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Does Our Counter-Terrorism Strategy Match the Threat?

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The RAND Corporation

Does Our Counter-Terrorism Strategy Match the Threat?[2]

Before the Committee on International Relations
Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation
United States House of Representatives

September 29, 2005

Mr. Chairman: I appreciate the opportunity to speak before your Subcommittee today on this important topic. Four years after the 9/11 attacks stunned the nation and indeed the entire world, we face an enemy different from that we confronted at the start of the ongoing global war on terrorism (GWOT). Beyond any doubt, the successes achieved by the U.S. and its allies during the initial operations of the GWOT account for this change. The remarkable accomplishment effected by a combination of U.S. air power and Afghan militiamen led and directed by American Special Operations Forces (SOF) and clandestine service agents (members of the Central Intelligence Agency's Special Activities Division) during the GWOT's initial operations completely routed the Taliban and its al Qaeda patrons. Subsequent operations in the GWOT expanded to involve conventional as well as unconventional joint military operations. During this phase, Afghanistan was liberated, the Taliban was crushed, and al Qaeda's command and control headquarters, training camps and operational bases in that country were overrun and destroyed. Simultaneously, the global counterterrorism efforts by the U.S. and its

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[2] Much of the following discussion is excerpted from the revised and expanded edition of the author's 1998 book, *Inside Terrorism*. The new, second edition, will be published in the U.S. by Columbia University Press in July 2006 and in Germany by S. Fischer Verlag in March 2006.

allies resulted, as President Bush has frequently described, in the death or capture of upwards of three-quarters of al Qaeda's senior leadership, the arrests of some 4,000 al Qaeda operatives worldwide, and the identification and seizure or "freezing" of more than $140 million of terrorist assets. And, during a subsequent phase of the GWOT, Iraq was invaded and liberated, the Ba'athist regime destroyed, and Saddam Hussein and his most important henchmen were systematically hunted down and either killed or captured. Subsequent, equally clear and unambiguous successes, however, have arguably eluded the U.S. Perhaps the most important reason for the current stasis is the paradox whereby our successes in the GWOT have indeed forced our adversaries to change, but our adversaries have also demonstrated that they are capable and able to effect such changes and thus adjust and adapt to even our most consequential countermeasures.

THE AL QAEDA MOVEMENT TODAY:
ADAPTIVE, RESILIENT, AND STILL FORMIDABLE

Since 9/11 al Qaeda has clearly shown itself to be a nimble, flexible, and adaptive entity. In retrospect, the loss of Afghanistan does not appear to have affected al Qaeda's ability to mount terrorist attacks to the extent we had perhaps hoped when "Operation Enduring Freedom" began.[3] In fact, al Qaeda had rebounded from its Afghanistan setbacks within weeks of the last set-piece battles that were fought in the White Mountains along the Pakistani border at Shoh-e-Kot, Tora Bora and elsewhere between December 2001 and March 2002. The attacks in Tunisia in April 2002 and in Pakistan the next month provided the first signs of this movement's resiliency. These were followed in turn by the attacks in Bali, Yemen, and Kuwait the following October, and then by the coordinated, near-simultaneous incidents against an Israeli hotel and charger passenger jet in Kenya that November and the two near successes the movement had in assassinating the president of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, the following month.

Al Qaeda's capacity to continue to plan and execute new terrorist strikes despite the loss of Afghanistan as a base shouldn't come as a surprise. Previous "high-end" attacks, for example, predated its comfortable relationship with the Taliban in Afghanistan and had

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[3] See, for example, Associated Press, "Expert Warns of al-Qaida-Linked Groups," 7 January 2004; Ellen Nakashima, "Thai Officials Probe Tie To Al Qaeda in Attacks," *Washington Post*, 9 January 2004; Associated Press, "Saudis Discover al-Qaida Training Camps," 15 January 2004

already demonstrated that the movement's strength is not in geographical possession or occupation of a defined geographical territory, but in its fluidity and impermanence. The activities of the peripatetic Ramzi Ahmad Yousef, reputed mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and his uncle, Khalid Shiekh Mohammed (KSM), during the former's sojourn in the Philippines during 1994 and 1995 is a case in point. Their grand scheme to bomb simultaneously 12 American commercial aircraft in mid-flight over the Pacific Ocean (the infamous "Bojinka" plot),[4] for example, did not require extensive operational bases and command and control headquarters in an existing country to facilitate its planning and execution.

Perhaps al Qaeda's greatest achievement, though, has been the makeover it has given itself since 2001.[5] On the eve of 9/11, al Qaeda was a unitary organization, assuming the dimensions of a lumbering bureaucracy. The troves of documents and voluminous data from computer hard disks captured in Afghanistan, for example, revealed as much mundane bumf as grandiose plots: complaints about expensive cell-phone bills and expenditures for superfluous office equipment[6] as well as crude designs for dreamt-about nuclear weapons.[7] Because of its logistical bases and infrastructure in Afghanistan, that now-anachronistic version of al Qaeda had a clear, distinct center of gravity. As we saw in the systematic and rapid destruction inflicted during the military operations as part of "Operation Enduring Freedom" during the global war on terrorism's first phase, that structure was not only extremely vulnerable to the application of conventional military power, but played precisely to the American military's vast technological strengths. In the time since 9/11, however, bin Laden and his lieutenants have engineered nothing short of a stunning make-over of al Qaeda from a unitary organization to something more

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[4] See the particularly knowledgeable account of this plot in Maria A. Ressa, *Seeds Of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia* (New York: Free Press, 2003), pp. 1-5 & 21-44.

[5] This point is also made in International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 2003/4* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 6, where the authors note: "The Afghanistan intervention offensively hobbled, but defensively benefited, al-Qaeda. While al-Qaeda lost a recruiting magnet and a training, command and operations base, it was compelled to disperse and become even more decentralized, 'virtual' and invisible."

[6] See Alan Cullison, "Inside Al-Qaeda's Hard Drive," *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 294, no. 2, September 2004, pp. 63-64.

[7] Presentation by CNN correspondent Mike Boetcher, at the "Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence Symposium on Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in the Greater Middle East," University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Scotland, 7-8 June 2002.

akin to an ideology that is true to its name and original mission——the "base of operation" or "foundation" or, as other translations more appropriately describe it, as the "precept" or "method." Al Qaeda in essence has transformed itself from a bureaucratic entity that could be destroyed and an irregular army that could be defeated on the battlefield to the clearly less powerful, but nonetheless arguably more resilient, amorphous entity it is today.

The al Qaeda movement therefore is now best described as a networked transnational constituency rather than the monolithic, international terrorist organization with an identifiable command and control apparatus that it once was. The result is that today there are many al Qaedas rather than the single al Qaeda of the past. The current al Qaeda therefore exists more as an ideology that has become a vast enterprise——an international franchise with like-minded local representatives, loosely connected to a central ideological or motivational base, but advancing the remaining center's goals at once simultaneously and independently of each other. Hence, unlike the hierarchical, pyramidal structure that typified terrorist groups of the past, the current al Qaeda movement in the main is flatter, more linear and organizationally networked. Nonetheless, it still retains some important characteristics and aspects of a more organized entity: mixing and matching organizational and operational styles whether dictated by particular missions or imposed by circumstances.

Al Qaeda can perhaps be usefully conceptualized as comprising four distinct, but not mutually exclusive, dimensions. In descending order of operational sophistication, they are:

1. **Al Qaeda Central**. This category comprises the remnants of the pre-9/11 al Qaeda organization. Although its core leadership includes some of the familiar, established commanders of the past, there are a number of new players who have advanced through the ranks as a result of the death or capture of key al Qaeda senior-level managers such as KSM, Abu Atef, Abu Zubayda, and Hambali, and most recently, Abu Faraj al-Libi. It is believed that this hardcore remains centered in or around Pakistan and continues to exert some coordination, if not actual command capability, in terms of commissioning attacks, directing surveillance and collating reconnaissance, planning operations, and approving their execution.

This category comes closest to the al Qaeda operational template or model evident in the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings and 9/11 attacks. Such high value, "spectacular" attacks are entrusted only to al Qaeda's professional cadre: the most dedicated, committed and absolutely reliable element of the movement. Previous patterns suggest that these "professional" terrorists are deployed in pre-determined and carefully selected teams. They will also have been provided with very specific targeting instructions. In some cases, such as the East Africa bombings, they may establish contact with, and enlist the assistance of, local sympathizers and supporters. This will be solely for logistical and other attack-support purposes or to enlist these locals to actually execute the attack(s). The operation, however, will be planned and directed by the "professional" element with the locals clearly subordinate and playing strictly a supporting role (albeit a critical one, though).

2. **Al Qaeda Affiliates and Associates.** This category embraces formally established insurgent or terrorist groups who over the years have benefited from bin Laden's largesse and/or spiritual guidance and/or have received training, arms, money and other assistance from al Qaeda. Among the recipients of this assistance have been terrorist groups and insurgent forces in Uzbekistan and Indonesia, Chechnya and the Philippines, Bosnia and Kashmir, among other places. By supporting these groups, bin Laden's intentions were three-fold. First, he sought to co-opt these movements' mostly local agendas and channel their efforts towards the cause of global jihad. Second, he hoped to create a jihadist "critical mass" from these geographically scattered, disparate movements that would one day coalesce into a single, unstoppable force. And, third, he wanted to foster a dependency relationship whereby as a quid pro quo for prior al Qaeda support, these movements would either undertake attacks at al Qaeda's behest or provide essential local, logistical and other support to facilitate strikes by the al Qaeda "professional" cadre noted above.

This category includes groups such as: al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI), Abu Musab Zarqawi's al Qaeda in Mesopotamia (formerly *Jamaat al Tawhid wa'l Jihad*), Asbat al-Ansar, Ansar al Islam, Islamic Army of Aden, Islamic Movement of

Uzbekistan (IMU), Jemaah Islamiya (JI), Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), and the various Kashmiri Islamic groups based in Pakistan——e.g., Harakat ul Mujahidin (HuM), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Laskar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), and Laskar I Jhangvi (LiJ).

3. **Al Qaeda Locals.** These are amorphous groups of al Qaeda adherents who are likely to have had some prior terrorism experience, will have been bloodied in battle as part of some previous jihadist campaign in Algeria, the Balkans, Chechnya, and perhaps more recently in Iraq, and may have trained in some al Qaeda facility before 9/11. They will therefore have had some direct connection with al Qaeda——however tenuous or evanescent. Their current relationship, and even communication, with a central al Qaeda command and control apparatus may be equally tenuous, if not actually dormant. The distinguishing characteristic of this category, however, is that there is some previous connection of some kind with al Qaeda.

Specific examples of this adversary include Ahmed Ressam, who was arrested in December 1999 at Port Angeles, Washington State, shortly after he had entered the U.S. from Canada. Ressam, for instance, had a prior background in terrorism having belonged to Algeria's Armed Islamic Group (GIA). After being recruited to al Qaeda, he was provided with a modicum of basic terrorist training in Afghanistan. In contrast to the professional cadre detailed above, however, Ressam was given very non-specific, virtually open-ended targeting instructions before being dispatched to North America. Also, unlike the well-funded professional cadre, Ressam was given only $12,000 in "seed money" and instructed to raise the rest of his operational funds from petty thievery. He was also told to recruit members for his terrorist cell from among the expatriate Muslim communities in Canada and the U.S.[8]

4. **Al Qaeda Network**. These are home-grown Islamic radicals——from North Africa, the Middle East, and South and South East Asia——as well as local

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[8] See 1734HA01, United States District Court, Southern District of New York, United States of America v. Mokhtar Haouri, S4 00 Cr. 15 (JFK), 3 June 2001, pp. 538, 548, 589, 622, 658, & 697.

converts to Islam mostly living in Europe, Africa and perhaps Latin America and North America as well, who have no direct connection with al Qaeda (or any other identifiable terrorist group), but nonetheless are prepared to carry out attacks in solidarity with, or support of, al Qaeda's radical jihadist agenda. They are motivated by a shared sense of enmity and grievance felt towards the United States and the West in general and their host-nations in particular. In this case, the relationship with al Qaeda is more inspirational than actual, abetted by profound rage over the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq and the oppression of Muslims in Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, and elsewhere. Critically, these radicals are neither part of a known, organized group nor even a very cohesive entity unto themselves.

Examples of this category, which comprises small cells of like-minded locals who gravitate towards one to plan and mount terrorist attacks completely independent of any direction provided by al Qaeda, include the group of mostly Moroccan Islamic radicals based in Spain who carried out the March 2004 Madrid bombings and their counterparts in the Netherlands responsible for the November 2004 murder of Theo Van Gogh, as well as perhaps the perpetrators of the July 2005 attacks on London's transit system.

The most salient threat posed by the above categories, however, continues to come from al Qaeda Central and then from its affiliates and associates. However, an additional and equally challenging threat is now posed by less discernible and more unpredictable entities drawn from the vast Muslim Diaspora in Europe. As far back as 2001, the Netherlands' intelligence and security service had detected increased terrorist recruitment efforts among Muslim youth living in the Netherlands whom it was previously assumed had been completely assimilated into Dutch society and culture.[9] Thus, representatives of Muslim extremist organizations had already succeeded in embedding themselves in, and drawing new sources of support from, receptive elements within established Diaspora communities. In this way, new recruits could be drawn into the movement who likely had not previously come under the scrutiny of local or national law enforcement agencies.

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[9] See General Intelligence and Security Service, *Recruitment for the jihad in the Netherlands: from incident to trend* (The Hague: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, December 2002).

This new category of terrorist adversary, moreover, also has proven more difficult for the authorities in these countries to track, predict and anticipate. They comprise often previously unknown cells whom it is otherwise difficult, if not impossible, to effectively profile. Although the members may be marginalized individuals working in menial jobs from the lower socio-economic strata of society, some of whom with long criminal records or histories of juvenile delinquency; others may well come from solidly middle and upper-middle class backgrounds with university and perhaps even graduate degrees and prior passions for cars, sports, rock music and other completely secular, more ethereal interests. What they will have in common is a combination of a deep commitment to their faith——often recently re-discovered; admiration of bin Laden for the cathartic blow struck against America on 9/11; hatred of the U.S. and the West; and, a profoundly shared sense of alienation from their host countries. These new recruits are the anonymous cogs in the worldwide al Qaeda enterprise and include both long-standing residents and new immigrants found across in Europe, but specifically in countries with large expatriate Muslim populations such as Britain, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium.

Al Qaeda's "operational durability" thus has enormous significance for U.S. counterterrorism strategy and policy. Because it has this malleable resiliency, it cannot be destroyed or defeated in a single tactical, military engagement or series of engagements——much less ones exclusively dependent on the application of conventional forces and firepower. In sum, al Qaeda has not only survived the military onslaught directed against it in Afghanistan during 2001 and 2002, but it has re-configured itself from the unitary organization that was once vulnerable to the application of U.S. military power to a more diffuse and amorphous ideological movement inspiring like-minded affiliates and associates. The new al Qaeda thus poses new, different, and more complex challenges than its previous incarnation did.

THE ONGOING INSURGENCY IN IRAQ AND THE GWOT

The other reason for the current stasis in progress regarding the GWOT is the escalating insurgency in Iraq and the new, and perhaps unanticipated operational challenges and requirements it has imposed on U.S. military capabilities and forces that were not present in the initial operations of the GWOT. What U.S. military commanders optimistically

described in late 2003 as the jihadist "magnet" or terrorist "flytrap" orchestrated by the U.S. invasion of Iraq is viewed very differently by al Qaeda. "We thank God," bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri declared on the occasion of the second anniversary of the 9/11 attack, "for appeasing us with the dilemmas in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Americans are facing a delicate situation in both countries. If they withdraw they will lose everything and if they stay, they will continue to bleed to death."[10] On the attacks' third anniversary, he issued a slightly different version of the same statement, now proclaiming that U.S. defeat in Iraq and Afghanistan "has become just a question of time. . . . . The Americans in both countries are between two fires," Zawahiri explained. "[I]f they continue, they will bleed until death, and if they withdraw, they will lose everything."[11]

For al Qaeda, accordingly, Iraq has likely been a very useful side-show: an effective means to preoccupy American military forces and distract U.S. attention while al Qaeda and its confederates make new inroads and strike elsewhere. On a personal level, it may have also provided bin Laden and al-Zawahiri with the breathing space that they desperately needed to further obfuscate their trail. But most importantly, Iraq has figured prominently in al Qaeda and jihadist plans and propaganda as a means to reinvigorate the jihadist cause and sustain its momentum as well as engage U.S. forces in battle and thus perpetuate the image of Islam cast perpetually on the defensive with no alternative but to take up arms against American and Western aggressors. In addition, the ongoing violence in Iraq coupled with the inability of U.S. and coalition and Iraqi security forces to maintain order and the Abu Ghraib revelations along with other disadvantageous developments, have all doubtless contributed to America's poor standing in the Muslim world.

Nonetheless, whatever the outcome of the current conflict in Iraq, its consequences will likely be felt for years to come. Much like Afghanistan after the struggle against the Soviet occupation ended in that country, the surviving foreign jihadists who fought in Iraq will eventually return to their home countries or the émigré communities that they came from. Having been blooded in battle in Iraq, they will possess the experience,

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[10] Quoted in Anonymous, *Imperial Hubris: Why The West Is Losing The War On Terror* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's 2004), p. xxi.
[11] Quoted in Walter Pincus, 'Al Qaeda Releases Tape Predicting U.S. Defeat,' *Washington Post*, 10 September 2004.

cachet and credibility useful for both jihadist recruitment and operational purposes elsewhere. Moreover, in contrast to the mujahideen who returned home from Afghanistan a decade and a half ago who were mostly trained in rural guerrilla warfare, this new generation of jihadists will have acquired in Iraq invaluable first-hand experience in urban warfare——including the construction of vehicular and roadside IEDs, the use of stand-off weaponry like mortars and similar remote-control fired devices, assassination and kidnapping techniques, and sniper and ambush tactics.[12] The application of these newly learned capabilities to urban centers in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and elsewhere could result in a precipitous escalation of bloodshed and destruction, reaching into countries and regions that hitherto have experienced little, if any, organized jihadist violence. While the threat to Europe is perhaps the most serious, the danger may be greatest in Saudi Arabia: the country from which the overwhelming majority of jihadists (61 percent) fighting in Iraq hail.[13] We may thus be on the cusp of an even bloodier and arguably more sustainable campaign of al Qaeda and al Qaeda-inspired violence in the years to come. What can and what should the U.S. do to counter it is the subject of the next, concluding section of this testimony.

REALIGNING AMERICAN COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY WITH THE THREAT[14]

Winning the GWOT, as many observers agree, will take decades, not years, to accomplish. Our ability to achieve that victory will depend fundamentally on the ability of American strategy to adjust and adapt to changes we see in the nature and character of our adversaries. At the foundation of such a dynamic and adaptive policy must be the ineluctable axiom that effectively and successfully countering terrorism as well as insurgency is not exclusively a military endeavor but also involves fundamental parallel political, social, economic, and ideological activities. Although explicitly recognizing the importance of all these diverse elements of national power in the struggle against

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[12] See Douglas Jehl, 'Iraq May Be Prime Place for Training of Militants, C.I.A. Report Concludes,' *New York Times*, 22 June 2005.
[13] Followed by Syria (10 percent) and Kuwait seven percent). See Reuven Paz, 'Arab volunteers killed in Iraq: an Analysis,' *PRISM Series of Global Jihad*, vol. 3, no. 1 (March 2005), p. 2 accessed at www.e-prism.org/pages/4/index.htm.
[14] The witness is grateful to Colonel Fred T. Krawchuk, U.S. Army Special Forces for his helpful comments, advice, and contributions to this section of the written testimony.

terrorism,[15] in practice America's counterterrorism strategy appears predominantly weighted towards the tactical "kill or capture" approach and metric: assuming that a traditional center of gravity exists whether the target is al Qaeda or the insurgency in Iraq and that this target simply needs to be destroyed so that global terrorism or the Iraqi insurgency will end. Both the adversaries and the threats that they pose, however, are much more elusive and complicated, as the previous discussion has argued. Moreover, as also was noted earlier, what worked for the U.S. and coalition during the initial operations of the GWOT——when we faced a differently configured and structured al Qaeda, for instance, and before the intensification of the insurgency in Iraq——will likely not prove as effective given the deliberate changes effected to obviate American countermeasures and the evolution in both terrorism and insurgency that we have seen. In so fluid an environment, our strategy must accordingly change and adopt as well. What will be required today and in the future to ensure continued success, therefore, is a more integrated, systems approach to a complex problem that is at once operationally durable, evolutionary and elusive in character. The U.S., in sum, cannot rest on the past laurels of success during the opening phases of the GWOT, but will need instead to adjust and adapt its strategy, resources, and tactics to formidably evolutionary opponents that, as we have seen, are widely dispersed and decentralized and whose many destructive parts are autonomous, mobile, and themselves highly adaptive.

That the above description conforms as much as to the current insurgency in Iraq as to the new form that al Qaeda and the radical jihadist threat has assumed, says volumes about the challenge this operational environment poses to U.S. national security. An effective response will thus ineluctably be predicated upon a strategy that effectively combines the tactical elements of systematically destroying and weakening enemy capabilities (the "kill or capture" approach) alongside the equally critical, broader strategic imperative of breaking the cycle of terrorist and insurgent recruitment and replenishment that have respectively sustained both al Qaeda's continued campaign and the ongoing conflict in Iraq. Accordingly, rather than viewing the fundamental organizing principle of American national defense strategy in this unconventional realm as a GWOT, it may be more useful to re-conceptualize it in terms of a global counterinsurgency (GCOIN). Such an approach would a priori knit together the equally critical political, economic, diplomatic,

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[15] See *National Strategy For Combating Terrorism*, February 2003, p. 29, but also pp. 2 & 11-12.

and developmental sides inherent to the successful prosecution of counterinsurgency to the existing dominant military side of the equation.[16] Although this desideratum is explicitly cited as the third "D" of the *National Strategy For Combating Terrorism's* "Four Ds"——to "**defeat** terrorist organizations of global reach through relentless action"; "**deny** terrorists the sponsorship, support, and sanctuary they need to survive"; to "win the war of ideas and **diminish** the underlying conditions that promote the despair and the destructive visions of political change that lead people to embrace, rather than shun terrorism"; and, to "**defend** against terrorist attacks on the United States, our citizens, and our interests around the world"[17]——it is precisely in this critical third dimension of diminishing underlying conditions where the U.S. strategy and efforts to date has proven particularly wanting.

For instance, despite the damage and destruction and losses of key leaders and personnel that al Qaeda has suffered over the past three-plus years, it stubbornly adheres to its fundamental raison d'etre: continuing to inspire and motivate the broader radical jihadist community. The principle of jihad is the ideological bond that unites this amorphous movement: surmounting its loose structure, diverse membership and geographical separation. The requirement to engage in jihad is relentlessly expounded in both video- and audio-tapes of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri and other senior al Qaeda personalities, on myriad jihadist web-sites, and by radical clerics, lay-preachers speaking in mosques or addressing informal circles of adherents in more private settings. The struggle is cast in narrow defensive terms: extolling the duty of the faithful to defend Islam by the sword. Imitation by example is encouraged through the depiction of the sacrifices of past martyrs (suicide terrorists and others who perished in battle against the infidels) coupled with messages about the importance of continuous battle against Islam's enemies. "It is no secret that warding off the American enemy is the top duty after faith and that nothing

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[16] This ineluctable principle of countering insurgency was first defined by Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer in Malaya more than 50 yeas ago. "The shooting side of the business is only 25% of the trouble and the other 75% lies in getting the people of this country behind us," Templer famously wrote in November 1952, responding to a communist directive from the previous year that focused on increase appreciably "cajolery" of the population. Quoted in John Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya——The Life of Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer*, (London: Harrap, 1985), p. 262.
[17] See *National Strategy For Combating Terrorism*, February 2003, p. 29, but also pp. 11-12.

should take priority over it," bin Laden wrote in his seminal 1996 declaration of war.[18]
Such exhortations continue to resonate today when many Muslims harbor a deep sense of
humiliation and resentment over the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the continued
bloodletting of their co-religionists in Palestine, Chechnya, and Kashmir among other
places,[19] the ill-treatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo alongside the
myriad other reasons jihadists have for hating the United States. Indeed, the expostulated
theological requirement to avenge the shedding of innocent Muslim blood——and
particularly that of Muslim children who have been killed in Iraq and Palestine——has
repeatedly been invoked by bin Laden.[20] These calls for revenge coupled with the
terrorists' own abiding faith in the potential regenerative power of even a single, new
dramatic terrorist attack to breathe new life into the jihadist movement, ensure that the
war on terrorism will be won neither easily nor soon.

Terrorist morale is also sustained by propaganda portraying the 9/11 attacks as a great
victory and America's involvement in Iraq as a quagmire that will ultimately bring about
the U.S.'s downfall. The connection between the destruction of the World Trade Center
and the blow struck against the U.S. economy by the 9/11 attacks has been a persistent
jihadist theme.[21] It was repeated by bin Laden himself in the videotape broadcast on 29
October 2004, when he explained, "So we are continuing this policy in bleeding America
to the point of bankruptcy. Allah willing, and nothing is too great for Allah."[22] Parallels
are also drawn with the mujahideen's defeat of the Red Army in Afghanistan, the alleged
chain reaction it set in motion that led to the demise of the Soviet Union and collapse of
communism with the current travails the U.S. faces in Iraq and the inevitability of our
defeat there at the hands of contemporary jihadists. Indeed, al Qaeda propaganda has

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[18] "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy
Places," in Yonah Alexander and Michael Swetnam, *Usama bin Laden's al-Qaid: Profile
of a Terrorist Network* (Ardsley, NY: Transnational, 2001)*, Appendix 1 A, p. 19.
[19] See, for example, 'Text of Bin Laden Remarks: "Hypocrisy Rears Its Ugly Head",'
Washington Post, 8 October 2001.
[20]Ibid. See also, Anonymous, Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical
Islam, and the Future of America (Dulles, VA: Brassey's 2002), pp. 47 & 197.
[21] Paul Eedle, "Terrorism.com," The Guardian (London), 17 July 2002.
[22] Al Jazeera.Net, 'NEWS: Arab World——Full Transcript of bin Laden's speech,' 1
November 2004 accessed at http://Englishaljazeera.net/NR/exeres/79C6AF22-98FB-
4A1C-B21F-2BC36E87F61F.htm.

long described the U.S. as a "paper tiger,"[23] on the verge of financial ruin and total collapse much as the USSR once was, with the power of Islam poised similarly to push America over the precipice.[24] Bin Laden emphasized this very point in his last publicly known address to his fighters in December 2001, when he declared that, "America is in retreat by the grace of God Almighty and economic attrition is continuing up to today. But it needs further blows. The young men need to seek out the nodes of the American economy and strike the enemy's nodes."[25] And, he repeated it again in the aforementioned videotape released just days before the 2004 American presidential elections. "This is in addition to our having experience in using guerrilla warfare and the war of attrition to fight tyrannical superpowers, as we, alongside the Mujahideen, bled Russia for ten years, until it went bankrupt and was forced to withdraw in defeat. All Praise is due to Allah."[26] This strategy thus continues to guide jihadist target selection and tactics today.

The al Qaeda movement's ability to continue to prosecute this struggle is also a direct reflection of its capacity to attract new recruits and replenish expended resources. Its survival may also be dependent upon the preservation of some core leadership cadre to champion and lead this campaign. In this respect, al Qaeda appears to retain at least some depth in managerial personnel as evidenced by its ability to produce successor echelons for the mid-level operational commanders who have been killed or captured. But the main challenge for al Qaeda and the wider jihadist movement is to promote and ensure its durability as an ideology and concept. It can only achieve this by staying in the news: elbowing itself into the limelight through dramatic and bloody attack, thereby promoting its continued relevance as the defenders and avengers of Muslims everywhere.[27] Violence will thus continue to be key to ensuring its continued presence as an international political force. Hence, al Qaeda and the wider movement's resiliency——if not, longevity——will thereby be predicated on its continued ability to recruit new cadre, mobilize the Muslim masses, and marshal support——both spiritual and practical——for jihad.

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[23] Quoted in John Miller, 'Interview; Osama Bin Laden (May 1998)' accessed at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/who/interview.html.

[24] Anonymous, Through Our Enemies' Eyes, p. xix.

[25] Translation by, and personal communication with, Eedle, 31 July 2002.

[26] 'Transcript: Full Text From The 18 Minute Tape Released By Al-Jazeera From Osama Bin Laden.'

[27] Bin Laden's 29 October 2004 also evidenced this understanding. See Ibid.

The success of U.S. strategy will ultimately be based on our ability to counter al Qaeda's ideology and message effectively and thereby break the cycle of recruit and regeneration that has sustained the movement thus far. To a large extent crafting and implementing such a strategy will ineluctably depend on our capacity to think like a networked enemy, in anticipation of how they may act in a variety of situations, aided by different resources. This goal requires that the American national security structure in turn organize itself for maximum efficiency, information sharing, and the ability to function quickly and effectively under new operational definitions. With this thorough understanding in mind, security and defense planners need to craft an approach that specifically takes into account the following key factors to effectively wage a GCOIN:

1. Separating the enemy from the populace that provides support and sustenance. This, in turn, entails three basic missions:
   a.   Denial of enemy sanctuary
   b.   Elimination of enemy freedom of movement
   c.   Denial of enemy resources and support;
2. Identification and neutralization of the enemy;
3. Creation of a secure environment——progressing from local to regional to global;
4. Ongoing and effective neutralization of enemy propaganda through the planning and execution of a comprehensive and integrated information operations and holistic civil affairs campaign in harmony with the first four tasks;
5. Interagency efforts to build effective and responsible civil governance mechanisms that eliminate the fundamental causes of terrorism and insurgency.

Greater attention to this integration of American capabilities would provide incontrovertible recognition of the importance of endowing a GCOIN with an overriding and comprehensive, multi-dimensional, policy. Ideally, this policy would embrace several elements: including a clear strategy, a defined structure for implementing it, and a vision of inter-government agency cooperation, and the unified effort to guide it. It would necessitate building bridges and creating incentives to more effectively blend diplomacy, justice, development, finance, intelligence, law enforcement, and military

capabilities along with untangling lines of authority, de-conflicting overlapping responsibilities and improving the ability to prioritize and synchronize interagency operations in a timely and efficient manner. Organizations will therefore have to do——or be compelled to do——what they have been reluctant to do in the past: reaching across bureaucratic territorial divides and sharing resources in order to defeat terrorists, insurgencies, and other emerging threats. Clarifying these expectations and processes is a critical step in efficiently addressing contemporary threats to U.S. security, and coherently generating and applying resources to defeat those threats. This would have particular benefit with respect to the gathering and exploitation of "actionable intelligence." By updating and streamlining interagency counterterrorism and counterinsurgency systems and procedures both strategically as well as operationally between the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the intelligence community, actionable intelligence could likely be acquired, analyzed and disseminated faster and operations mounted more quickly. A more focused and strengthened interagency process would also facilitate the coordination of key themes and messages and the development and execution of long-term "hearts and minds" programs.[28]

Even the best strategy will be proven inadequate if military and civilian agency leaders are not prepared to engage successfully within ambiguous environments and reorient their organizational culture to deal with irregular threats. Success transcends the need for better tactical intelligence or new organizations. It is fundamentally about transforming the attitudes and mindsets of leaders so that they have the capacity to take decisive, yet thoughtful action against terrorists and/or insurgents in uncertain or unclear situations based on a common vision, policy, and strategy. Arguably, by combating irregular adversaries in a more collaborative manner with key relevant civilian agencies, military planners can better share critical information, track the various moving parts in terrorist/insurgency networks, and develop a comprehensive picture of this enemy——including their supporters, nodes of support, organizational and operational systems, processes, and plans.

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[28] Facilitating this would doubtless go well beyond DoD's purview, necessarily involving the National Security Council or the emerging National Counterterrorism Center and would likely entail the development of an "operational arm" with the authority of the President to de-conflict, synchronize, and task the various agencies of the government involved in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations.

CONCLUSION

Given these trends and developments in al Qaeda's evolution, what can the U.S. do given these changed circumstances and this highly dynamic threat? Eight broad imperatives or policy options appear most relevant.

1. The preeminent lesson of 9/11 is not to be lulled into a false sense of complacency or to rest on past laurels: especially in a struggle that our adversaries have defined as a war of attrition. In these circumstances, the main challenge we face is to retain focus and maintain vigilance and keep up pressure on terrorists by adapting and adjusting ourselves—rapidly and efficiently—to the changes unfolding with respect to terrorism. To do so, we need to better understand al Qaeda's operations and evolution and thus more effectively anticipate changes in radical international jihadism and better assess the implications of those changes. "If you know the enemy and know yourself," Sun Tzu argues, "you need not fear the results of a hundred battles." Four years into the GWOT we do neither really know nor fully understand our enemy. During the Vietnam conflict, for instance, tremendous efforts and resources were devoted to understanding Viet Cong morale and motivation and the ideological and psychological mindset of our enemy. Today, no such program is evident with the attention seemingly focused exclusively on identifying high-value targets or ensuring military force protection and not critically also to fully understanding our current enemies.

2. We must ensure that the new Iraq succeeds. The stakes are enormous. Iraq has become a critical arena and test of America's strength and resolve. That a democratic, stable government takes root in Iraq, that the Iraqi people are united in having a stake in that outcome, and that security is achieved throughout the country have indisputably become among the most important metrics not only for assessing success in Iraq, but inevitably now in the war on terrorism. Failure and/or withdrawal from Iraq by U.S. forces and abandonment of our efforts in that country, will surely be trumpeted by radical jihadists as a victory over America on par with the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan——with even worse and more consequential repercussions. Having set out to establish democracy and stability in Iraq, we cannot waver from achieving that goal lest we hand our opponents a tremendously significant propaganda victory.

3. We must systematically and thoroughly overhaul our communications with, and create a more positive image of, the U.S. in the Muslim world. These communications were already fractured and our efforts both stillborn and maladroit before the invasion of Iraq and the revelations about the treatment of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib surfaced. Fixing these efforts and repairing the damage done has become critical——and indeed is now the focus of rejuvenated State Department efforts—— dubbed a SAVE (struggle against violent extremism). This new emphasis on a richer mix of policy options and information operations that specifically seeks to ameliorate Muslim antipathy towards the U.S. by undercutting support for radical Islam——is a positive, though lamentably belated, development. The U.S. today is already increasingly viewed as a malignant force among Muslims throughout the world: thus furnishing al Qaeda propagandists with fresh ammunition and alienating precisely that community which must be our closest allies in the struggle against terrorism. The damage has thus been done and it will take years to repair. Greater resources and more sustained focused efforts will need to be committed to improving our public diplomacy in the Muslim world as well as to develop more effective initiatives to counter the messages of radicalism and hate promulgated with greater fervor by radical jihadists. In particular, special efforts must be devoted to effectively countering the messages of hate and intolerance and the calls for violence and bloodshed that now permeate the Internet. The coarsest most base conspiracy theories are regularly peddled with a frequency that has endowed them with a veracity through repetition and ubiquity that is divorced from reality. Accordingly, this "war of words" needs to be fought most critically on and through the Internet——an arena where American efforts have been particularly anemic while those of our enemies have been active, voluminous and indeed effective. Before 9/11, for example, al Qaeda had only one website: www.alneda.com. Today, the movement is present on more than 50 different sites.[29] "The more Web sites, the better it is for us," a jihadist statement posted on azzam.com in 2002 proclaimed. "We must make the Internet our tool."[30] For al Qaeda, the Internet therefore has become something of a virtual sanctuary: providing an effective, expeditious and anonymous means through which the movement can continue to communicate with its fighters, followers, sympathizers and supporters world-wide.

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[29] Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, forthcoming), p. 64.
[30] 'Information Security News: Militants wire Web with links to jihad,' *InfoSec News*, 11 July 2002 quoted in Ibid., p. 27.

4. Part and parcel of the above, the U.S. should recognize that we can't compete with al Jazeera and other Arab media simply by creating rival outlets such as the Arabic-language television station, Al Hura, and radio station, Radio Sawa. In addition to those American-backed stations, which will inevitably take time to win their own significant audience share, we must meanwhile find ways to communicate more effectively using precisely media like al Jazeera and other foreign language outlets to get our message across and directly challenge and counter the misperceptions that they foster. Addressing the threat of radical Islam directly and head-on is thus imperative. Even if we maintain that this struggle is not a "clash of civilizations," our enemies regularly define it precisely as that. Indeed, al Qaeda describes its fundamental raison d'etre in terms of the "clash of civilizations" religious typology that America and its allies in the war on terrorism have labored so hard to avoid. "These events," bin Laden declared in his 7 October 2001 statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter, "have divided the world into two sides——the side of believers and the side of infidels. . . . . Every Muslim has to rush to make his religion victorious. The winds of faith have come."[31] In a videotaped speech broadcast over al-Jazeera television on 3 November 2001, he reiterated this message stating: "This is a matter of religion and creed, it is not what Bush and Blair maintain, that it is a war against terrorism. There is no way to forget the hostility between us and the infidels. It is ideological, so Muslims have to ally themselves with Muslims."[32]

5. We must address and conclusively resolve the open-ended legal status of the Guantánamo detainees and others held elsewhere. This is already a growing source of worldwide anger and opprobrium directed at the U.S., especially in the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib revelations. Failure to arrive at an acceptable international legal determination regarding the detainees' status and ultimate disposition will remain an open sore in how the U.S. is perceived abroad and especially in the Muslim world.

6. We must continue our concerted effort to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Neither Americans nor anyone else should be under any illusion that resolving this conflict will magically end global terrorism. Bin Laden and al Qaeda in fact took

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[31] 'Text of Bin Laden Remarks: "Hypocrisy Rears Its Ugly Head",' *Washington Post*, 8 October 2001.
[32] Neil MacFarquhar with Jim Rutenberg, 'Bin Laden, in a Taped Speech, Says Attacks in Afghanistan Are a War Against Islam,' *New York Times*, November 4, 2001, p. B2.

root and flowered in the late-1990s—precisely at a time when Palestinian-Israeli relations were at their zenith as a result of the Oslo Accords. But, it is nonetheless indisputable that being seen to play a more active and equitable role in resolving this conflict will have an enormously salutary effect on Middle Eastern stability, global Muslim attitudes towards the U.S., and America's image abroad.

7. We must more instinctively regard our relations with friends and allies in the war on terrorism as a perishable commodity: not taken for granted and regularly repaired, replenished and strengthened. Notwithstanding the sometimes profound policy differences that surfaced between the U.S. and even some of its closest allies over the war in Iraq, working-level intelligence and law enforcement cooperation in the war on terrorism has remained remarkably strong. However, these critically important relationships should neither be taken for granted nor be allowed to fray. This will entail repeated and ongoing sharing of intelligence, consultation and consensus and continued unity of effort if we are to prevail against the international jihadist threat. Moreover, for the war on terrorism to succeed, enhanced multilateral efforts will need to be strengthened to accompany the already existent, strong bilateral relations.

8. Finally, as previously argued, the U.S. must enunciate a clear policy for countering terrorism and from that policy develop a comprehensive strategy. In the confrontation with communism following World War II, the U.S. did not only declare a "war on communism." Rather, we also articulated the policy of containment and within that intellectual framework developed a clever, comprehensive, multi-faceted strategy— that did not rely exclusively on the military option—to serve that policy. This statement should not be interpreted as an argument in favor of some new containment strategy, but rather for similar clarity of thought and focus to guide and shape our thinking and direct our efforts through the subsequent phases of what will likely be a long struggle.

In sum, new times, new threats, and new challenges ineluctably make a new strategy, approach and new organizational and institutional behaviors necessary. The threat posed by elusive and deadly irregular adversaries emphasizes the need to anchor changes that will more effectively close the gap between detecting irregular adversarial activity and rapidly defeating it. The key to success will be in harnessing the overwhelming kinetic force of the U.S. military as part of a comprehensive vision to transform capabilities across government in order to deal with irregular and unconventional threats. A

successful strategy will therefore also be one that thinks and plans ahead with a view towards addressing the threats likely to be posed by the terrorist and insurgent generations beyond the current one.