsequently released by Russia's Federal Security

1 Testimony by Jamal al-Fadl in United States v. Usama bin Laden, et.al. February 6, 2001 US District Court Southern District of New York. Judge Leonard B. Sand pgs 35-41.

2 *Ibid.* pg 62.

3 US District Court of the District of Columbia. V.Z. Lawton et.al vs. The Republic of Iraq. Pg. 4 <http://www.judicialwatch.org/cases/86/complaint.html>.

4 Testimony by Jamal al-Fadl in United States v. Usama bin Laden, et.al. February 6, 2001 US District Court Southern District of New York. Judge Leonard B. Sand pgs. 153-154.

5 *Ibid.* pg. 363.

Service (FSB). There is unconfirmed speculation that Zawahiri was seeking nuclear weapons or material in Russia, based on his later statement that al Qaeda had obtained nuclear weapons from the former Soviet Union.⁶

MAY 21, 1996

Drowning death of founding al Qaeda leader Abu Ubeida al-Banshiri, who was a passenger on a capsized ferry on Lake Victoria in Africa. According to commentary from senior al Qaeda officials, he was seeking nuclear material in southern Africa. Al Qaeda senior leaders traveled to the site of the capsized ferry in order to confirm Ubeidi's death.⁷

MAY 1996

Al Qaeda leadership relocates to Afghanistan.⁸

EARLY 1998

The merger of Ayman Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and Osama bin Ladin's al Qaeda organizations marks a particularly significant development in al Qaeda's efforts to acquire WMD.⁹ Zawahiri, who holds a master's degree in surgery, brought his Egyptian scientific capabilities to al Qaeda, which—combined with Osama bin Ladin's strategic, global objectives—was pivotal in bringing WMD to the forefront of the combined leadership's list of priorities. The more technologically sophisticated Egyptian wing of al Qaeda has consistently been linked to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons development. While Osama bin Ladin's vision is crucial to understanding the potential value of WMD in their struggle, Zawahiri took personal control over what became the development of strategic biological weapons and nuclear development. He personally oversaw and managed the biological weapons development, and he steered the group toward the idea that these weapons might be used to attack vulnerabilities in the US infrastructure and economy.¹⁰

Note: There were internal discussions within the al Qaeda leadership about the wisdom and efficacy of pursuing chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear interests as far back as the early 1990's, ac-

6 Alan Cullinson and Andrew Higgins, "Saga of Dr. Zawahiri Illuminates Roots of al Qaeda Terror (cover story)," *Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2002, Eastern Edition.

7 United States District Court Southern District of New York. *United States v. Usama Bin Laden, et. Al*, May 3, 2001, pg. 5562.

8 Rohan Gunaratna, "The Evolution of Al Qaeda," in *Countering the Financing of Terrorism*, ed. Thomas J. Biersteker and Sue E. Eckert (New York: Routledge, 2007), pg. 54.

9 Osama bin Laden, "Al Qaeda's Fatwa," *Online Newshour*. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1998.html.

10 Lawrence Wright, "The Man Behind Bin Laden," *The New Yorker*, September 16, 2002, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/09/16/020916fa_fact2?currentPage=21.

ording to some accounts.¹¹ However, 1998 marked the year when systematic, programmatic efforts began, according to most available information.¹²

FEBRUARY 23, 1998

Osama bin Ladin issues a fatwa against America that said, “The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.”¹³

AUGUST 7, 1998

Al Qaeda launches simultaneous bombings in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, at the U.S. embassies, killing hundreds of innocent civilians.¹⁴

AUGUST 20, 1998

The United States destroys the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum, Sudan, with cruise missiles based on suspicions that the plant produced nerve agent VX for the Sudanese government and/or al Qaeda.¹⁵

DECEMBER 24, 1998

Osama bin Laden states in an interview with TIME Magazine’s Rahimullah Yusufzai: “Acquiring weapons (WMD) for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty.”¹⁶

1999-2001

Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan conduct chemical, biological, and radiological basic training courses for hundreds of extremists. The organization’s Durante & Tarnak Farms training courses were led by Abu Khabab al-Masri (aka Midhat Mursi al Sayid Umar), a chemist and alleged top bomb maker for al Qaeda, who was part of Osama bin Ladin’s inner circle and Abu Musab al-Suri (aka Setmariam), a Spanish citizen born in Syria¹⁷

11 Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know* (New York: Free Press, 2006), pg. 337.

12 Author’s analysis based on Osama Bin Laden’s statement in 1998 that acquiring nuclear weapons was a “religious duty” and series of events in 1998 outlined both in this chronology and in books such as Bergen, “*The Osama bin Laden I Know*,” pgs. 338-339 about beginnings of Al Qaeda’s attempts to procure HEU.

13 Osama bin Laden, “Al Qaeda’s Fatwa,” *Online NewsHour*, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1998.html.

14 *United States v. Usama bin Laden, et.al.* February 6, 2001 US District Court Southern District of New York. Judge Leonard B. Sand pg. 40-41

15 Bill Clinton, *My Life: The Presidential Years Vol. II* (New York: Vintage Press, 2005), 448.

16 Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Conversations with Terror,” *TIME*, January 11, 1999.

17 Habibullah Kahn and Brian Ross, “U.S. Strike Killed Al Qaeda Bomb Maker,” *ABC News*, January 18, 2006, <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/Investigation/story?id=1517986>.

Note: Setmariam was an outspoken proponent of using chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons in attacks against the U.S.¹⁸ He theorized on the role of weapons of mass destruction in jihad. Notably, Setmariam wrote that al Qaeda had made a mistake by not utilizing WMD in the 9/11 attacks.¹⁹ He also was suspected of planning the Madrid train bombing on March 11, 2004. Setmariam was captured in a raid on November 3, 2005 in Pakistan.²⁰

EARLY 1999

Al Qaeda leader Ayman Zawahiri recruits a non-descript, mid level Pakistani government biologist with extremist sympathies named Rauf Ahmed to secretly develop a biological weapons program, including a laboratory in Kandahar, Afghanistan.²¹

EARLY 1999

Hambali (aka Riduan Isamuddin), the head of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), an al Qaeda-associated militant Islamist group based in southwest Asia, introduces an ex-Malaysian Army Captain, Yazid Sufaat, to Ayman Zawahiri, to develop anthrax in a second, parallel network to Rauf Ahmed's Afghanistan program. Neither network knew of the existence of the other, and each reported to Zawahiri independently. Assigned to different tasks, Ahmed was responsible for acquiring equipment and setting up labs. Sufaat, a fully trusted, hard core JI cadre member, was therefore given a more prominent role than the less-committed Ahmed. Sufaat was primarily focused on developing the anthrax pathogen and has been described as the "CEO" of al Qaeda's anthrax program.²² Sufaat, who received his college degree from California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), hosted a meeting of the 9/11 attackers in Kuala Lumpur in June 2001. Sufaat provided a false Malaysian address for Zacharias Moussaoui, who was arrested shortly before 9/11, to travel to the U.S.²³

Note: This collaboration between al Qaeda and JI was likely the first established instance involving joint development of WMD between Islamic terrorist groups at the most senior levels of two organizations.²⁴

18 Author assessment based on al-Suri's statements: "Although I emphasize my non-participation and lack of prior knowledge of the honorable September 11 attacks, if I had been consulted about this operation, I would have advised them to select aircraft on international flights and to have put weapons of mass destruction aboard them."

19 Lia, Brynjar, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of al-Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pg. 306. "Writes that if he had been involved in planning the 9/11 attacks, he would have recommended that the airplanes be filled with weapons of mass destruction." The original translation from Arabic was "Although I emphasize my non-participation and lack of prior knowledge of the honorable September 11 attacks, if I had been consulted about this operation, I would have advised them to select aircraft on international flights and to have put weapons of mass destruction aboard them."

20 Lisa Meyers, Jim Popkin and Robert Windrem, "Key al-Qaida Figure Captured," *NBC News*, November 3rd, 2005, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9909169/>.

21 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 278.

See also: Joby Warrick, "Suspect and a Setback In al-Qaeda Anthrax Case," *The Washington Post*, October 31, 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/30/AR2006103001250_pf.html.

22 Maria Ressa, "Al Qaeda Operative Sought Anthrax," *CNN*, October 10, 2003, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/10/10/alqaeda.anthrax/>.

23 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 278.

24 Author's analysis based on knowledge of al Qaeda and JI cooperation after Hambali swore allegiance to bin Laden, which

1999-2001

Abdel Aziz al Masri (aka Ali Sayyid al-Bakri), confirmed to be the father of al Qaeda's nuclear program, conducts nuclear-related explosive experiments in the desert. He is an explosives expert and chemical engineer by training, and reportedly self-taught on things nuclear.²⁵

JANUARY 2001

Creation of Pakistani humanitarian NGO Umma Tameer e Nau (UTN), which was founded by Pakistani nuclear scientists with close ties to al Qaeda and the Taliban. UTN was headed by Bashiruddin Mahmood, who had been chief of Pakistan's Khushab plutonium reactor; artillery officer and engineer Abdul Majid; SM Tufail and other engineers, experts and scientists in the Pakistan scientific and military establishment. Former Director General of Pakistani Interservices Intelligence Directorate (ISID) Hamid Gul is listed among the board members and patrons of UTN.²⁶ During his time working in Pakistan's nuclear operations, Mahmood told colleagues that Pakistan's nuclear weapons should be "the property of a whole Ummah," referring to Muslims around the globe.

Note: Mahmood had been forced into retirement due to concerns about his extremist sympathies and reliability. He penned controversial books predicting the looming Apocalypse, tying nuclear weapons with sunspots and offering a radical interpretation of the Koran.

SOMETIME BEFORE AUGUST 2001

UTN CEO Bashiruddin Mahmood offers to construct chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs for al Qaeda and Libya, in two separate, discreet approaches.²⁷

Note: The US subsequently passed this information to Libyan intelligence Chief Musa Kusa in London. Musa Kusa later confirmed to US intelligence that Libya would have no dealings with the UTN "WMD for hire" consortium.²⁸

AUGUST 2001

Ayman Zawahiri and Riduan Isamuddin (Hambali) personally inspect Rauf Ahmed's completed laboratory in Kandahar.²⁹ They separately meet with Yazid Sufaat, a member of al Qaeda's terrorist network with a degree in biochemistry, who gives them a weeklong briefing on his reportedly

is laid out in Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, pg. 254. Author asserts that it appears to be the first instance of cooperation because there are no earlier documented cases.

25 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 275.

26 *Ibid.* pg. 262.

27 Robert Windrem, "Pakistan's nuclear history worries insiders," *NBC News*, November 6, 2007, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21660667/>.

28 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 263.

29 Lawrence Wright, "The Man Behind Bin Laden," *The New Yorker*, September 16, 2002, pg. 25.

successful efforts to isolate and produce a lethal strain of anthrax.³⁰

*Note: Presumably, the inspection visit was timed to occur at the last possible time before the events of 9/11, of which both Zawahiri and Hambali were of course well aware.*³¹

SUMMER 2001

Some casing-related activity and contacts allegedly take place between Mohammed Atta, organizer and leader of the September 11th attacks, and WMD-associated figures, including Adnan Shukrijumah, an al Qaeda member named by the FBI as a “future facilitator” for attacks against the U.S. by al Qaeda. According to the FBI, Shukrijumah, aka Jaffar al-Tayyar (“the pilot”), cased targets in New York City for possible attacks; he has been associated with al Qaeda’s interest in a nuclear weapon and/or “dirty bomb” plot.³²

Note: A person fitting Atta’s description sought to apply for a loan in Florida to purchase a crop duster, but was refused.³³ This information prompted the FBI to approach all crop duster companies in the US, in an effort to identify any possible links to terrorists.³⁴

SUMMER 2001

Detention of Abderraouf Yousef Jdey, a biology major with possible interest in biological and nuclear weapons,³⁵ who traveled with Zacharias Moussaoui from Canada into the United States. Moussaoui is detained with crop duster manuals in his possession;³⁶ Jdey had biology textbooks.³⁷ Earlier, they attended McMaster University in Canada, along with Adnan Shukrijumah.³⁸

Note: There has been unconfirmed speculation that they were slated to be part of a “second wave” of attacks post-9/11.³⁹ Their whereabouts are unknown.

30 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 278-279

31 Author opinion based on obvious fact that both groups were closely linked and were aware of 9/11. Planning meeting of 9/11 hijackers was held in Kuala Lumpur at apartment of JI associate Yazid Sufaat. (Tenet, 278)

See also: Lawrence Wright, “The Man Behind Bin Laden,” *The New Yorker*, September 16, 2002, pg. 25 states that “Zawahiri has been responsible for much of the planning of the terrorist operations against the United States...[including] the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11th.”

32 CNN, “Transcript: Ashcroft, Mueller News Conference,” May 26, 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/05/26/terror.threat.transcript/>

33 John Cloud, “Atta’s Odyssey,” *TIME*, October 8, 2001, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101011008-176917,00.html>

34 Jeffrey Price and Jeffrey Forrest, *Practical Aviation Security: Predicting and Preventing Future Threats* (Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2008), 133.

35 United States Department of State, “Wanted: Abderraouf Ben Habib Jdey,” <http://www.rewardsforjustice.net/english/index.cfm?page=abderraouf>

36 Massimo Calabresi and Sally Donnelly, “Cropduster Manual Discovered,” *TIME*, Saturday September 22, 2001, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,175951,00.html>

37 United States Department of State, “Wanted: Abderraouf Ben Habib Jdey,” <http://www.rewardsforjustice.net/english/index.cfm?page=abderraouf>

38 Richelson, Jeffrey, *Defusing Armageddon*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2009), 138.

39 9/11 Commission, “Threats and Responses: Excerpts from Statement by 9/11 Commission,” *New York Times Online*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/17/world/threats-and-responses-excerpts-from-statement-by-sept-11-commission-staff.html?pagewanted=7>

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Al Qaeda attacks America.

SEPTEMBER 2001

Al Qaeda breaks camp and most senior operatives and family members flee Afghanistan in anticipation of imminent US invasion.

OCTOBER 7, 2001

The United States launches Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to neutralize and destroy al Qaeda and Osama bin Ladin.

OCTOBER 23, 2001

A long list of UTN members and associates are detained by Pakistan Intelligence (ISID) at the request of the U.S. government/CIA in Islamabad.⁴⁰

Note: CIA Director George Tenet and ranking officials fly to Pakistan to meet with President Musharraf about the threat posed by UTN and the evidence that al Qaeda may be attempting to build chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons programs. President Musharraf's initial response: "Men in caves can't do this." By hour's end, the Pakistan President agreed to implement comprehensive measures to eliminate any possibility of Pakistan scientists cooperating with al Qaeda to develop WMD. Musharraf and Pakistan intelligence largely followed through on their promises.⁴¹

1990'S-2001

A nuclear weapons supply network run by the father of the Pakistan nuclear weapons program, Abdul Qadeer Khan, supplies rogue state programs in Iran, North Korea, and Libya with nuclear technologies and know-how, leveraging a global clandestine network.⁴² Nuclear bomb designs are found on computer of European supplier.⁴³

Note: Indeed, there were reported attempts by al Qaeda to contact AQ Khan associates for assistance; the attempts were reportedly rejected by the Khan network.⁴⁴ The AQ Khan network was exposed in 2003.⁴⁵ As a result, Libya gave up its nuclear program,⁴⁶ key members of the network were arrested

40 David Albright and Holly Higgins, "A Bomb for the Ummah," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 59, (March/April 2003), pg. 51.

41 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 266.

42 David Albright and Corey Hinderstein, "Unraveling the A.Q. Khan and Future Proliferation Networks," *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pg. 116. See also: George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pgs. 283-284.

43 Ian Traynor, "Nuclear Bomb Blueprints For Sale on World Black Market, Experts Fear," *The Guardian*, May 31, 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/may/31/nuclear.internationalcrime>.

44 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 261.

45 *Ibid.* pg. 285.

46 *Ibid.* pg. 296.

in numerous countries,⁴⁷ and AQ Khan was placed under temporary house arrest in Pakistan.⁴⁸ In a twist of history, Musharraf had told CIA Director Tenet that he was confident the UTN network posed no proliferation threat because his best nuclear expert, AQ Khan, had assured him this was the case.⁴⁹

NOVEMBER 7, 2001

Osama bin Ladin states in an interview with Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir, “I wish to declare that if America used chemical or nuclear weapons against us, then we may retort with chemical and nuclear weapons. We have the weapons as deterrent.”⁵⁰ In the same interview, Ayman Zawahiri states that, “If you have \$30 million, go to the black market in the central Asia, contact any disgruntled Soviet scientist, and a lot of dozens of smart briefcase bombs are available. They have contacted us, we sent our people to Moscow to Tashkent to other central Asian states, and they negotiated and we purchased some suitcase bombs.”⁵¹

Note: On November 14, 2001 President Bush met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Crawford, Texas, and is passed the Presidential Daily Brief containing an assessment of the proliferation threat posed by the Pakistan UTN group.⁵² Bush asked Putin if he is certain at all Russian nuclear weapons and materials are secure. Putin responded using words to the effect: I can only vouch for the security of nuclear materials in Russia after I assumed power.⁵³

NOVEMBER 2001

UTN CEO Bashiruddin Mahmood, his associate Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, and many other associates are re-arrested and detained. Mahmood confesses that he was introduced to al Qaeda seniors in Afghanistan in summer 2001, met with Osama bin Ladin around a campfire, and they discussed how al Qaeda could build a nuclear device. Mahmood drew a very rough sketch of an improvised nuclear device.⁵⁴ When Mahmood advised Osama bin Ladin that it would be too

47 Donald Rumsfeld, Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Secretary of State Donald H. Rumsfeld to the International Institute for Strategic Studies,” (remarks presented at International Institute for Strategic Studies, June 5, 2004. Examples of arrests of network participants include that of Buhary Sayed Abu Tahir (Bill Powell, The Man Who Sold the Bomb, *TIME*, February 6, 2005, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1025193,00.html>) and that of Gotthard Lerch (Victor Homola, “Germany: First Trial in Nuclear Black Market, *The New York Times*, March 18th, 2006, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/full-page.html?res=9D0DE5D71E31F93BA25750C0A9609C8B63>.)

48 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 287. See also David Albright and Corey Hinderstein, “Unraveling the A.Q. Khan and Future Proliferation Networks,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pgs.116-117.

49 *Ibid.* pg. 266.

50 Hamid Mir, “Osama Claims He Has Nukes: If US uses N-arms it will get same response,” *Dawn*, November 10, 2001, Shaba’an 23, 1422, <http://www.dawn.com/2001/11/10/top1.htm>.

51 Andrew Denton, “Interview of Hamid Mir on Enough Rope,” *Australian Broadcasting Company (ABC)*, March 22, 2004. <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/enoughrope/transcripts/s1071804.htm>.

52 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 272.

53 *Ibid.*

54 Ron Suskind, *The One Percent Doctrine*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), pg. 70. See also, George Tenet, *At the Center*

hard for his group to undertake a nuclear weapons program and develop the billion dollar infrastructure for weapons-usable materials, bin Ladin queries, “What if I already have it? (the nuclear material)”⁵⁵

NOVEMBER 2001

Search of UTN Kabul office produces documents containing crude chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear-related documents, including hand-written notes in Arabic and internet-related searches.⁵⁶

DECEMBER 2001

Capture of Jemaah Islamiya senior operative Yazid Sufaat by authorities crossing the Malaysian border.⁵⁷ Pakistani authorities arrest Rauf Ahmed at his home in Islamabad, based on correspondence found in Afghanistan between Ahmed and Zawahiri that establish Ahmed’s role in developing a biological weapons program on behalf of al Qaeda. Ahmed confesses his involvement in the project and provides substantiating evidence.⁵⁸

Note: Ahmad’s laboratory was located in Kandahar.⁵⁹ Much equipment was recovered by Pakistani authorities, and connections were identified and thoroughly run down in the course of a coordinated international investigative effort on the part of numerous countries.⁶⁰

of the Storm, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 264.

55 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 268.

56 United States Department of Homeland Security Office of the Press Secretary, “Day 100 of the War On Terrorism: More Steps to Shut Down Terrorist Supply Networks,” Department of Homeland Security, December 20, 2001, http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/releases/press_release_0038.shtm.

57 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 279.

58 Joby Warrick, “Suspect and A Setback In Al-Qaeda Anthrax Case,” *The Washington Post*, October 31, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/30/AR2006103001250.html>.

59 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 278.

60 Author analysis which has been generalized to reflect that there was a major effort launched and it was successful.

JANUARY 2002

Capture of al Qaeda senior operative Ibn al-Shaykh al Libi. During interrogation by Egyptians, al Libi claims al Qaeda operatives received chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training in Baghdad. He claims several small containers of nuclear material were smuggled into New York City by Russian organized crime.⁶¹

*Note: Al Libi later recanted his statement while in U.S. custody.*⁶²

MARCH 2002

Chechen leader Ibn al-Khattab is assassinated by Russian special services, utilizing a poison that was reportedly delivered to him in a letter by a messenger.⁶³

MARCH 28, 2002

U.S. captures Abu Zubaydah (aka Zein al-Abideen Mohamed Hussein). During interrogation, he reveals plot by American al Qaeda associate Jose Padilla to explode a “dirty bomb” in the United States.⁶⁴

*Note: Abu Zubaydah’s capture led to the first high-level detainee reporting on al Qaeda’s WMD interests. Abu Zubaydah’s information concerning the “dirty bomb” plot was largely confirmed. Padilla was subsequently identified and arrested in Chicago.*⁶⁵

SPRING 2002

In Khartoum, Sudan, a CIA officer meets two senior al Qaeda associates, Mubarak al-Duri and Abu Rida Mohammed Bayazid, in an effort to determine whether they are involved in al Qaeda’s nuclear and biological weapons programs. Both men were in Osama bin Ladin’s inner circle during al Qaeda’s years in Sudan and have ties to WMD. Bayazid, a founding member of al Qaeda, graduated from the University of Arizona with an advanced degree in physics in the 1980’s. By his own admission, he is a close associate of the 9/11 principals, including Wadi el-Hage. Bayazid assisted bin Ladin in managing his financial affairs and was responsible for establishing Islamic non-governmental organizations in the U.S. Bayazid was directly involved in al Qaeda’s attempt to purchase uranium in 1993-1994 (see entry). Mubarek al-Duri, an agronomist with biological dual-use knowledge, also received his degree at the University of Arizona. He summed up his views when asked to assist in a common cause to prevent differences from leading to the deaths of innocent women and children

61 Cliff Schecter, *The Real McCain*, (LaVergne, TN: PoliPointPress, 2008), pg. 124.

62 Douglas Jehl, “Qaeda-Iraq Link U.S. Cited Is Tied to Coercion Claim,” *The New York Times*, December 9, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/09/politics/09intel.html>.

63 “Obituary: Chechen Rebel Khattab,” *BBC News*, April 26, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1952053.stm>.

64 Central Intelligence Agency, “Counterterrorism Detention and Interrogation Activities (September 2001–October 2003), CIA Inspector General Special Review (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, May 7, 2004), pg. 93. See also first hand account by former FBI Special Agent Ali Soufan in the *New York Times*: “the uncovering of Jose Padilla, the so-called dirty-bomber—was gained from another terrorism suspect Abu Zubaydah, by “informed interrogation,” conducted by an F.B.I colleague and me.” Ali Soufan, “What Torture Never Told Us,” *The New York Times*, September 6, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/06/opinion/06soufan.html?pagewanted=print>.

65 Amanda Ripley, “The Case of the Dirty Bomber,” *TIME*, June 16, 2002, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,262917,00.html>.

on both sides of the war: “Killing millions (of you) is justifiable, by any means....It is your doing. You made us what we are.”⁶⁶

SUMMER 2002

Al Qaeda leader in Saudi Arabia Yusef al-Ayeri (aka “Swift Sword”), Ali al-Faqasi al-Ghamdi (aka Abu Bakr al-Azdi) and associates begin planning attacks against the royal family and oil assets in the Kingdom.⁶⁷ Nuclear and biological-related references begin to appear in communications within the al Qaeda cell in Saudi Arabia.⁶⁸

SUMMER 2002

With the blessing of Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda begins coordination of two religious treatises (fatwas) to justify an escalation of terrorism—one to authorize attacks not only against U.S. targets in Saudi Arabia, but against the interests of the Saudi Royal family itself, and the other to justify the use of WMD.⁶⁹ Al Qaeda-associated extremists in Saudi Arabia with WMD-related ties to al Qaeda in Pakistan case Saudi oil targets, including the Saudi city Ras al Tanura and facilities belonging to oil giant Saudi Aramco.⁷⁰

JUNE 2002

Extremists under the command of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (aka Ahmad Fadeel al-Nazal al-Khalayleh) conduct crude chemical and biological training and experiments in a remote camp in northeastern Iraq (Khurmil).⁷¹ Zarqawi’s commanders include Abu Ashraf, Abu Attiya and Abu Taisir, all of whom had served as lieutenants in the Herat Camp that Zarqawi ran in Afghanistan.⁷² Zarqawi is well known to al Qaeda, but is considered to be an independent operator who had not sworn loyalty (“bayat”) to Osama bin Laden.⁷³

Note: Zarqawi, a Jordanian, was engaged in a blood feud with the Jordanian government and was also preoccupied with mounting attacks in Jordan, in addition to his activities in Iraq.⁷⁴ He was convicted in absentia for planning the assassination of U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley in Amman, Jordan.⁷⁵

66 Robert Windrem, “Sanctions likely won’t hurt U.S-Sudan intel ties,” *NBC News*, May 29, 2007, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18923223>.

67 Ron Suskind, *The One Percent Doctrine*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 146-147. “Specifically, kill members of the royal family, and destroy the oil fields.”

68 Anthony H. Cordesman and Nawaf Obaid, “Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia: Asymmetric Threats and Islamist Extremists,” CSIS January 2005. http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/050106_al-qaedainsaudi.pdf.

69 Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know* (New York: Free Press, 2006), pg. 374.

70 Anthony H. Cordesman and Nawaf Obaid, “Saudi Petroleum Security: Challenges and Responses,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 30, 2004, pg. 11.

71 Colin Powell, “Ties to al Qaeda” (presented at meeting of the United Nations, New York, NY, February 5, 2003).

72 *Ibid.* Slide 40.

73 “Special Dispatch No. 788,” The Middle East Media Research Institute (Memri), September 23, 2004, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP78804>.

74 Craig Whitlock, “Amman Bombings Reflect Zarqawi’s Growing Reach,” *The Washington Post*, November 13, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/12/AR2005111201201.html>. The feud is referenced in the quote “Zarqawi..has sought for years to overthrow the monarchy in his native Jordan.” Mounting attacks in Jordan are referenced in the article, including a triple suicide bombings at hotels in Amman on November 9, 2005. Beyond his work in Jordan, he is also listed as the “best-known leader of the insurgency in Iraq.”

75 BBC News, “Jordan Hangs US Diplomat Killers,” *BBC News*, March 11, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4796280.stm.

JULY 10, 2002

Al Qaeda press spokesman Sulayman Abu Ghayth al Libi—while under “house arrest” in Iran, along with other senior al Qaeda members—cites al Qaeda’s justification to use WMD to kill four million Americans.⁷⁶

Note: Abdel Aziz al-Masri is identifiable as the same individual who had been carrying out secret nuclear – related experiments in the late 1990s⁷⁷

Note: Al Qaeda seniors reportedly remain under “house arrest” in Iran, although there have been media reports that some senior al Qaeda members, including Saad bin Ladin, the Osama bin Ladin’s son, were released by Iranian officials and returned to Pakistan.

AUGUST 2002

CNN exposes Afghanistan training camp experiments conducted on animals in late 1990’s, led by Abu Khabab al-Masri. These gruesome experiments include testing the lethality of crude toxins and poisons, including cyanide creams, ricin, mustard, sarin, and botulinum. Abu Khabab later laments that his students did not take their training to heart by using chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons in terrorist attacks.⁷⁸

Note: Abu Khabab was killed by a U.S. predator strike in Pakistan on July 28, 2008.

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2002

Zarqawi associates infiltrate into Turkey, UK, Spain, Italy, France, Sweden, Germany and other countries and begin coordinating ricin and cyanide attacks in a loose association of terrorist cells in several countries.⁷⁹

Note: The U.S. President and Vice President receive briefings on the Zarqawi network’s poisons and toxins-based activities.⁸⁰ Over the course of several briefings, the loosely associated network grew from a handful of terrorists in one country to extremists identified in over 30 countries.⁸¹

SEPTEMBER 11, 2002

Capture of Ramzi bin al-Shibh in Pakistan.⁸²

76 “New Al Qaeda Threats,” CNN, July 10, 2002, <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/US/07/09/alqaeda.statement/index.html>.

77 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 275.

78 “Analyzing Al Qaeda’s Chemical Tests,” CNN, August 19, 2002, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/020819/lt.14.html>.

79 Colin Powell, “Ties to al Qaeda” (presented at meeting of the United Nations, New York, NY, February 5, 2003); AP, “Iraq Militants Claim al-Zarqawi Is Dead,” *Associated Press*, March 4, 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4446084/>; See also Ernesto Londono and Karen DeYoung, “Al-Qaeda in Iraq Figure Was a Swedish Citizen,” *The Washington Post*, October 17, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/16/AR2008101603615.html>.

80 Ron Suskind, *The One Percent Doctrine*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), pg. 183. An example of one of these briefings is found on pg. 185.

81 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 277.

82 *Ibid.* pg. 243: Also see bin al-Shibh capture mentioned in *Washington Post*: Dan Eggen and Walter Pincus, “FBI, CIA Debate Significance of Terror Suspect,” *The Washington Post*, December 18th, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/17/AR2007121702151.html>.

JANUARY 5, 2003

Seven extremists are arrested in UK in the “ricin plot,” the Zarqawi network’s effort to use ricin poison on the London Underground.⁸³

Note: This highly publicized reporting, including the shooting death of a London policeman in a raid on a terrorist safehouse, represented the front edge of a wave of arrests that take place in the United Kingdom, continental Europe and other parts of the world over the next several months. The arrests confirm the reliability of the intelligence reporting and produce forensic evidence of crude poisons and toxins-related attacks planning.

JANUARY-MARCH 2003

Zarqawi-associated operatives are arrested and ricin/cyanide attacks are disrupted in the UK, Spain, Italy, and France.⁸⁴

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2003

Abu Musab al Zarqawi leaves Khurmal camp and returns to Baghdad to prepare for an insurgency to meet the US invasion of Iraq.⁸⁵

Note: On February 5, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell gave a speech to the U.N. Security Council naming the Herat camp leadership, including Abu Musab al Zarqawi, and his deputies Abu Ashraf, Abu Atiya, and Abu Taisir. Meouane Benahmed and Menad Benchalali are also named on a partial organizational chart, which cites “UK poison cell”, “Spain cell”, “French poison cell”, and “possible Italy cell.”⁸⁶

Note: Secretary Powell’s information used for this part of speech proved to be accurate in the course of events. The exposure of the network’s leadership helped accelerate its demise. The Khurmal camp was among the first targets bombed by the US military after the invasion of Iraq in March.⁸⁷ That bombing of the camp in northeastern Iraq, just after the exodus of Zarqawi to begin his terror campaign in Iraq and the identification and neutralization of the European terror cells, ended the crude toxin and poison threats to Europe.⁸⁸

83 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pgs. 277-278.

84 *Ibid.* pg. 277.

85 Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know* (New York: Free Press, 2006), pg. 361.

86 “Colin Powell’s Case Before the U.N.” *The Washington Post*, February 5, 2003, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/flash/world/powell/slides/powell_slideshow.html.

87 Micah Zenko, “Foregoing Limited Force: The George W. Bush Administration’s Decision Not to Attack Ansar Al-Islam,” in *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32:4 (Aug 2009), pg. 639. The use of the words “among the first targets” by author is meant to convey to reader that it was a high priority.

88 Author’s analysis based on information similar to that in Zenko, “Foregoing Limited Force” pg. 640.

MARCH 1, 2003

9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) is captured in Pakistan, along with Ahmed Abdul Qadus Khan.⁸⁹ Confronted with the evidence found during the raid, KSM provides confirming information on al Qaeda's nuclear and biological weapons programs.⁹⁰

Note: KSM later recanted some of the information he provided on al Qaeda's nuclear and anthrax programs, including information that had been confirmed by other detainee and reporting.⁹¹

MARCH 2003

Ayman Zawahiri calls off an attack that had been planned against the NYC subway system for "something better." Al Qaeda associates from Bahrain, with connections in Saudi Arabia, cased the subway system in December 2002 for a cyanide attack using a homemade cyanogen gas-releasing device called a "mobtaker."⁹² Operatives were reportedly recalled from the U.S. after the attack was cancelled by the al Qaeda deputy.⁹³

Note: The Bahraini extremists were subsequently arrested and detained.⁹⁴

MARCH 2003-MAY 2003

Al Qaeda Saudi senior operative Abu Bakr is in communication with Iran-based al Qaeda seniors, including the group's chief of operations, Saif al-Adel, who was reportedly under house arrest in Iran, to purchase three purported "Russian nuclear devices."⁹⁵ An unidentified Pakistan specialist is enlisted to verify the goods with unspecified instruments.⁹⁶

Note: The information is briefed as breaking news to the U.S. President. In an unprecedented action, the sensitive intelligence—which was deemed reliable—was packaged and passed on an urgent basis to all relevant governments for possible action, including Saudi Arabia,⁹⁷ Russia⁹⁸, and Iran.⁹⁹

89 Peter Finn, Joby Warrick and Julie Tate, "How a Detainee Became an Asset," *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2009, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/28/AR2009082803874_pf.html.

90 *Ibid.*

91 James Risen, *State of War*, (New York: Free Press, 2006), pg. 33. See also, statement by KSM during Tribunal Hearing of March 10, 2007: "'President: So you are aware that other?' Detainee: 'Yes' President: 'People made false statement as a result of this?' Detainee: 'I did also.'" "Verbatim Transcript of Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10024," March 10, 2007 at U.S. Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, pg. 15.

92 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pg. 273. See also: Jane A. Bullock, et al., Introduction to *Homeland Security*, 2d. ed (Burlington, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006), pgs. 160–163.

93 *Ibid.* pgs. 273-274.

94 NEFA Foundation, "Report #12 A NEFA analysis of the New York City Subway Poison Gas Plot," December 2007, Published by NEFA Foundation, www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/NYCPoisonPlot.pdf, pg 1. See also: *Associated Press*, "Bahraini Arrests Five Men Allegedly Planning Terror Attacks," *Fox News*, February 24, 2003, Author includes the Fox News article as another example of international news coverage of the arrests of the Bahraini extremists.

95 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 272.

96 *Ibid.*

97 *Ibid.* pg. 273.

98 *Ibid.* pg. 275.

99 *Ibid.* pg. 275.

MAY 21 2003

Radical Saudi cleric Nasir al Fahd, a steady companion of al-Faqasi, writes a 26-page fatwa justifying use of WMD. The fatwa was endorsed by another radical cleric, Ali al-Khudair, one of the leading religious supporters of al Qaeda. Entitled “A Treatise on the Legal Status of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction Against Infidels,” it makes four principal justifications for the use of WMD.¹⁰⁰

MAY 28 2003

Saudi intelligence (Mabahith) make a series of arrests in a determined campaign to neutralize al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and eliminate their capacity to mount attacks in the Kingdom. Al Fahd is arrested.¹⁰¹

Note: Voluminous documents and information produced as a result of Saudi and UK action in this time frame drive a spike in connected threats to the U.S. homeland that is called the “end of summer threat” in the United States government.¹⁰² Cyanide is found in an al Qaeda safehouse in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.¹⁰³ Al-Ayeri was subsequently killed in a shootout.¹⁰⁴ Nasr al Fahd recanted his fatwa on Saudi television in December 2003.¹⁰⁵

JUNE 26 2003

An Armenian citizen, Garik Dadayan, was caught with 170 grams of unsheathed highly enriched uranium (HEU) on the Georgia Armenia border. This was a sample of a larger amount of HEU that was being offered for sale to an unknown customer, possibly in the Middle East.¹⁰⁶

Note: In 2006, a second seizure of weapons grade HEU is made in Georgia.¹⁰⁷ The material was

-
- 100 Nasir Bin Hamd Al-Fahd, “A Treatise on the Legal Status of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction Against Infidels,” Carnegie Endowment. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/static/npp/fatwa.pdf>.
- 101 “Saudis Say 330 Convicted In Terrorism Trials,” *CNN*, July 8, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/07/08/saudi.terror.trials/index.html#cnnSTCText>.
- 102 Author analysis based on events detailed in *CNN* article: Jeanne Meserve and Kelli Arena, “Advisory: Al Qaeda Planning New U.S. Attacks,” *CNN*, September 5, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/09/04/homeland.advisory/> as well as CBS, “US: Al Qaeda Risk Remains,” *CBS News*, June 10, 2003, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/06/10/attack/main557805.shtml>. US Government clearly stated that an increase in threats meant a “high probability that al Qaeda will attempt an attack..within the next two years.”
- 103 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007),273.
- 104 Douglas Jehl, “Al Qaeda Links Seen in Attacks on Top Saudi Security Officials,” *The New York Times*, December 30, 2003, Section A pg. 1, New York Edition.
- 105 Neil MacFarquhar, “Under Pressure to Change, Saudis Debate Their Future,” *The New York Times*, November 23, 2003, New York section, pg. 12.
- 106 Lawrence Scott Sheets, “A Smuggler’s Story,” *The Atlantic*. April 2008, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200804/uranium-smuggling/3>.
- 107 *Ibid.* See also, Michael Bronner, “100 Grams and Counting, Report for Project on Managing the Atom, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/100-Grams-Final-Color.pdf>.

*brought back to the US, analyzed and determined to be weapons-grade material (over 90 percent enriched).*¹⁰⁸ *In 2009, there is no publicly available information confirming that the cases were ever resolved.*¹⁰⁹

AUGUST 13, 2003

Capture of Jemaah Islamiya's chief, Riduan Isamuddin (Hambali), who provides confirmation of his role in the anthrax program.¹¹⁰

108 Michael Bronner, "100 Grams and Counting, Report for Project on Managing the Atom, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/100-Grams-Final-Color.pdf>, pg. 16.

109 Author's assertion.

110 Lauren Johnston, "Is Al Qaeda Making Anthrax?," *CBS News*, October 9, 2003, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/10/09/eveningnews/main577395.shtml>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Prior to his appointment as a senior fellow at the Belfer Center, Mr. Rolf Mowatt-Larssen served over three years as the Director of Intelligence and Counterintelligence at the U.S. Department of Energy. Prior to this, he served for 23 years as a CIA intelligence officer in various domestic and international posts, to include Chief of the Europe Division in the Directorate of Operations, Chief of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Department, Counterterrorist Center, and Deputy Associate Director of Central Intelligence for Military Support. His overseas assignments include Stockholm (1984-1987), Moscow (1988-1990, 1992-1994), Athens (1990-1992), Yerevan (1992), Zurich (1994-1996) and Oslo (1998-2000). Prior to his career in intelligence, Mr. Mowatt-Larssen served as an officer in the U.S. Army. He is a graduate of the United States Military Academy, West Point, NY. He is married to Roswitha and has three children. He is a recipient of the CIA Director's Award, the George W. Bush Award for Excellence in Counterterrorism, the Secretary of Energy's Exceptional Service Medal, the Distinguished Career Intelligence Medal, Secretary of Defense Civilian Distinguished Service Medal, and the National Intelligence Superior Performance Medal, among others.



Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

Harvard Kennedy School

79 JFK Street

Cambridge, MA 02138

Fax: (617) 495-8963

Email: belfer_center@harvard.edu

Website: <http://belfercenter.org>

Copyright 2010 President and Fellows of Harvard College