

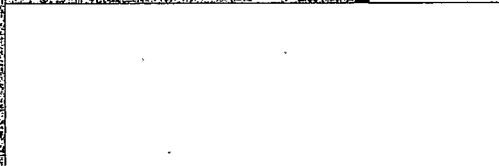
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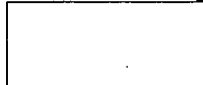
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Afghanistan Camps Central to 11 September Plot: Can Al- Qa'ida Train on the Run?



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**Afghanistan Camps Central to 11 September
Plot: Can Al-Qa'ida Train on the Run?**

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Key Findings (U)

Al-Qa'ida used its sanctuary and network of training facilities in Afghanistan not only to impart the skills necessary to carry out terrorist operations and jihad but also to select and vet terrorist recruits, foster a jihadist lifestyle, build commitment to the cause, and develop liaison relationships with other groups. [REDACTED]

Al-Qa'ida's Afghanistan camps played a central, if not a crucial role in the planning of the 11 September attacks and in the selection and training of cadres to execute the plot.

- In their Afghanistan haven, the organizers and masterminds were able to exchange views at length in face-to-face meetings as the plot took final shape in the Ramadan 1999/2000 time period.
- The in-person meetings greatly reduced the risk of discovery that more remote communications—by cell phone or Internet, for example—would have entailed.
- Although al-Qa'ida could still exploit the open society in the United States to repeat a terrorist act on the scale and with the complexity of 11 September, it will be much harder to assemble as well-trained and carefully selected a team as the 19 hijackers without a safehaven comparable to Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

A variety of sources suggest that, after the plot was set in motion in December 1999, the selection process for members of the "second wave" of hijackers—the support team for the pilots—also took place in Afghanistan and that it involved direct contact with the al-Qa'ida leadership, including Bin Ladin. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

and that Bin Ladin personally interviewed and assessed each applicant.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

in the past year al-Qa'ida has set up small, temporary pockets of training in

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[REDACTED] The group is a long way, however, from recreating the comprehensive training program it had in the Afghanistan camps. In the short run, al-Qa'ida can feed off the fruits of its labor in Afghanistan to maintain its operations and conduct small-scale training. The organization trained [REDACTED] people in its camps in Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Most of the trainees received only basic training, but experienced trainers from those camps are now scattered to other locations where new training activities have been reported.

- Al-Qa'ida members can train with or provide trainers to allied terrorist groups [REDACTED]
- Al-Qa'ida and associated groups are using a number of venues for small training efforts, including madrasas [REDACTED] refugee camps, secluded compounds in areas under limited government control, schools, mosques, apartments, and the Internet. The training of a handful of men for terrorist operations is difficult to detect. [REDACTED]

Over the long run, al-Qa'ida's failure to find a safehaven in which to reestablish its full training programs will affect the nature of the organization, its ability to carry out complex operations such as the 11 September attacks, and its standing among associated terrorist groups. It will be more difficult and risky to bring new recruits into the organization without the lengthy vetting process that was possible in Afghanistan. Senior planners will be less able to observe trainees and choose those best suited to operations. It will be more difficult to create the psychological environment necessary to turn out disciplined terrorist operatives who can carry out complex operations. Finally, al-Qa'ida will increasingly be forced to train with other groups—rather than being in the position to offer other groups training—and thus will lose an important source of leverage and influence in Islamic extremist circles. [REDACTED]

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Afghanistan Camps Central to 11 September Plot: Can Al-Qa'ida Train on the Run? [redacted]

The Role of Afghanistan (U)

Al-Qa'ida's training facilities in Afghanistan served multiple functions—from allowing Bin Ladin to forge the organization to acting as the crucible for the 11 September plot. The Afghan training system:

- Imparted the skills necessary to carry out terrorist operations and fight in jihad.
- Allowed careful selection and vetting of terrorist recruits and operatives by the most senior members of the organization.
- Fostered a jihadist lifestyle among all recruits, allowing al-Qa'ida leaders to meld men of widely varied backgrounds and nationalities into a focused, single-minded corps.
- Provided the isolation and psychological atmosphere necessary to support classic brainwashing techniques that turned recruits into committed operatives who—like several of the 11 September hijackers—could be trusted to live for several years in the West and still carry out their mission. [redacted]

Al-Qa'ida used its Afghanistan camps as currency to increase its influence with other terrorist groups and to build an international network of trained Islamic terrorists to which al-Qa'ida could later turn for support for its operations. According to various intelligence reporting, among the groups that trained in al-Qa'ida camps in the past are al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya, Jemaah Islamiya (JI) [redacted]

[redacted] Al-Qa'ida also sent trainers to other groups—particularly those in

Southeast Asia—to help set up training programs. [redacted]

The Afghanistan safehaven was a crucial factor in the planning and implementation of complex operations, including the 11 September attacks. Our analysis, one-and-a-half years after the attacks, indicates the plot was conceived and almost entirely directed from Afghanistan. The safehaven played a key role in the planning and execution of the operation, including the hijackers' selection, indoctrination, training, and initiation into the plot. Even the plot's relatively autonomous senior coordinator, Muhammad Atta, relayed his updates on the situation in the United States and recommendations for changes in the plan to Afghanistan, seeking the input of the al-Qa'ida leadership. [redacted]

Targeted Candidates

Like many other eventual al-Qa'ida members, the 11 September hijackers were targeted for recruitment outside of Afghanistan, primarily in Germany and Saudi Arabia, according to a variety of reporting. Al-Qa'ida recruiters, trusted clerics, and family recommendations played roles in spotting candidates.

- Muhammad Heydar Zammar, an extremist with suspected al-Qa'ida connections [redacted]

[redacted] recruited three of the four pilots—Muhammed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi, and Ziad Jarrah [redacted]

- Nawaf al-Hazmi probably recommended his brother, Salim al-Hazmi, for recruitment [redacted]

This assessment was prepared by the DCI Counterterrorist Center's Office of Terrorism Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to [redacted]

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- Several of the Saudis appear to have been recruited from Saudi universities or mosques. [redacted]

Gathering in Afghanistan

Travel to Afghanistan was a critical step in turning al-Qa'ida recruits into committed terrorists. The experience of travel to the "pure Islamic state," the camaraderie among recruits, and the discipline and commitment exhibited by al-Qa'ida instructors had a powerful influence [redacted]

to it. The time spent in Afghanistan mobilized, radicalized, and transformed the youth [redacted]

All 19 hijackers, as well as several of the plot's main facilitators, spent time in al-Qa'ida training facilities and guesthouses in Afghanistan during the two years before the September 2001 attacks [redacted]

- The visits of the four pilots to Afghanistan were short relative to those of the "second wave"—the support team for the pilots. Some of the second wave made more than one trip and most stayed many months in the training camps. [redacted]

Selection

According to a variety of intelligence reporting, while men were recruited worldwide, actual selection into the ranks of al-Qa'ida occurred only in Afghanistan, after the organization had ample opportunity to observe candidates' performances in training. In Afghanistan, senior planners observed recruits to

better match individuals to specific operations and operational environments and chose those best able to blend into the target country. [redacted]

[redacted] five pilot candidates for the 11 September plot were selected during Ramadan meetings in 1999 with al-Qa'ida's senior leadership in Kandahar. Three were the Hamburg-based hijackers and the remaining two were hijacker Nawaf al-Hazmi and facilitator Ramzi Bin al-Shibh. [redacted]

- A variety of sources suggest that, after the plot was set in motion in December 1999, the selection process for members of the "second wave" of hijackers also took place in the Afghanistan camps and that it was thorough and involved direct contact with the al-Qa'ida leadership, including Bin Ladin [redacted]

We do not know how many potential suicide attackers were evaluated when the team that carried out the 11 September attacks was chosen, but it was a large number [redacted]

The large number of men passing through the Afghan training camps [redacted] allowed al-Qa'ida to be selective. [redacted]

Controlled Training

Most of the hijackers underwent training similar to that given other al-Qa'ida recruits. The al-Faruq training camp west of Kandahar appears to have been the preferred location for the training and vetting of most second-wave hijackers probably because of its proximity to Bin Ladin and the senior al-Qa'ida leadership. Of the 12 young Saudi hijackers who were in Afghanistan concurrently during the spring of

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2001, at least seven underwent the basic training regime at al-Faruq.

- Three other Saudis—Khalid al-Mihdhar, Satam al-Suqami, and Majid Muqid—trained at Khaldan, another large basic regime training camp that was located in Paktia Province south of Kabul.

Al-Qa'ida instructors conducted training in stages designed to winnow out all but the best and most reliable recruits.

- According to a variety of intelligence reporting, all recruits received standardized basic training, including training in firearms, heavy weapons, explosives, and topography. Recruits learned discipline and military life and were subjected to artificial stresses designed to measure their psychological fitness and commitment to jihad. After the initial stage of training, al-Qa'ida instructors chose candidates to be suicide operatives and others physically and emotionally capable of advancing to the next level.

- Advanced training focused on tactical classes, such as explosives handling and detonation, sabotage, and kidnapping. Al-Qa'ida's philosophy was taught along with advanced theological training. Al-Qa'ida also offered this training to recruits from other terrorist groups [REDACTED]

Specialized training—such as surveillance, urban warfare techniques, and the manufacture of explosives—was reserved for al-Qa'ida members who had been selected to participate in terrorist operations and who had pledged *bay'at* (an oath) to Bin Ladin. Facilitators received tailored training consistent with their specialties, and operatives received training tailored to the specific operations, [REDACTED]

The second wave of hijackers engaged in months-long, daily, intensive instruction, which included

martial arts, ideological and religious indoctrination, and familiarization with procedures that would allow them to blend in with their surroundings in the United States. They likely were put through physical endurance tests, including food and water deprivation, to test their dedication to the cause and ability to withstand captivity—a common practice at al-Qa'ida training camps.

[REDACTED] easier to conduct martial arts and operational security training, which the second-wave hijackers acquired as a team with their future coconspirators, in the controlled environment of the training camps in Afghanistan than in a classroom. [REDACTED]

To prevent backsliding among the second-wave hijackers, the al-Qa'ida trainers in Afghanistan used brainwashing techniques to cement their loyalty and discouraged them from contacting their families during and after their stay in Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] instance of backsliding by a hijacker candidate.

[REDACTED] al-Hamlan, who trained in Afghanistan in the summer of 2000 and swore an oath of allegiance to Bin Ladin, apparently had second thoughts after he made an unapproved visit to his family while on a trip to Saudi Arabia with hijacker Ahmad al-Nami. The two had been instructed to get US visas from the Consulate in Jeddah, but al-Hamlan felt misgivings about the suicide mission after speaking with a brother and refused to return with al-Nami to Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

Afghanistan offered the second-wave hijackers the opportunity to cement their personal ties and loyalties to each other in a relatively secure location as they absorbed the skills needed to execute the plot. Senior planners could observe potential operatives and assemble a team with complimentary skills. Bin Ladin suggested that the hijacker teams in each aircraft comprise individuals who knew each other well and had formed close bonds during training to

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ensure solidarity to the mission's end [redacted]
[redacted]

discovering that it was cheaper and shorter in duration than similar training in Europe.

Facilitators and Associates

Several of the plot's key facilitators and members of the Hamburg network also trained in Afghanistan. Like the second-wave hijackers, the visits of the associates and facilitators took place after the Hamburg pilots' travel to Kandahar in late 1999. The Hamburg associates may have made these trips to Afghanistan so that the al-Qa'ida leadership could personally assess their trustworthiness and utility to the unfolding plot.

- Mounir al-Motassadeq, convicted in Germany for his role in supporting the conspiracy, admitted at his trial to having been in Afghanistan from June to August 2000.

[redacted]

- Zaccarias Moussaoui, whose role in the 11 September plot is still being determined, visited Afghanistan in April 1998 and later that year, August through October 1999, and again in December 2000. [redacted]

Flight Training (U)

[redacted]

although Muhammad 'Atif instructed the three Hamburg pilots to enroll in flight training, he did not specify where. Plot senior coordinator Muhammad Atta had enough decisionmaking latitude to seek flight instruction in the United States, upon

- The three Hamburg pilots used the Internet to research flight schools in the United States, to submit applications for training and, having arrived in the United States, to order flight deck videos from an aviation store in Ohio.
- Al-Qa'ida's continued interest, even after 11 September, in obtaining this kind of training is clear from the discovery of flight training brochures in some of the Afghanistan training camps after the fall of the Taliban. [redacted]

Picking Up the Pieces (U)

Al-Qa'ida today can draw on numerous resources to provide training outside Afghanistan. The organization trained [redacted] people in its camps in Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001.

[redacted] Experienced trainers from Afghanistan's camps are now scattered in other locations.

[redacted]

The group has extensive contacts with other terrorist groups, including many that are in debt to al-Qa'ida for past aid.

- Al-Qa'ida can utilize a variety of venues for small training programs, including madrasas [redacted] refugee camps, secluded compounds in areas under limited government control, schools, mosques, and even apartments.
- Al-Qa'ida sympathizers are also increasingly taking to the Internet to disseminate training materials, such as poison manuals, and conduct online training [redacted]

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We have no information indicating that al-Qa'ida has been able to recreate anything approaching the large-scale training program it once had in Afghanistan. [redacted]

[redacted]

before establishing itself in Afghanistan in 1996, al-Qa'ida administered paramilitary-style training camps, primarily in Somalia, Sudan, and certain parts of Ethiopia, in the early-to-middle 1990s. [redacted]

In the mid-1990s, al-Qa'ida also sent trainers—or associates with expertise in al-Qa'ida curriculum—to the Balkans, Chechnya, England, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, to train extremists, recruit operatives, and support local jihads. Such training usually took place in camps or facilities run by sympathetic organizations. [redacted]

however, that al-Qa'ida in the past year and a half has conducted or attempted to conduct short-term, small-scale training in areas where it has a presence. For example:

- Al-Qa'ida and local extremist groups have trained in Pakistani border regions in preparation for launching operations against US and coalition forces and the Afghan Government. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Al-Qa'ida also sends its operatives to Western countries for specialized training—for example, the flight training taken by the 11 September hijackers. [redacted]

[redacted]

Outlook (U)

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Al-Qa'ida can feed off the fruits of its past labor in Afghanistan to continue conducting operations and conduct small-scale training in the near term. It probably will be relatively easy to covertly train small groups of terrorists in the skills necessary to conduct operations. The training of a handful of operatives will be difficult to detect. [redacted]

The orchestration of major attacks, however, will become increasingly difficult without a new safehaven that would give the al-Qa'ida leadership the freedom to operate and control the plotting.

[redacted]

Without the Afghanistan camps to continue training thousands of men, al-Qa'ida will have a smaller pool of recruits to choose from. Moreover, if al-Qa'ida is not able to exercise firm control over its training programs, conduct consecutive courses, and have its senior leaders observe and vet new trainees, it will be more difficult to bring adequately trained new recruits into the organization. Moreover, those who are brought into the group may not enjoy the full confidence of al-Qa'ida's senior planners to operate independently over long periods of time with unwavering commitment to the cause. [redacted]

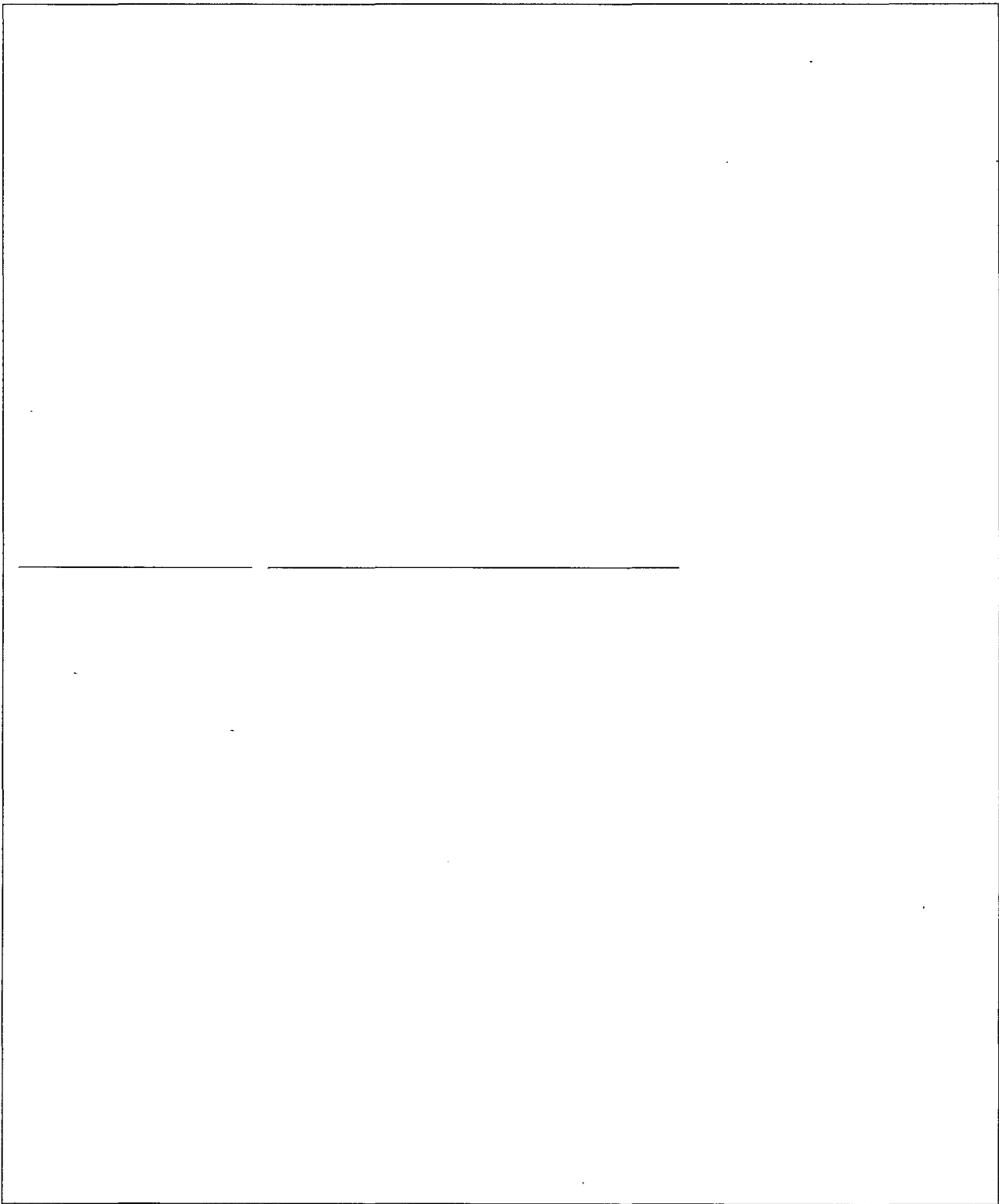
[redacted]

[redacted]

- Over the long run, the failure to find a safehaven in which to reestablish its training programs will affect the nature of al-Qa'ida's organization and the broader extremist community and al-Qa'ida's standing among associated terrorist groups.
- Al-Qa'ida may lose leverage over allies as the global antiterrorist campaign further degrades its ability to provide financial, logistic, and training support to allied groups and to its own fighters.

[redacted]

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