

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

Part Two

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This is the second 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.

General Security Principles

Certain fundamental principles of security do not change over time and are not dependent on environment, despite advancements in technology. It is therefore important to be familiar with them.

The most important principle is stated in the Qur'an: "O ye who believe! Take your precautions..."¹ As this verse indicates, just as prayer is an Islamic-legal obligation, so, too, is protecting oneself from the enemy, in times of peace as in times of war. Even in times of peace, the enemy deploys spies and gathers intelligence; for example, the Americans are now collecting information about the mujahideen to learn their movements and capabilities, and to prepare to defend themselves. In fact, the enemy collects so much information and prepares so many scenarios, that he gives the mujahideen ideas they had not had on their own!

All of the world's most important intelligence services recruit spies. The CIA and Israel's Mossad collect information about events all over the world. In contrast, the intelligence agencies of Arab countries concentrate on local events. International intelligence agencies operate beyond the borders of their home countries. For example, the Americans send spies to South America, Libya and Iraq, where they attain key posts that enable them to interfere with these countries' interests, and ensure they match those of the US. The leaders of many countries, like Russia and the US, formerly served in intelligence. In effect, they turn the entire country into one large interrogation room, treating all of their citizens as if they were criminals. Ultimately, this leads their regimes to wrack and ruin.

Until some 20 years ago, the mujahideen were able to exploit the war between the US-led Western Bloc and the Russian-led Eastern Bloc to act and move freely. Since the demise of

¹ From Qur'an 4:71, translated by Abdullah Yusufali, <http://www.islam101.com/quran/yusufAli/QURAN/4.htm>.

the USSR and the Soviet bloc, the US has controlled the world. Consequently, nowhere in the world do the mujahideen have a safe place to congregate and launch attacks against the enemy. Today, the mujahideen should be organized in cells, and not in traditional hierarchical organizations. In the police states that Arabs inhabit today, it is enough if one man is caught and gives up his commander for an entire organization to collapse. Conversely, if one member of a four- or five-man cell is arrested and confesses, only one cell will be ruined, and not all of the mujahideen in the country. In a network based on cells, the cells should not have any contact whatsoever with each other, and no one person should know about all of the cells. If one man was responsible for founding the cells and recruiting their members, he would do well to leave the country once they have been organized or, better yet, to perpetrate a suicide attack so that the secret dies with him. This last concept apparently grew out of discussions between al-Adam and Sheikh Abu Musab al-Suri, a senior member of Al-Qaeda who was considered one of the most important analysts of modern jihad and one of its most sophisticated strategists.

The First Principle: Awareness is the Key to Security

To prevent being surprised by the enemy, the Muslim must be constantly on the alert. Often the enemy operates late at night so as to surprise us; it is well-known that the element of surprise is halfway to victory. For example, the ambush used in guerilla warfare is founded on the element of surprise; the key is to catch the enemy unprepared.

The mujahid must constantly be cautious, guarding his personal safety and that of the secret documents in his possession. He should not keep incriminating evidence of his involvement in jihad at home, which could be used against him in an infidel court. Anyone suspected of involvement in jihad is likely to be under the surveillance of the regime, and therefore must move about with caution, lest he fall into a trap laid by police and intelligence services.

As much information as possible should be collected that is relevant to jihadist activity. For example, the mujahideen should monitor the regime's Internet sites and the media. This will give them an accurate picture of the situation and help them avoid being ambushed. Moreover, by monitoring the media, the mujahideen can learn the whereabouts of senior officials, such as a country's president. For example, if the mujahideen wish to assassinate the president, monitoring the media can help them do so, by informing them of when he will be at a public event, so they can get close to him. It is also possible to benefit from watching video clips about security. It is wise to remember that intelligence agents are

selected with care; not everyone is suited to such a job, which requires a certain inborn talent.

Mujahideen should share information. For example, when a brother is arrested, it is important to understand the circumstances of his arrest and to analyze his mistakes so as to prevent them from being repeated. Mujahideen who must travel should learn from local people how best to protect against danger in an area that is unfamiliar to them. Brothers who have been released from prison should tell others about the interrogation methods of intelligence agents. For example, a brother who was incarcerated at Guantanamo related that the Americans gave him something to drink that caused him to lose his short-term memory; they would interrogate him, and then use what he had told them to convince him that his friends had betrayed him. Understanding the nature of interrogations enables us to prepare for them. CIA agents are stupid. They do not understand the mujahideen and the Arabs in general. Because they are unfamiliar with Middle Eastern culture, it is easy to trick them.

A mujahid must be resourceful and exercise maximum caution. For example, when a mujahid disguises himself to conceal his identity, he should take note of the smallest details of his dress, lest he reveal that he is wearing a disguise. Nuances of dress and disguise can be exploited by infidel authorities to catch and imprison mujahideen; therefore, much thought should be given them.

The Second Principle: Preventive Steps

The mujahid must exercise caution lest he be captured by the authorities. Security errors can be analyzed after the fact, but as doing so is complex, it would be better to avoid them altogether. All of the brothers, especially those in cities, should take precautions when traveling: Do not travel without a disguise and a cover story. Just as intelligence agents everywhere travel with a cover story, so, too, must the mujahideen.

Nevertheless, no one is immune to erring. Mujahideen who engage in jihad, which requires much movement and activity, cannot always avoid making mistakes. There is no shame in erring, but it must be dealt with. When preparing an operation, the mujahid must also plan for unexpected interference; all of the brothers involved in a plan of attack must know what to do if certain mistakes are made. It is the responsibility of the leader of the group to train and equip his men, and give them the tools to act correctly.

The Third Principle: Neither Exaggerate Nor Disregard

Do not exaggerate your security measures, but do not treat them lightly. Find the golden mean. Too many precautions may stymie progress, but too much enthusiasm can lead to a lack of caution. Remember to obey Allah's commandments and fight for Allah. There is no contradiction between jihad and security; in fact, security makes it possible to promote jihad and reach greater achievements. It is not always wise to hasten to fight; sometimes, it is best to wait and make preparations that will ensure success in battle. If a mujahid rushes into battle enthusiastically without making preliminary preparations and then is taken prisoner, he will be lost to the brothers, whose might will be diminished. Remember: When the few fight the many, every man is important. The fewer the mujahideen, the greater the importance of personal security. Moreover, when a mujahid leaves for action, he must have only the information relevant to his part in the action. He should know nothing about future actions, so that he will not be able to divulge anything if he is taken prisoner by the enemy. At the same time, neither should crucial information about an action be concealed from the mujahideen, as it is important not to exaggerate security measures.