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# Intelligence Report

DCI Counterterrorist Center

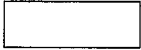
02 November 2000

## *Bin Ladin's Terrorist Operations: Meticulous and Adaptable*

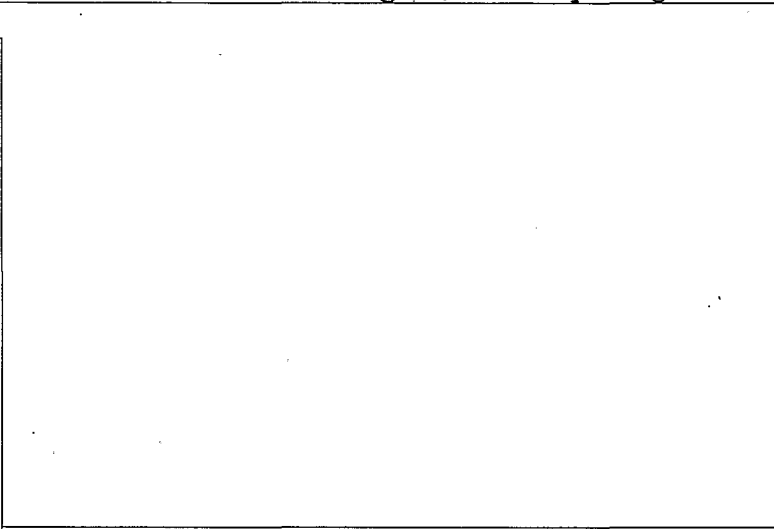
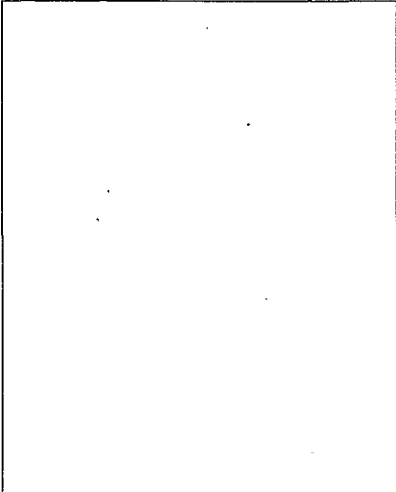


*Credible intelligence reporting on the activities of Usama Bin Ladin's al-Qa'ida organization depicts a highly skilled, resilient network with a wide range of methods of attack at its disposal. Al-Qa'ida operatives are trained to conduct bombings, assassinations, standoff attacks, kidnappings, and attacks with crude chemical or biological agents, and the group's extreme interpretation of Islam sanctions the use of these methods against a large pool of US and other targets, including civilians.*

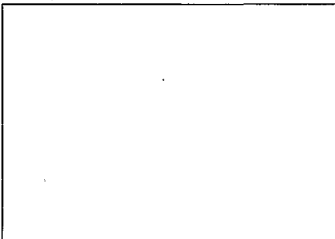
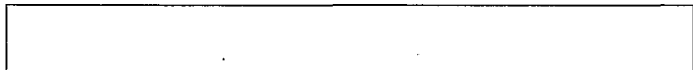
- The organization also observes sound operational practices, making use of meticulous contingency planning completed far in advance of an operation.*



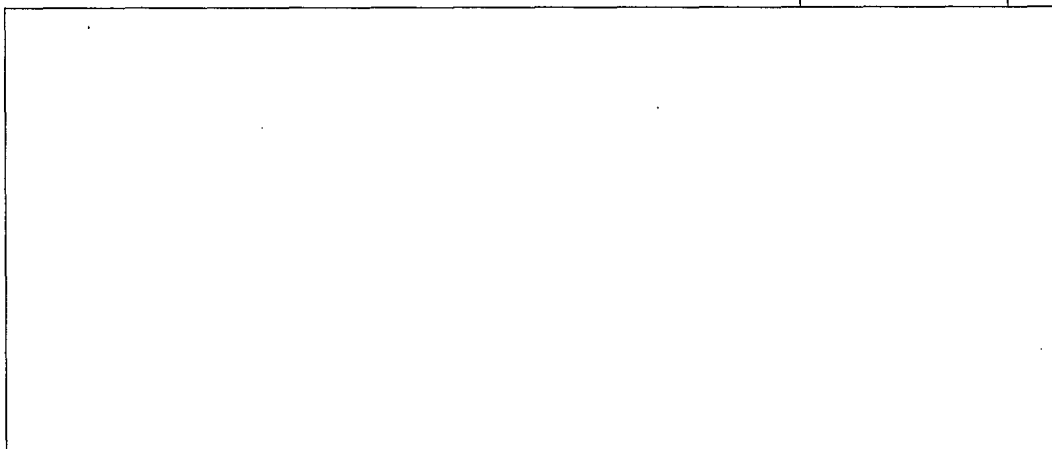
*Intelligence on terrorist plotting discovered over the millennial period also indicates that al-Qa'ida has refined its tactics to cope with security crackdowns and heightened political pressure on Bin Ladin and his Taliban hosts. The organization is improving its operational security,*



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## Operational Doctrine Rooted in Interpretation of Islamic Law

Bin Ladin's terrorist operations are grounded in his extreme interpretation of Islamic law, which sanctions attacks against a wide variety of targets worldwide.

Al-Qa'ida's most recent *fatwa*—issued in February 1998 by Bin Ladin and leaders of other extremist groups under the banner of his "World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders"—is broadly worded, stating that all Muslims have a religious duty "to kill Americans and their allies, both civilian and military" worldwide.<sup>1</sup> During an interview in December 1998 Bin Ladin explained that all US citizens are legitimate targets because they pay taxes to the US Government.

- This interpretation broadened and superseded Bin Ladin's previous *fatwa*, which only authorized attacks against Western military targets on the Arabian Peninsula. Bin Ladin publicized this decree as a "Declaration of Jihad" in August 1996.

US interests are Bin Ladin's primary—but not sole—target. The United States figures most prominently in Bin Ladin's public threats, and Bin Ladin has characterized the United States as "the head of the snake." Bin Ladin's *fatwa* authorizes attacks against Americans "and their allies," suggesting that he sees the countries of the "Jewish-Crusader alliance" (see box) as a single enemy.

This Intelligence Report was prepared by an analyst in the DCI Counterterrorist Center. It has been coordinated within CIA. Queries and comments are welcome and may be directed

<sup>1</sup> Bin Ladin's *fatwas* carry no formal authority outside of his own organization, and many Islamic religious scholars view his justifications for terrorism as simplistic and flawed, failing to address the numerous Islamic injunctions prohibiting violence against innocents—including Christians and Jews, who are traditionally tolerated as "Peoples of the Book." Instead, Bin Ladin attempts to appeal to Muslims who are not familiar with the finer points of Islamic jurisprudence but are convinced that their civilization must fend off an assault of Western military power and cultural values. (U)

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- Al-Qa'ida members planning terrorist operations in Jordan in December 1999 intended to attack both US and Israeli tourists, and Bin Ladin frequently denounces Israel and the United Kingdom alongside the United States in his public statements.

[Redacted]

- Bin Ladin's doctrine tolerates the death of citizens of other countries in his attack, as "collateral damage" or as targets in their own right. In an interview in December 1998, Bin Ladin claimed that the obligation to attack US targets outweighs the risk to innocent civilians, whom he compared to human shields.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

- Al-Qa'ida-directed extremists planning attacks in Jordan in late 1999 chose to target Christian religious sites and other areas frequented by US and Israeli tourists.

[Redacted]

**Bin Ladin's World View: Battling the "Jewish-Crusader" Conspiracy (U)**

Like many figures in the larger Sunni extremist "jihad movement," Bin Ladin views the Islamic world as a civilization under siege by a conspiracy of foreign powers and corrupt Islamic regimes that he calls the "Jewish-Crusader alliance."

[Redacted]

The goal of this alliance is the destruction of Islam by territorial conquest and the introduction of corrupting foreign influences.

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- Bin Ladin and other jihadists often cite military action against Iraq, sanctions against the Taliban, US support for Israel, and the killing of Muslims in Chechnya and Kosovo as recent examples of international designs against Islam.

Bin Ladin has endorsed a variety of actions to defend the Islamic world against this conspiracy.

- **Terrorist and insurgent attacks** - Some Sunnar extremist authors have even attempted to take ownership of the word "terrorism," noting that the Qur'an tells Muslims "to strike terror into the hearts of the enemies of God" (8:60). A variable intelligence indicates that Bin Ladin sees the United States, Israel, and other major Western powers as his organization's top targets, but he also provides assistance to extremists that target the interests of other perceived enemy states.
- **Acquisition of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons** - Bin Ladin has called the acquisition of unconventional weapons a "religious duty" and noted that they could represent a strategic counterweight to the military strength of the United States and other foreign powers.
- **Promoting Islamic unity** - Bin Ladin has called for the restoration of a pan-Islamic Caliphate based in Afghanistan to serve as a rallying point for the Islamic world.

#### Thorough Pre-Operational Planning

By the time of the 1998 East Africa bombings, al-Qa'ida had established a modus operandi emphasizing careful planning and exhaustive field preparations, which Bin Ladin saw as a prerequisite for spectacular terrorist operations. When asked in a November 1996 interview why his organization had not yet conducted attacks in response to its August *fatwa*, Bin Ladin replied, "If we wanted to carry out small operations, it would have been easy to do so after the statements, but the nature of the battle requires qualitative operations that affect the adversary, which obviously requires good preparation."

Much of the advance planning involves the preparation of targeting studies.

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[Redacted]

The study of the US Embassy in Nairobi—prepared in December 1993—included detailed information

[Redacted]

casing was conducted [Redacted] with a camera and included recommendations for possible methods of attack. According to press, local operatives also surveilled the Embassy days before the August bombing, probably to update the 1993 casing report.

[Redacted]

Such detailed field preparation may support the process of review and approval of an operation by al-Qa'ida's leadership.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

during the months prior to the East

Africa bombings

[Redacted]

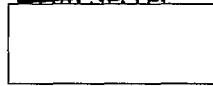
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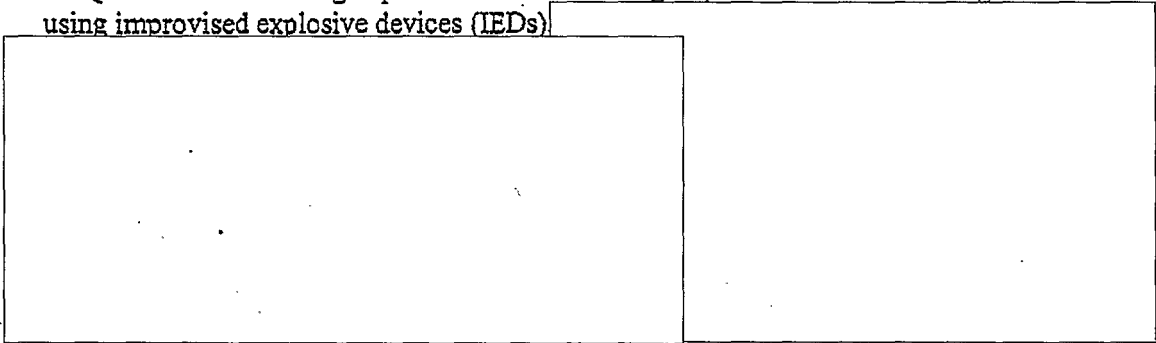
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Flexible Methods of Attack



Al-Qa'ida's bombmaking expertise has enabled the group to conduct devastating attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs)

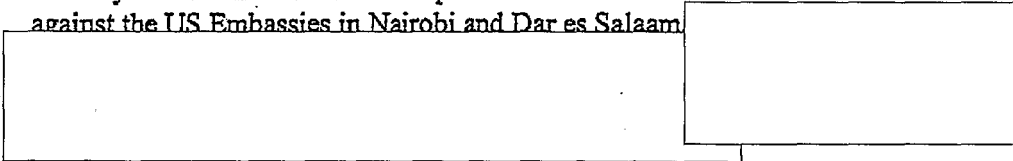


- An explosives manual [redacted] discusses recipes for numerous explosive compounds, details on manufacturing detonators, handling tips, and methods for obtaining the ingredients. [redacted]

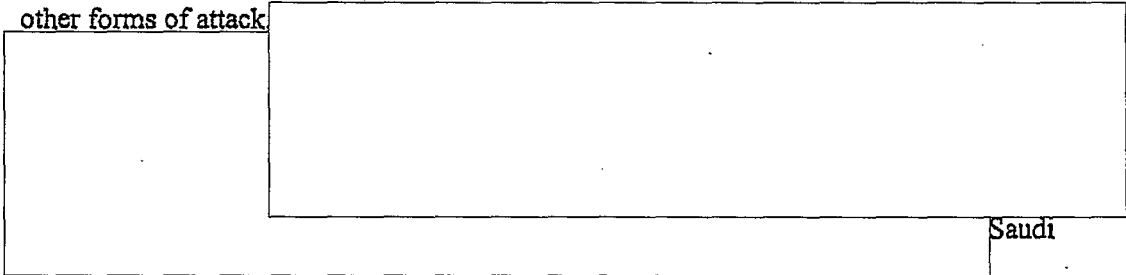
- Operatives plotting attacks in Jordan over the millennial period had cached several tons of materials to make explosives, including nitric acid, sulfuric acid,



- Al-Qa'ida and associated groups have employed a variety of methods for bomb delivery and detonation. Suicide operatives carried out the vehicle bomb attacks against the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.



In addition to bombings, al-Qa'ida has demonstrated the capability and intent to employ other forms of attack



Saudi

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[Redacted]

authorities [Redacted] arrested a group of al-Qa'ida members attempting to smuggle [Redacted] antitank guided missiles into the kingdom for use against US or Saudi facilities [Redacted]

• *Assassinations and armed assaults.* [Redacted]

[Redacted]

• *Kidnappings.* [Redacted]

[Redacted] views hostage taking as a legitimate tactic under certain conditions. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

• *Chemical and biological attacks.* [Redacted]

that Bin Ladin's organization is interested in acquiring unconventional weapons—particularly chemical or biological agents—and possesses at least a rudimentary capability to employ them in attacks. In a December 1998 interview, Bin Ladin called the acquisition of these weapons a "religious duty" and noted, "How we would use them is up to us."

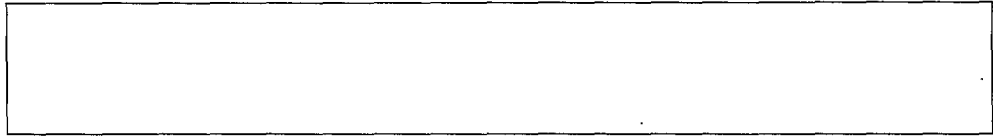
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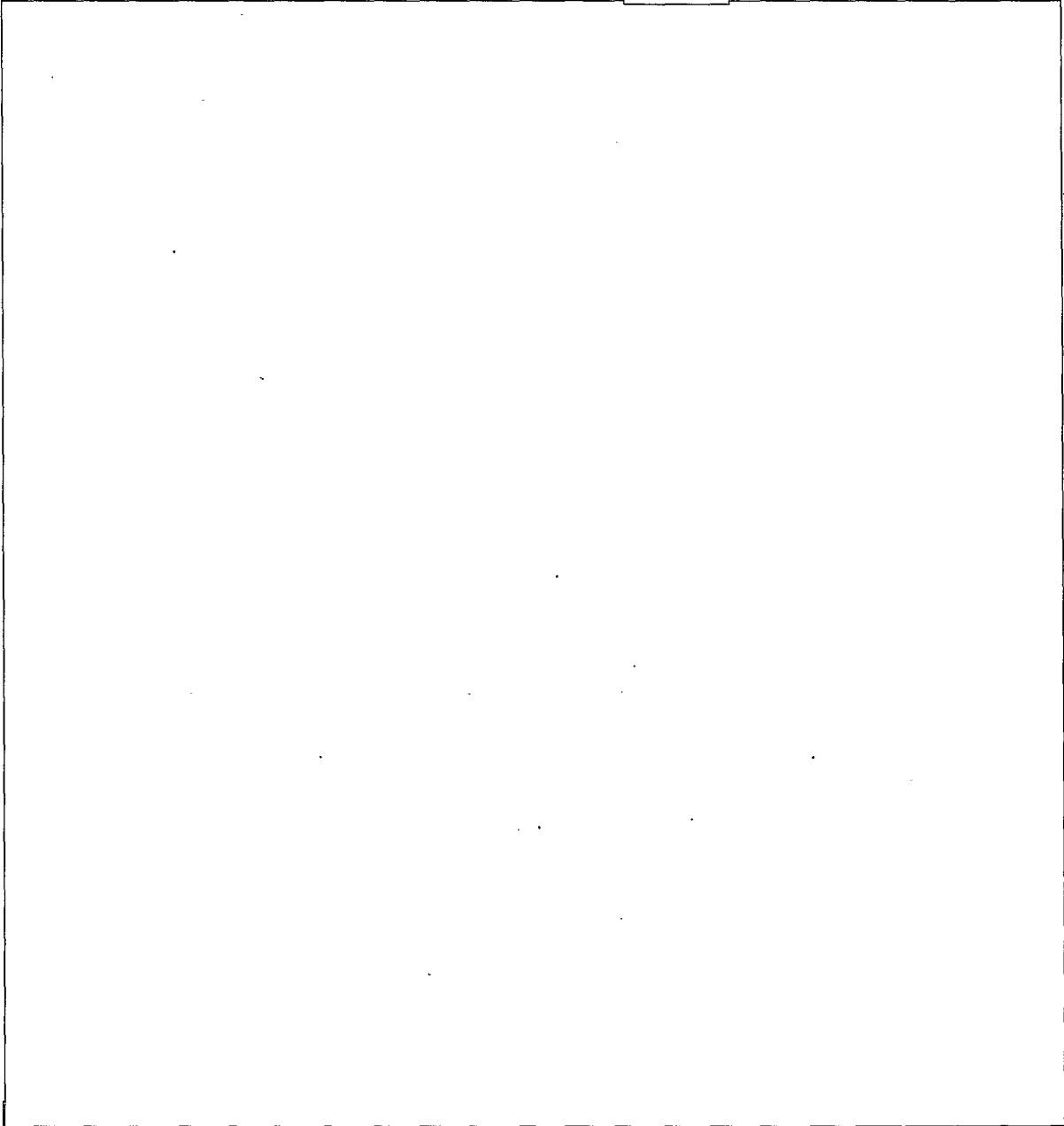
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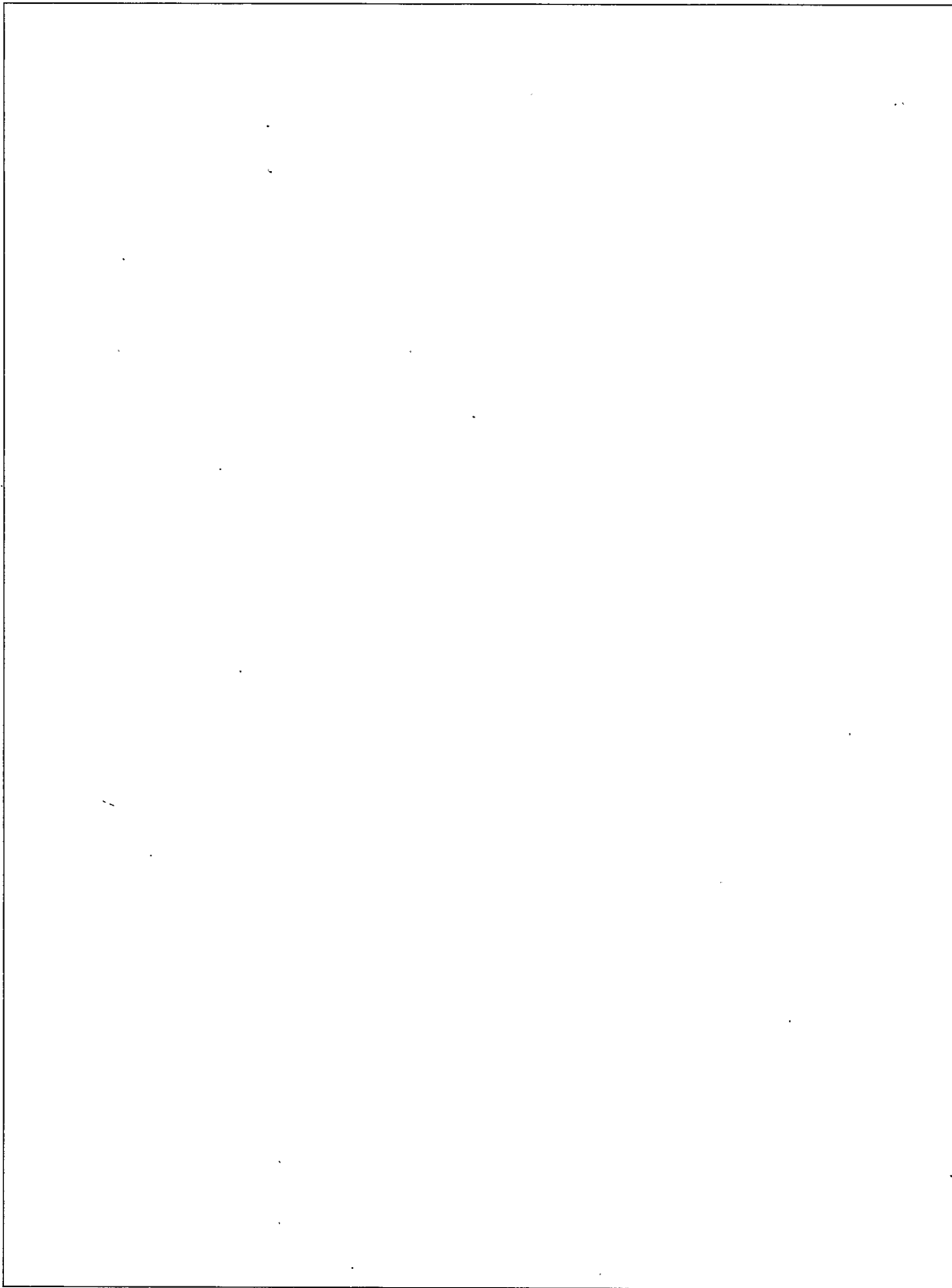
Adapting to New Political and Operational Realities



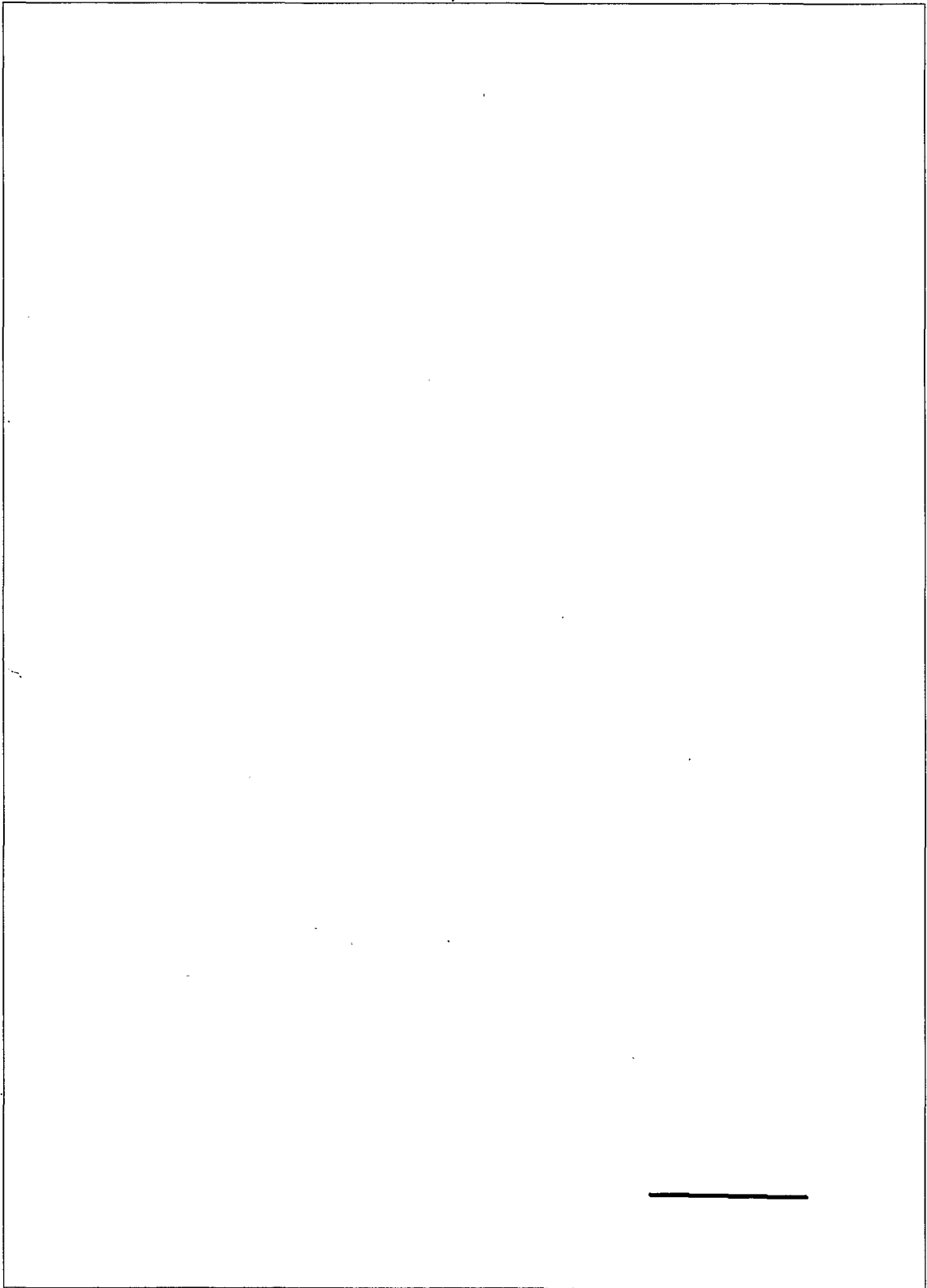
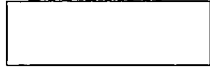
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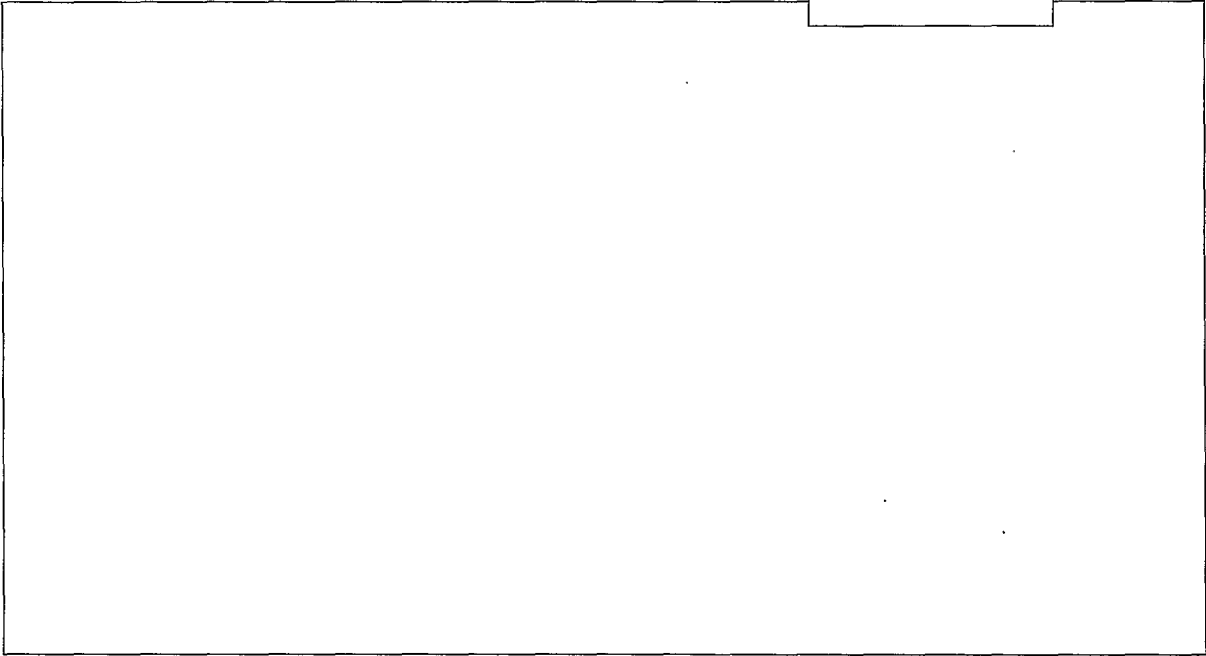
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Appendix A: The East Africa Bombings

The near-simultaneous bombings of the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam on 7 August 1998 concluded almost a full year of preparations involving operatives throughout al-Qa`ida and the resources of a potent local network

The attacks inflicted a heavy toll—over 200 dead and thousands injured—and demonstrated that Bin Ladin is willing to sacrifice a well-developed local infrastructure to strike at the United States.

*Early Activities of the East Africa Cell: A Foundation for Terror*

[Redacted]

East Africa Cell" grew

into a significant infrastructure

[Redacted]

also maintained contact with senior al-Qa`ida leaders and performed important tasks for the organization.

[Redacted]

- Abu `Ubaydah al-Panjshiri

[Redacted] was in frequent contact with the cell until his death in a May 1996 ferryboat accident on Lake Victoria, according to press.

The cell used its presence in Kenya to case potential targets and acquire explosives for terrorist attacks.

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

- The cell had obtained explosives, possibly through local arms trafficking networks, years before the bombings. The US indictment of several of the bombing suspects charges that a local cell member in 1996 displayed TNT and detonators acquired in Tanzania. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

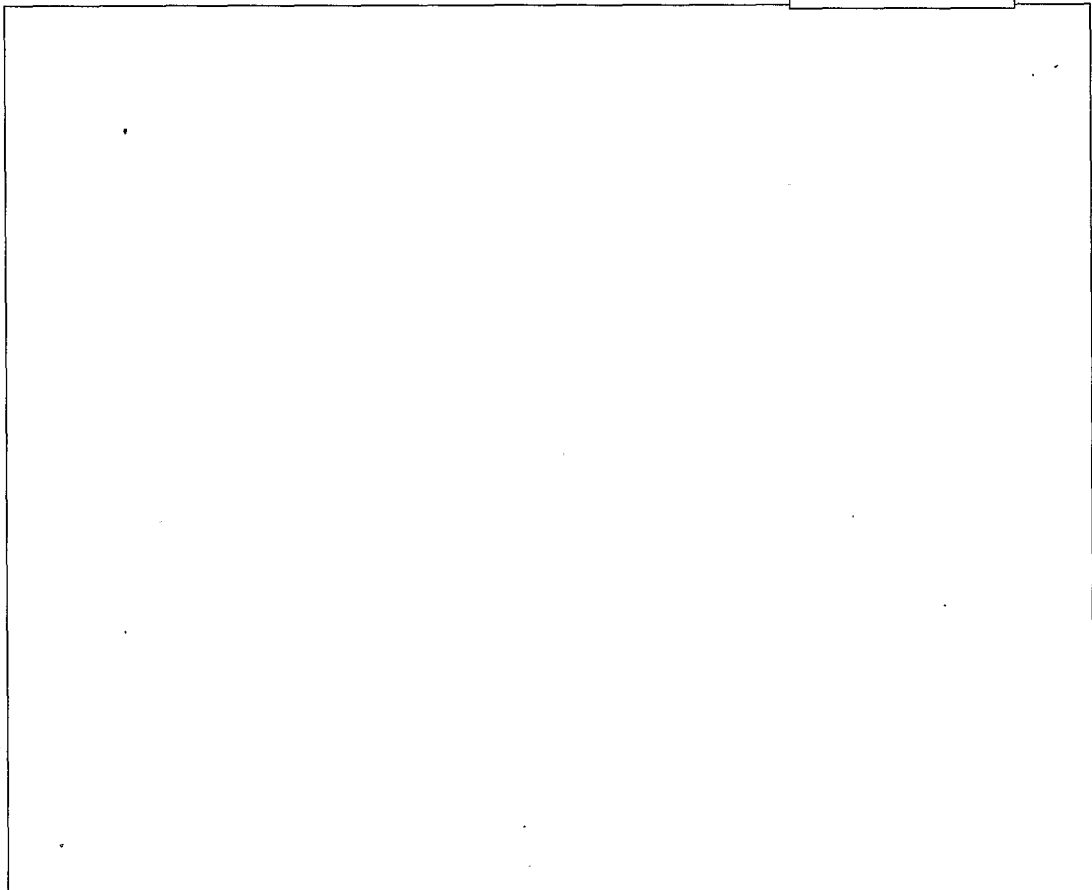
- Bin Ladin warned in a late May interview that the results of his jihad "would be visible within weeks."
- Between May and July, al-Qa'ida operatives in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam rented safehouses and purchased the trucks that they later used as bomb vehicles, according to press.
- [Redacted] Nairobi cell members completed the last preparations for the attack during the first week of August, including a final casing of the Embassy [Redacted] and the departure from East Africa of all al-Qa'ida operatives not directly involved in the attacks. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

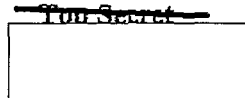
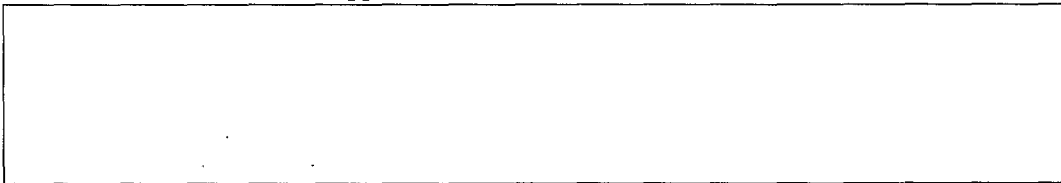
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***Operations "Holy Ka'aba" and "al-Aqsa Mosque"***

The day after the bombings, a London-based Arabic newspaper received three faxes claiming responsibility for the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam attacks—codenamed "Operation Holy Ka'aba" and "Operation al-Aqsa Mosque," respectively—on behalf of the "Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places," a previously unknown group. Quoting from Bin Ladin's February *fatwa*, these letters claimed that three suicide bombers conducted the bombings in retaliation for the presence of US troops on the Arabian Peninsula and US support to Israel.



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Appendix B: Bin Ladin's Role in the Anti-US "Millennial" Plots

In December 1999, intelligence and law enforcement agencies in Jordan and Canada uncovered separate networks preparing to conduct near-term, anti-US attacks.

[Redacted]

The plotters in Jordan planned to time their first attacks to coincide with millennial New Year's celebrations

[Redacted]

**Jordan**

Jordanian authorities arrested [Redacted] members of [Redacted]

[Redacted] cell was planning to kill US and Israeli citizens with bombs and automatic weapons at a variety of tourist-related sites, including the SAS Radisson Hotel in Amman

[Redacted] remarked that the cell's motto was, "The season is coming, and bodies will pile up in sacks."

[Redacted]

[Redacted] al-Hijazi, began planning the operation

[Redacted] sent casing studies for approval to Abu Zubaydah, a senior Bin Ladin

lieutenant

[Redacted]

- The cell accumulated a large arms cache, including several tons of chemicals used to make explosives

[Redacted]

[Redacted] al-Hijazi

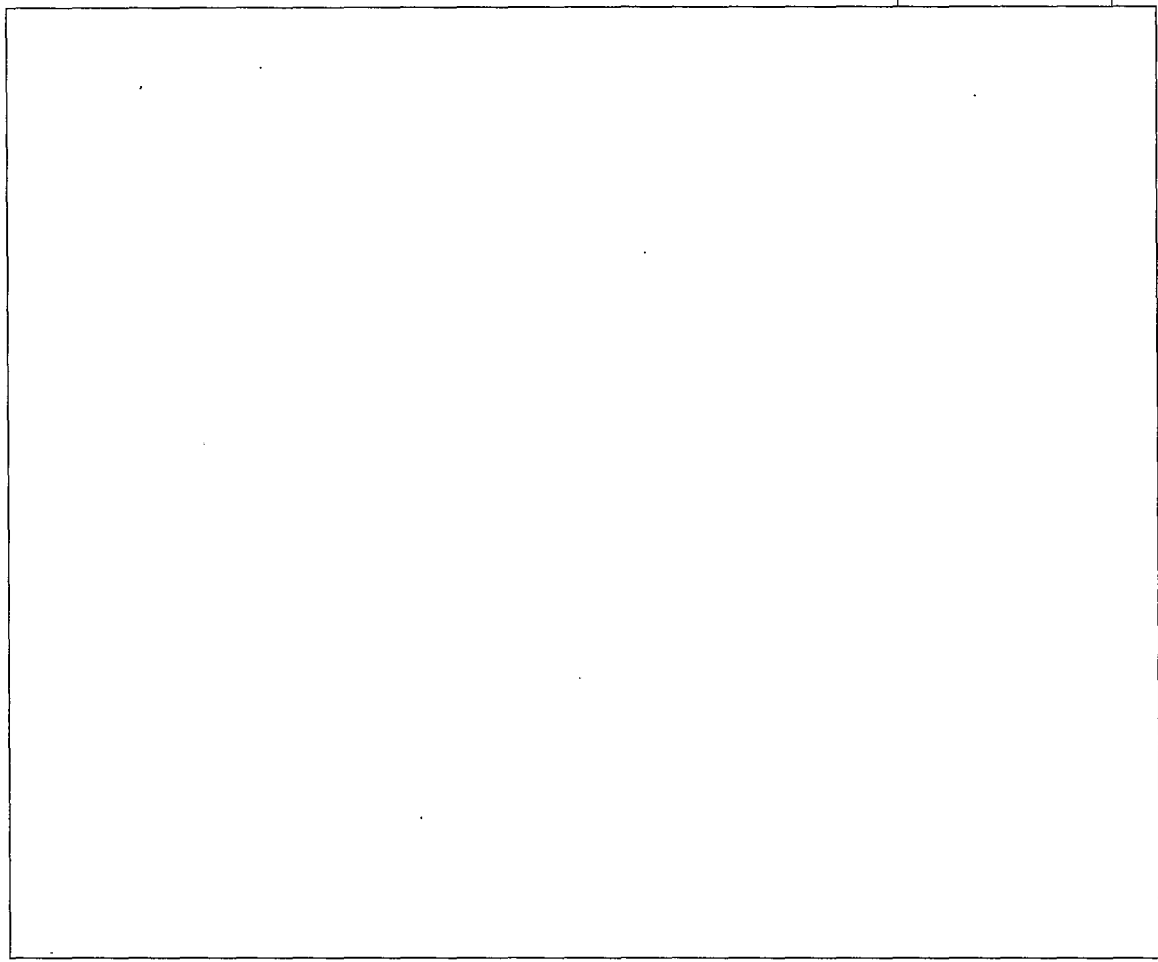
accompanied three operatives to Afghanistan for six months of terrorist training at al-Qa'ida camps.

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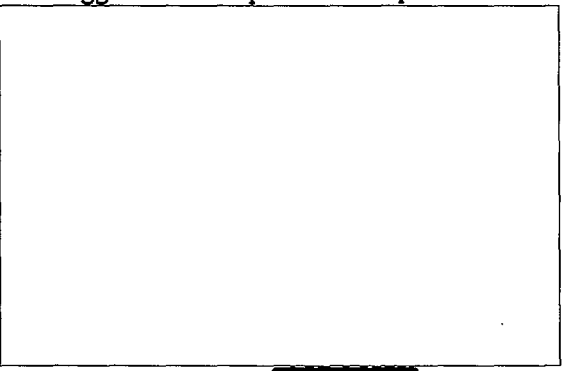
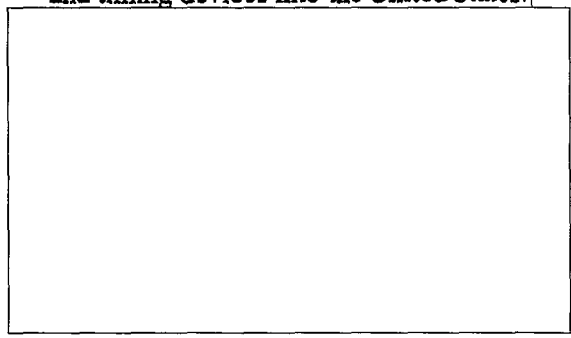
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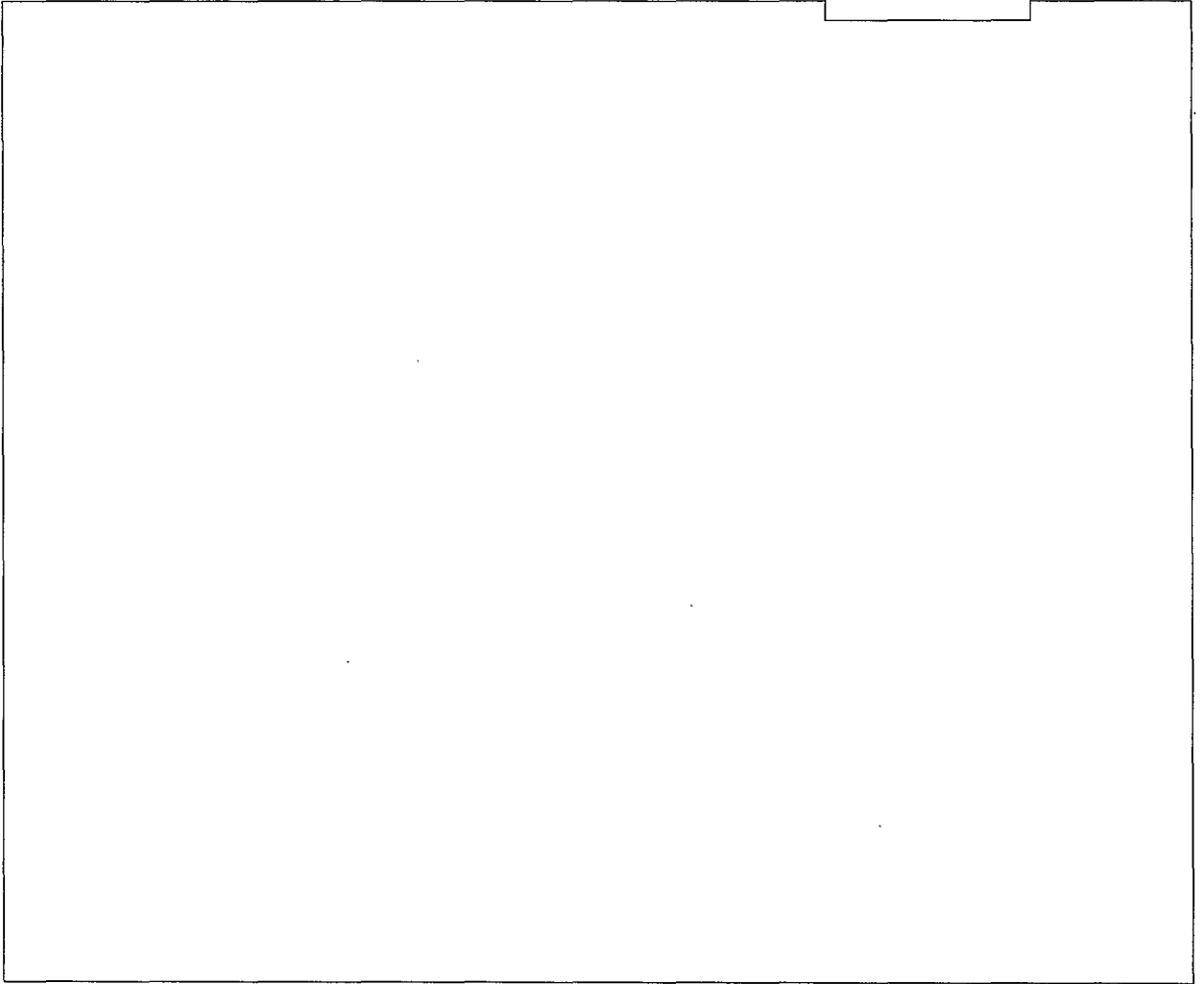
**Canada**

The 14 December arrest of Algerian extremist Ahmad Ressam at the US-Canadian border uncovered preparations for additional anti-US attacks. Ressam—a former Montreal resident who had trained at Bin Ladin's camps in Afghanistan

was attempting to smuggle over 100 pounds of explosives and timing devices into the United States.



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