



# TRC TWW Report

Terror Web Watch Report



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## Editor's Note

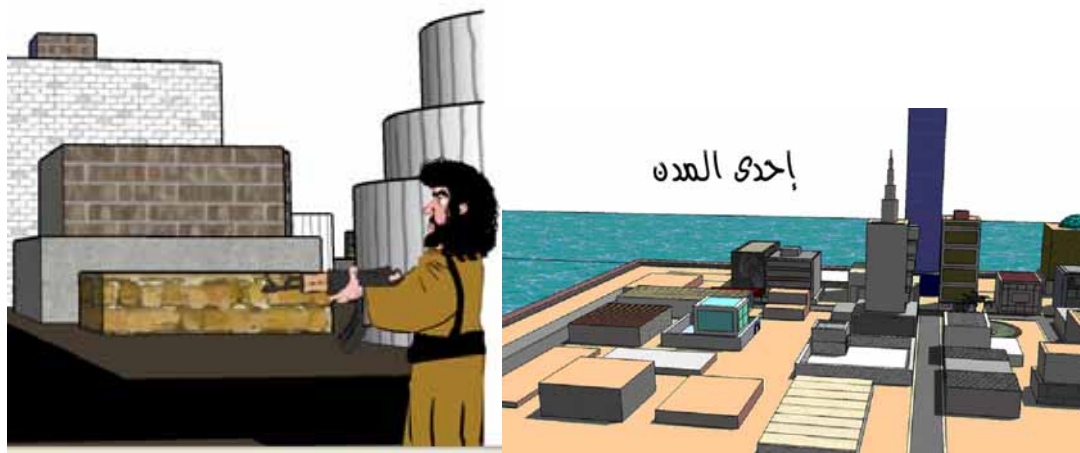
Item 1: Interview with Al-Qaeda (Group Profile) Field Commander to Take Place over Radical Websites

Item 2: The "Jihad Cell" Forum Focuses on US Bases in the Middle East

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**Graphic:** Scenes from a new Jihadist cartoon



## Editor's Note

This is the final Terror Web Watch edition for 2005. The Terrorism Research Center's offices will be closed on December 23, 26, 30, and Jan 2 for the holidays. The TWW will resume normal publication on January 6, 2005.

## Orientation/Introduction:

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

## Item 1: Interview with Al-Qaeda ([Group Profile](#)) Field Commander to Take Place over Radical Websites

Jihadist Internet forums have long been used to disseminate materials from al-Qaeda branches to their supporters and followers. Now, these supporters are being given an opportunity to send their thoughts back to an al-Qaeda personality online. In an announcement circulated on December 19, the al-Ekhlaas website announced on their site and on other Jihadist websites that they would be conducting an interview with alleged al-Qaeda field commander Abu Laith al-Libi (Abu Laith the Libyan). The interview would be driven by the members of Jihadist websites, who were encouraged to submit their questions within one week.

"The al-Ekhlaas network has the pleasure of hosting (in an unprecedented meeting), a lion of Islam, the leader of the Arab Mujahideen in Afghanistan, the Sheikh, the Mujahid, Abu Laith al-Libi," read the announcement. "He will be taking questions from members [of the forums] and media correspondents, who [are asked to] mention what media front they represent, one week from now."

The announcement also requested that members "please provide respectful questions free of provocation or sarcasm." It was signed "the administration of the al-Ekhlaas network." The al-Ekhlaas site is a popular Jihadist forum ([www.alekhlaas.net](http://www.alekhlaas.net)).

Abu Laith al-Libi was allegedly a member of the core al-Qaeda group in Afghanistan ([Country Profile](#)) and appeared in July 2002 calling for the Middle East Broadcasting Center to give a statement that Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri had escaped US ([Country Profile](#)) attacks on Afghanistan unscathed. Recently, video tapes allegedly depicting training sessions of Mujahideen in Afghanistan with footage as recent as 2003 were circulated on the Internet ([Terror Web Watch](#)).

Questions submitted from eager followers included: "How can the young men on the Jihadist forums best serve the Jihad and the Mujahideen?" Another member asked: "How can Islam best wage a war against the community of infidels and their henchmen in the midst of today's oppression in Afghanistan, Iraq [[Country Profile](#)], and Palestine? And how are you using the resources of the al-Qaeda organization after the raids on New York and Washington [[Terrorist Incident](#)]? Are there new strikes in store against the community of infidels, especially America?"

Another member asked about how to best use veterans of the Iraqi Jihad: "What is your opinion of spreading out the brother Mujahideen, especially those returning from Iraq, to carry out Jihad operations in their countries?" He also wanted advice on the best way to get to Afghanistan to join the fighting and news on the wellbeing of Osama bin Laden.

## Item 2: The "Jihad Cell" Forum Focuses on US Bases in the Middle East

Members of this forum, which focuses on attack planning and the tools to carry out terrorist attacks, have posted information about the US military bases in the Gulf states and in Iraq. Much attention was paid to the crucial coast states—Kuwait ([Country Profile](#)), Qatar ([Country Profile](#)), the UAE ([Country Profile](#)), and Bahrain ([Country Profile](#)). "Kuwait is considered the most important base American forces use to attack Iraq in the south." The names of Camps in Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Djibouti ([Country Profile](#)), and Turkey ([Country Profile](#)) were listed. The homepage for Camp Doha in Qatar, [www.campdoha.org](http://www.campdoha.org), was provided.



Some of the information had been previously posted on the radical site [www.rightword.net](http://www.rightword.net) in July 2004. Its reposting on this forum prompted discussion and more research into the locations of important US bases in the Gulf. A two and a half page paper entitled, "A Map of Permanent American Military Bases," was posted that listed the names and locations of important bases in Iraq in addition to descriptions of their uses. Another member posted information about bases in Kuwait.

A picture of the gate at Camp Muleskinner was included in information given about bases in Iraq. This photo can be viewed through the *BBC* ([link](#)).

The information provided suggested that open source web research had been done on the bases, but there were no details that suggested physical surveillance in addition to that. The photo of Camp Muleskinner was taken from the Internet. This research is, thus, notable for the focus on these Camps as potential targets of violence, but not as evidence that attacks are in the planning stages.

A third member, suggesting a tactic by which the American presence might be attacked, responded by posting a lengthy manual on conducting kidnappings. The manual's content implies that it emanated from Palestinian terrorists and includes information on conducting surveillance, snatching the hostage, and making strategic decisions about the hostage's fate. Yet another participant in the discussion expressed that he did not live in the Gulf region, but that if anyone in the forum ever wanted to conduct attacks in Syria ([Country Profile](#)), he would like to participate. He recommended foreign embassies and consulates in Syria as targets.

### **Item 3: New Editions in Bomb Making Instructional Video Series; Videos Said to Originate With Hizbollah ([Group Profile](#)).**

Terror Web Watch has been tracking the emergence of a series of video clips depicting step-by-step instructions for various aspects of explosive making (for more, see [Terror Web Watch](#)).

The most recent editions of this series include separate clips on how to plant and remove anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, how to produce nitrocellulose, urea nitrate, "glycol nitrate", and nitroglycerin. In the past, videos have contained no group attribution. This has now changed. With some of the recently issued clips in the series, a new screen has been added describing the origin of the videos.

A short statement appears on the screen before the start of the video, signed by "Abu Omar al-Filistini," a member of the "Jihad Cell" forum. He asks viewers of the Salafi forum to excuse the music in the background of the videos (some adherents to Salafi Islam believe music is forbidden), explaining the videos were obtained from "Hizb Allat, which is a derogatory Sunni name given to the Shia organization Hizbollah.

The name "Hizb Allat" implies that the group worships a pagan goddess and is highly offensive. There is no information provided as to how a group of Salafis with so little respect for Hizbollah obtained the videos from Shia militia in the first place. They may have been purchased. Or, if the videos were willingly provided to Salafi militants by Hizbollah, it may be an attempt by the group to indirectly encourage terrorist attacks. Hizbollah is attempting to paint itself as a legitimate political party in Lebanon ([Country Profile](#)) but has also held a rally in which its Secretary General led a mob in a chant of "Death to America." The videos refrain from using a regional Arabic dialect, instead opting for the Modern Standard Arabic literary form, which is understood across the Arab world and studied by Muslims outside of the Arab world. If Hizbollah had intended the videos to only be used by its own Lebanese members, they would likely have chosen a Levantine dialect (which would also be understood by Hizbollah's Palestinian membership). Instead, they made a strategic linguistic choice for the video to be understood across the Arab world and even by some Muslims outside of it.

The attribution to Hizbollah can not be verified. It is supported, however, by a scene from one of the more recent video clips on the subject of planting mines. The anti-personnel mine being planted is printed in Hebrew, a possible vestige from Israel's ([Country Profile](#)) occupation of southern Lebanon.



## Item 4: Al Qaeda's Internet Bubble

Conventional wisdom indicates that al-Qaeda ([Group Profile](#)) has transformed itself from a small group of dedicated terrorist to an ideology of resistance endorsed by significant segments of the Muslim world. Proponents of this argument point to the increased number of terrorist attacks since 9/11 ([Terrorist Incident](#)) and to surveys, such those commissioned by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, that note a precipitous decline of America's image as perceived by Muslims as well as an increased acceptance of suicide bombings by Muslims as a means for resistance to Western imperialism.

While the increase in terrorist attacks and corresponding decline of America's image may, in fact, be related to the proliferation of al-Qaeda's ideology, it is methodologically difficult to make such a direct connection. Further, data points are needed to tie directly Al-Qaeda's propaganda efforts to the post-9/11 upsurge in terrorism.

One way to prove or disprove the idea that the proliferation of Al-Qaeda's ideology is directly correlated to the increase in terrorist attacks is to measure how many people are exposed to al-Qaeda's message. It is possible to measure how many people have been exposed to al-Qaeda's propaganda by observing the traffic patterns on known al-Qaeda websites and message boards. Over the last three months, from October 2005 to December 2005, traffic has increased on all but three of 13 known websites and messages boards. Of the three websites that experienced a decline in traffic, two were taken offline during the previous three months and, therefore, do not have accurate data for the entire three month time frame. On average, traffic increased 117% on the 11 sites that remained on-line throughout the previous three months. Therefore, on a relative basis, it is fair to say that more people are being exposed to al-Qaeda propaganda.

On obvious counter-argument to the noted relative increase in traffic on known al-Qaeda websites and messages boards is that a 100% increase in traffic is easy to achieve when there were only a small number of visitors measured at the start of the survey. For example, it is easy to achieve doubling of traffic if there were only 100 users to begin with. However, an examination of the raw number of visitors to the known al-Qaeda websites and forums reveals that a significant number of people are visiting these sites. For example, the most visited al-Qaeda-affiliated site reached an average of 67 out of a baseline of one million Internet users on a daily basis over the last three months. While this number does not sound intimidating, it is worth considering that there are approximately one billion Internet users worldwide. Therefore, it can be roughly approximated that 67,000 Internet users visit the most popular al-Qaeda website on a daily basis. As a point of reference, the roughly 67,000 users to visit the most popular al-Qaeda site pales in comparison to the 240 million visitors to Google. However, it is worth considering that if only one percent of the visitors to the most popular al-Qaeda website endorsed terrorism as a justified means of resistance and actively sought training and guidance for an attack, then western intelligence and law enforcement officials would have to worry about tracking roughly 670 individuals.

While these traffic patterns do not show a definitive correlation between al-Qaeda's propaganda and the rise in terrorist attacks, they do portend a broad proliferation of al-Qaeda's message of resistance through terrorism. Moreover, it is particularly disconcerting to note that the same websites that espouse al-Qaeda messages of violence also equip the visitor with the training regimens required for a terrorist attack.

## Item 5: Newest Jihadi Threat Takes Cartoon Format

A cartoon has been circulating around Jihadist websites that depicts an attack in Iraq ([Country Profile](#)) and threatens a car bomb attack in a western-looking city. It first appeared on multiple Jihadist forums on December 19 and was reported on in the pan-Arab newspaper *al-Hayat* as a possible attempt to aim propaganda at children. The cartoon, however, seems more likely an attempt to communicate a threat using visual displays instead of a written statement or recorded speech in order to overcome language barriers. The transition from Iraq to the non-Iraqi city and the replication of an Iraqi insurgency-style attack within that city seem to threaten the "bleed out" of the war in Iraq to other countries.

The cartoon begins in a setting likely meant to represent an Iraqi urban area, depicting insurgents attacking a tank and a sniper attack on a soldier who speaks English with a satirical "Rocky" accent. The next scene opens to





"one of the cities where the motorcades of the tyrants travel," according to the caption, and depicts a city that sits on the edge of a body of water. The city looks western, but it could also be an Arabian Gulf city. It, then, depicts a motorcade's middle vehicle being intercepted by a car bomber. Words flashing on the screen announce that "the true battle begins soon." This cues a second attack on police vehicles that have rushed to the scene. The cartoon closes promising a sequel.

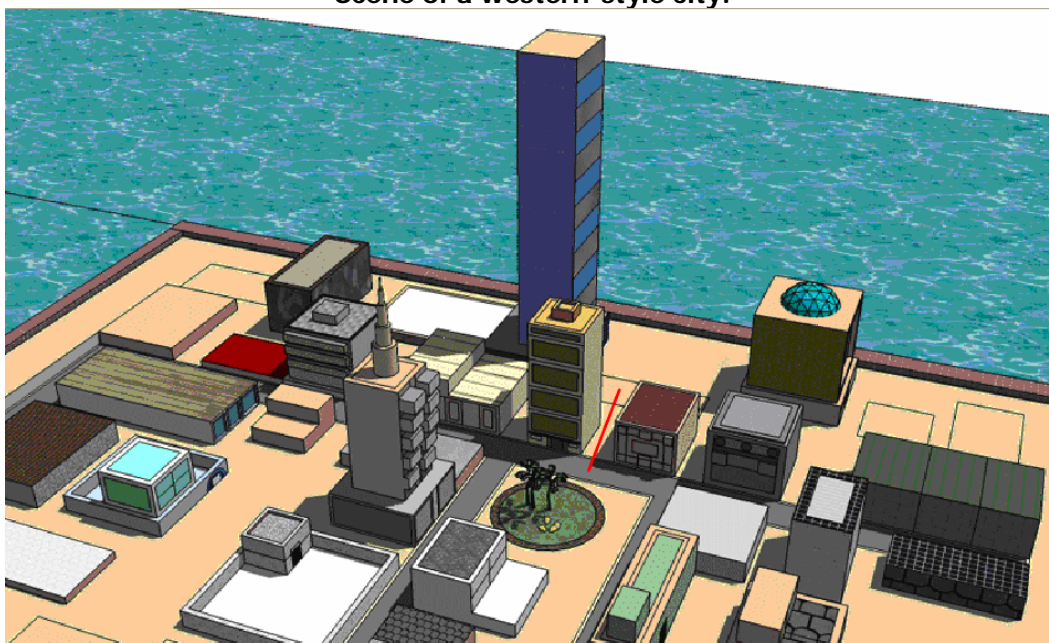
The cartoon is not signed by a group or media outlet. It was originally posted on a Jihadist forum by the forum's administrator. It is a novel way to communicate a threat, which defies the language barrier, but the cartoon format lends the threat a comic tone that is difficult to take seriously. It could easily be the work of someone who emotionally supports the international Jihadist effort and has some skills in computer graphics but no real connection to any group of people intending to carry out an attack.

Scenes from the cartoon:

**Insurgents on foot attack tanks:**



**Scene of a western-style city:**



**A car bomb targets a motorcade on a street lined with people:**



**An insurgent (top left) fires on a police vehicle that has responded to the scene:**



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