

Modus Operandi – Explosive Packages Found Aboard UPS and FedEx Transport Aircraft

Based on Articles Published in the 16th Edition of “Sada Al-Malahem” Magazine

At the end of October 2010, two packages of explosives were discovered in Britain and Dubai. Reports in the Arab media claim the package in Britain was discovered on a UPS aircraft whilst the one in Dubai was found at a FedEx installation, deposited inside a printer's ink cartridge which contained an electrical circuit and a cellular phone mechanism. Both packages were addressed to Jewish synagogues in Chicago and contained powerful PETN explosives. According to investigators, this type of explosive hints not only to the organization behind the attempted attack, but also to the identity of the manufacturer himself, suspected to be Ibrahim Hassan Al-Asiri, a Saudi citizen who is on the list of the 85 men wanted by the Saudi authorities.

In late August 2009, Al-Asiri inserted a PETN bomb into his younger brother's body. The brother, Abdullah, attempted to assassinate an assistant to the Saudi Minister of Interior, Prince Muhammad Bin Naif. These explosives were also used in the attempted attack on an aircraft en route to Detroit from Amsterdam on Christmas Eve 2009, an attack which was carried out by the Nigerian Omar Faruq Abd Al-Mutallab. Al-Asiri is presumed to be behind this attempted attack as well. According to the reports, Al-Asiri obtains the substances for the construction of the bombs by stealing medication from hospitals in Sana'a. Al-Asiri is one of the members of the cell of Al-Qaeda's Yemen military leader, Qasim Al-Rimi. He studied chemistry at the King Saud University, but did not complete his studies.

The two packages, seized on October 29th 2010, were dispatched from Yemen under the name of Hannan Muhammad Al-Samawi, a female computer science student at Sana'a University's Engineering Faculty.

It was reported at the beginning of November 2010, that there were a number of unresolved issues pertaining to this matter, such as: Al-Samawi's involvement in the affair; the possibility of additional packages which were not apprehended; whether the bombs meant to detonate inside the targeted synagogues; or were they meant to detonate en route during the flight.¹

In January 2011, the 16th edition of the "Sada Al-Malahem" Jihadist magazine was published. A number of articles on the affair of the explosive packages were included, revealing how Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has succeeded in overcoming security and bypassing the x-ray systems at the airport in Yemen.

The first article was written by Yahya Ibrahim, who also writes in the organization's English magazine "Inspire". In his article titled "The Attrition Explosive Charges - \$4,200", he stated that "Two Nokia mobile phones at a cost of \$150 each, two printers at a cost of \$300 each, plus the cost of transportation and dispatch of the explosives. In total, all the costs amounted to \$4,200".

He added that "The operation took three months to prepare... an attack which cost \$4,200 will cost the enemy billions". Ibrahim further wrote that "Fewer than six operatives were involved in the operation... From the first moment, the goal was an economic one, as bringing down a transport plane only kills the pilot and co-pilot".

He then stated that "during the initial discussions before carrying out the mission, we understood that its success was dependent on two factors: the first - that the

¹ <http://international.daralhayat.com/>, <http://www.aawsat.com/>

packages would succeed in passing through the security systems at the airport; and the second factor was to terrorize, forcing the West to spend a lot of money in improving their security measures”.

Ibrahim finally determined that “what happened is only the first stage of a multistage plan. The next stage will be to transfer our data to our Mujahideen brothers worldwide, to enable them to use it in their countries. The following stage will be to utilize our foreign connections to dispatch explosives from other states which do not focus on security, as in Yemen. Furthermore, we will duplicate the idea so that it is used on civilian aircraft in the west”.²

The identity of the second article's author is not mentioned but it is apparently a translation into Arabic of an article which appeared in the third issue of “Inspire” magazine, written by the Head of Overseas Operations.³ Official American sources identify him as Adnan Shukri Jumah, of Saudi origin, aged 35⁴, who is wanted by the FBI.⁵

² Sada Al-Malahem, 16th issue, page 17.

³ Inspire, 3rd issue, page 7.

⁴ <http://www.google.com/hostednews/>

⁵ <http://www.fbi.gov/>



Shukri Jumah's photograph on the FBI website

In an article published in "Sada Al-Malahem" magazine⁶, he wrote under the title "The Goals of the Attrition Explosives Attacks" that "In our discussions prior to the operation, we defined the transfer of the explosives from any airport as the criteria for the operation's success. As far as we were concerned, blowing up an aircraft was something which would please us, but according to our plan, this was not the goal, but rather one more complementing factor".

He added that "The first package succeeded in passing through and detonated the aircraft departing from Dubai...⁷ In the second attempt, we used a different type of charge and decided that if both bombs succeeded in passing the transport companies' checkpoints and the airport screening machines, this would result in a worldwide state of emergency and would force two alternatives on the west: either to spend billions to check every package in the world, or do nothing, in which case we would do it again".

⁶ Sada al Malahem magazine, 16th issue, page 18.

⁷ AQAP claimed responsibility for dispatching the explosives in October 2010, as well as for the attack on a UPS aircraft on September 3rd 2010, after it had departed from Dubai.

He then stated that "The explosive charges in the second operation, not only passed the screening at the airport in Sana'a, but one of the two packages also succeeded in reaching Britain, and had there been no intelligence on the operation, both explosive packages would have detonated. Following Omar Al-Farouk's operation, we developed a bomb capable of bringing down an aircraft, and we researched all the security systems used at airports, including the x-ray machines, sniffer dogs *etc.* In light of this research, we achieved a new type of explosive device and we were confident that with Allah's help, it would penetrate even the most efficient and sophisticated systems. Our prediction was correct. The explosives were checked in at the FedEx branch (whilst at the UPS branch the package was not inspected at all)..."

Jumah then stated that they addressed the packages with names taken from Muslim/Arab history, from the period of Salah Al-Din and Andalusia.

Finally, Jumah wrote that he identifies himself as part of the organization in the Arabian Peninsula, *i.e.*- that he is the head of the organization's overseas operations: "We in the 'Qaidat Al-Jihad' organization in the Arabian Peninsula will never forget Palestine, and how could we forget it when our slogan is 'We will start here and meet at Al-Aqsa'.⁸ We therefore sent the packages to Jewish synagogues, one of which is a synagogue for gay people. We also chose the city of Chicago, as it is President Obama's hometown. We were very optimistic with regards to the results of these operations and that is why we placed a copy of the English novel 'Great Expectations' inside the printer".⁹

⁸ This slogan was the title of the first video published by the new Al-Qaeda leadership in the Arabian Peninsula after the union between the two branches in Yemen and Saudi Arabia in January 2009.

⁹ A novel by Charles Dickens.

The third article was written by Ikrimah Al-Muhajir and was titled "The explosives' packages – how? And until when?".¹⁰ This is apparently an adaptation of a similar article he had written, published in "Inspire" magazine's third issue, where he was identified as a member of the organization's "Sabotage Department".¹¹

At the beginning of the article, the author presents the types of screening equipment the explosives evaded:

1. A metal detector – "Allah enabled us to neutralize this machine and to prevent the enemy from using it. This was manifested in the operations of 'Abu al-Khir' (who attempted to assassinate the aide of the Saudi Arabian Minister of Interior at the end of August 2009), may Allah accept him and may Allah free Omar Faruq Abd Al-Mutallab. No metal was used in the bombs. We created five new ways pertaining to the explosives' fuses, none of which require the use of metals".
2. Sniffing equipment – "A good wrapping and blocking of the explosives' molecules in a closed segment so that they do not dissipate, prevented the dogs from sniffing them out. Rinsing the outside part of the bomb several times with organic mixtures prevents the molecules of the material from remaining on the outside wrapping of the bomb and as a result, the machines, which are based on checking the external wrapping of the package, are neutralized as well as inserting the package into the machine identifying explosives' molecules. We rinsed the packages with a number of organic substances in order to dissolve every molecule of the materials".
3. The x-ray screening machines – "The machine used has two colors, black and white. Thereafter, the machine was improved and a three color x-ray

¹⁰ Sada Al-Malahem, 16th issue, pages 19-21.

¹¹ Inspire, 3rd issue, pages 13-14.

machine was used. The one that was breached operates on six colors. These colors appear according to the atomic number of the material; organic material has two colors; non-organic material has one color and metals have three other colors”.

The article also contains a sub-section titled “How the screening machines were broken into and the colors manipulated?” in which he wrote that “They used a machine which included organic and non-organic substances, such as a printer. The ink container is full of black ink whose main component is organic material called 'black carbon', whose molecular number is close to that of PETN, which is made out of alcohol with four groups of hydroxyl. We emptied out the ink and placed 340 grams of PETN inside in its stead. We created a small fuse with a wide diameter so that they would not see that it is a fuse containing four grams of lead ion. It was assembled using a specific technique where the wires welded to a metal plate at the back of the ink container were removed. The wires were then properly covered, so that no external change could be discerned in the upper part of the container.

With regard to the electricity and electronics, we used a mobile phone. We disassembled it and hid its display screen, so that it would look like an electronic component belonging to the printer when it was passed through the screener. It was affixed into the printer, the wires removed and welded to the part of the printer which touches the metal plate inside the ink container. When the container is placed inside, the electrical circuit is connected, causing the detonation.

This technique of complete separation of the ink from the printer makes the manual screening useless. This is due to the fact that when examining the printer, one first removes the ink container which cuts off the electrical circuit.

The printer is then examined on the inside through the printer door and no explosive can be discerned and when the ink container is put back, the circuit is activated. In actual fact, the printer door will not close until the ink is put back in its proper place.

These steps proved the inability to discover the explosives. Evidence of this is that when the plane landed in Britain, the packages were examined twice, but no explosives were found...".



A photograph accompanying Ikrimah Al-Muhajir's article

The last article which deals with the explosive packages was written by Sheikh Ibrahim Abu Salah Al-Bana who, according to Arab sources, is an ideologue for Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.¹² In articles he wrote for "Inspire" magazine it is stated that he graduated from the Al-Azhar Institute for Religious Studies. In August 2010, it was reported that Al-Bana, of Egyptian origin, was arrested in

¹² <http://ksa.daralhayat.com/>

Yemen.¹³ In the article, Al-Bana praised the operation and stated that the war is one of data and technology and that it is the Mujahideen's obligation to be as prepared as possible. He stressed that the operation exposed the shame of Arab rulers who are competing amongst themselves as to who will satisfy the Americans the most.¹⁴

¹³ <http://www.alriyadh.com/>

¹⁴ Sade Al-Malahem, 16th issue, pages 21-22.