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PDB MEMO

DATE: 10/14/2000
SUBJECT: Islamic Army of Aden's Capabilities and Links
BODY:

14 October
2000

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1. The Islamic Army of Aden (IAA) has carried out at least one confirmed terrorist act--a kidnapping in 1998 of 16 Westerners that left four tourists dead--but nothing previously on the scale of Thursday's attack on the USS Cole.

Several past IAA claims of responsibility for incidents in Yemen have proved false,

2. The IAA has strong links to UK-based Islamists, to the broader mujahidin movement, and possibly to Usama ~~Bin Laden~~. In exchange for its Western hostages, the group in 1998 demanded the release of six imprisoned Arab terrorists associated with the Supporters of Sharia--a London-based Islamist propaganda outlet--demanded an end to Sanaa's alleged persecution of mujahidin elements, and expressed opposition to the UN sanctions on Iraq.

--- The IAA is an offshoot of the now-defunct Yemen Islamic Jihad, which was linked to ~~Ben Laden~~, and previous IAA communiques claimed allegiance to him.

3. Soon after former IAA leader Abu Hassan was executed last year for the kidnapping incident, the Yemeni Interior Minister announced the arrest of his alleged successors--Abu al-Muhsin and Abu Bassam--and claimed the group no longer existed. Yemeni authorities remain concerned about the group and its terrorist capabilities.

and Arab media in May carried a

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statement threatening the Yemeni Government that was attributed to Abu Hassan's followers. [REDACTED]

4. Recent conciliatory gestures suggest Yemeni authorities feared the group might pose a renewed threat. In the past two weeks, a Yemeni court had handed down a light sentence against Abu Hassan's accused successor, and the Interior Minister hinted at the possible release of the incarcerated Supporters of Sharia associates. [REDACTED]

Two additional groups have claimed responsibility for the USS Cole attack. The Muhammad's Army organization was active in Jordan and Pakistan in the 1990s, and individuals linked to the Jordanian group were implicated in the millennium plot in Jordan. A group using this name also has claimed credit for the explosion at the British Embassy in Sanaa yesterday, and [REDACTED] the blast may have resulted from a small bomb. [REDACTED]

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