



Central Intelligence Agency

Senior Executive Memorandum

25 July 2001

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Bin Ladin's 1998 fatwa:

Usama Bin Ladin's most recent *fatwa*, published in two London-based Arabic newspapers on 23 February 1998, says all Muslims have a religious duty "to kill the Americans and their allies, whether civilian or military" worldwide until US forces withdraw from the Arabian Peninsula and Jerusalem is liberated. It was issued in the name of the "World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders" and listed Bin Ladin and the leaders of five Egyptian and South Asian extremist groups as signatories.

The 1998 pronouncement provided the ideological rationale for the East Africa bombings the following August and most subsequent terrorist planning by his al-Qa'ida organization. Bin Ladin's previous *fatwa*, publicized in August 1996, only authorized attacks against Western military targets on the Arabian Peninsula.

- Al-Qa'ida requires a *fatwa*, typically drafted by religious scholars within the group's leadership, as a prerequisite for all attacks,

Neither of Bin Ladin's *fatwas* carries formal weight outside his organization, and mainstream Muslims have rejected them. Nonetheless, they could inspire attacks by extremists who view Bin Ladin as a role model and believe the Islamic world must fend off an assault of Western military power and cultural values.

- A group of extremists planning anti-US attacks arrested in May in [redacted] said they were acting on Bin Ladin's *fatwa* but do not appear to have been members of his organization, [redacted]

For further information, contact the Chief, Assessments and Information Group, at [redacted] secure.