

Statement Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
by
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Current and Projected Threats to the National Security of the United States

(U) Chairman Roberts, Vice Chairman Rockefeller, members of the committee: I am pleased to have the opportunity today to present INR's views on current and projected threats to the United States. Rather than repeat the threats enumerated by DCI Tenet and Admiral Jacoby, I would like to highlight the threat to US interests posed by al-Qaida terrorists, especially in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq. I will conclude with a brief statement on the wide array of other issues on the Secretary's agenda.

Al-Qaida

(U) Al-Qaida continues to pose the most immediate and dangerous threat of attack against the US homeland and against Americans and American interests around the world. This is so despite its having taken heavy hits as a result of worldwide counterterrorism efforts. Stronger cooperation between the US and its coalition partners, arrests of key al-Qaida facilitators and operatives, and increased security measures have forced the group to rely on smaller-scale attacks against softer targets. Though this does not mean that large-scale attacks are out of the question, we believe al-Qaida has been hurt by our efforts and is now less capable than it was in 2001. US success against al-Qaida has been substantial, especially in the second half of 2002, but it remains a serious threat to international security.

(U) Despite our counterterrorism successes, we know that al-Qaida has a "second string" ready to step in to try to resume the efforts of arrested individuals. Logistics networks appear to remain active with secondary personnel who are prepared to continue attack planning in the event of arrests. The organization's co-optation of some local officials is also of concern as the group has been forced to operate in environments that are less friendly than Afghanistan under the Taliban.

(U) Al-Qaida may be stepping up its attempts—unsuccessfully so far—to broaden its support base among Muslims. Al-Qaida, for example, has been persistent in its efforts to exploit Muslim support for Palestinians. We may also see more attacks by groups that have cooperated with or received support from al-Qaida in the past, along the lines of the attack in Bali or the seizure of the theater in Moscow. Al-Qaida will continue to choose its targets carefully so that the attacks can be used to win support from potential allies.

(U) With the cooperation of our allies and the UN, we have managed to freeze millions in terrorist funds. We still have much work to do in this area, particularly in assisting countries to strengthen their financial systems. Additional efforts need to be made to address informal methods of transferring funds. Front companies and charitable organizations are also problematic.

(U) Al-Qaida has recently engaged in small-scale operations out of temporary bases. Many of these smaller groups remain, as expected, in the Middle East; others have ventured to new areas. Administrative centers, however, appear to remain in traditional areas of concentration in the Persian Gulf states, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Afghanistan

(U) Though I have highlighted here the dispersal of terrorists from Afghanistan, the fight there is not over. We have deprived al-Qaida of its secure, large-scale operational base in Afghanistan, but that country, and the region more generally, remain a key area of operations for al-Qaida with respect to leadership, haven, attack planning, and logistics, as well as a target area. Al-Qaida leaders probably continue to move in and out of Afghanistan or remain hidden along the border. Several experienced combat commanders doubtless remain in Afghanistan and may be involved in planning operations against US and coalition forces.

Pakistan, Iran, and al-Qaida

(U) Al-Qaida appears to maintain an operational presence in Pakistan and Iran. The government of Pakistan has been a key partner in Operation Enduring Freedom and in our global war on terrorism, but despite its best efforts al-Qaida continues to use Pakistan for transit, haven, and as a staging area for attacks. Though extremists have faced detention and deportation in Iran, al-Qaida operatives have been able to maintain a significant presence there as well. Al-Qaida leaders in Iran play important roles in logistics and attack planning against targets outside the region.

Al-Qaida and Iraq

(U) As Secretary Powell explained to the United Nations General Assembly last week, Iraq has a long history of supporting terrorist groups, from the Abu Nidal Organization and the Palestinian Liberation Front to Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Saddam's continued support for these organizations puts him squarely in violation of UNSCR 687 and, by extension in breach of UNSCR 1441. But beyond his violation of these UN Security Council Resolutions, his growing relationship with al-Qaida marks a clear and present danger, not only to the United States, but to the world.

(U) Al-Qaida's presence in Iraq has grown since 9/11, including inside Baghdad. We know that Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi spent considerable time in Baghdad during 2002, and has a network of operatives in northern Iraq in an area under the control of Ansar al-Islam. This network has been working steadily to produce toxic substances which are

ready for deployment, based on recent arrests in Europe. Zarqawi controls operations outside Iraq as well, as evidenced by the assassination of USAID representative to Jordan, Lawrence Foley, in which the perpetrators reported they were acting with support from Zarqawi. Though we do not know the specific operational details of Iraq's relationship with al-Qaida yet, we do know that neither Iraq nor al-Qaida would have any compunction about using WMD in terrorist attacks against civilians. Based on the weight of our current information, I believe that al-Qaida operatives inside Iraq have positioned themselves so that they could launch operations with little or no warning.

(U) The intensifying relationship I have described is quite logical. Our Global War on Terror has gained momentum, denying al-Qaida camps, bases, and havens throughout the Middle East and South Asia. Iraq has become increasingly attractive following losses elsewhere and Saddam has given no indication that he considers Iraq's increasing attractiveness a problem. In fact, it has been just the reverse. Saddam has allowed al-Qaida not only transit, but increasingly, secure bases from which to plan terrorist attacks. Given al-Qaida's interest in acquiring WMD to carry out mass casualty attacks against the United States, and Saddam's past provision of training and safehaven, we cannot rule out the possibility that Saddam will provide the WMD capabilities al-Qaida continues to seek. It is also possible that al-Qaida will simply find a way to procure these items from Iraqi sources or to steal them. As al-Qaida faces continued disruption outside and the loss of territory and personnel, Iraq becomes more attractive and the terrorist threat emanating from Iraq correspondingly grows.

Other Threats

(U) Though INR has stepped up its analytical coverage of terrorism threats, it has not done so by devoting less attention to other threats to the well-being of Americans here and abroad. INR has a standing requirement to support the Secretary of State with all-source analysis of all threats in all regions at all times. We know from painful experience that, even with significant intelligence collection efforts, threats can come unexpectedly, sometimes in remote places and perhaps by obscure groups. Threats can arise via WMD smuggling among states and non-state actors intent on subverting the international non-proliferation regime. At the same time, they can come from rebel factions using cheap weapons to intimidate and even kidnap civilians as well as American tourists.

(U) Al-Qaida, Iraqi WMD programs, and North Korean nuclear reactivation have dominated the attention of world leaders, but many other threats engage the work of State Department policymakers.

(U) We have learned that no place is safe—neither skyscrapers in bustling downtowns nor resorts on idyllic beaches—and INR is helping to meet that challenge in support of the new Department for Homeland Security. Over the past year, INR has been working with other bureaus in the State Department and with other federal agencies to expand its pioneering TIPOFF system to help keep terrorists from entering the United States. INR has an extensive coordination network throughout the Intelligence Community that supports not just counterterrorism, but all international affairs priorities.

(U) The key to INR's global coverage of all threats to US national security is our experienced staff. INR boasts some of the best analysts in the Intelligence Community; they understand and can explain to policymakers the local, national, and international context in which each new threat arises. Their knowledge is critical to State Department efforts to support the war on terrorism by ensuring that whatever specific counterterrorism objectives are chosen, policymakers will be able to pursue them with the best possible understanding of the conditions surrounding the threat and probable consequences of policy options.

(U) Mr. Chairman, good intelligence-based analysis is critical for all those engaged in mitigating the impacts of terrorism—not just war fighters, but also diplomats who are forging coalition agreements with other governments and perhaps even those who are assisting victims of terrorism. INR is proud of its contribution to the war on terrorism and in countering other threats to our citizens and American interests. We will continue to assist the Secretary of State by providing the very best intelligence support possible.

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End.