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Insights

The Terrorism Industry”: An Al-Qaeda Course in Security and Intelligence Part Five

Part Five

This is the fifth segment in the series "The Terrorism Industry" by Sheikh Abu Ubaydah Abdallah al-Adam, who was until his death a prominent leader of Al-Qaeda responsible for its intelligence and security operations. The series was published by the Al-Fajr Media Institution, which is responsible for disseminating the written, audio and visual materials of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

Recruiting People to the Organization

We will now discuss the most important topic in the field of personal security – the stages through which every comrade vying to take part in the jihad activities of an organization, group or faction must pass. These stages are progressive and designed to prevent the enemy from infiltrating the organization; the regimes that control Arab states and their intelligence agencies recruit many people in order to gather information and protect the regime.

The First Stage: Initial Screening

In this stage, one must examine the characteristics and attributes necessary for jihadist group activities, and look for these traits in the relevant person. If the said individual does display these traits, then he should move on to the second stage and if not, he should not continue past the initial stage.

The Second Stage: Research and Information Gathering

Information must first be collected about a person's past, since past behaviors can be an indication for the future. For instance, it is important to find out if a person took part in political or criminal activities in the past, if his behaviors would be suitable for a member of the group, and if he experienced a problematic past that the government could use to blackmail him in order to recruit him as a spy.

A person's political and ideological leaning must also be clarified, especially his opinion on the establishment of an Islamic state and how to create a Muslim society. For example, it is not worth encouraging a person who believes in democracy, Communism or nationalism to join jihad. There are several possible ways to get this information: a person's relatives and friends can be questioned about his beliefs, the person can be followed, and direct contact with him can even be made as long as the dialogue begins with general questions such as "What do you think about jihad?" in order to get a clear picture of the situation. It is important to remember that jihadist groups must not collaborate with groups that espouse different views, even if both groups want to overthrow the current regime. If a person seems to show an inclination for jihad activities, he may be offered to join the group as long as he is also shown to be healthy and fit to carry out jihad operations.

The Third Stage: Making Contact

By this stage, it is already clear that the person is suitable for jihad activity and he should be contacted. In order to make contact, a member of the organization is sent to speak with him and instill in him loyalty and love for Allah, rather than for members of the group or its leader; this is done in order to guarantee that he continue to act for the sake of jihad out of a religious obligation, regardless of what may happen to specific people [down the line]. The comrade makes several connections, including a social connection with members of the group, and an ideological and conceptual connection [with the group's outlook]. At this stage, certain nuances about the person must be checked: Is he physically and emotionally fit, can he keep secrets, can he work as a team, what is the nature of his conduct and ethics, etc.

As a result of the above-mentioned connections and the in-depth familiarity made with him, the comrade can then be appointed to operations most suited to his strengths. For instance, not every comrade is suited to be a fighter but he can be given a different job within the organization. In general, organizational roles can be divided among visible people, secret people, and leaders.

A visible person: This refers to a group member who is known to the public by appearance and voice. Such a person must not be too curious and ask questions that have nothing to do with him, and he must remember that he is also known to intelligence agencies and is liable to be taken captive. In addition, a visible member of the group must not keep names and addresses of other group members on him, and he should limit his movements in periods of tension and during waves of arrests. He must remember not to speak on the telephone about matters of value to intelligence agencies, or engage in too much small talk.

A secret person: This refers to a group member who operates undercover and is not known to the public. Such a person must operate in secret and take many precautions. He must suppress his Islamic identity and appearance so as not to draw attention, and he must always have a cover story to explain his presence in a certain area, including forged documentation if needed. It is even recommended that he adopt the local dialect of the region in which jihadist operations are being carried out. A secret person will only make contact with visible members of the organization in a secure manner and only when there is a real need for it, and all contact will be made through secret or encrypted channels of communication. In actuality, all mujahideen should conduct themselves as secret people in light of the enemy's war against terrorism and jihad.

A leader: Leaders play an important role in both visible and secret operations for many reasons, including the particularly large volume of information in their possession as well as the very long training that they undergo, which makes it difficult to find people capable of replacing them. Therefore, leaders must take even more precautions than their subordinates.

The Fourth Stage: Training

During this stage, after a comrade is selected and classified, he must be trained in jihad activities. First, he must be educated in shari'a [Islamic law] and politics, and imbued with a love for the religion and jihad; knowledge of shari'a is very important for the mujahideen. In addition, the comrade must undergo security training in order to protect the organization's secrets. Only after he successfully completes the security training can he undergo military training, which will be tailored to his abilities, his requirements, and his classification as either a visible or secret person.

ABOUT THE ICT

Founded in 1996, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) is one of the leading academic institutes for counter-terrorism in the world, facilitating international cooperation in the global struggle against terrorism. ICT is an independent think tank providing expertise in terrorism, counter-terrorism, homeland security, threat vulnerability and risk assessment, intelligence analysis and national security and defense policy. ICT is a non-profit organization located at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel which relies exclusively on private donations and revenue from events, projects and programs.

ABOUT THE JIHADI MONITORING GROUP

The Jihadi Websites Monitoring Group (JWMG) is a specialized research and analysis team at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT). Composed of researchers fluent in Arabic, the JWMG monitors websites that support and serve the Global Jihad organizations. The unique characteristic of JWMG publications is the team's integration of diverse materials from a wide variety of Arabic sources. JWMG connects each source to larger trends, providing a complete understanding of events on both a local and a global scale.

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