



# TRANSNATIONAL THREATS UPDATE

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*“We know that the nation requires more from our Intelligence Community than ever before because America confronts a greater diversity of threats and challenges than ever before. Globalization...does facilitate the terrorist threat, heightens the danger of WMD proliferation, and contributes to regional instability and reconfigurations of power and influence.”*

The Honorable John D. Negroponte, Former Director of National Intelligence, Statement for the Record to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 11, 2007

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## Terrorism

### Insights into the Network

In an intriguing interview with CBS’s *60 Minutes* on March 25, 26-year-old British-Pakistani Hassan Butt provided impressively frank insights into the radicalization of young Muslims in Europe. Butt had been recruited to the so-called “Network” at age 16, having had exposure to some of the most radical imams in Britain. The Network, a web of radical organizations loosely affiliated with al Qaeda operating in Great Britain, is said to have recruited the 7/7 London suicide bombers and has turned Britain into Europe’s most fertile breeding ground for terrorists.

Butt said that he personally recruited between 50 and 75 young men to send them to training camps in Pakistan. He met with young British Muslims in his gym in Manchester and in other neighborhoods to talk about the suffering of Muslims all over the world. He emphasized that he never forced people into training,

but instead waited for them to express their interest. “If the person...has the conviction themselves to come up to you and say they want to, then they are the type of person who will most likely take that one step further and will be the reliable foot soldier for you.”

Asked about reasons for the radicalization of Muslims, Butt responded that many followers initially took the first steps to radicalization because radical Islam offered them a way out of being forced into an arranged marriage by their families. “The radical imams were offering them a way out,” he remarked.

At age 20, Butt moved to Pakistan to help British Muslims go to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban. As the Taliban retreated, the fighters went to Britain as sleeper cells to bring the fight home. Butt also returned to Britain and raised up to \$300,000 to fund the Network. He admitted to having met the ringleader of the 7/7 bombings, Mohammad Siddique Khan, but insisted he never discussed specific operations with him.

Butt believed there was a tacit agreement between radical imams and British law enforcement, allowing imams to preach hatred, recruit followers, and raise funds as long as they would not call for attacks on British soil. “And as a result of that,” he reiterated, “the British government lost count of how many people were going abroad, getting trained, and coming

back and going into operational mode as sleeper cells.”

If such an agreement existed, it fatally broke down in July 2005 with the London bombings. These attacks also changed Hassan Butt. He began to question the killing of innocent people in the name of Islam. When he questioned his handlers, they wanted to send him to Iraq “to receive reprogramming.” He left the Network and decided to reveal his story to the public.

“I’ve come to realize that killing in the name of Islam for the sake of killing is completely and utterly prohibited. There is a big problem in the Muslim world, and it’s a very big cancer that needs to be dealt with. As long as we, as Muslims, do not acknowledge that there is a violent streak in Islam, we are going to always lose the battle to the militants by being in complete denial about it.” (*CBS 60 Minutes*)

### **Southern Thailand Erupts in Insurgency Violence**

Thailand’s military-installed government and its prime minister, Surayud Chulanont, are failing to calm ethnic tensions across its southern provinces bordering Malaysia. Despite strenuous efforts to overhaul most of its predecessor’s policies and a declared willingness to address longstanding grievances, 400 people have died in attacks from Muslim insurgents since the military coup in September 2006. The attacks are reported to have become more sophisticated, provocative, and coordinated. As Bangkok’s commitments have proved difficult to translate into changes in the south, this month has been the bloodiest in a series of escalated violence since the overthrow of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra six months ago.

On March 14, separatists in Thailand’s Muslim-majority south killed nine Buddhist civilians, including six women, in an execution-style attack in the province of Yala. A week later, two soldiers were killed by militants while searching houses for insurgent activities in Narathiwat province. On March 24, two Buddhist police officers were killed while off duty in a crowded outdoor market. General Watanachai Chaimuanwong, the prime minister’s top security adviser, said that the militants are adopting al Qaeda strategies, increasingly targeting civilians and executing gruesome beheadings. A Hong Kong-based

consultancy, International Risk, called the insurgency the world’s “new terrorism front line,” and experts warn of a regionalization of the Thai insurgency due to complex outside involvement.

Whereas strategic goals of the insurgents remain blurry, analysts stress Malaysia’s role in the insurgency and the militants’ increasing outside connections and transnational training and recruitment. Bangkok has repeatedly accused Malaysia of providing safe havens for militants crossing the common border after attacks as well as tolerating militant training camps on its soil. According to Thai military, the number of insurgents ranged from 3,000 to 5,000, with some 10,000 to 12,000 sympathizers among the region’s 3 million Muslims.

International Crisis Group (ICG) published a report this month examining the interim government’s efforts to ease tensions in the Muslim south through a hearts-and-minds strategy rather than brute force. Chulanont has restructured the conflict management institutions in the south and taken trips to the region to launch reconciliation initiatives. He has also made a historic apology for the abuses and injustices of the previous government to the people of the south. The interim government’s strategy is widely unpopular in Thai public opinion. The majority of Thais express a strong hostility to negotiations with the insurgents. The militants have responded to the new approach with increased violence and propaganda aimed at undermining conciliation efforts.

Both government and law enforcement agencies prove unable to regain control over the situation. To date, the number of successful convictions of insurgents has been only two. Prof. Zachary Abuza, an expert on Southeast Asian politics and security, claims that the lack of coordination and sharing of intelligence are responsible for the failing judiciary system. Because of ill-executed investigations and lack of forensic evidence, courts throw cases out, and the military, in response, does not turn suspects over but rather holds them indefinitely. This creates a further sense of injustice that is felt by the Muslim community.

Abuza warns that the situation will worsen in Thailand’s south in the course of this year. If the government does not quickly dedicate credible resources and changes its strategy (something he claims is unlikely

to happen), Buddhist vigilante justice is likely to increase, creating an irreversible cycle of violence. (*Combined dispatches*)

### **Four Syrians Detained for Lebanese Bus Bombings**

Lebanon arrested four militants belonging to Fatah al-Islam, a self-proclaimed Sunni militant group allegedly linked to the Iraq insurgency and backed by Syria. The detainees reportedly confessed to having carried out the near simultaneous bus bombings near Beirut on February 13, 2007, killing 3 people and wounding more than 20.

But Fatah al-Islam spokesman Abu Salim told the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation that the group did not have the capacity to carry out the attack and was not involved. Little is known about Fatah al-Islam besides the group's creation after last year's split from Damascus-based Fatah Uprising, itself a branch of the Palestinian Fatah. Fatah al-Islam is said to have dozens of members in the Palestinian refugee camps in northern Lebanon. The alleged confessions raised fears that Sunni extremists are plotting attacks in a country that is already shattered with domestic warfare.

The attacks occurred on a busy commuter road northeast of Beirut, one day before the second anniversary of the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri. Two blasts tore through two buses within minutes of each other. A higher death toll was averted, because passengers of the second bus rushed out to help the victims of the first explosion. Despite accusations from the Lebanese government under Fouad Siniora, Syria denies any involvement. The Associated Press reported that the ringleader of the plot was Mustafa Sayour, a Syrian who confessed to having planted the bombs. (*Combined dispatches*)

### **German Train Bomber Confesses in Lebanon**

One of the two Lebanese suspects accused of placing bombs in suitcases on German trains in July last year reportedly confessed to his involvement in the terrorist plot, according to German press. Twenty-year-old Jihad Hamad escaped to Lebanon shortly after the failed attacks but was arrested in Beirut in August 2006. He confessed to placing the suitcases filled with explosives on one of the targeted trains departing

from Cologne's main station to travel through West Germany.

A German newspaper had reported that the plot was initially aimed at the World Cup soccer finals in July 2006, but the suspects changed their mind due to strong security at the event. In his confessions, Hamad reportedly stated that he had no intention of killing anyone, but rather wanted to issue a warning against insulting the Muslim prophet Mohammed. "I did not want to hurt anyone. I only wanted to stop people from defaming the image of the prophet Mohammed." German officials suspected the caricatures of the prophet Mohammed in the Danish daily, *Jyllands-Posten*, in September 2005 triggered the bomb plot.

The bombs were set to explode 10 minutes before the trains were due to arrive at the stations in the German cities of Koblenz and Dortmund. Hamad is accused of planning the attacks and placing the bombs with 21-year-old Lebanese Youssef al-Hajdib, who was arrested in Germany. Both resided in Cologne, Germany, as students and were described by friends and neighbors as "completely normal" and "polite" men. The head of Germany's Federal Crime Office (BKA), Jörg Ziercke, said that the two men had a certain base ideology when they came to live in Germany, but became more radicalized through al Qaeda Internet propaganda. The bombs failed to explode on July 31, 2006, because of faulty, timed detonators. Hamad's trial starts on April 11 in Beirut. If convicted, the suspects will face lifelong imprisonment in Lebanon. (*Combined dispatches*)

### **Moroccan Security Foils Suicide Bomb Plot**

The popular holiday resorts of Agadir, Marrakesh, and Essaouira in Morocco, along with foreign cruise liners in the port of Casablanca, were reportedly potential targets of a terrorist plot that was uncovered by Moroccan security forces earlier this month.

The follow-up investigation of a suicide bombing in a Casablanca Internet café on March 11 led to the arrests of 24 alleged fundamentalists in Sale, near Rabat, who reportedly planned to attack foreign tourists in Morocco. Twenty-three-year-old Abdelfettah Raydi blew himself up, injuring four people in an Internet café. It is said that the bomb went off acci-

dentally when a quarrel erupted between Raydi and the café manager's son.

Chakib Benmoussa, Morocco's interior minister, revealed details of the plot and claimed that at least half of the 24 arrested had intentions of becoming suicide bombers in a series of attacks against tourists. Morocco has been on high security alert since February, following a surge in terrorist activities across north-west Africa. (*Combined dispatches*)

## **Australian and Indonesian Police Thwart Bomb Plans**

A joint investigation of Australian Federal Police officers and Indonesian police led to the seizure of more than a ton of the deadly explosive potassium chloride and the arrest of seven men allegedly plotting a terrorist attack earlier this month. The law enforcement agencies claimed that if the seized material would have been used in an attack, the blast from such a bomb would have been twice the size of the bombing of the Australian embassy in Jakarta in 2004. The arrested are alleged members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).

While hunting for the emir of JI, Abu Dujana, in the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia's U.S.-trained counterterrorism squad, Detachment 88, seized explosives, TNT, jerry cans of liquid chemicals, detonators, and circuits that could be used for suicide bombings. It was announced that the Australian law enforcement agencies were closely involved in the investigations that led to the seizure.

Jemaah Islamiyah was responsible for the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings and other attacks such as the attack on the Australian embassy in 2004. Authorities consider Dujana, who fought alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan and, according to senior police officials, had connections to al Qaeda, to be the new emir of JI, having replaced Abu Rusdan as the head of the terrorist group. (*Combined dispatches*)

## **Counterterrorism**

### **Dutch Parliament Backs New Antiterror Law**

Controversial new antiterror measures were passed by the majority of the Dutch parliament this month, allowing for people to be banned from certain areas and

requiring individuals to report to the police at specific times, even if they have not committed a crime. These latest preventive measures follow a series of counterterrorism efforts in the Netherlands, including greater powers for intelligence gathering and tougher sentences for terrorist crimes.

Political parties and Dutch society are deeply entangled in a debate on whether the trade-off between security and legal rights is going too far. The Netherlands has not experienced a major terrorist attack, but the murder of the Dutch filmmaker and outspoken critic of Islam, Theo van Gogh, in November 2004, has put Dutch society on edge. The subsequent discovery of the homegrown terrorist network, the Hofstad Group, added to the anxiety that the Netherlands could be confronted with a larger attack soon.

Earlier this month, Ondiep, a working class neighborhood in the Dutch city of Utrecht, experienced riots after a 54-year-old Dutchman, Rinie Mulder, was killed by a police officer. Some observers labeled the uproar as ethnic riots, because there had been tensions between Moroccan youth and Dutch inhabitants of the neighborhood for some time. Locals accuse the police of failing to protect them while tolerating the immigrants' criminal behavior.

Mulder had filed a complaint with the police accusing the young Moroccans in his vicinity of public disturbance. He was killed by a police officer of Moroccan origin while confronting the Moroccans with a knife in hand. After the murder, locals and Dutch football hooligans started rioting in Ondiep. Dutch police arrested 130 people and eventually shut down the neighborhood after cars were burnt and shops looted, in an attempt to avoid the riots from escalating further. (*Combined dispatches*)

## **Terrorist Financing**

### **Canadian Baptist Minister Accused of Financing Afghan Terrorist Camps**

Sixty-one-year-old Brian David Anderson was arrested in Madrid, Spain, earlier this month for his alleged involvement in financing terrorist camps in Afghanistan. The Canadian Baptist minister is accused of fraud for scamming millions of dollars from investors together with his business partner Abdul Tawala

Ibn Ali Alishtari. The FBI arrested Alishtari in New York this past February.

The U.S. Department of Justice announced charges against Alishtari, accusing him of facilitating the transfer of \$152,000 with the intention of using it to help train terrorists in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The indictment states that he transferred the money in exchange for payment, indicating that his involvement may have been primarily motivated by profit rather than ideology.

British Columbian authorities, who have been investigating Anderson's financial dealings since April 2006, claim that the accused bilked investors of 7 million Canadian dollars through massive fraud by operating an untruthful loan program based in the United Arab Emirates. (*Combined dispatches*)

## Al Qaeda

### Al Qaeda Targeting High-Security Internet Hub in UK

Scotland Yard announced earlier this month that it uncovered evidence that al Qaeda plotted to bring down the Internet in the UK, causing chaos at the London Stock Exchange and to businesses. Recovered computer files revealed that the terrorists were targeting a high-security Internet hub, the Docklands facility in London. The facility houses the channel through which a large majority of cyber information passes in or out of Britain.

In a series of raids, police officers found computer files indicating that the suspects had targeted the headquarters of Telehouse Europe, which houses Europe's biggest Internet hub, containing dozens of servers. A senior official said that the police suspected the plotters of having planned to infiltrate and blow up Telehouse Europe from the inside.

The discovery led the MI5 to create a new Center for the Protection of National Infrastructure, a special MI5 unit that helps to deter terrorist attacks on networks such as telecommunications and the Internet and key utilities such as oil, gas installations, and nuclear power stations. (*Combined dispatches*)

## Organized Crime

### Crackdown on Fake Passport Factories in UK

British police cracked down on major, fake passport factories and suppliers earlier this month. London's Metropolitan Police arrested 22 people on March 21 in operation "Maxim," launched against the illegal passport factories. More than 100 officers seized large amounts of cash, false passports, driver licenses, and foreign identity documents at 13 locations across London. Nineteen people were arrested and accused of unlawful facilitation, identity card offences, and possession of and conspiracy to produce and distribute false documents.

The investigation also included organized immigration crime such as human smuggling. British Home Office minister Joan Ryan stated that the UK's Identity and Passport Service has received more than 16,000 fraudulent applications in 12 months, with almost half of these applications remaining undetected. (*Combined dispatches*)

## Maritime Security

### Former U.S. Sailor Arrested on Terrorism Charges

Hassan Abujihad, formerly known as Paul R. Hall, 31, was arrested on charges of espionage and providing material support for terrorism, earlier this month in Phoenix, Arizona. The case began in Connecticut, with an Internet service provider hosting terrorist fundraising Web sites, and follows a suspected terrorist network across the country and into Europe and the Middle East. Abujihad is accused of having provided classified information about a U.S. Navy battle group, traveling from California to the Persian Gulf, to a London-based group called Azzam Publications.

A British computer specialist, Babar Ahmad, was arrested in 2004 and accused of raising money for terrorism through the Web sites. Investigators found files on Ahmad's computer containing classified information about navy ships. The files included drawings of navy battle groups, information on upcoming missions, and documents describing how the battle group could be attacked using small weapons such as rocket-propelled grenades. Abujihad exchanged e-

mails with Ahmad in 2000 and 2001 while on active duty on the guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold in the Middle East. The e-mail exchanges included discussions regarding videos that promoted violent jihad and whether it was safe to send materials to Abujihaad at his military address aboard the USS Benfold.

The investigation started in Connecticut when Abujihaad allegedly used an Internet service provider to host his fundraising Web site. Abujihaad agreed to a temporary order of detention before the U.S. magistrate judge and to be removed from the state of Connecticut for further prosecution. (*Combined dispatches*)

## **India and Japan to Cooperate on Maritime Security**

A three-day visit of Indian foreign minister Pranab Mukherjee to Tokyo opened the first-ever strategic dialogue between India and Japan earlier this month on maritime security, energy policy, and free trade. Stressing common values, both countries' foreign ministers agreed to build a strategic global partnership in maritime security, to include cooperation between the navies to secure sea lanes in the Indian Ocean from piracy.

Mukherjee stressed that maritime security essentially protects energy supply and favors economic development for both countries. Japan agreed to hold navy exercises with India in December this year.

Japan is actively seeking to boost ties with India to counter tensions with China. A country that imports nearly all its oil from the Middle East, Japan must navigate its oil tankers through the Indian Ocean. Although the number of piracy attacks has been trending downward in the region, the risk of terrorist attacks is an imminent concern in the region. Both countries agree to actively cooperate in order to secure sea lanes in the Indian Ocean and ensure safe passage for oil tankers and other vessels. (*Combined dispatches*)

## **Nuclear Threats**

### **New Zealand Increases Efforts against Nuclear Smuggling**

During an official visit to the United States, Prime

Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand announced her country's increased efforts in combating nuclear smuggling. New Zealand will cooperate closely with the United States in fighting nuclear smuggling. The agreement is part of an international effort to battle against increased insecurity arising from the threat of nonstate actors obtaining nuclear materials. The smuggling of nuclear and radioactive materials has become a serious threat, especially in the former Soviet Union.

New Zealand will fund approximately U.S.\$500,000 as part of the G-8 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, launched in 2002. Clark announced that the money will be used to improve border security between Ukraine and Russia. It is aimed at providing better detection equipment for Ukrainian border officials, who are being trained by the U.S. Department of Energy. The project has already attracted funding from Canada and the International Atomic Energy Agency. (*Combined dispatches*)

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