

Testimony of

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Prepared Remarks
of
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Good afternoon, Senator Kyl and other members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me here today to testify regarding the state of the terrorist threat to the United States. The Subcommittee's work in this area is an important part of improving the security of our Nation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation greatly appreciates your leadership, and that of your colleagues in other committees dealing with the security of our country. I would like to briefly discuss for the Subcommittee the FBI's assessment of the current threats facing the United States.

First, let me emphasize the commitment of the FBI to investigating and disrupting terrorist activity both in this country and against U.S. interests overseas. There is no more important mission within the FBI. We are dedicating tremendous resources to this effort and will continue to do so as long as the threat exists.

Since September 11, 2001, the FBI has investigated more than 4,000 terrorist threats to the U.S. and the number of active FBI investigations into potential terrorist activity has quadrupled. Working with our partners in local and state law enforcement and with the U.S. Intelligence community, we have also disrupted terrorist activities in over 35 instances inside the United States since September 11, 2001. These include both domestic and international terrorism matters and consist of a variety of preventive actions, including arrests, seizure of funds, and disruption of recruiting and training efforts. No threat or investigative lead goes unanswered today. At headquarters, in our field offices, and through our offices overseas, we run every lead to ground until we either find evidence of terrorist activity, which we pursue, or determine that the information is not substantiated. While we have disrupted terrorist plots since 9/11, we remain constantly vigilant as a result of the ongoing nature of the threat. The greatest danger to our safety and security comes not from what we know and can prevent, but from what we do not know.

We know this: The Al Qaeda terrorist network remains the most serious threat to U.S. interests both here and overseas. That network includes groups committed to the "international jihad movement," and it has demonstrated the ability to survive setbacks. Since September 11, 2001, we believe that Al Qaeda has been involved in at least twelve terrorist attacks against the United States and our allies around the world. This fact requires that we continue to work closely with our partners to fight Al-Qaeda in all its forms both here and overseas.

On March 1, 2003, counterterrorism forces in Pakistan captured Al Qaeda operational commander Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and financier Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi. In early 2002, another high ranking Al Qaeda operational commander, Mohamed Atef, was killed in a U.S. bombing raid. Many more suspected Al Qaeda operatives have been arrested in the United States and abroad.

Despite these strikes against the leadership of Al Qaeda, it remains a potent, highly capable and extremely dangerous terrorist network -- the number one terrorist threat to the U.S. today. The very recent attacks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and in Casablanca, Morocco -- which we believe to be either sponsored or inspired by Al Qaeda - clearly demonstrate that network's continued ability to kill and injure innocent, unsuspecting victims.

In Riyadh on May 12, 2003, the simultaneous strikes on three foreign compounds were carried out by 12 to 15 individuals, nine of whom were suicide bombers. The overall death toll rose to 34, including at least seven Americans and the nine attackers. Nearly 200 people were wounded. Forty of those were Americans.

In Casablanca on May 16, 2003, as many as 12 suicide bombers orchestrated the simultaneous bombing of 5 targets. A targeted Jewish center was closed and unoccupied when one of the bombs was detonated. The deadliest attack occurred inside a Spanish restaurant where 19 were killed. Outside one targeted hotel, a security guard and a bellboy scuffled with bombers intent on entering the hotel. They prevented them from entering but lost their lives, along with those of their terrorist attackers, when the bombs were detonated outside. The terrorists even targeted a Jewish cemetery.

We know that the Al Qaeda network maintains a presence in dozens of countries around the world, including the United States. Audiotaped messages released in early October 2002 from Usama bin Laden and his senior deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, urged renewed attacks on U.S. and Western interests. Intelligence analysis indicates that subsequent attacks against Western targets may have been carried out in response to these audiotaped appeals that were broadcast on the al-Jazeera network beginning on October 6, 2002.

Two subsequent audiotapes attributed to bin Laden, released on February 11 and February 14, 2003, linked a call for terrorist attacks against Western targets with the pending war in Iraq. In the latter of these audiotaped messages, bin Laden appeared to express his desire to die in an attack against the United States. The most recent audio tape attributed to bin Laden, released on April 9, 2003, urged jihadists to carry out suicide attacks against those countries supporting the war in Iraq. And while individual suicide attacks have the potential to cause significant destruction and loss of life, we remain concerned about Al Qaeda's ability to mount simultaneous and large-scale terrorist attacks.

While large-scale, coordinated attacks remain an Al Qaeda objective, disruptions to the network's command and logistics structures during the past 20 months increase the possibility that operatives will attempt to carry out smaller scale, random attacks, as evidenced by Richard Reid's failed attempt to detonate a shoe-bomb on board a trans-Atlantic flight in December 2001. Such attacks, particularly against softer or lightly secured targets, may be easier to execute and less likely to require centralized control. We remain vigilant to the ability and willingness of individual terrorists, acting on their own in the name of "jihad", to carry out random acts of terror wherever and whenever they can.

We also know that jihadists tend to focus on returning to "unfinished projects," such as the destruction of the World Trade Center and attacks on U.S. Navy vessels. Consequently, a continuing threat exists to high profile targets previously selected by Al Qaeda. These include high profile government buildings, and encompass the possibility of more terrorist attacks on major U.S. cities and infrastructures. While we know that Al Qaeda has focused on attacks that have economic impact, we believe that its goals still include the infliction of mass casualties.

As I mentioned earlier, we have made significant progress in disrupting terrorist activities and planning; and this includes Islamic extremist activities within the United States. For example:

· Between October 3, 2002, and May 2, 2003, six men and one woman were indicted in Portland, Oregon, for conspiracy to levy war against the United States, conspiracy to provide material support and resources to a terrorist organization, and conspiracy to contribute services to Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Six of the individuals have been arrested. The seventh remains at large.

· On September 13, 2002, five members of a suspected Al Qaeda cell were arrested in Lackawanna, New York. They were charged with "providing, attempting to provide, and conspiring to provide material support and resources to a designated foreign terrorist organization." In addition, a sixth member was rendered to the United States from Bahrain in mid-September 2002, pursuant to an arrest warrant, and was charged with providing material support to Al-Qaeda.

► FBI information indicates that in the spring and summer of 2001, these subjects attended religious Tablighi Jamaat training in Pakistan. They also attended an Al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan where they received training in mountain climbing, and were instructed in the use of firearms, including assault rifles, handguns, and long range rifles. During their training, Usama bin Laden visited the camp and gave a speech to all of the trainees. At the guest houses where members stayed, some received lectures on jihad and justification for using suicide as an operational tactic.

► All six defendants have pled guilty to providing material support to Al Qaeda.

· On December 22, 2001, Richard C. Reid was arrested after flight attendants on American Airlines Flight 63 observed him attempting to ignite an improvised explosive in his sneakers while onboard the Paris-to-Miami flight. Aided by passengers, the attendants overpowered and subdued Reid. The flight was diverted to Logan International Airport in Boston, Massachusetts. Reid, who was traveling on a valid British passport, was indicted on eight counts, including placing an explosive device on an aircraft and attempted murder.

► FBI investigation has determined that the explosives in Reid's shoes, if detonated in certain areas of the passenger cabin, could have blown a hole in the fuselage of the aircraft.

► Reid's indictment charged that he, too, trained in camps operated by Al-Qaeda. Investigators continue to work to determine the extent of Reid's possible links to others in this plot.

► On October 4, 2002, Reid pled guilty to all of the counts against him. On January 30, 2003, he was sentenced to life in prison.

· On December 11, 2001, Zacarias Moussaoui was indicted in the Eastern District of Virginia for his alleged role in the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Moussaoui is charged with six counts, including conspiracy to commit an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries and conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction. He is awaiting trial.

? Last week, the Attorney General announced the guilty plea of Iyman Faris, an Ohio truck driver, who -- as a key operative for Al Qaeda -- conspired to provide, and did in fact provide, material support to a terrorist organization. We believe he was tasked by Al Qaeda to assist in the identification of possible terrorist targets inside the United States and provided other logistical support to that organization.

? On Monday of this week, Ali Saleh Kahlal al-Marri, was designated an enemy combatant and transferred to the control of the Department of Defense. Al-Marri is a Qatari national who was initially arrested on a material witness warrant following the September 11 attacks. He was subsequently indicted for credit card fraud and making false statements. Recent information from an Al Qaeda detainee identified Al-Marri as an Al Qaeda "sleeper" operative who was tasked with providing support to newly arriving Al Qaeda operatives inside the U.S. Two separate Al Qaeda detainees have confirmed that Al-Marri has been to Al Qaeda's Farook camp in Afghanistan where he pledged his service to bin Laden. The decision to designate Al-Marri as an enemy combatant has disrupted his involvement in terrorist planning and taken another Al Qaeda operative out of action.

? The FBI is also actively looking for suspected Al Qaeda operative Adnan G. El Shukrijumah. El Shukrijumah has been identified by detainees as a key Al Qaeda operative who was sent to the United States to plan and carry out acts of terrorism against the U.S. El Shukrijumah was in the United States prior to September 11th and his current whereabouts are unknown. The FBI has put out a "be on the look out" alert to law enforcement both inside the U.S. and overseas to locate and interview him regarding these reports.

Additionally, the FBI has aggressively pursued the individuals and networks that provide financing for terrorism worldwide. Since September 11, 2001, our Terrorist Financing Operations Section (TFOS) has been involved in the financial investigations of over 3,195 individuals and groups suspected in financially supporting terrorist organizations. The FBI has also worked closely with the Treasury Department in developing targets for designation and blocking orders. This has resulted in the terrorist designation of some 250 individuals or entities by Executive Order, and the blocking or freezing of approximately \$124.5 million in assets since September 11, 2001.

As I said at the outset, finding and rooting out Al Qaeda members and adherents, once they have entered the U.S., is our most serious intelligence and law enforcement challenge. In addition to our focus on identifying individuals directly involved in launching terrorist attacks, we are also very concerned with identifying and locating persons engaged in terrorist support activities, such as fund raising, recruiting, training and other logistical responsibilities. This is very important since these individuals are vital to the operations of terrorist networks. We also remain deeply concerned about Al Qaeda's efforts to recruit U.S. citizens to support its terrorist goals and, perhaps, to carry out attacks on American soil.

Al Qaeda is not our only concern. We know that many Islamic extremists are tied to terrorist activities. Islamic Shiite extremists, represented by such groups as Hizballah, have been launching terrorist attacks against the U.S. and its allies for more than twenty years. Islamic Sunni extremism, spearheaded by Al Qaeda, but which also includes HAMAS and other groups, continue to inflict casualties on innocent people worldwide. Hizballah and HAMAS in particular, also maintain a sizable presence in the U.S. While the activities of these U.S. cells have not involved actual attacks within the United States, we know that Hizballah and HAMAS have been involved in activities that support terrorism, such as fund-raising, recruiting and spreading propaganda inside our country. Since they have been responsible for the deaths of Americans and our allies overseas, we continue to be concerned about their activities.

In conclusion, the United States faces threats from a wide range of international terrorist groups, although we assess Al Qaeda to be the greatest threat today. Their potential attacks could be large-scale, or smaller and more isolated. Since our understanding of terrorist groups and the underlying philosophy behind these movements continue to develop, the FBI's assessment of the overall threat continues to evolve. We remain, however, concerned about Al Qaeda's efforts to launch another major attack inside the U.S. Consequently, we continually work with the U.S. intelligence community and our foreign partners to assess Al Qaeda's intentions and capabilities, including their use of weapons of mass destruction in future attack scenarios.

That is why we remain as focused as we are on detecting and preventing terrorism. We will not stray from this purpose and will work closely with State and Local law enforcement and other federal agencies to improve our preventive capabilities. We sincerely appreciate your guidance and support as we carry out our mission.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have to the extent I am able.