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Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council
NEWSLETTER



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Open Source News reporting Summary: This collection of open source information is offered for informational purposes only. It is not, and should not be, construed as official evaluated intelligence.

Maine election officials urged to be prepared for disruptions

More than 30 election wardens discovered the world had changed a lot in four years when they were briefed by the Portland Police Department on precautions surrounding the presidential election. Election officials, many of them retirees, learned about a litany of potential problems including telephone threats, suspicious people, chemicals, powders, explosives. "It's basically Security 101," said Chief Michael Chitwood. "We just want to make sure all towns and cities have been thinking it through,"

Full story: <http://news.maintoday.com/apwire/D85DGCD83-272.shtml>

Terrorists have oil industry in cross hairs



Terrorists and insurgents are stepping up attacks on oil and gas operations overseas in an effort to disrupt jittery energy markets, destabilize governments and scare off foreign workers, analysts said. The attacks have been most intense in Iraq, but also have occurred in recent months in Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Russia and Nigeria. In many cases, the attacks are orchestrated by terrorists or rebels, often Islamic extremists, seeking to cause economic disruption or steal oil to finance their operations, analysts said. Their targets are sometimes pipelines, tankers and workers in areas with varying levels of security.

Full story: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A52810-2004Sep26?language=printer>

Related reporting:

Pipeline security difficult

http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=13011747&BRD=1574&PAG=461&dept_id=532215&rft=6

Terrorists pick oil operations as easy targets

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04277/388930.stm>

The Weaponization Of Comparative Advantage

<http://www.americandaily.com/article/1062>

It's not so much *what folks don't know* that's the problem.
It's that *they know too much... that ain't so ...* that's the problem !

U.S. officials dispute al Qaeda role in hemisphere

DHS Secretary Tom Ridge declared on 27 September that there was no sign of al Qaeda infiltration along the border with Mexico, despite the flurry of recent reports by CIA and FBI officials noting that al Qaeda lieutenant Adnan El Shukrijumah was working with a Salvadoran gang to transport al Qaeda sympathizers into the U.S. to stage an attack (*Washington Times*). According to a recent National Public Radio newscast, FBI officials find it “very plausible” that Shukrijumah -- a 29-year-old Saudi pilot suspected of being a terrorist cell leader -- has already entered Mexico, warning that he may be the next Mohamed Atta, a reference to the leader of the group of 9/11 terrorists (National Public Radio). The Salvadoran gang Mara Salvatrucha, which reportedly has extensive connections in Latin American and U.S. communities, allegedly plans to use immigrant smuggling routes to move terrorists into the country, according to a 29 September report by *The Herald*. Although Attorney General John Ashcroft has singled out Shukrijumah as one of seven especially dangerous al Qaeda-linked terror figures wanted by the government, offered a \$5 million reward for information leading to his capture, and confirmed earlier this month that U.S. border agents had increased efforts to identify and detain Shukrijumah should he attempt to enter via Mexico, Secretary Ridge held firm in his assertion that there had been no indications of al Qaeda infiltration along the border. Secretary Ridge also noted the U.S. had no plans to “militarize” the border with Mexico (Associated Press).

ANALYSIS:

Reliable reports of al Qaeda attempting to use Latin America as a staging ground to launch attacks in America have steadily increased in the past few months. Honduran officials claim Shukrijumah was spotted earlier this year at an Internet cafe in the capital of Tegucigalpa and the U.S. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks -- or ***the 9-11 Commission -- suggested on 22 August that al Qaeda may have developed a sophisticated network with Latin American "coyotes" -- or smugglers of illegal aliens -- to enter the U.S. as early as 2002.*** The extent to which terrorists have infiltrated small Muslim communities or recruited sympathizers is still unclear, although Honduran Security Minister Óscar Álvarez announced that ***al Qaeda operatives had sought to recruit locals*** to carry out an attack in Honduras and abroad by offering money and appealing on ideological grounds (*La Prensa*, AP). However, the discrepancy between official reports -- namely, from Secretary Ridge and Attorney General Ashcroft -- only adds to the many existing questions regarding border security and terrorist coordination in the hemisphere. Experts fear that, despite modest security improvements along the porous border, al Qaeda may develop -- or worse, may have already developed -- a smuggling network. Two suspects arrested in early September by U.S. authorities in Detroit, along with a Jordanian citizen arrested by Peruvian police, are charged with transporting over 200 illegal Iraqis, Jordanians, and other Middle Easterners to the U.S. since 2001 via Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador (*Detroit Free Press*), raising questions over the extent of other, possibly undiscovered, smuggling rings. ***Although there may be no “indications” of actual al Qaeda infiltration, failure to recognize the complexity of al Qaeda planning in Latin America may lead to disastrous consequences.***

Related reporting:

INM Searching for Two Iraqis in Tamaulipas – 22 September 2004

Nuevo Laredo and Miguel Alemán, Tamaulipas – Tamaulipas INM delegate José Fernando Montes stated that immigration authorities in Tamaulipas ***are searching for two Iraqi citizens who are trying to cross illegally to the U.S.*** They may be hiding in Nuevo Laredo. “We have reinforced our operations because we suspect that two Iraqi citizens may be in the Nuevo Laredo border region or in the Miguel Alemán village,” he explained. The foreigners may be hiding in a hotel or have attempted to cross into U.S. territory via Miguel Alemán, which is adjacent to Roma, Texas. “We are inspecting hotels in Miguel Alemán as well as Nuevo Laredo, but we have not had any results,” he concluded.

COMMENT: The above paragraph is a complete translation of the article as it appeared in:

Source: http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/pls/impreso/noticia.html?id_nota=246281&tabla=notas

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Al Qaeda leader identified in 'dirty bomb' plot



A top al Qaeda cell leader spotted in Mexico and Canada has been identified as an active player in a scheme to obtain radioactive materials for a so-called "dirty bomb" that could be smuggled into the United States, federal authorities said. Adnan G. El Shukrijumah, who worshipped at the same South Florida mosque as Jose Padilla — now being held as an enemy combatant in a plot to detonate a "dirty bomb" — has attempted unsuccessfully to enter the United States using phony passports, authorities said. Known to law enforcement officials as the "diminutive terrorist" because of his 5-foot-4-inch stature, El Shukrijumah also is believed by authorities to have met with alien smugglers in Mexico and Honduras, seeking help in bringing al Qaeda members illegally into the United States. Authorities said those meetings involved members of the Mara Salvatrucha gang, which U.S. immigration officials said has smuggled hundreds of Central and South Americans — mostly gang members — into the United States.

Full story: <http://washingtontimes.com/national/20041005-013052-7047r.htm>

Schoolteachers arrested for involvement in terrorist groups

Authorities confirmed Sept. 29 that security forces arrested 17 schoolteachers Sept. 17-24 in the departments of Amazonas, Cuzco, Junin, La Libertad, Lima, Piura, San Martin and Ucayali for their involvement with terrorist groups. The teachers are allegedly members of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) rebel groups. Interior Minister Javier Reategui said that nine of the alleged terrorists were members of the teachers workers union (Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de Educacion de Peru or SUTEP), and that there are several other members of the union who belong to these terrorist organizations.

COMMENT:

The arrests were coordinated by a special anti-insurgency team. Peruvian government officials estimated that approximately 450 Shining Path rebels remain active following former leader Abimael Guzman's 1992 decision to end armed conflict; the remnant forces did not accept Guzman's decision. The group operates in rural areas of Peru and is allegedly involved in the drug trafficking business. The MRTA was very active and violent from the 1980s through the mid 1990s, and became notorious when it held 72 hostages for four months in the Japanese ambassador's residence, starting December 1996. Ideologically the MRTA has been a Cuba-inspired "Guevarista" movement, less radical in its political views than Sendero Luminoso, which follows Maoist totalitarian ideology. Last September, Victor Polay, the imprisoned leader of the MRTA, accepted the defeat of his group in an interview with the Peru21 newspaper. Polay said that his group should give up all arms and join the "political fight," respecting the principle of democracy.

U.S. struggles to understand Al Qaeda finances

More than three years after the Sept. 11 attacks, the United States is still struggling to understand how al Qaeda gets its funding, how much it earns and where it spends the money, lawmakers heard on Wednesday. Commission Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton and Commissioner Slade Gorton said the complex web of raising and moving money, the mix of terrorist and legitimate funds, and problems of international cooperation were among the obstacles to stopping terrorist financing. "Since the Sept. 11 attacks and the defeat of the Taliban, al Qaeda's budget has decreased significantly," they said in joint testimony to the Senate banking committee. "Although the trend line is clear, the U.S. government still has not determined with any precision how much al Qaeda raises or from whom, or how it spends its money,"

Full story: <http://www.reuters.com/newsArticle.jhtml?type=topNews&storyID=6368979>

Related reporting:

Financial sleuths face uphill battle to track terrorist funds: experts

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle.asp?xfile=data/theWorld/2004/October/theWorld_October71.xml§ion=theWorld

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Money launderers seek new ways to beat law

Criminals and terrorists are devising new ways to launder money and move it around the world, even as authorities are tightening the rules to stop them. At a conference in Vienna this week, speakers noted that, at the most primitive level, this can mean physically smuggling cash across borders, especially using high-denomination notes like 500 euro bills, worth almost 350 pounds. At its most sophisticated, it may involve recruiting legal and financial professionals as "gatekeepers" to set up complex webs of holding companies via offshore tax havens.

(See 'Stored Value Card' paragraph)

Full story:

<http://www.reuters.co.uk/newsPackageArticle.jhtml?type=reutersEdgeNews&storyID=594768&src=rss/uk/featuresNews§ion=finance>

Laser injures Delta pilot's eye



A pilot flying a Delta Air Lines jet was injured by a laser that illuminated the cockpit of the aircraft as it approached Salt Lake City International Airport last week, U.S. officials said. The plane's two pilots reported that the Boeing 737 had been five miles from the airport when they saw a laser beam inside the cockpit, said officials familiar with government reports of the Sept. 22 incident. The flight, which originated in Dallas, landed without further incident at about 9:30 p.m. local time. "TSA is aware of the incident, and we are working with the airline in conducting an investigation to try and determine the cause of the incident," "TSA is aware of the incident, and we are working with the airline in conducting an investigation to try and determine the cause of the incident,"

Full story: <http://washingtontimes.com/national/20040928-111356-3924r.htm>

Related reporting:

How Lasers Work (scroll down and select article)

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/laser4.htm>

Long Island Laser Works

<http://www.lilaser.net/laser.htm>

Al-Jazeera Airs New Al-Zawahri Message

Al-Jazeera news network Oct. 1 aired an audiotape of Ayman Al-Zawahri, Al-Qaeda's second in command, calling on Muslims to mobilize against the interests of the those countries participating in military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Zawahri singled out Australia, France, Hungary, Japan, Norway, Poland, South Korea, the U.K. and U.S. for their participation in military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan; he focused primarily on the countries directly involved in Iraq. Zawahri spoke of a "Muslim duty" to liberate Israel and Palestinian territories from the "global coalition against Islam," naming Israel, the "Zionist U.S." and the "crusader West" as members of this coalition. Zawahri urged Muslims to "learn the lessons of resistance in Afghanistan, Chechnya Iraq and Palestine...", and to go on the offensive.

COMMENT:

This latest message sets the stage for decentralized planning and execution of operations by Al-Qaeda and affiliated movements, cells and operatives in the absence of direction from senior Al-Qaeda leadership. This is an indication that thus far, Zawahri and other senior leaders have maintained some measure of operational control over the organization, approving operations before they were carried out. Now it would appear that operations can and will be planned at a lower lever within regional cells, allowing for

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independent operations without authorization from the most senior leadership. At the same time, the message may also be an admission that he and other senior leaders will eventually be captured or killed, and may indicate that those hunting Al-Qaeda's senior leadership are getting close. In response to the latest message from Al-Qaeda, Norway, South Korea and others stepped up security at home, putting security forces on high alert, deploying additional personnel to protect vital infrastructure and institutions as well as increasing security measures at their missions abroad. The financial services sector in northern New Jersey, New York City and Washington, D.C. have been at Code Orange (High) threat level since Aug. 1, while the remainder of the country remains at Code Yellow (Elevated). Authorities have repeatedly expressed concern about a possible Al-Qaeda attack in the U.S. before the upcoming presidential elections. But no further specific threats as to when or where such an attack might take place have been identified.

Saudi militants switch from suicide to hit-and-run

After a series of spectacular suicide attacks, militants in Saudi Arabia are now launching isolated hit-and-run shootings of Westerners. Frenchman Laurent Barbot was the latest victim, shot in his car as he left a late night supermarket in the Red Sea city of Jeddah early on Sunday. Westerners and Saudi security forces have been the prime targets of the Al Qaeda campaign to drive non-Muslims out of the deeply conservative cradle of Islam and overthrow the country's pro-Western absolute monarchy.

Full story: <http://www.reuters.com/newsArticle.jhtml?type=worldNews&storyID=6350186>



Al-Sadr militia pumping up with drugs

Militiamen fighting under the banner of radical Muslim cleric Muqtada al-Sadr are pumping themselves up with drugs before confronting coalition forces, according to U.S. military reports and State Department and Iraqi sources. Although quelled in Najaf in August, the Mahdi's Army militia is still active around southern Iraq and continues to largely control the Baghdad slum known as Sadr City — the target of repeated U.S. military air raids and tank patrols. "They give their suicide bombers barbiturates, and the amphetamines are for street fighters who are facing off with the U.S.," a State Department analyst said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

Full story: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/world/20041005-022526-7903r.htm>

Iranian missiles can reach Europe



Former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani announced Oct. 6 at a Space and National Security conference that Iran now has missiles with a range of 2,000 km (1,250 miles) - i.e., capable of reaching Europe. Rafsanjani claims Iran is capable of increasing the missile range further in the near future. Iranian officials have indicated that the Islamic republic will attempt to launch a satellite in 2005.

COMMENT:

Up to now, it was believed that Iran's Shihab-3 missiles had a range of up to 1,300 km (808 miles), placing Israel and U.S. bases in the Gulf within range. Israeli officials have long claimed that Iran is developing a Shihab-4 missile that would put most European capitals in range. Should Iran test a missile with such an extended range, the matter will be of special concern to southern and central European countries. It is likely that the announcement is related to the increased pressure placed on Iran's nuclear program by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). U.S. officials, determined to have the IAEA refer the matter to the U.N., are winning over the support of European countries that resist such a referral and prefer dialogue with the Islamic republic to economic sanctions.

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