



Homeland
Security

Outwitting Terrorists

More than a decade has passed since the 9/11 attacks, and, dire predictions notwithstanding, Al-Qaeda has not succeeded in perpetrating any other attack in the United States since then. Much of the government's success in combating terror is due to its new strategies, often based more on intelligence and wit than on brute force. The US has come up with a string of clever schemes to outsmart terrorists at their own game and entrap them. Though America is still not out of the woods, it has learned that in the war against fanatical terrorists the most useful weapon is often the mind rather than the sword.

HOMELAND SECURITY
ADVISORY SYSTEM

SEVERE
SEVERE RISK OF
TERRORIST ATTACKS

HIGH
HIGH RISK OF
TERRORIST ATTACKS

ELEVATED
SIGNIFICANT RISK OF
TERRORIST ATTACKS

GUARDED
GENERAL RISK OF
TERRORIST ATTACKS

LOW
LOW RISK OF
TERRORIST ATTACKS

Aryeh Cohen

The September 11 attacks awakened a slumbering lion. The American government reacted swiftly and powerfully. President George W. Bush ordered the CIA and the military to employ every method at their disposal to find and kill those responsible for this horrific attack and for planning any other attacks on US soil.

America's fierce reaction clearly demonstrated the power of the sleeping beast. However, American officials soon realized that the usual military tactics alone would never suffice in subduing this new foe. In contrast to enemies of the past, Al-Qaeda was not a central government with a country that could be attacked by American forces, and was not based on any particular territory that the US could menace. Moreover, the group did not have its own points of interest that the US could target as a deterrent. The only interest Al-Qaeda had was in sowing terror throughout the Western world. And Al-Qaeda leaders were not inhibited by concerns and considerations of leaders of countries that had planned to attack the US in the past.

Therefore, a group of military analysts working in the inner chambers of the Pentagon began planning a different kind of war, one that would conquer the enemy by sheer wit rather than by physical force. They eventually came up with a number of tactics to outsmart the new enemy. For instance, though it is nearly impossible to deter suicidal terrorists whose own lives

mean nothing to them, there are those who aid and abet the terrorists from the sidelines, including financiers, planners and the weapons smugglers. Though the terrorists rely on these people for their various services, these people often have little ideological connection to jihad and are only out to profit from the "business." Military analysts, therefore, unanimously settled on a strategy that would focus on putting the accomplices of Al-Qaeda out of commission, thereby disabling, crippling and possibly even destroying the terrorist cells dependent on their aid.

At the same time, American officials began considering a number of techniques they hoped could plant doubts in the minds of terror followers who believed that, as a reward for murder and mayhem, pure bliss awaited them in the next world. Finally, the US gained the upper hand in the war against terror and radical Islam.

Join us as we explore some of the clever schemes implemented by the US to undermine the plans of terrorists.

Turning Off the Flow

When the US was attacked on September 11, the military was still operating with the same methods it had used when under the imminent threat of communism, even though the Soviet Union had long imploded. In fact, the F-16 jets dispatched that day to protect American skies initially flew out to

sea. This was part of their past training to fend off potential Soviet aerial attacks from across the Atlantic.

Immediately following the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration focused primarily on capturing and killing Al-Qaeda leaders and other Islamic radicals, but this strategy did not work. Instead of Al-Qaeda withering and dying, the terror group was growing exponentially. For every terrorist captured or killed, another two sprang up to replace him. It began to seem as if this strategy was producing more terrorists than it was eliminating.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the man hated by many Americans for dragging America into the war with Iraq, was actually the first one to acknowledge the problem. Rumsfeld expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with the way things were going and demanded results. He was a man open to new ideas and innovative strategies.

Hence, a group of analysts met to confer and plan a strategy to deal with this new, unconventional and very dangerous enemy.

In 2005, Under Secretary Douglas Feith presented the new military strategy to Rumsfeld, who expressed his satisfaction with the results. This was exactly what he had been waiting to hear. He promptly arranged a conference with the president in order to brief him on the new strategy. President Bush was then at his ranch in Crawford, Texas. Using a presentation prepared by his aides, Rumsfeld outlined the plan.

At first, Bush was skeptical about the strategy's viability, but Rumsfeld was adamant that this was it; this was the solution that would bring the desired results.

It took several years, but the military finally caught on.

While the US government continued its pursuit of the terrorists, it simultaneously began keeping an eye on the gun smugglers, weapons traders, bomb



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manufacturers and sellers, and mostly on the financial supporters.

The US conducted a string of missions in Afghanistan aimed at destroying the financial networks that were transferring money to Al-Qaeda and eliminating those who ran them. In the Muslim world, there are special institutions known as "Hawala"—something akin to the Western Union, through which money can be transferred via a simple, expedited process. It works somewhat like this: A man goes into a Hawala in Saudi Arabia and hands money to the owner. Immediately afterward, someone in Afghanistan can enter a Hawala in his country and retrieve the money. Al-Qaeda took advantage of this system to transport money to its numerous terror cells in Muslim countries, and because nothing was recorded and the transactions were executed by word of mouth, this was a simple way to prevent the US from tracking the money trail.



Left: A tense President Bush makes phone calls from a Florida school he was visiting when the terrorists struck on 9/11.



Center: Bush planning a unified response from all the government agencies from his secure bunker beneath the White House.



Right: Bush in conversation with Vice President Cheney in the bunker after the meeting.

A Hawala Primer
The informal structure of hawala makes it an effective way to transfer money quickly—and, on occasion, illegally. The key to hawala is that money is transferred but not moved. Here's how it works:

The backbone of the system is the hawala dealer, and the key ingredient of any hawala deal is trust.

- 1 Instead, the taxi driver chooses a hawala dealer. They negotiate a fee and exchange rate. And he gives her the \$5,000 and her fee.
- 2 The dealer then calls, faxes or sends an e-mail to another dealer in Karachi.
- 3 The Karachi dealer arranges to have the equivalent of \$5,000 delivered in rupees to the brother. The transaction takes one or two days.
- 4 The Karachi dealer will carry the debt until he needs to send money to New York. Eventually, the books of the two dealers should balance.

A Pakistani working in New York as a taxi driver wants to send \$5,000 to his brother in Karachi. He can go to a bank, but the bank is likely to want him to open an account. It also will charge him to change and send the money.

The taxi driver has sent the money more quickly and cheaply than possible through a bank and avoided the complications inherent in an overseas bank transaction. He also has avoided the bureaucracy—no papers are necessary to send money through hawala, and no paper trail is generated. If the New York dealer has any record of the transaction at all, it probably will focus on her financial relationship with the Karachi dealer.

SOURCE: "The Hawala Alternative Remittance System and its Role in Money Laundering," by Patrick M. Jost and Harji Singh Sandhu, Treasury Dept. Financial Crimes Enforcement Network/Intepal

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