



TRC TWW Report

Terror Web Watch Report



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Item 1: Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi's organization, Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers (Group Profile), issues statement of responsibility for attack in Jordan (Country Profile) (Terrorist Incident)

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Graphic: New video "Today and Tomorrow, America," issued by the Islamic Army in Iraq (see Item 5)



Orientation/Introduction:

Please review the introduction to the Terror Web Watch at [Intel Report](#).

Item 1: Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi's organization, Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers ([Group Profile](#)), issues statement of responsibility for attack in Jordan ([Country Profile](#)) ([Terrorist Incident](#))

[begin translation]

In the Name of God, the Merciful, and the Compassionate...

"And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter." Al-Baqra (191)

Your brothers in the military wing of the Organization of al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers received the plan for the Aqaba raid from God some time ago. After making the preparations and determining the targets, your brothers launched rockets at their targets. These were where groups of American Crusader forces gathered, in the port of Aqaba and Eilat. Thanks to God, Most High, God kept the brothers safe and they returned safely from where they had come.

The raid was led and supervised by the Organization of al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers. Understand that we postponed proclaiming our responsibility for the attack until the brothers completed their withdrawal. We are, with the permission of God, most High, continuing our fight to attack the centers of disbelief and apostasy as much as we can.

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar...all dignity is for God and his Messenger and the Mujahideen.

Abu Maysara al-Iraqi (Media Division of the al-Qaeda organization in the Land of the Two Rivers)

[end translation]

Many analysts have said that Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi will continue to attempt attacks outside Iraq ([Country Profile](#)), especially in his native Jordan. Terrorist operations connected to the insurgent leader have been interrupted on a couple of occasions since the beginning of the Iraq war. One was the thwarted chemical attack on a Jordanian security target (Terrorist Incident forthcoming); another was a plot against American archaeologists working at a dig in Jordan ([Terrorist Incident](#)). Earlier this month, Jordanians arrested 17 militants linked to the al-Qaeda branch in Iraq and another group in Saudi Arabia ([Country Profile](#)).

This claim of responsibility seems authentically to come from the network. It has been circulated around a number of Jihadist Web sites for several days now and is purportedly signed by Abu Maysara al-Iraqi, recognizable as the group's Internet spokesperson. Based on the frequency with which the group's media wing posts to and appears to monitor these sites, the lack of a counter-statement by the group declaring this claim false appears to support its authenticity. In the past, when unconnected individuals have tried to make claims in the name of Zarqawi's branch, a swift reprimand by the group and the site administrators has followed. None such thing has happened, which supports that the group issued this message. It was posted in the same places that the group posts its other daily claims of attacks in Iraq.

Though the message appears to have come from Zarqawi's network, there are still questions about the validity of the claim. Nothing in the targeting nor the execution of this attack looks like other Zarqawi-directed operations. This was a rather crude, failed attack on targets that differ from others Zarqawi has selected in planning attacks in Jordan. The "Sheikh of the Slaughterers," as he is called by his admirers, has shown a penchant for understanding what kind of violence best captures the attention of the American media. Thus, the attacks he is believed to have been involved in have either been spectacular – like the plot to inflict a massive chemical



explosion in downtown Amman – or have been aimed at capturing headlines with unique targeting and brutal treatment of civilians – such as the Nicholas Berg ([Terrorist Incident](#)) and other beheadings in Iraq. The planned attack on archaeologists in Iraq also fits, with the selection of a completely apolitical, innocent, vulnerable target set. Had the attack succeeded, even with just a few deaths, it would have captured headlines and confused people for its senselessness because the victims were researchers who had nothing to do with the conflict. There are a number of very soft targets that would have conformed to Zarqawi's style of calibrating targets and attacks for the western media reaction. American civilians in Jordan abound: contractors for the Iraqi effort, American civilians working for companies in Jordan, college students spending semesters abroad, western tourists visiting Petra or Jordan's biblical sites. To go after offshore US military targets in Jordan (when they are so widely available in Iraq) does not seem consistent with Zarqawi's style. The amateur nature of these attacks, in comparison to others he has planned or directed in Jordan, also does not seem consistent. The one detail that does fit is the information coming out of the Jordanian investigation that three men connected with the attack have fled to Iraq; this matches what the statement says about waiting until the operatives return before issuing the claim.

Another group has claimed responsibility for the attack: the Martyr Abdullah Azzam Brigades of the al-Qaeda Organization in Land of Rabat and the Land of Canaan ([Group Profile](#)). This claim was met with skepticism when it was posted on the al-Ansar site (see last week's Terror Web Watch: [Intel Report](#)). Analysts and Jordanian intelligence are skeptical about both claims, leaning instead toward a mostly homegrown cell. This is in spite of the fact that a Syrian has been arrested in connection with the attack. A regional military analyst quoted in "Voice of America" news brought up a thought-provoking point about a homegrown versus foreign cell in this attack: "You are Syrian and Iraqi, and coming with a Mercedes and want to hire a place. All this I think will raise some doubts. In these little towns and cities, foreigners are suspected. This is not an easy operation. It needs a lot of reconnaissance. It needs a lot of preparation. This story which we heard now is a very simplistic [one]. And I don't think they can do it, if they are coming from outside, without heavy assistance from inside" ([source](#)). More details will have to come out about the case to determine whether it would require so much preparation and reconnaissance.

Item 2: Osama Bin Laden alleged injured reported by Taliban **(Group Profile) spokesman**

[begin translation] ([Intel Report](#))

In the Name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate,

The Sheikh Osama bin Laden led an attack on a base for Spanish forces. The attack was called the Battle of Khilood. The Mujahideen butchered the enemies of God, and killed many of them, Praise God.

The Sheikh Osama was injured in the left leg during this operation, but, with God's permission [the wound] was light. We ask God, Glorious and Sublime, to heal our Sheikh and to preserve him and all the brother Mujahideen in every place.

Multiple Sources
Al-Sahab Institute
The Official Spokesbody of the Taliban

[end translation]

According to the endnote, the statement was posted originally on the al-Hesbah Jihadist site before being reprinted on other sites. Other statements also popped up attesting that Bin Laden had been injured in the leg. The al-Sahab Institute has produced a number of al-Qaeda propaganda tapes in the past. However, that "multiple sources" are quoted makes it apparent that there was no one direct, trusted source close to Sheikh himself.

The likelihood of Bin Laden leading an attack on Spanish forces is not great, recalling the frailty of his appearance and the weakness of his voice in his last video. Further, if Bin Laden were leading attacks against westerners or



the new Afghani government, the Jihadist world would have heard about it in one of the reports that the Afghan Resistance puts out over the Internet. Least of all, he would likely not have been replaced as leader of the Afghan resistance just weeks ago ([Intel Report](#)) had he really been as active as this report implies. It may have been a heroic story invented to explain a real-life injury. Even if there were an injury, if it was "light," as this report states, it may not be an important development at all.

What does seem to be an important development is the lack of attention being paid to this on the Jihadist web. On the popular, extremist Al-Saf site, where the announcement of his wounding has been up for a couple of days, a counter indicates that only 182 people have even bothered to open the message and read it. This is low on this site, where the most popular messages, statements, and articles are often read by people numbering into the low thousands. The sense pervades that the relevance of his activities nowadays does not near those for which he is legendary. He apparently has been inactive and in hiding for years now.

The change is made even clearer when the relatively mild reaction to the news of Bin Laden's injury is compared to the more explosive reaction that accompanied reports of Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi's wounding ([Intel Report](#)). There was an online "campaign of a billion prayers to heal Zarqawi," and messages reporting news of the situation were read by tens of thousands, according to the counters on the forums. For such an active, powerful, and useful insurgent leader to be taken out of the fight mid-course was a much more worrisome thing for the members of this online community than for another terrorist leader who is only, as it seems at this point, of symbolic importance. That could be wrong – Bin Laden could still have the ability to plan and dispatch teams to carry out attacks – but judging by the lack of concern over his wellbeing after this alleged injury, even his online constituency looks to be in doubt of his relevance. The lack of reaction could also be due to the announcement that the wounds were characterized as "light," but Zarqawi's wounds were also played down. In both cases, it was probably in keeping with Arabic cultural custom around discussing illness and injury: such conditions are supposed to be discussed as if they are much less serious than they are.

This may be a sign of Bin Laden's growing irrelevance to the current Jihadist movement. That may be a good thing in the short-term – Jihadists have yet to act out on, for instance, his instructions to attack Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure. However, it also demonstrates the extent to which the al-Qaeda global movement has outgrown its own originators, a sign that it will easily survive them.

Item 3: The organization and Jihadist web forum of British-based Islamist Mohammed al-Masaari has been "killed by the hand of the repressive regime led by Tony Blair"

A notice on al-Masaari's Web site announces that the British government has made it impossible for his "Islamic Renewal Organization" (formerly "the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights" – the CDLR) to continue surviving. The message, which appeared where the extremist forum of the "Tajdeed" (Renewal) Web site used to be, was dramatically entitled "Death Notice." It accuses Tony Blair of having betrayed Britain's "tradition of liberal democracy," choosing to follow examples of government oppression set by the countries like Saudi Arabia. Masaari and his Islamist extremist group managed to operate in the United Kingdom ([Country Profile](#)) for about a decade by characterizing themselves as pro-democracy political dissidents who needed asylum.

In the days before the site came down, a message appeared on the forum entitled: "this is what has shut down Masaari's site [referring to an earlier, temporary shutdown], and put him on the run." It displayed English and Arabic texts of a *Sunday Times* article about Masaari and his Web site on which TRC consulted ([source](#)).

It is unknown what circumstances actually compelled Masaari to end his organization, if that is in fact what has happened. With many terrorist groups, the danger that comes with cracking down on them is that they could be driven underground and become more extreme. With Masaari's group, there is not much of a chance of that because it was never one of those groups, like Hizb al-Tahrir ([Group Profile](#)), that aimed to attract a large following and create an angry, anti-western, grass roots movement among Muslims. It was a more elitist group, focused on Saudi Islamist dissidents in London and also in the Saudi Arabia. It is possible that the group will just go away, with some members absorbed into other organizations.



While this "death notice" implies that the Jihadist forum is destined to stay offline for good, the disappearance of a Jihadist Web site seems to have little effect on the overall Internet Jihadist movement. In fact, it seems that the more sites that go down, the more the community realizes the need for redundancy, replacing each disappeared site with another two or three.

Item 4: The Al-Ansar site opens multilingual forums

The al-Ansar site gained notoriety for at one time being the primary Internet porthole of Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi's network in Iraq; it was on this site that the video of the Nicholas Berg beheading was first posted. It seems to have resumed that role, along with a number of other sites (see Item 3).

This past weekend, the al-Ansar forum opened up English, French, and Spanish language forums on its site. Later this week, a Dutch forum also appeared. The forums are symptomatic of an increasing desire on the part of extremists to reach out to Muslim Diaspora communities in western countries who may not speak the holy language of Arabic. One of the most dangerous effects of the "Internet Jihad" is the way that it has used the Internet to bridge gaps between Middle Eastern-based extremists and Muslim immigrant communities in the western world. The opening of this forum demonstrates an attempt to reach out to Muslims who never grew up with Arabic – either because they were from Pakistan or another non-Arabic speaking Muslim country – or, more worrisome, because they are first or second generation Americans and Europeans, possibly possessing the citizenship of the countries in which they live.

As of yet, there is little material populating these forums, although the French language forum is catching on the fastest. Most of the material present is translations of statements posted on the main Arabic-language forums.

Screen shot:



Item 5: Video Available: "Today and Tomorrow, America"

This is the title of the Islamic Army in Iraq's ([Group Profile](#)) new propaganda compilation of various attacks and activities. As part of the general trend of insurgent videos coming from Iraq recently, this video shows some increased sophistication on the prior releases by the group. The video is available from TRC upon request. Screen shots, posted along with the link to download the video on the al-Ansar forum, appear below.



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