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PDB MEMO

DATE: 12/11/98
SUBJECT: Significant Near-Term Threat of Bin Ladin Attacks
BODY:

11 December 1998

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1. [REDACTED] over the past two months suggest Bin Ladin's group is preparing one or more terrorist attacks in the near future. Individuals in Malaysia tied to a senior operative of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad—a group closely allied with Bin Ladin—last month said "they" were "in the ninth month" of pregnancy, and a Bin Ladin associate in Yemen late last month told his mother he would soon be involved in "commerce" and a "wedding"—terms often used as codewords for terrorist planning.

--- In late October, Bin Ladin's most senior lieutenant in Khartoum discussed a shipment of "containers," [REDACTED] before the East Africa bombings [REDACTED]

2. [REDACTED] several reports of impending anti-US terrorist operations. [REDACTED] and planning to hijack aircraft before Ramadan, [REDACTED] Bin Ladin last month was planning an "imminent" terrorist operation against a US facility in [REDACTED] and was frustrated that an attack in [REDACTED] had not been carried out. [REDACTED]

3. Bin Ladin may view the coming weeks as propitious for terrorist operations because he may anticipate security at US installations will relax during the Christmas and New Year's holiday period. Similarly, security forces in Muslim countries will be spread thin and be less vigilant during Ramadan, which lasts from 20 December to 18 January. In addition, Ramadan commemorates the Prophet Muhammad's victories over his enemies. [REDACTED]

4. [REDACTED] and Bin Ladin's ideological motivations suggest he assigns the highest priority to attacks against official US facilities in the Persian Gulf. We have strong indications that he would like to attack the US and allies such as the UK and Israel on their own soil. If Bin Ladin judges these venues are too well defended, however, he will target US and allied interests in other areas of the world accessible to his network.

--- [REDACTED] Bin Ladin may seek to conduct terrorist operations in areas where allied extremists have extensive networks, such as Pakistan and Egypt. [REDACTED]

5. Bin Ladin and his allies are most capable of conducting assassinations and bombings similar to the attacks in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, but they could employ other means to defeat security measures at US targets. [REDACTED] the al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya in October obtained SA-7 missiles and intended to shoot down an Egyptian or US aircraft. Many Bin Ladin operatives used man-portable antiaircraft missiles against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, and [REDACTED] others

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have received training in aircraft hijacking.

--- [REDACTED] efforts by Bin Ladin to acquire unconventional weapons, including CW agents such as the nerve agent VX, [REDACTED] he has considered using these materials [REDACTED] [REDACTED]



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