

Oil Installations as an Attractive Target for Terrorism

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Background

In recent months, Jihadi online forums have been discussing oil installations, oil tankers, oil pipes etc. as being attractive targets for a terrorist attack. Despite the fact that the desire to attack oil installations is not new, it would seem that the discussion of this subject indicates a renewed trend on Jihadi forums.

The debate of oil in the internal Jihadi discourse, as expressed on Jihadi online forums, does not constitute a dialogue just for the sake of discussion. Oil installations have constantly and systematically been attacked, ever since the global Jihad organizations decided to operate in this direction.¹ This trend has gained momentum from the time that Iraq was occupied by the Americans in April 2003. The Jihadi organizations then attacked oil pipes, refineries etc., even more forcefully.²

Evidence of this could be seen when, at the beginning of July 2009, it was reported that the Egyptian security forces arrested 25 Al-Qaeda activists, who were suspected of planning to carry out terrorist attacks on ships passing through the Suez Canal and on the network of oil pipes in the Canal area.³

The ongoing threat by the Global Jihad to oil facilities caused Middle Eastern countries, as well as other countries all over the world, to make plans to thwart these attacks. During the past decade, many terrorist attacks against oil installations around the world were foiled.⁴

Book – "Sentenced to Target Oil Interests"

In May 2009, links to Abd Al-Aziz bin Rashid Al-Anzi's book "Sentenced to Target Oil Interests and the Root of the Economic Jihad" were posted on the "Al-Faloja" online forum. Al-Anzi was defined on the forum as one of the senior religious clerics of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.⁵

The book is comprised of four parts, as follows:

¹ For examples of prominent terrorist attacks against oil targets in the past decade, see the appendix at the end of this document.

² For example, see the attack on an American oil tanker in the Tikrit region on May 2009: <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=62317>

³ <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3744165,00.html>

⁴ <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/182/currentpage/14/Default.aspx>,
<http://212.150.54.123/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=426>

⁵ <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=60567>

1. Indigenization Forensic Provisions of the Economic Jihad
2. Who Has the Oil Interests?
3. The Rule of Destruction of Funds in War
4. The Rule of the Targeting of Oil Interests

The book instructs Al-Qaeda members to attack oil pipes in Saudi Arabia and Iraq, but stipulates avoiding attacks on oil wells, as they are the pillars of the Islamic countries' economy. It should be noted that this is the third time this book has been published. It was placed on the internet for the second time at the end of February 2006, correspondingly with a terrorist attack perpetrated by Al-Qaeda in Buqayq in east Saudi Arabia, where there are huge oil installations and refineries. Already in 2006, evaluations were made regarding the placing of the book on Islamic websites, believing it points to an attempt to market Al-Qaeda's ideas and ideology. Others surmise that the publication of the document came in response to the public's opposition to the attempted attack on the Saudi oil installations in Buqayq, in February 2006.⁶

It should be noted that following the attempt on the life of the Assistant Saudi Minister of Interior for Security Affairs, Muhammad bin Naif, at the end of August 2009, the Saudi authorities increased security surrounding oil installations in the country, including in the Buqayq region.⁷

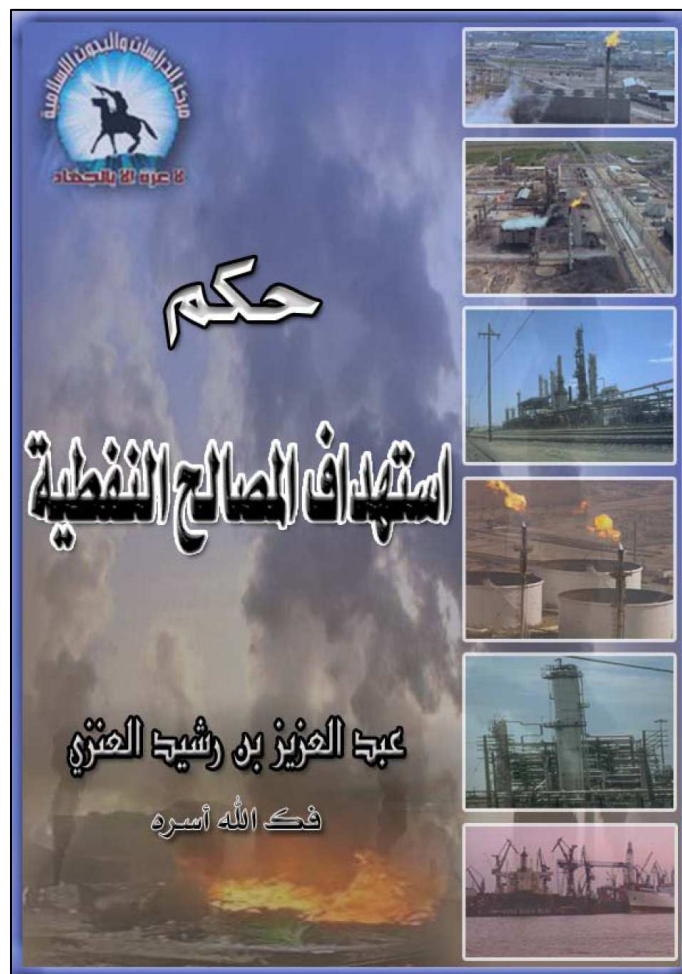


Oil facilities in Saudi Arabia

⁶ <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=351088&issueno=9957>

⁷ <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/08/30/83419.html>

Al-Anzi, who is also known as Al-Qaeda's "Minister of Propaganda", apparently published the book on the internet in March 2004, where he wrote that the disruption of the oil supply is the best way to hurt the American economy and undermine the stability of the Saudi Royal Family. He added: "The oil refineries in Saudi Arabia and the Iraqi oil pipes and installations – are all in the hands of the infidels" and that is why Al-Anzi states that: "It is permissible to attack oil interests, controlled by the infidels, including American and Western oil tankers".⁸ This book actually provides "a religious power of attorney" to attack these targets, such as oil pipes, employees (including senior officials) in the oil sphere, that are able to affect its prices, oil tankers etc. However, Al-Anzi did not permit attacking oil wells and oil fields, as this would eventually hurt all of the Muslims and the "nation's property".



The cover of the book "Sentenced to Target Oil Interests"

⁸ <http://www.alhejazi.net/seyasah/014105.htm>

Abd Al-Aziz bin Rashid Al-Anzi – an Al-Qaeda strategist

A letter published in the London-based newspaper "Al-Sharq Al-Awsat" in March 2006, reveals that Al-Anzi, who was arrested by the Saudi authorities in May 2005, is one of Al-Qaeda's most important theoreticians.⁹

Al-Anzi was extremely active on Jihadi websites using a series of aliases. He published many fatwas calling for Jihad and permitting the spilling of "infidel" blood. For example, the Saudi daily newspaper "Al-Riyadh" mentions a fatwa by Al-Anzi obliging every Muslim to go on Jihad in Iraq and to come to Iraq by any means possible in order to join the campaign.¹⁰

Further information on Al-Anzi reveals that he headed Al-Qaeda's Propaganda and Religious Committee in Saudi Arabia, and was apparently recruited via the internet in 2003, and maybe even in 2002, if not earlier. He helped recruit many youths to Al-Qaeda through the internet, took an active part in many Jihadi online forums and even supervised one of these forums. In addition, he was one of the most prominent writers of the Jihadi magazine "Sawt Al-Jihad" (Voice of Jihad) which commenced publication in October 2003 on behalf of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula¹¹. The "Sawt Al-Jihad" magazine ceased publication in February 2007. Today, the organization publishes the "Sada Al-Malahim" (The Echo of the Battles) magazine.

Attacking oil interests – part of Al-Qaeda's strategic action plan

It should be emphasized that within the scope of Al-Qaeda's "Seven Stages" plan – a strategic action plan, spanning a period of 20 years, from 2000 to 2020 – attacking oil interests is mentioned as part of the campaign to overthrow heretic governments. In the fourth Stage, the "healing stage and gathering strength change", expected to start in 2010 and end in 2013, efforts will be focused on overthrowing regimes, through a direct and aggressive struggle against them, including attacking oil installations, which constitute an American asset and an economic basis for the governments in the region.¹²

⁹ <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=351088&issueno=9957>

¹⁰ <http://www.alriyadh.com/2005/05/11/article63577.html>

¹¹

<http://www.asskeenh.com/Gallery/Text/ViewText.aspx?TextType=News&TreeIndex=1&No deID=66&BookID=101&ID=8>,

<http://www.alarabiya.net/programs/2005/10/17/17782.html>. More details on Al-Anzi were also published on Combating Terrorism Center at West point. See: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/atlas/Atlas-ResearchCompendium.pdf>, pages 288-289.

¹² http://ict.org.il/Portals/0/Internet%20Monitoring%20Group/JWVG_Al-Qaeda_Operational_Strategies.pdf

Why Al-Qaeda?

At the end of March 2009, the Yemenite weekly paper "Al-Masdar" published a series of articles on the subject "Oil is in Al-Qaeda's Sights".¹³ One of the articles dealt with the huge fire that occurred on March 22nd 2009, at the reservoirs of the French "Total" Company in Hadramawt County in Yemen, several days after the execution of two terrorist attacks carried out by "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb" against South Korean tourists and researchers in Yemen.¹⁴ Despite the fact Al-Qaeda did not take official responsibility for the attack, which was explained by the company and the security authorities, as being the result of a "short circuit", the article claimed there are indications connecting Al-Qaeda to the event, which are divided into two:

- a) Events accompanying the fire
- b) Similar preceding events

Events accompanying the fire

1. On March 19th 2009, the Yemenite Vice-President visited the company's site for the inauguration of equipment for the new pipeline. The extraordinary thing is that he was accompanied by senior members of the Yemenite security forces. This visit can be tied to the terrorist attack against the South-Koreans, but it can also be connected to security information received, that Al-Qaeda was preparing for an attack on the company's installations, and the senior members came to examine the security measures at the site.
2. On the day of the event, the media reported that it was caused by an electrical shortage, whilst the company announced, that same day, and the Ministry of Oil announced the following day, that "investigations were still in progress".
3. Several days after the fire, the security authorities announced that they had apprehended six Al-Qaeda members, who were planning to perpetrate twelve terrorist attacks against oil installations, friendly countries' targets and foreign tourists.

¹³ <http://www.al-masdar.net/78/10-11.pdf>

¹⁴

http://ict.org.il/Portals/0/Internet%20Monitoring%20Group/JWVG_Terrorist_Attacks_Yemen.pdf

From the above, the author concludes that there is a connection between the fire in Hadramawt and the terrorist attack against the South Korean tourists that occurred in the same region.

Similar preceding events

In 2002, Al-Qaeda carried out its first terrorist attack on Yemenite soil against the French "Limburg" tanker, but the terrorist attacks perpetrated against oil installations occurred in 2008. For example, at the end of March the French "Total" company's pipeline in the Sah region in Hadramawt was blown up. Two days later, a terrorist attack occurred at a Chinese oil field in that same region. Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for both the attacks. On May 30th, 2008, Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for an attack at the refineries in Aden in the Al-Burayqah region. In September 2006, the Yemenite Ministry of Interior announced that it had killed terrorists who failed to perpetrate attacks in the Mareb and Hadramawt regions. Al-Qaeda confirmed this information and added that its branch in Yemen was responsible for the attacks against oil installations from September 15th, 2006.

Al-Qaeda's attitude towards the oil field

The topic of oil does not only come up in ideological contexts, but also in operational contexts, in books, in Jihadi forums and so forth.

Al-Qaeda's leadership views oil as a resource belonging to the Muslims, given to them by Allah in order to ease their lives and to be used as a force against their enemies. The organization's leadership believes that the leaders of the Islamic nation do not use this resource correctly. On the contrary, they have turned it into a tool to aid the enemies of Islam. Many western countries, headed by the United States, rely on the oil in the Middle East. As the United States is Al-Qaeda's foremost enemy, the idea of oil as an attack target, is necessary in order to weaken the power of the U.S. and the West. As Arab and Muslim countries took part in the global war against terrorism and used oil funds in order to kill Mujahideen, the Mujahideen are obligated to attack the oil installations, in order to weaken them as well.

Examples of statements made by Al-Qaeda leaders on the subject:

- In 2004 Osama bin Laden stated that the price of an oil barrel must reach 100 dollars, as the oil belongs to the Islamic Nation and is now being robbed by the United States and its allies. In 2005, Ayman Al-Zawahiri asked that oil be viewed as an attack target, so that the "enemies of the Nation" would not steal it.
- Issue no. 8 (March 2009) of the "Sada Al-Malahim" ("The Echo of the Battles") magazine, published by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, focused on the subject of oil. For example, Hamil Al-Mask's article stated: "[...] the Arabian Peninsula is undergoing a tense period and seeks an egress from the hell it faces, after the West attacked it and stole its resources, such as the oil [...]."
- Abu Musab Al-Suri wrote about "the responsibility of the citizens of Yemen for the holy dedications of the Muslims and their resources": "it is important that their funds and resources remain in their possession [...] when we speak of their resources, we do not mean a few Dirhams, but the fact that 75% of the oil in the world is in the Arabian Peninsula [...]."

The article stated in its conclusion, that for Al-Qaeda, Yemen is an appropriate center for departure for campaigns in the Arabian Peninsula, due to several factors, first and foremost due to the oil installations in Saudi Arabia.

The Sawt Al-Jihad Magazine

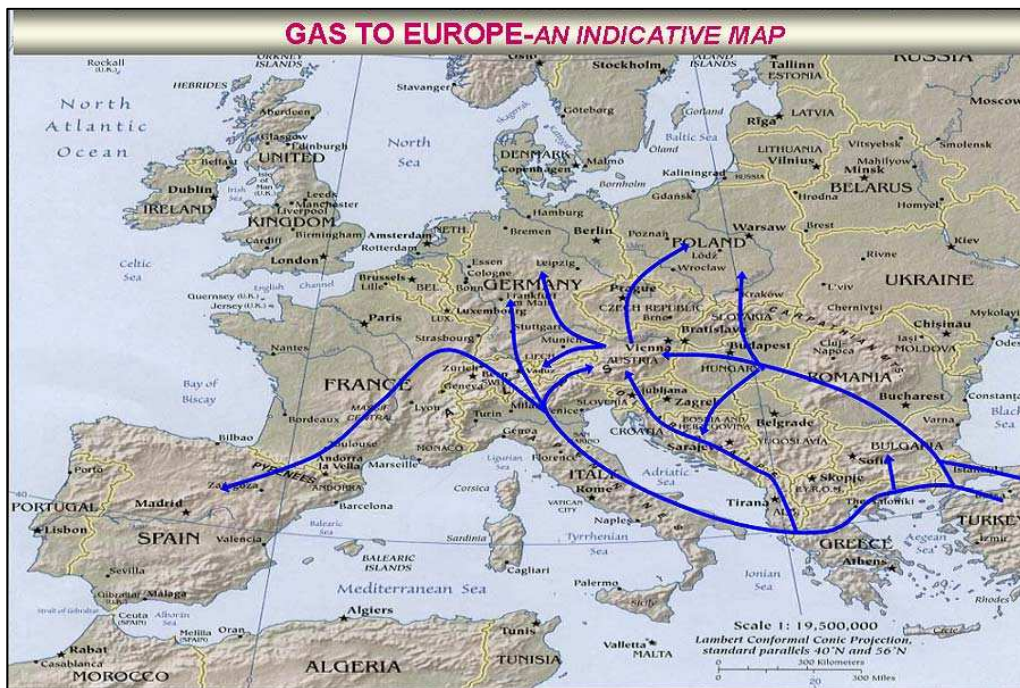
Issue no. 30 of the "Sawt Al-Jihad" magazine (the Voice of Jihad) published in February 2007, dealt extensively with the oil topic. The magazine printed an exclusive interview with one of the perpetrators of the terrorist attack in Buqayq, and published Al-Qaeda's official announcement regarding the attack. It even printed the research conducted by Adeeb Al-Bassam on the subject of "Bin Laden and the Oil Weapon".¹⁵

¹⁵ For more details, see:

http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1019&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=240&no_cache=1

The discourse on Jihadi forums

In May 2009, the Jihadi "Al-Faloja" forum quoted an article published by the Reuters news agency, prior to the European and Central Asia Countries convention in the Gas and Oil spheres. However, the surfer, who posted the article, chose another heading for the subject: "A call to blow up the energy lines between America/Europe and the Caspian Sea region".¹⁶ Most of the surfers posted many articles dealing with the upcoming convention, but a few of them uploaded maps explaining how the gas reaches Europe, such as the following map:



In other correspondence, a surfer of the "Al-Faloja" forum, posted an article on the American interest in the oil in the Caspian Sea,¹⁷ and another surfer posted an article discussing the gas reservoirs in the Caspian Sea, which according to the plan, will reach the West and Europe.¹⁸

The "Al-Faloja" forum quoted extensive segments from an article published on the www.rense.com website, on the strategic importance of the Turkistan region for China and the Asian countries and Europe, with regard to oil and gas

¹⁶ <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=60971>

¹⁷ <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=66709>

¹⁸ <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=66675>

infrastructures. Relevant segments of the article were translated from English into Arabic.¹⁹

In mid July 2009 the "Hanein" forum reported that two oil tankers belonging to the NATO forces were blown up in North West Pakistan, apparently by the Taliban. The report received a sympathetic response from the forum members.²⁰

¹⁹ <http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=74159> ,
<http://www.rense.com/general86/wash.htm>

²⁰ <http://hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=114698>

Appendix – examples of prominent terrorist attacks against oil interests in the past decade

It is important to clarify that most of the prominent terrorist attacks were carried out against the oil infrastructure's delivery and control system. Furthermore, it should also be emphasized that although there were many attempts to attack oil interests in Iraq, following the American occupation in April 2003, only a few attacks were carried out against oil wells in the country.

Date	Location	Modus operandi	Results	Description
October 6 th 2002	Off the coast of Yemen	Bombing	-----	At 9:15, an explosion occurred aboard the French oil tanker Limburg off the coast of Yemen
March 18 th 2003	Marib, Yemen	Armed Assault	4 casualties, 1 injured	A Yemeni man shot and killed four people at an oil rig in Yemen
March 1 st 2004	Yanbu, Saudi Arabia	Armed Assault	6 casualties	An attack on the offices of a western oil company
March 28 th 2004	Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia	Armed Assault	22 casualties	An Al-Qaeda group seized the installations of an oil company. The group held 50 westerners hostage for one day, most of whom were released by a Saudi commando force
April 25 th 2004	Basra, Iraq	Suicide bomb	2 casualties, 5 injured	Three motor boats exploded near two oil terminals

February 24 th 2006	Buqayq, Saudi Arabia	Attempted terrorist attack	The attack was foiled	A failed attempt by Al-Qaeda to blow up the oil installations in Buqayq, in east Saudi Arabia
February 28 th 2006	Baghdad, Iraq	Suicide bomb	22 casualties, 51 injured	A suicide bomber activated an explosives belt in a gas station in east Baghdad
February 27 th 2007	Sui to Baluchistan, Pakistan	Bombing	-----	A bomb damaged the gas line from Sui, providing gas for Baluchistan