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TESTIMONY

Islam and the West: Searching for Common Ground

The Terrorist Threat and the Counter-Terrorism Effort

BRUCE HOFFMAN

CT-263

July 2006

Testimony presented to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 18,
2006

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The RAND Corporation

***Islam and the West: Searching for Common Ground
The Terrorist Threat and the Counter-Terrorism Effort***

**Before the Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate**

July 18, 2006

“We were working off a script which actually has been completely discounted from what we know as reality.”

Andy Hayman, Assistant Commissioner of Specialist Operations,
Scotland Yard²

“I think the more we learned over this period of several years, the more we began to realize the limits of what we knew . . .”

Tom Dowse, Chief of the Assessments Staff³

These two admissions, made by persons at the apex of the United Kingdom’s counterterrorism effort, encapsulate the central challenge today facing the United States in our own counterterrorism effort. Given the threat’s dynamic and evolutionary character and our adversaries’ seeming ability to adapt and adjust their tactics and *modi operandi* to overcome or obviate even our most consequential countermeasures, how can we best ensure that our own assessments and analyses are anchored firmly to sound, empirical judgment and not blinded by either conjecture, mirror-imaging, politically partisan prisms or wishful thinking? And, equally critically, how can we ensure that our counterterrorism policy is sufficiently comprehensive, well crafted and effectively directed?

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² Quoted in Intelligence and Security Committee, *Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005: Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty*, Cmd 6785, May 2006, p. 30, accessed at http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/publications/reports/intelligence/isc_7july_report.pdf.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Al Qaeda Today: Evolution, Adaptation and Adjustment

Al Qaeda's obituary has been written often since 9/11. "Al-Qa'ida's Top Primed To Collapse, U.S. Says," trumpeted a *Washington Post* headline two weeks after Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks, was arrested in March 2003. "I believe the tide has turned in terms of al-Qa'ida," Congressman Porter J. Goss, then-chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Intelligence Committee and himself a former CIA case officer who became its director a year later, was quoted. "We've got them nailed," an unidentified intelligence expert was quoted, who still more expansively declared, "we're close to dismantling them."⁴ These up-beat assessments continued the following month with the nearly bloodless capture of Baghdad and the failure of al Qaeda to make good on threats of renewed attacks in retaliation for invasion.⁵ Citing Administration sources, an article in the *Washington Times* on 24 April 2003 reported the prevailing view in official Washington that al Qaeda's "failure to carry out a successful strike during the U.S.-led military campaign to topple Saddam Hussein has raised questions about their ability to carry out major new attacks."⁶ Despite major terrorist attacks in Jakarta and Istanbul during the latter half of that same year and the escalating insurgency in Iraq, this optimism carried into 2004. "The Al Qaida of the 9/11 period is under catastrophic stress," Ambassador Cofer Black, at the time the U.S. State Department's Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, declared. "They are being hunted down, their days are numbered."⁷ Then came the Madrid bombings six weeks later and the deaths of 191 persons. The most accurate assessment, perhaps, was therefore the one offered by al Qaeda itself. "The Americans," Thabet bin Qais, a spokesperson for the movement said in May 2003, "only have predications and old intelligence left. It will take them a long time to understand the new form of al-Qaida."⁸ Admittedly, while the first part of bin Qais's assertion is not correct, there is more than a grain of truth to the second part. More than three years later we are indeed still struggling to understand the changing character and nature of al Qaeda and the shifting dimensions of the terrorist threat as it has evolved since 9/11.

Today, al Qaeda is also frequently spoken of as if it is in retreat: a broken and beaten organization, incapable of mounting further attacks on its own and instead having devolved operational authority either to its various affiliates and associates or to entirely organically-produced, homegrown, terrorist entities. Nothing could be further from the truth. Al Qaeda in fact

⁴ Dana Priest and Susan Schmidt, "Al-Qa'ida's Top Primed To Collapse, U.S. Says," *Washington Post*, 16 March 2003.

⁵ See, for example, CNN, "Alleged bin Laden tape a call to arms," at <http://cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/02/11/sprj.irq.wrap> and bin Laden's statement, "We want to let you know and confirm to you that this war of the infidels that the U.S. is leading with its allies . . . we are with you and we will fight in the name of God."

⁶ David R. Sands, "Al-Qa'ida's credibility 'on the line' as war in Iraq winds down," *Washington Times*, 24 April 2003. See also, Dennis Pluchinsky, "Al-Qa'ida Identity Crisis," *Washington Times*, 28 April 2003.

⁷ "U.S.: Al Qaida is 70 percent gone, their 'days are numbered'," *World Tribune.Com*, 23 January 2004.

⁸ Sarah el Deeb, "Al-Qaida Reportedly Plans Big New Attack," *Associated Press*, 8 May 2003.

is on the march. It has re-grouped and re-organized from the setbacks meted out to it by the United States and our coalition partners and allies during the initial phases of the global war on terrorism (GWOT)⁹ and is marshalling its forces to continue the epic struggle begun now some ten years ago. Al Qaeda is now functioning exactly as its founder and leader, Usama bin Laden envisioned it. On the one hand, true to the meaning of the Arabic word for the “base of operation”¹⁰ or “foundation”—meaning the base or foundation from which worldwide Islamic revolution can be waged (or, as other translations have it, the “precept” or “method”)¹¹—and thus simultaneously inspiring, motivating and animating, radicalized Muslims to join the movement’s fight. While, on the other, continuing to exercise its core operational and command and control capabilities: directing the implementing terrorist attacks.

The al Qaeda of today combines, as it always has, both a “bottom up” approach—encouraging independent thought and action from low (or lower-) level operatives—and a “top down” one—issuing orders and still coordinating a far-flung terrorist enterprise with both highly synchronized and autonomous moving parts. Mixing and matching organizational and operational styles whether dictated by particular missions or imposed by circumstances, the al Qaeda movement, accordingly, can perhaps most usefully be conceptualized as comprising four distinct, though not mutually exclusive, dimensions. In descending order of 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 Abu Atef, KSM, and Hambali, and more recently, Abu Faraj al-Libi and Abu Hamza Rabia.¹² It is believed that this hardcore remains centered in or around the Afghanistan and Pakistan borders and continues to exert actual coordination, if not some direct command and control capability, in terms of commissioning attacks, directing surveillance and collating reconnaissance, planning operations, and approving their execution.

⁹ The most stunning and consequential of these was achieved during “Operation Enduring Freedom,” that topped the Taliban regime ruling Afghanistan and destroyed al Qaeda’s infrastructure in that country.

¹⁰ Peter Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), p. 29.

¹¹ As Jason Burke notes “Al-Qaeda” is a messy and rough designation The word itself is critical. “al-Qaeda” comes from the Arabic root *qaf-ayn-dal*. It can mean a base, as in a camp or a home, or a foundation, such as what is under a house. It can mean a pedestal that supports a column. It can also mean a precept, rule, principle, maxim, formula, method, model or pattern.’ Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting A Shadow Of Terror* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), p. 7. See also, idem. ‘Think Again: Al Qaeda,’ *Foreign Policy* (May/June 2004), accessed at <http://www.foreignpolicy.com>.

¹² A search on google.com for “al Qaeda Number 3’s” illuminates how this movement has a deeper bench than is often thought and something akin to an institutionalized process of leadership succession.

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).

2. **Al Qaeda Affiliates and Associates.** This category embraces formally established insurgent or terrorist groups that 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, Morocco 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 jihadi “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 dependent 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), the late 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). Both the number and geographical diversity of these entities is proof of al Qaeda’s continued influence and vitality.

3. **Al Qaeda Locals.** These are dispersed cells of al Qaeda adherents who have or have had some direct connection with al Qaeda—no matter how tenuous or evanescent. They appear to fall into two sub-categories.

One category comprises persons who have had some prior terrorism experience—having been blooded in battle as part of some previous jihadi campaign in Algeria, the Balkans, Chechnya, and perhaps more recently in Iraq, and may have trained in some al Qaeda facility whether in Afghanistan or Yemen or the Sudan before 9/11. Specific examples of this adversary include Ahmed Ressay, who was arrested in December 1999 at Port Angeles, Washington State, shortly after he had entered the U.S. from Canada. Ressay, 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, Ressay was given very non-specific, virtually open-ended targeting instructions before being dispatched to North America. Also, unlike the well-funded professional cadre, Ressay 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 by KSM to recruit members for his terrorist cell from among the expatriate Muslim communities in Canada and the U.S.¹³ The al Qaeda operative, Andrew Rowe, a British national and Muslim convert, convicted for his involvement in the 2003 al Qaeda plot to attack London's Heathrow Airport is another example of this category.

The other category, as is described in the detailed discussion of the 7/7 London attacks below, conforms to the profile of the four British Muslims responsible for the 2005 bombings of mass transit targets in London. In contrast to Ressay and Rowe, none of the four London bombers had previously fought in any of the contemporary, iconic Muslim conflicts (e.g., Algeria, Chechnya, Kashmir, Bosnia, Afghanistan, etc.) nor is there *conclusive* evidence of their having received any training in an al Qaeda camp in Afghanistan, Yemen, or the Sudan *prior* to 9/11.¹⁴ Rather, at least the two ringleaders of the London cell were recruited locally, brought to Pakistan for training and then returned to their homeland with both an attack plan and the knowledge to implement. They

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ A confidential informant of the British Security Service (MI-5) claims to have traveled to Afghanistan in the late 1990s/early 2000s with another man named "Imran," who he later identified as the ringleader of the 7/7 London attacks, Mohammed Siddique Khan. That "Imran" was in fact Khan has not been confirmed. See Intelligence and Security Committee, *Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005*, p. 16.

recruited others locally as needed, into the cell and undertook a relatively simple, but nonetheless sophisticated and highly consequential attack.¹⁵

In both the above categories, however, the terrorists will have some link with al Qaeda. Their current relationship, and communication, with a central al Qaeda command and control apparatus may be either active or dormant and similarly their targeting choices may either be specifically directed or else entirely left to the cell to decide. The distinguishing characteristic of this category, however, is that there is some previous direct connection of some kind with al Qaeda.

4. **Al Qaeda Network.** These are home-grown Islamic radicals—from North Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia—as well as local 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 jihadi agenda. Like the "al Qaeda Locals" they too are motivated by a shared sense of enmity and grievance felt towards the United States and West in general and their host-nations in particular. In this specific instance, however, 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 persons are neither directly members of a known, organized terrorist group nor necessarily even a very cohesive entity unto themselves.

Examples of this category, which comprises small collections 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 so-called Hofstad Group in the Netherlands, a member of whom (Mohammed Bouyeri) murdered the Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam in November 2004.

The most salient threat posed by the above categories, however, continues to come from al Qaeda Central and 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

¹⁵ See Honourable House of Commons, *Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005* (London: The Stationary Office, HC 1087), 11 May 2006, titled "Were They Directed From Abroad?" pp. 24-27, accessed at <http://www.official-documents.co.uk/document/hc0506/hc10/1087/1087.asp>.

society and culture.¹⁶ Thus, representatives of Muslim extremist organizations—including, presumably, al Qaeda—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.

This new category of terrorist adversary, moreover, also has proven more difficult for the authorities in these countries to track, predict and anticipate. The Director of GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters), Britain's equivalent of our NSA (National Security Agency) admitted this in testimony before a Parliamentary committee investigating the 7/7 attacks. "We had said before July [2005]," Sir David Pepper noted,

there are probably groups out there that we do not know anything about, and because we do not know anything about them we do not know how many there are. What happened in July [the 2005 London bombings] was a demonstration that there were [material redacted for security reasons] conspiracies going on about which we essentially knew nothing, and that rather sharpens the perception of how big, if I can use [Secretary of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld's term, the unknown unknown was.¹⁷

This adversary, comprising hitherto unknown cells, is difficult, if not impossible, to effectively profile. Indeed, this was precisely the conclusion reached by the above-mentioned Parliamentary committee in their report on the London bombings.¹⁸ Although the members of these terrorist cells may be marginalized individuals working in menial jobs from the lower socio-economic strata of society, some 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, material interests. For example, in the case of radicalized British Muslims, since 9/11 we have seen terrorists of South Asian and North African descent as well as those hailing both from the Middle East and Caribbean. They have included life-long devout Muslims as well as recent converts. Persons from the margins of society who made a living as thieves or from drug dealing

¹⁶ 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).

¹⁷ Quoted in Intelligence and Security Committee, *Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁸ The report concluded that "The July attacks emphasized that there was no clear profile of a British Islamist terrorist." See *Ibid.*, p. 29.

and students at the London School Economics, one of the UK's premiere universities.¹⁹ This was not a sentence. 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. “There appear to be a number of common features to this grooming,” the report of the Intelligence and Security Committee of the UK House of Commons concluded.

In the early stages, group conversation may be around being a good Muslim and staying away from drugs and crime, with no hint of an extremist agenda. Gradually individuals may be exposed to propaganda about perceived injustices to Muslims across the world with international conflict involving Muslims interpreted as examples of widespread war against Islam; leaders of the Muslim world perceived as corrupt and non-Islamic; with some domestic policies added as ‘evidence’ of a persecuted Islam; and conspiracy theories abounding. They will then move on to what the extremists claim is religious justification for violent jihad in the Quran and the Hadith . . . and—if suicide attacks are the intention—the importance of martyrdom in demonstrating commitment to Islam and the rewards in Paradise for martyrs; before directly inviting an individual to engage in terrorism. *There is little evidence of over compulsion. The extremists appear rather to rely on the development of individual commitment and group bonding and solidarity [my emphasis].*²⁰

These new recruits are the anonymous cogs in the world-wide 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.

The Perils of Wishful Thinking: Al Qaeda and the 7/7 London Bombings

The United Kingdom of course rightly prides itself on decades-long experience and detailed knowledge of effectively countering a variety of terrorist threats. Over the past dozen years the UK homeland itself has been subject to attack from a diversity of adversaries including: the

¹⁹ For instance, in the criminal category are Richard Reid (the so-called “shoe bomber,” who attempted to blow up an American Airlines flight en route from Paris to Miami in December 2001) and Jermaine Lindsay (one of the 7/7 London bombers); while the two LSE students include Omar Saed Shiekh (who orchestrated the kidnapping and murder of the *Wall Street Journal* reporter, Daniel Pearl, in 2002) and Omar Sharif Khan (one of the two British Muslims who carried out a suicide bombing attack against a sea-side pub in Tel Aviv, Israel in April 2003).

²⁰ Honourable House of Commons, *Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005*, pp. 31-32.

Provisional Irish Republican Army,²¹ renegade Palestinian factions²² and both before and since 9/11 by al Qaeda as well.²³ Yet, despite Britain's formidable counterterrorist capabilities and unrivaled expertise, only a month before the 7 July 2005 London bombings, the Joint Terrorism Assessment Center (JTAC), the British counterpart of our own NCTC (National Counterterrorism Center) concluded that, "at present there is not a group with both the current intent and the capability to attack in the UK" and consequently downgraded the overall threat level for the UK.²⁴

More astonishing perhaps was the dismissal of the prospect of suicide terrorist attacks occurring in the United Kingdom, despite the emerging global pattern of terrorism in this respect and the involvement of several British nationals in both attempted and successful suicide attacks elsewhere.²⁵ Seventy-eight percent of all the suicide terrorist incidents perpetrated between 1968 and 2004, for instance, have occurred in the years following 9/11. And, the dominant force behind this trend is religion—specifically groups and individuals identifying themselves as Islamic.²⁶ Indeed, of the 35 terrorist organizations currently employing suicide tactics, 86 percent

²¹ During the 1990s alone, major terrorist bombings rocked the City, London's financial center and the equivalent of New York City's Wall Street, on at least three separate occasions, with massive explosions occurring at St Mary's Axe, the Baltic Exchange building, and Canary Wharf.

²² For instance, the 1982 assassination attempt on Israel's ambassador to the UK by the Abu Nidal Organization and the 1994 bombing of the Israeli embassy in London.

²³ For instance, the intended massive truck bomb attack planned for downtown Birmingham in 2000 and the plans in 2003 to simultaneously hijack a plane from Eastern Europe and crash it into a terminal at London's Heathrow Airport and then launch a secondary attack with remote-control mortars (see David Leppard, "Al-Qaeda's Heathrow Jet Plot Revealed," *Sunday Times* (London), 9 October 2005 at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-1817244,00.html>).

²⁴ Quoted in Intelligence and Security Committee, *Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005*, p. 23. Note should be taken, however, that although the threat level was reduced to "Substantial," this designation still "indicates a continued high level of threat and that an attack might well be mounted without warning." See *Ibid*.

²⁵ For example, Richard Reid, the so-called "shoe bomber," who attempted to blow up an American Airlines flight en route from Paris to Miami in December 2001; the involvement of another Briton, Sajid Badat, in an identical inflight aircraft suicide bombing plot that same month; and the two British Muslims, Asif Hanif and Omar Khan Sharif, who carried out the suicide bombing of Mike's Place, a seafront pub in Tel Aviv, Israel in April 2003.

²⁶ That there has been a significant rise in the incidence of suicide terrorism since 9/11 is not disputed by scholars. See, for instance, Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 3 (August 2003), pp. 343-361 and *idem.*, *Dying To Win: The Strategic Logic Of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005) p. 1; as well as Mia A. Bloom, *Dying To Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2005). The role of religion behind this increase, however, is debated. Pape argues in his seminal article that, "Religious fanaticism does not explain why the world leader in suicide terrorism is the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka . . ."; while conceding that "although religious motives may matter, modern suicide terrorism is not limited to Islamic Fundamentalism" ("The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," p. 343). In his book, however, Pape is more explicit, writing that the "presumed connection between suicide terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism is misleading . . . there is little connection between suicidal terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, or any of the world's religions. In fact, the leading instigators of suicide attacks are the Tamil Tigers . . ." (*Dying To Win*, pp. 1-2). While I fully agree with Pape on this point that the Tigers are responsible for the largest number of suicide terrorist attacks between 1968 and 2001, they are *not*, however, the driving force behind the increasing use of this tactic *since* 9/11. In fact, since 2002 an uneasy truce between the Tigers and the Sri Lankan government has meant that the Tigers have largely abjured from engaging in any terrorist operations, much less suicide attacks. Moreover, Pape is not accurate in categorizing the Tamil Tigers as a "Marxist Leninist" group. It is more appropriately described as an ethno-nationalist/separatist movement. Further, while the Tigers are *not*

(31 of 35) are Islamic. These movements, moreover, have been responsible for 81 percent of all suicide attacks since 9/11.²⁷ Indeed, to date, suicide attacks have taken place in at least two dozen countries—including, the United Kingdom, Israel, Sri Lanka, Russia, Lebanon, Turkey, Italy, Indonesia, Pakistan, Colombia, Argentina, Kenya, Tanzania, Croatia, Morocco, Singapore, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq.²⁸ By comparison, at the dawn of the modern era of religious terrorism some twenty years ago, this was a phenomenon confined exclusively to two countries: Lebanon and Kuwait and employed by less than a half dozen groups.²⁹ Yet, only four months before the 7/7 bombings, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), Britain's most senior intelligence assessment and evaluation body (one roughly similar to the American intelligence community's NIC, or National Intelligence Center), judged that "such attacks would not become the norm within Europe." This judgment, coupled with the testimony of Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, the Director-General of the Security Service (MI-5), prompted the aforementioned Parliamentary committee to conclude that "The fact that there were suicide attacks in the UK on 7 July was clearly unexpected: the Director General of the Security Service said it was a surprise that the first big attack in the UK for ten years was a suicide attack."³⁰

The point of this discussion is most certainly not to criticize our principal ally in the war on terrorism but rather to highlight the immense difficulties and vast uncertainties concerning countering terrorism today that have confounded even the enormously professional and experienced British intelligence and security services. Moreover, the danger of similarly cloaking ourselves in a false sense of security based on faulty assumptions or wishful thinking is omnipresent in so fluid and dynamic a terrorism environment as exists today. Indeed, our appreciation and understanding of the current al Qaeda threat further underscores these perils. Both at the time of the London bombing attacks and since a misconception has frequently been perpetuated that this was entirely an organic or homegrown phenomenon of self-radicalized, self-selected terrorists. Such arguments often were cited in support of the argument that entirely

a religious terrorist organization, they nonetheless share some characteristics more common with a religious cult than with their secular ethno-nationalist/separatists counterparts. For a particularly incisive critique of Pape's fundamental arguments about suicide terrorism see Bloom, *Dying To Kill*, pp. 83-84.

²⁷ The RAND Terrorism Incident Database. As Mia Bloom also concludes in her exhaustive study of suicide terrorism, "There is an increasing and disturbing trend towards Islamic suicide terrorism." Bloom, *Dying To Kill*, p. 2.

²⁸ Ibid. See also, Israeli Security Agency, "Security Seminar on Combating The Threat of Suicide Bombers," Israeli Embassy, Washington, D.C., 16 September 2003.

²⁹ Towards the end of the 1980s, however, suicide terrorism began to spread beyond the Middle East: first to Sri Lanka but then as the 1990s unfolded to India, Argentina, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, and Tanzania. It was also initially embraced by a couple of terrorist groups only: al Dawa, an Iraqi Shi'a group, and the Lebanese Shi'a organization Hezbollah (mostly using its cover name, Islamic Jihad). Hezbollah's example of successfully driving the U.S. from Lebanon with suicide attacks (as discussed below) subsequently inspired other groups to adopt this tactic, specifically: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or the Tamil Tigers), Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad, and al-Qa'ida.

³⁰ Quoted in Intelligence and Security Committee, *Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005*, p. 28.

homegrown threats had superseded those posed of al Qaeda; that al Qaeda itself was no longer a consequential, active terrorist force; and accordingly that the threat had both changed and perhaps even receded. The evidence that has come to light since the London attacks a year ago, however, points to the opposite conclusion: that al Qaeda is not only alive and kicking, but that it is still actively planning, supporting through the provision of training and perhaps even directing terrorist attacks on a global canvas.

Issues of classification and sensitive collection prevent a full description and account of this evidence of active al Qaeda involvement in the London attacks. However, suffice it to say that what is publicly known and has been reported in unclassified sources, clearly points to such involvement. For instance, the aforementioned report by the Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee, noted among its other conclusions, that

- "Investigations since July have shown that the group [the four London bombers] was in contact with others involved in extremism in the UK . . . "
- "Siddique Khan [the group's ringleader] is now known to have visited Pakistan in 2003 and to have spent several months there with Shazad Tanweer [another bomber] between November 2004 and February 2005. It has not yet been established who they met in Pakistan, but it is assessed as likely that they had some contact with Al Qaida figures."
- "The extent to which the 7 July attacks were externally planned, directed or controlled by contacts in Pakistan or elsewhere remains unclear. The [British intelligence and security] Agencies believe that some form of operational training is likely to have taken place while Khan and Tanweer were in Pakistan. Contacts in the run-up to the attacks suggest they may have had advice or direction from individuals there."³¹

More compelling, albeit for the moment necessarily circumstantial, evidence may be found in the "martyrdom" videos made by Khan and Tanweer sometime while they were in Pakistan between November 2004 and February 2005.³² Like all Usama bin Laden's most important video taped statements and appearances, the Khan and Tanweer statements were both professionally produced and released by al Qaeda's perennially-active communications department, "Al Sahab [the Clouds] for Media Production."

³¹ Ibid., p. 12. See also, the section of the Honourable House of Commons, *Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005*, pp. 20-21.

³² Honourable House of Commons, *Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005*, p. 20.

The first of the two videos, of Khan, was broadcast on the Qatar-based Arabic-language news station, al Jazeera, on 1 September 2005. It is worth exploring the content of Khan's statement in some detail since it accurately encapsulates the essence of European Muslim radicalism today. Khan's statement is especially noteworthy for the following reasons:

- He professes his preeminent allegiance to and identification with his religion and the *umma*—the worldwide Muslim community. Hence, unlike most Western conceptions of identity and allegiance that are rooted to the nation or state, Khan's is exclusively to a theology.
- Like all terrorists before him, Khan frames his choice of tactic and justifies his actions in ineluctably defensive terms. He describes his struggle as an intrinsically defensive one and his act as a response to the repeated depredations and unmitigated aggression of the West that have been directed against Muslims worldwide.
- The sense of individual empowerment and catharsis evident in Khan's words and demeanor.
- The intense desire for vengeance and martyrdom, with the latter regarded by him as "supreme evidence" of his religious commitment.³³
- Khan's laudatory comments about bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

The relevant portions of Khan's statement are as follows:

I and thousands like me are forsaking everything for what we believe. Our driving motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer. Our religion is Islam—obedience to the one true God. Allah, and following the footsteps of the final prophet and messenger Muhammad... This is how our ethical stances are dictated.

Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters [my emphasis].

Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation

³³ Ibid., p. 19.

I myself, I make du'a [calling] to Allah . . . to raise me amongst those whom I love like the prophets, the messengers, the martyrs and today's heroes like our beloved Sheikh Osama Bin Laden, Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and all the other brothers and sisters that are fighting in . . . this cause.³⁴

Al-Zawahiri in fact appears at the end of the same tape, praising Khan for having brought the "blessed battle . . . to the enemy's land." In a subsequent video, aired on al Jazeera on 19 September, al-Zawahiri also claimed responsibility for the attacks in the name of al Qaeda.³⁵ Only last week, a similar martyrdom tape made by Khan's traveling companion and fellow bomber, Shahzad Tanweer, was released by al Sahab to mark the first anniversary of the London attacks. Titled, "The Final Message of the Knights of the London Raid," it showed Tanweer expressing similar views to those of Khan. "To the non-Muslims of Britain," he begins,

you may wonder what you have done to deserve this. You are those who have voted in your government, who in turn have, and still continue to this day, continue to oppress our mothers, children, brothers and sisters, from the east to the west, in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Chechnya. Your government has openly supported the genocide of over 150,000 innocent Muslims in Falluja.

You have offered financial and military support to the U.S. and Israel, in the massacre of our children in Palestine. You are directly responsible for the problems in Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq to this day. You have openly declared war on Islam, and are the forerunners in the crusade against the Muslims.

Al-Zawahiri then appears on screen to explain that, "What made Shehzad join the camps of Qaeda Al-Jihad was the oppression carried out by the British in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine. He would often talk about Palestine, about the British support of the Jews, and about their clear injustice against the Muslims." An unidentified narrator then continues:

In order to remove this injustice, Shehzad [sic] began training with all his might and devotion. Together with the martyr Siddiq Khan, he received practical and intensive training in how to produce and use explosives, in the camps of Qaeda Al-Jihad. The recruits who join these camps do not have to achieve high averages or to pass

³⁴ Quoted in Ibid.

³⁵ "London's blessed raid is one of the raids which Jama'at Qa'idat al-Jihad (Al Qaidah of Jihad Group) was honoured to launch." Quoted in Ibid., p. 19.

entrance exams. All they need is to be zealous for their religion and nation, and to love Jihad and martyrdom for the sake of Allah.³⁶

The video continues with Tanweer warning “all you British citizens to stop your support to your lying British government, and to the so-called ‘war on terror,’ and ask yourselves why would thousands of men be willing to give their lives for the cause of Muslims.” Al-Zawahiri also again appears to emphasize how both Khan and Tanweer were “striving for martyrdom, and were hoping to carry out a martyrdom operation. Both of them were very resolute in this.” Tanweer then calls upon his fellow British Muslims to rise and fight the “disbelievers, for it is but an obligation made on you by Allah.” A statement is then heard from U.S.-born, Muslim convert Adam Gadahn (“Azzam the American”) before concluding with Tanweer threatening that:

What you have witnessed now is only the beginning of a series of attacks, which, *inshallah*, will intensify and continue, until you pull all your troops out of Afghanistan and Iraq, until you stop all financial and military support to the U.S. and Israel, and until you release all Muslim prisoners from Belmarsh, and your other concentration camps. And know that if you fail to comply with this, then know that this war will never stop, and that we are ready to give our lives, one hundred times over, for the cause of Islam. You will never experience peace, until our children in Palestine, our mothers and sisters in Kashmir, and our brothers in Afghanistan and Iraq feel peace.³⁷

Towards a New U.S. Counterterrorism Policy³⁸

“Could we, could others, could the police have done better? Could we with greater effort, greater imagination, have stopped it? We knew there were risks we were running. We were trying very hard and very fast to enhance our capacity, but even with the wisdom of hindsight I think it is unlikely that we would have done so, with the resources available to us at the time and the other demands placed upon us. I think that position will remain in the foreseeable future. We will continue to stop most of them, but we will not stop all of them.”

³⁶ Quoted in MEMRI, Clip No. 1186, “Al-Qaeda Film on the First Anniversary of the London Bombings Features Messages by Bomber Shehzad Tanweer, American Al-Qaeda Member Adam Gadan and Al-Qaeda Leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri: *Recorded message of London bomber Shehzad Tanweer and statements by Al-Qaeda leaders Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Adam Gadahn, which were posted on www.tajdeed.net.tc on July 8, 2006*” accessed at <http://www.memritv.org/Transcript.asp?P1=1186>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ I am indebted to Lieutenant Colonel Fred T. Krawchuk, U.S. Army Special Forces for his contributions to this section of my testimony.

-- Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, Director-General, UK Security Service
(MI-5)³⁹

As this discussion of the 7/7 London bombings has shown, Al Qaeda and the threat it poses can not be defeated through military means alone. Yet, our policy to date has arguably been 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. However, both our adversaries today and the threats that they pose, are much more elusive and complicated and, as the previous discussion of the London attacks clearly depicts, less amenable to kinetic solutions. As one U.S. intelligence officer with vast experience in this realm acerbically told to me nearly two years ago: "We don't have enough bullets to kill them all." Accordingly, a new strategy and new approach is vital. Its success will 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. A successful strategy will thus be one that also thinks and plans ahead with a view towards addressing the threats likely to be posed by the terrorist and insurgent generation beyond the current one.

At the foundation of such a dynamic and adaptive strategy 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. This timeless principle of countering insurgency was first defined by Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer in Malaya more than 50 years 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 terrorist directive from the previous year that focused on increasing appreciably the "cajolery" of the population.⁴⁰ 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, and developmental sides inherent to the successful prosecution of counterinsurgency to the existing dominant military side of the equation.

³⁹ Quoted in Intelligence and Security Committee, *Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005*, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Quoted in John Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya—The Life of Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer*, (London: Harrap, 1985), p. 262.

Such a new approach would necessarily be built upon a more integrated, systems approach to a complex problem that is at once operationally durable, evolutionary and elusive in character. 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 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.⁴¹

The U.S. government, in sum, will need to adjust and adapt its strategy, resources, and tactics to formidable opponents that, as we have seen, are widely dispersed and decentralized and whose many destructive parts are autonomous, mobile, and themselves highly adaptive. In this respect, 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. A successful GCOIN 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. In addition to traditional "hard" military skills of "kill or capture" and destruction and attrition; "soft" skills such as information operations, negotiation, psychology, social and cultural anthropology, foreign area studies, complexity theory, and systems management will become increasingly important in the ambiguous and dynamic environment in which irregular adversaries circulate.

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——

⁴¹ Facilitating this would doubtless go well beyond DoD's purview, necessarily involving the National Security Council or the 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.

including their supporters, nodes of support, organizational and operational systems, processes, and plans. With this information in hand, the U.S. would then be better prepared to systematically disrupt or defeat all of the critical nodes that support the entire terrorist/insurgent network, thus rendering them ineffective.⁴² Achieving this desideratum, however, will necessitate the coordination, de-conflicting, and synchronization of the variety of programs upon which the execution of American counterterrorist and/or counterinsurgency planning are dependent. An equally critical dimension of this process will be aligning the training of host nation counterparts with GWOT/GCOIN operations: building synergy; avoiding duplication of effort; ensuring that training leads to operational effectiveness; and ensuring that the U.S. interagency team and approach is in complete harmony. In other words, aligning these training programs (among the different government agencies) with GCOIN operations to build indigenous capabilities in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency will be absolutely fundamental to the success of such a strategy.

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 effectiveness of U.S. strategy will be based 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, we 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;

⁴² Battle against small, independent, and mobile formations change too rapidly to allow rigid, centralized command and control. The U.S. military will have to continue to adjust and fight accordingly. Fast and fluid bottom-up planning and execution, supported by top-down guidance, resources and support is an appropriate approach to counterinsurgency. Intelligence logistics, and communications must integrate horizontally and vertically with operations to support this innovative approach to fighting insurgents. Counterinsurgency forces, with clear guidance and appropriate technology, can be both responsive C4ISR and effective execution nodes, greatly shortening the decision-making loop while still allowing the passing of information on actions and results to higher levels for strategic analysis.

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; and
5. Interagency efforts to build effective and responsible civil governance mechanisms that eliminate the fundamental causes of terrorism and insurgency.

In conclusion, al Qaeda may be compared to the archetypal shark in the water that must keep moving forward—no matter how slowly or incrementally—or die. In al Qaeda's context, this means adapting and adjusting to our countermeasures while simultaneously searching to identify new targets and vulnerabilities. In this respect, al Qaeda's capacity to continue to prosecute this struggle is a direct reflection of both the movement's resiliency and the continued resonance of its ideology. Accordingly, if the threat we face is constantly changing and evolving, so must our policies and responses be regularly reviewed, updated and adjusted. In this struggle, we cannot afford to rest on past laurels or be content with security that may have proven effective yesterday and today, but could likely prove inadequate tomorrow given this process of terrorist change and evolution.

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. To a significant degree, our ability to carry out such missions effectively will depend on the ability of American strategy to adjust and adapt to changes we see in the nature and character of our adversaries.