

1 February 1999

SUBJECT: Usama Bin Ladin's Unconventional Weapons Capability

1. [REDACTED] on unconventional weapons training at Bin Ladin-affiliated camps, attack scenarios [REDACTED] the moderate technical skill required, [REDACTED] suggest that Bin Ladin could conduct crude chemical attacks or poisonings using biological toxins but that such attacks would not cause more casualties than a large conventional bomb. [REDACTED] training at a Bin Ladin-affiliated camp includes instruction on making and using poisons and poisonous gases.

— [REDACTED] Bin Ladin operatives last year agreed to concentrate on obtaining chemical and biological weapons, [REDACTED]

2. [REDACTED] Bin Ladin may have succeeded in acquiring a military-grade unconventional weapon from parts of the former USSR. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Bin Ladin [REDACTED] obtained a "chemical bomb" from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Bin Ladin's network [REDACTED] celebrated the acquisition of a chemical weapon [REDACTED]

— [REDACTED] criminal groups and some government officials are selling CW agents, but CW scams exist elsewhere, and Bin Ladin has been taken in by similar scams in the past. [REDACTED]

3. [REDACTED] Bin Ladin during the past three years has tried to obtain nuclear weapons and related materials, primarily from the former USSR, but we judge he does not have a weapon, the necessary weapons material, or infrastructure to conduct an attack. [REDACTED] his organization has some radioactive material that could be used in a dispersion device—a so-called "dirty" bomb—or in poisonings, but they would not cause mass casualties.

— [REDACTED]

— [REDACTED] Bin Ladin accelerated his search for CW and BW weapons in part because he failed to obtain enough uranium or plutonium. [REDACTED]

4. Bin Ladin might switch from the use of large conventional bombs if he found a way to introduce chemical or biological weapons into targets such as US military bases or embassies. If Bin Ladin succeeded in buying a chemical or biological weapon, his past behavior and statements indicate he would have no reservations about using it and he would begin searching for a suitable target.

— In interviews in December, Bin Ladin said it is a religious duty to seek such weapons to defend Muslims. [REDACTED]

This memorandum was prepared by [REDACTED]
can be reached on [REDACTED] secure.

of the DCI Counterterrorist Center. The author

5. Recent disruptions of suspected terrorist cells of other organizations have had a major impact. [REDACTED] authorities last month arrested [REDACTED] Egyptian extremists, including Abu Khalid, a top operative in the EIJ's Vanguard of Conquest faction led by Ahmad Husayn Agiza and the key outside contact for Agiza, who is in Iran.

- Joint operations [REDACTED] disrupted terrorist support activities in the triborder region of [REDACTED]

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