



PDB Memorandum

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8 December 1999

SUBJECT: Implications of Foiled Terrorist Plot in Jordan

1. Jordanian authorities on Tuesday arrested a sixteen-man team of terrorists who planned New Year's Eve attacks on pilgrims at the John the Baptist shrine on the River Jordan and tourists at a hotel in Amman. The terrorists—of various nationalities—planned to use poisons and improvised explosive devices and intended to maximize US and Israeli casualties.

- [REDACTED] individuals on the team have direct links to Bin Ladin's al-Qa`ida organization, to mujahidin supporters in Pakistan, including Abu Zubaida and Khalil Deek—key figures in the world mujahidin movement—and to Abu Khabab al-Masri, a Bin Ladin-associated trainer in chemical and biological materials use. [REDACTED]

2. Details of the plot match Bin Ladin's terrorist methods in several ways—the preference for soft targets, efforts to minimize Muslim casualties, and a growing confidence in the use of chemical agents. Bin Ladin's 1998 fatwa authorizing attacks against "Americans and their allies" draws no distinction between civilian and military targets, and [REDACTED] his organization sees individual US citizens as valid targets if Embassies or other fixed installations are too well-protected. [REDACTED]

- The targeting of tourists and Christian pilgrims and the timing indicate that avoiding harm to Muslims remains important to Bin Ladin. Planning for the East Africa bombings included similar measures, such as conducting the attacks on a Friday.

- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Bin Ladin's organization has trained operatives in the use of toxic chemical and biological toxins for several years but has not used them in an attack.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

3. Bin Ladin has shown he can mount multiple attacks, and he and his allies presumably have other operations under way. An al-Qa`ida terrorist planner this year shipped more than 10 "containers"—possibly targeting studies or operational proposals—to Afghanistan, [REDACTED] suggesting the group has contingency plans for attacks against numerous targets.

- Some interpretations of Islamic tradition view warfare on nonbelievers as particularly appropriate during Ramadan—this year from 9 December to 7 January—and security in Muslim countries may be relaxed during the fast. Extremists may expect similar unpreparedness and large crowds at US and other Western targets around Christmas and New Year's. [REDACTED]

For further information, please contact the Director, DCI Counterterrorist Center, at [REDACTED] secure.

[REDACTED]