

Bin Ladin Links to USS Cole Bombing

 Preliminary results of the joint US-Yemeni investigation indicate that individuals with varying degrees of association with Usama Bin Ladin's al-Qa'ida organization were involved in the attack against the USS Cole.

Planning

At least two of the key planners are known al-Qa'ida operatives—one, **Abd al Rahim al-Nashiri**, has been implicated in previous Bin Ladin attack planning.

- Another suspect, Tawfiq Bin Attash, is an al-Qa'ida member allegedly close to Bin Ladin who 
 directed the operation from Afghanistan or Pakistan—

Intelligence reporting and the criminal investigation do not yet provide explicit confirmation that Bin Ladin or one of his lieutenants personally masterminded or authorized the attack. Most of the principal suspects in the attack still are at large. US investigators have had only limited access to those in Yemeni custody, none of whom has provided details on outside assistance or direction.

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Execution

 have identified five key operatives and arrested several suspects, ***but only one key player—Jamal al-Badawi—is in custody.*** 
al-Badawi—a former *mujahidin* fighter—confessed to purchasing the attack boat and aiding al-Nashiri, who was the operation's local manager.

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- The group attempted unsuccessfully to attack a US warship visiting Aden harbor last January. The group refitted the boat, leased a new observation site, and conducted a test run last August.

Highlights al-Qa'ida Involvement

- [REDACTED] "Shaykh Usama" planned the attack three years ago.

- [REDACTED] Bin Ladin operative [REDACTED] told a confidant in November that the *USS Cole* attack was a [REDACTED] al-Qa'ida operation.

- [REDACTED] clearly was privy to the failed attack last year.