

Al-Qaeda and Weapons of Mass Destruction as seen on Jihadi Online Forums

Preface

In January 2009 the international media reported that Al-Qaeda activists have closed their training base in the mountains of the Tizi Ouzou region in Algeria, after a failed experiment held with non-conventional weapons, which caused the death of 40 activists¹. The Al-Qaeda organization in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has published a denial to these reports, and claimed that the Mujahideen are in good shape².

The terrorist organizations' aspirations to obtain weapons of mass destruction is not new, and for several years lively discussions are held surrounding this issue on Islamic websites. Furthermore, radical ideologists and Muslim religious scholars have given religious authorization providing legitimization to obtain weapons of mass destruction and to use them³.

The issue as expressed on the online forums

At the end of May 2008, a movie called "The Prayer, The Prayer: Allah Akbar America Has Been Destroyed - by a Fatal Jihadi Nuclear Strike", was posted on Jihadi online forums. The movie, which is 39 minutes long, deals with the legitimacy of terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction. The main claim in the movie is that Jihadist organizations should obtain atomic weapons, to create a balance of terror versus the West, which possesses such weapons and

¹ <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jan/19/al-qaeda-bungles-arms-experiment/>

² http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/01/21/monitor/entry4745908.shtml?source=search_story

³ See more in the appendix at the end of the document.

has even used them in the past in World War 2⁴. It should be noted that while the movie was posted on prominent Jihadi online forums, it was not produced by one of Al-Qaeda's known media institutions. Furthermore, the publication of the movie on the "Al-Ekhlaas" online forum – which has not been active for many months – has aroused a widespread wave of responses surrounding the issue⁵.



The movie's opening credits

A few days after the publication of the movie, one of Al-Qaeda's prominent speakers, who calls himself "Asad Al-Jihad 2" (the Jihad Lion 2)⁶, wrote the following text in an article published on Jihadi online forums, entitled "The Following September Events":

"The news that Al-Qaeda may have nuclear bombs has already been spread!!! And I say – and "Asad Al-Jihad 2" knows what he is saying – we indeed have them. I already said so in an article published last year. Furthermore, when Sheikh Osama bin Laden was asked before the beginning of the Crusade War against Afghanistan, if America will strike us

⁴ <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=41212>

⁵ <http://www.jihadica.com/insider-analysis-of-nuke-tape/>

⁶ Some believe "Asad Al-Jihad 2" is the Egyptian, Muhammad Khalil Al-Hukaymah, who was active in the Egyptian Jihad Organization and is considered today to be in charge of propaganda in Al-Qaeda. See: http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=5191, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Khalil_al-Hukaymah

with nuclear weapons what will we do? He answered: If they strike us with nuclear weapons, we shall strike them in the same currency [...] and when we say Al-Qaeda holds nuclear or atomic weapons, only its leaders will decide when to use them and where. Al-Qaeda does not rush and does not use all its might in its blows"⁷.

In addition to statements and remarks made regarding the legitimacy of using weapons of mass destruction, on the one hand, and the possibility that Al-Qaeda does indeed possess such a weapon, on the other, the Jihadi forums publish a lot of material in guide books and movie clips, instructing how to produce homemade chemical bombs⁸.

On January 26th 2009, Al-Jazeera's television channel internet website published an interview conducted by Abdul Ela Haydar Sha'i with the leader of Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula, Nasir Abd Al-Karim Al-Wahishi, a.k.a. Abu Basir. In the interview, Al-Wahishi hinted that Al-Qaeda possesses weapons of mass destruction. At the end of the interview he was asked: "If Al-Qaeda possesses nuclear weapons or deterrence weapons, why didn't it use it in the September 11th attacks?". To that he replied: "This was the first message, and they should know that there are many more messages..."⁹.

⁷ <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=44615>

⁸ See for example: <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=38349>

⁹ <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/50B5DB96-29CD-4071-B737-E4FAE57FC874.htm>



Abu Basir (right) during the interview

On March 2009, one of the online surfers on the Al-Faloja forum identified with Al-Qaeda, quoted a news item appearing on CNN regarding a British report, containing the British strategy and policy regarding terrorism. The report states that there is an increasing danger of terrorist attacks being carried out with chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. Following this publication a short discussion ensued.

One surfer stated that since the publication of the "Nuclear Jihad" movie (see details above) and the statements made by Abu Hamza Al-Muhajer¹⁰, he has been waiting for such an attack. Another surfer mocked him and said that he can

¹⁰ Abu Hamza Al-Muhajer was born in Egypt in 1975. He serves as First Deputy to the President of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi, and as Minister of Oil, Defense and War. On September 28th 2006, while serving as Al-Qaeda's leader in Iraq, following the elimination of Al-Zarqawi, he gave a speech saying, amongst other things:

"And my last message is to the people of distinctive competencies, and highly experienced scientists in all fields and disciplines, chemistry, physics, management and electronics, information [...] and in particular nuclear scientists and explosives specialists. We say to you, we are in dire need for your experience. The battlefields of Jihad will satisfy your ambitions [...] American bases serve as the best test fields for your non-traditional bombs [...] such as germ warfare and the so called dirty-bombs". Apparently the online surfer was referring to this speech.

go on waiting for a long time. This response was rebuked by another surfer, who suggested an interesting interpretation to the first surfer's words:

"Maybe he is a Jihadi fighter? Maybe he is preparing for Jihad [...] Maybe he cannot communicate with anyone? Do you want him to "burn himself" in face of the intelligence? [...] What is wrong with him waiting for an attack in Britain prepared by his brothers? What is the problem? Our brothers have made preparations there and they will carry it out if Allah wishes, maybe he is making preparations wherever he is?".

These defensive words concluded the dialogue¹¹.

In April 2009, Al-Qaeda's leader in Iraq, Abu Hamza Al-Muhajir, emphasized in an audio tape posted on the Jihadi online forums, the need for acquiring biological, chemical and even nuclear weapons, in order to compensate for the superiority of the enemies with conventional weapons. He said that the Muslim scientists should do all they can in order to develop weapons of mass destruction, to be used as a deterrent by the Mujahideen¹².



Abu Hamza Al-Muhajir

¹¹ <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=53646>

¹² <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/04/21/monitor/entry4959370.shtml>

In response to Al-Muhajir's call, many Jihadi online forums posted at the beginning of June 2009 the "Encyclopedia for Weapons of Mass Destruction", alongside two additional encyclopedias: "The Rocket Encyclopedia" and the "Explosives Encyclopedia".¹³ In the initial message, preceding the publication of these encyclopedias, it was said that the "brothers" Al-Baraa Al-Masri and Abu Safia will be publishing these essays.¹⁴

Al-Baraa Al-Masri and Abu Safia are active members of several Arabic Internet forums. They provide weapons and explosives information to jihadi hopefuls. Al-Baraa Al-Masri, who was labeled "Al-Qaeda's explosives engineer" by fellow members of the forums, is thought to have been the instructor who was featured in a 35-hour video series entitled "Defeating the Cross" – a tutorial video series on the making of explosives that emerged on the web in 2007.¹⁵

The "Encyclopedia for Weapons of Mass Destruction" contains a lot of material in the field of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. All of the material is in English and contains great detail regarding the various types of weapons and their components. Furthermore, the encyclopedia contains instruction manuals for the manufacturing of weapons of mass destruction and extensive explanations as to how these materials should be treated.

Some correspondence was posted on the "Al-Ansar" Jihadi online forum regarding the possibility that the Al-Qaeda organization has weapons of mass destruction.

The correspondence said:

"Some of the brothers held a long debate regarding the veracity of the existence of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of the Al-Qaeda organization and regarding its ability to use them in order to deter the enemies of Islam and the

¹³ <http://www.muslim.net/vb/showthread.php?p=2222077>

¹⁴ <http://www.mojahden.net/vb/showthread.php?t=22608>

¹⁵ <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/05/20/monitor/entry5029222.shtml>

Muslims. This in case the organization's leadership believes that this step can contribute to the Islamic nation and specifically help the Mujahideen.

Some believe that obtaining weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, is a difficult task these days for the Mujahideen, but not an impossible one [...] others say it is impossible [...].

The question to be asked is whether there is something preventing the Al-Qaeda organization from obtaining weapons of mass destruction as a deterring tool against the enemies, to make them fear the organization and help the Islamic nation from the claws of the enemies, or is it a far fetched dream?

And if we assume that the Al-Qaeda organization has obtained such a weapon, can it use it against all its enemies? Knowing such a weapon will bring on the mass destruction of humankind???"¹⁶

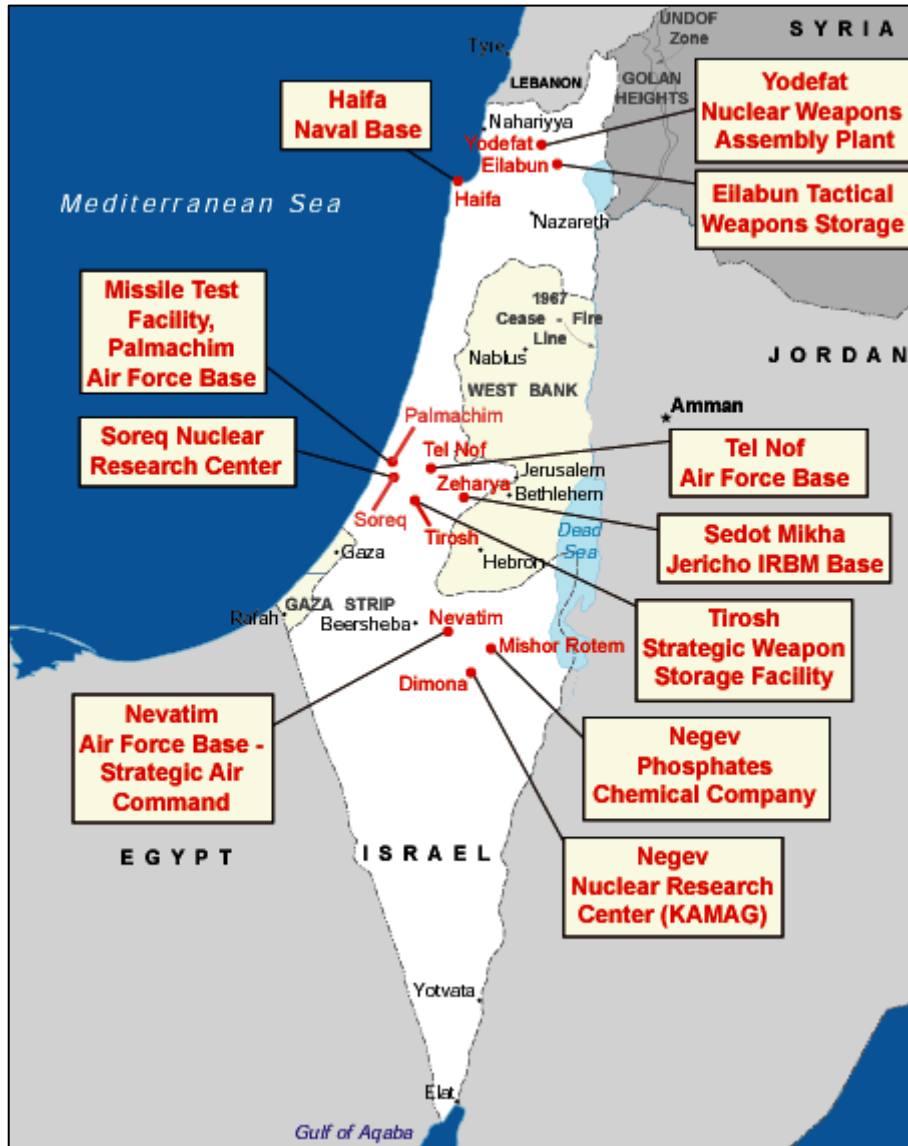
These words garnered some response. In a response by the forum management it was said: "Al-Qaeda holds weapons of mass destruction with a 100% certainty, and praise Allah; it is allowed to use them [see the words of Sheikh Naser who has allowed the use of weapons of mass destruction¹⁷]" . One of the forum supervisors added: "we ask Allah to give this weapon to the Jihadists". Another surfer wrote: "Of course Al-Qaeda holds weapons of mass destruction".

At the same time, several Jihadi online forums called for an attack on nuclear sites, such as power plants, nuclear reactors and storage facilities for strategic weapons. The call included publication of information and maps of nuclear facilities belonging to NATO, the United States, Britain, Pakistan, Israel, Belarus, France, India, Russia, South Africa, Turkey and the Ukraine. Furthermore, the message points to another target - a ship construction company in Haifa called

¹⁶ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=4733>

¹⁷ This refers to the fatwa published by Sheikh Naser bin Hamad Al-Fahd. For more details, see the appendix.

"Israel Shipyard Ltd.", which manufactures weapons and according to the forums, builds missile boats for India¹⁸.



A map of strategic installations in Israel, The Al-Faloja online forum, April 2009

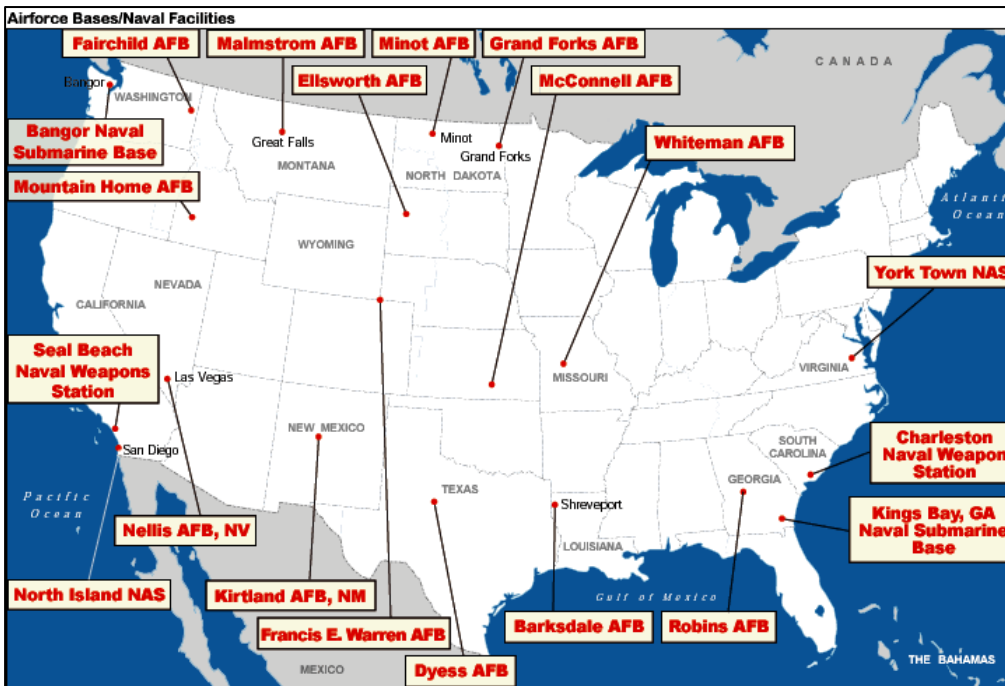
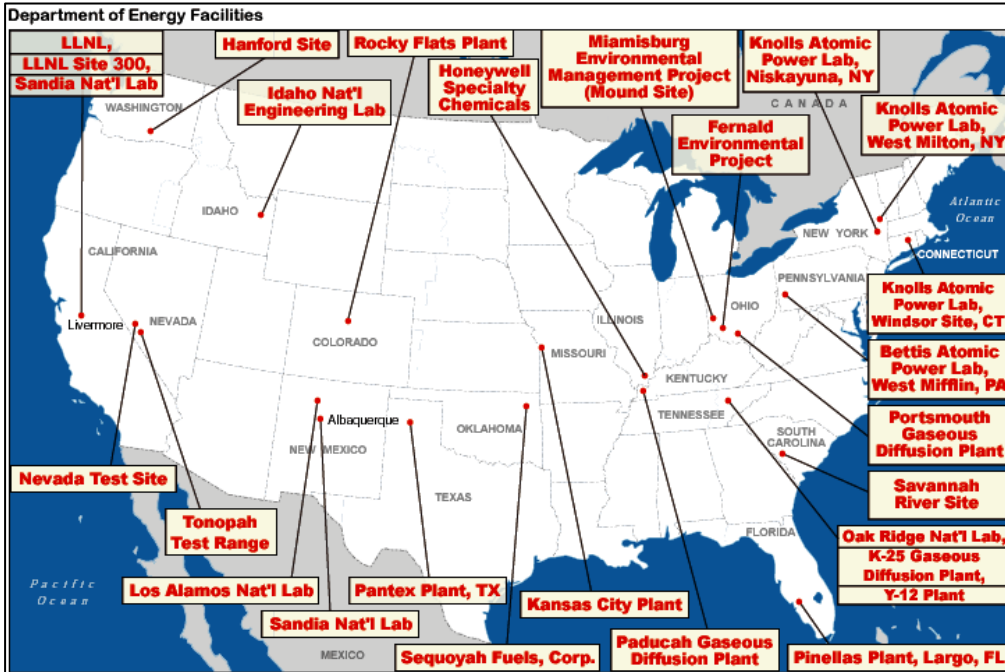
¹⁸ <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=57253>.



A map of strategic installations in Pakistan,
The Al-Faloja online forum, April 2009



NATO's target map,
The Al-Faloja online forum, April 2009



The United States' target map,
The Al-Faloja online forum, April 2009

Summary

It is apparent that in the dialogue of Jihadi organizations, both the religious and the strategic ones, the debate on weapons of mass destruction is still ongoing. It is possible that the event described at the beginning of the document constitutes part of the organizational effort to go from the conversational level to the operational ability level. It is possible that this event and the lively discussion on the Jihadi forums, are an indication of the organizational effort to achieve these capabilities, and even - maybe - of operational or experimental activity in the field.

Appendix - religious authorization for the use of weapons of mass destruction

The Saudi religious scholar, Sheikh Naser bin Hamad Al-Fahd, known as one of the senior Muslim religious scholars in Saudi Arabia and as being close to the Al-Qaeda organization, published a fatwa in May 2003, granting religious legitimacy for the use of weapons of mass destruction against the United States and Britain and their citizens.¹⁹

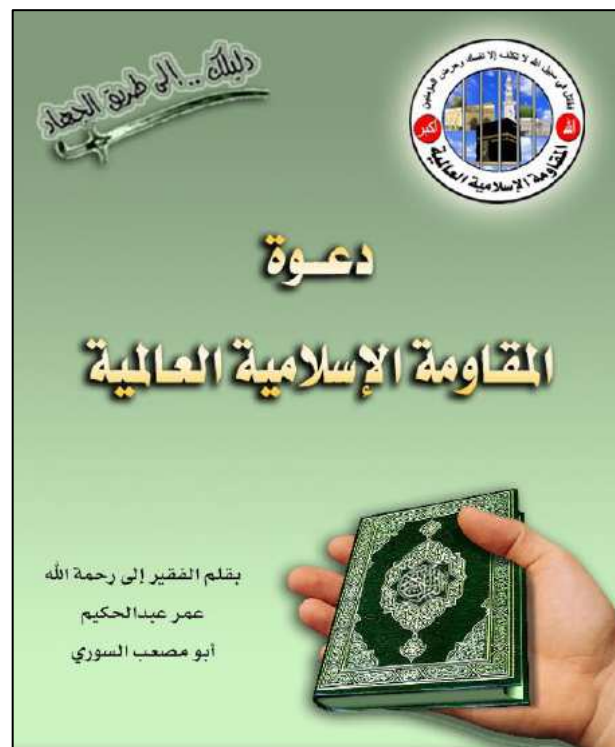
The fatwa, published on the Sheikh's website www.al-fhd.com²⁰, was also placed on additional Islamic websites identified as supporters of Al-Qaeda and global Jihad. The detailed fatwa is 27 pages long and refers to the religious Islamic foundation allowing Muslims to use non conventional weapons. In the fatwa, Sheikh Al-Fahd explains that the Muslim world is conducting a defensive war and not an elective war against the United States and Britain. In addition to the religious foundation, the moral aspect supporting the use of these weapons is also emphasized, as the United States was the first to use it during World War 2.

In the famous book by Abu Musab Al-Suri, one of the great minds of global Jihad, "Da'awat Al-Muqawamah Al-Islamiyyah Al-'Alamiyyah" (The Global Islamic Resistance Call), which is 1,600 pages long, the wish to obtain non conventional weapons and to use them against the infidels, is expressed. He calls for the establishment of "sarayas" (companies) for strategic operations, and states the necessary conditions for their formation. Amongst other things, he writes that "knowledge and operational abilities should be gained regarding the possession of weapons of mass destruction and the use of these weapons when necessary, in

¹⁹ <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/580/Default.aspx>

²⁰ The Sheikh's website is no longer active, but the fatwa can be downloaded in various Jihadi online forums.

order to pay back in kind, or to bring about a strategic conclusion to the battle against America". He suggests that wealthy Muslims believing in the path of resistance should help form these companies together with veteran Jihadists, with those who held positions in the security forces of the Muslim governments, with veteran military personnel and military strategy experts and with former politicians or those who still hold official posts.



**Abu Musab Al-Suri's book,
The Global Islamic Resistance Call**

Furthermore, Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, President of the Global Union of Muslim Religious Scholars, said in his Friday sermon on February 20th 2009, that Islam is in favor of peace that comes from a position of power and not a position of weakness, and that the Muslims are allowed to hold nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction for purposes of deterrence²¹.

²¹ www.islamtime.net, February 21st 2009.