



TRC WAR Report

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

The Capture of Hussein

The capture of Saddam Hussein ([Intel Report](#)) by US forces is rife with implications for counter-insurgency efforts in Iraq as well as counterterrorism efforts worldwide. The long-term optimism resulting from the operation must be tempered by a near-term pragmatic assessment that the best-case scenario is no change (meaning no decrease) in attacks on US forces, whereas the worse-case--and more probable--effect is an increase of Iraqi insurgent activity in near-term.

Hussein's backers are now in an "all or nothing" scenario where they will want to increase the cost of his capture on US foreign policy (e.g. spill more US blood) or engage in tactics and targeting to try and free him (or negotiate his freedom, potentially by FARC-esque hostage taking). For Hussein sympathizers, their situation has become "act or do nothing" since the end of their effort is in sight with his capture. For example, even after the invasion of Germany in 1945 and the suicide of Adolph Hitler, there was an increase in attacks by SS and other loyal fanatics. Similarly, since Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, former Iraqi general and commander of the Northern Army, remains at large and is reported to still be coordinating attacks by foreign fighters and Iraqi regime loyalists, anti-U.S. and anti-Western attacks should be expected to continue until he is removed. A former aide to al-Douri and two senior members of Ansar al-Islam ([Group Profile](#)) have stated as much in interrogations. Al-Douri will probably be found in or around the city of Mosul since he holds strong tribal connections there. A number of the former military officers surrounding him were also from the Mosul region.

The capture of Hussein will surely bring an intelligence windfall – both direct and indirect. The form, scope, and nature of the Iraqi insurgency should soon become clearer vis a vis to what level the anti-Western attacks have been guided by Hussein and his closest advisors vs. non-aligned Western rejectionists vs. al Qaeda ([Group Profile](#)) sympathizers. It is likely that armed assaults, roadside mines, ambushes, sniper, and mortar attacks are the work of Hussein allies while the suicide attacks and multiple car-bombings are evidence of al Qaeda influence, if not outright al Qaeda operations. Although al Qaeda links will likely be found, local insurgency cannot be underestimated. Thousands of Iraqis lost jobs and salaries when U.S. authorities decided to dissolve the Iraqi military; they certainly long for a return to a soldier's life, even if not at a soldier's pay.

This operation may also strengthen the optimism that al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden might still be caught. Though lessons learned in Hussein's capture will certainly be used for that future operation, the transferable lessons may be few indeed. U.S. intelligence and forces knew Hussein was probably in Iraq and probably in or near Tikrit, where he had tribal support. That narrow swath of land is completely controlled by allied forces and thus far easier to search. Neither condition is applicable to a hunt for Osama bin Laden, even assuming he is hiding along the Afghan/Pakistani border.

In sum, the capture of Saddam Hussein is certainly good news for the strategic efforts both at counter-insurgency in Iraq and regional counterterrorism operations. Nonetheless, the short-term effect will be continued--if not increased--levels of attacks on Western interests in Iraq for the next few months. Additionally, the applicability of lessons-learned to the other international manhunt for Osama bin Laden are few and unlikely to resolve that issue anytime soon.

Written by: Jim Kirkhope, TRC Staff

INTERNATIONAL ANALYSIS

Indonesia

(1) Indonesia Braces for More Terror Attacks—Minister -- Fearing that militant cells are preparing fresh attacks, Indonesian security forces are preparing "for the worst" as the New Year approaches in the world's most populous Muslim nation, a senior minister said on Sunday. Chief Security Minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, speaking on the sidelines of a security conference in Jakarta, said Christmas and New Year celebrations as well as upcoming elections were a vulnerable time. "Understanding the behavior and the mindset of terrorists, we had better prepare for the worst," the minister told reporters. "It means that preparing for the New Year's celebrations or bigger events, that is elections in 2004, we have to intensify our operations in identifying threats to our security, including a possible strike by terrorists," he said. "I cannot say now that the threat of terrorism is not imminent." Indonesia will hold a parliamentary election on April 5 and the country's first ever direct presidential vote on July 5. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: The threat of more terror attacks in Indonesia is probably a valid one that should be taken seriously. On the macro level, the frequency of terror attacks worldwide has increased especially against what are considered "Western or US targets," and further attacks in Indonesia would only continue with this trend. On micro level scale, the attacks in Bali ([Terrorist Attack](#)) and against the Marriot hotel in Jakarta ([Terrorist Attack](#)) are perhaps only the opening salvo of a terrorist campaign in the region--these attacks brought to the fore the existence and capability of terrorist networks and organizations in South East Asia, including such as Jemaah Islamiah (JI) ([Group Profile](#)), their relations with organizations such as al-Qaeda ([Group Profile](#)), and Islamic militancy in the region. Ostensibly and to the Indonesian government's credit, they did make arrests in the both major bombing campaigns with trials for the Bali bombers and identification of others wanted in connection with these bombings. Several other plots were reportedly thwarted. Indonesia had also enacted anti-terror legislation and has pledged to cooperate against terrorism. It is only in the aftermath of these bombings that it was really understood how deep these terrorist networks went and that the problem has not gone away. What has been uncovered thus far is only the proverbial tip of the iceberg.

Major events and holidays are coming up--like the Christmas holidays (during Christmas Eve 2000, militants attacked churches – [Terrorist Attack](#)), New Years, and crucial elections in the spring--that provide an attractive backdrop, and publicity, for attacks. However, timing issues do not necessarily connote capability or motivation for attacks. In a omnipresent fear that the other shoe has yet to drop, the Bali police chief claimed two large bombs are still in the possession of terrorists. Further, at least 10 major militants who operate in the region are at large in Indonesia. Two Malaysians wanted in connection with the Jakarta bombing, Azahari Husin and Noordin Mohammed, are at large, and authorities were concerned they had suicide bomb capabilities. Indonesian authorities have had a difficult time prosecuting people suspected of belonging to a terrorist organization unless they could provide a direct link. Some of these people can consequently continue to direct activities. In addition, young Indonesians and others from the region have been found attending "religious" schools in Pakistan. Six Indonesians were recently deported by Pakistani authorities who were found in the company of the younger brother of the alleged Bali bombing mastermind, Hambali. Recruiting videos for fundraising have also been found with Indonesia as a backdrop. Equally disconcerting, a popular Muslim charity in Indonesia, Kompak, is suspected of having ties to al Qaeda, but the government has to tread carefully against them because the group claims to help the poor, and the government is afraid of the political backlash of going after a Muslim group.

Finally, although Indonesia has one of the largest Muslim populations in the world, it is a multi-faceted society that traditionally has not embraced a fundamentalist lifestyle. But, powerful Islamic political parties exist throughout the country. While many Indonesians were appalled by

the events of September 11, domestic opposition to the US war on terrorism, especially relating to Iraq, have fueled resentment and fostered a potential body of recruits. It is possible that the Indonesian authorities may not be as adept or as vigilant at catching terrorists because of political sensibilities. They do not want the war on terrorism to be associated with a war on Islam, and too much investigation of Islamic groups could be political dynamite for political parties in the next election; both sides are playing politics. In addition, Indonesian authorities have been accused of being ruthless against dissenting groups. It is certainly possible that terrorists may hope to drive the government into a crackdown against Muslim groups and drive a further wedge of dissension between political groups and institute a backlash. For all these reasons, it is likely that terrorism will continue in the region.

Israel

(2) Hamas Official Says Suicide Attacks to Resume -- A top official of Islamic group Hamas said Monday the recent lull in Palestinian militant suicide attacks against Israel was just a break between waves. "The martyrdom operations come as waves so there are gaps between the waves," Hamas chief spokesman Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi told Reuters in an interview. "We are just in the period of a gap between waves." A day after the collapse of talks among Palestinian factions on a complete cease-fire with Israel -- which Hamas opposed -- Rantissi said Palestinian militants were emboldened by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's domestic woes and U.S. problems in Iraq and Afghanistan. [Full Story](#)
TRC ANALYSIS: This last week Hamas ([Group Profile](#)) leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi stated in an interview that the recent lull in martyrdom operations was just a break between waves. Armed with confidence after staging a walkout from the Cairo meeting with Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist leaders turned the tables on Qureia, giving him nothing which with to negotiate and signaled the advent of attacks in the coming months ahead.

On December 12, 2003, Rantisi promised thousands of Palestinians in the Jebaliya refugee camp that suicide attacks would resume and that jihad is coming. Rantisi appeared at the 16th anniversary of the establishment of Hamas. The last time he appeared in public Israeli helicopters fired seven missiles at him, killing two and injuring 22. The last suicide attacks launched by Hamas occurred three months ago, on September 9 when Hamas attacked a café in Jerusalem and near a military base.

A local Palestinian leader from the Jebaliya refugee camp on December 14th stated that "Hamas would continue to be a problem and be supported since there are not a whole lot of alternatives. The US has been so busy with Iraq and has conducted this start-stop diplomacy that the leaders of Hamas have taken advantage of the situation. Additional attacks will probably take place and innocent people will get killed."

With new logistical support and improved detonators and timers Hamas is ready to carry out the next wave of suicide attacks.

Bangladesh

(3) Bangladesh May Be Emerging Terrorist Nexus, Canadian Spy Agency Warns -- Bangladesh may be emerging as a haven for Islamic terrorists in South Asia, says an intelligence report by Canada's spy agency. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service expressed concern about serious attacks by radicals on cultural groups in Bangladesh, hints of collusion with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida and the government's alleged unwillingness to crack down on terrorism. The CSIS report also suggests there could be dangers to Canadian aid agencies with a "strong presence" in Bangladesh, the third-largest

Muslim country in the world. The Canadian Press news agency obtained a declassified copy of the secret July report under the Access to Information Act. Considerable portions of the highly sensitive document were withheld from release. A CSIS spokeswoman declined to elaborate on the findings. After reading the report, Bangladesh's high commissioner in Ottawa steadfastly denied his country had become a terrorist sanctuary. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: Bangladesh interestingly appeared in the news on three occasions this week. Most notably the country hit the headlines based on a Canadian intelligence report recently made public that suggests Bangladesh is rife for radical Islamic militancy threatening Canadian and other international aid workers and perhaps even political stability. The Bangladeshi government's reluctance to investigate radical and militant attacks against minority groups suggests a tolerance, if not acceptance, for such undemocratic activities. The original Canadian appraisal was published in July 2003, but it was only made public last week due to the sensitive nature of its conclusions and its somewhat tenuous hypotheses such as formally linking local groups to al Qaeda.

Nevertheless, December 2003 has been a violent month thus far for the small country. Southern vigilante groups are increasingly targeting suspected bandits and pirates to supplement the rather ineffective government security forces resulting this past week in deaths of at least 30 villagers. Additionally, a Sunni Muslim minority sect called the Ahmadiyyas have increasingly been singled-out by radical religious leaders for protest and even violent mob attacks especially in the southwestern district of Kustia and the northern districts of Rangpur and Jamalpur. In sum, although there does appear to be religious overtones to recent local and regional violence, clear links to international terrorist movements have not been clearly identified. As such, threats to foreign interests in the near term are likely more from mob violence, banditry and piracy rather than traditional terrorist attacks.

Philippines

(4) Abu Sayyaf commander held -- A senior member of the Philippines kidnapping group Abu Sayyaf has been captured by the country's armed forces. Galib Andang, popularly known as Commander Robot, was caught after a gun battle between the rebels and the military on Sunday in southern Jolo island following a public tip-off as to his whereabouts. He is suspected of taking part in a series of kidnappings for ransom, including the abduction of 21 tourists from a Malaysian dive resort in April 2000. After Mr Andang was transported to the southern city of Zamboanga, he was reported to have been verbally abused by a crowd of onlookers, and even attacked by one of his former kidnap victims. He was given treatment at Zamboanga airbase for treatment to wounds sustained during the gun fight. He had been shot in both legs. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: A continuing multinational counterterrorist offensive in the Philippines achieved some success this past week. Abu Sayyaf ([Group Profile](#)) operational leader, Gaib Andang (a.k.a. Commander Robot), was captured in a firefight with Philippine armed forces on the southern island of Jolo – a known but isolated rebel stronghold. Commander Robot is believed to have coordinated and led a spectacular series of ransom kidnappings in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines with Mujib Susukan. Both Andang and Susukan have family connections to Islamic militant leaders dating back a generation to 1970s. Although Abu Sayyaf's roots are firmly in the Islamic rebel movements, as the leadership has been picked off by authorities over the past five years, the group has focused activities primarily on kidnappings for ransom despite propaganda efforts painting it as allied with al Qaeda. The belief that Abu Sayyaf is not linked to al Qaeda has been supported by CNN's chief Jakarta desk officer, Maria Ressa. Though Abu Sayyaf has had some contact with al Qaeda membership, recent communication has

been limited probably due to the increased pressure by the local authorities and the international efforts limited al Qaeda efforts.

Subsequent intelligence gathered through interrogations of Commander Robot sheds light on the ransoms paid by foreign governments, corporations, and individuals to secure the freedom of hostages kidnapped by Abu Sayyaf. Press reports this week indicated as much as US\$25 million has been paid to the group over the past few years in the form of ransom. It appears that Libyan officials have, on occasion, served as intermediaries between public and private interests to obtain the release of hostages. Commander Robot has subsequently admitted to receiving as much as US\$181,000 in the most recent ransoms for his participation in the kidnap operations. Such revelations will spark anew the debate surrounding the policy of negotiating and paying ransoms for the release of prisoners.

Russia

(5) Six die in Moscow suicide blast -- A suspected suicide bombing near Red Square in Moscow has left six people dead and wounded several others. The blast happened on a busy street only a few hundred metres from the Kremlin in the heart of the city. In a speech soon afterwards, President Vladimir Putin said "terrorists" threatened the nation's development. The attack may have been aimed at government buildings, two days after Mr Putin's supporters won legislative elections. It follows last week's suicide bombing on a train in southern Russia that killed dozens of people and which officials blamed on Chechen rebels. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: For a complete review of the presumed Chechen attack on December 9, 2003, please review the TRC Terrorist Attack Database ([Entry](#)).

Colombia

(6) Colombia hostage releases on hold -- A Colombian rebel group says it has suspended plans to release a Briton and four Israelis being held hostage. The leftist National Liberation Army, ELN, said army operations in the Sierra Nevada mountains had put the hostages - held since September - in danger. A Spaniard and German were released two weeks ago and observers hoped the rest would be released before Christmas. Colombia has the world's highest kidnap rate, with more than 3,000 people abducted each year. The ELN made its announcement in a communiqué to the Israeli and British governments. "The lives of your citizens have been put at risk in an irresponsible way by the army," they said. The rebels added that they could no longer guarantee the necessary security conditions to release the foreign tourists before Christmas as planned. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: The ELN ([Group Profile](#)) originally seized eight tourists trekking to the ruins of the Lost City on September 12, 2003. Since then one hostage escaped, and two were released in exchange for a UN human rights commissioner's report on conditions of indigenous Indians in the mountains. The region where the kidnapping occurred, the Sierra Nevada mountains, is known to be "crime ridden," according to the AP, and foreigners are typically advised to avoid this area—among many others—of Colombia.

The ELN is the second largest terrorist group in Colombia, behind the FARC ([Group Profile](#)), which currently holds about 800 hostages, including at least three Americans (Terrorist Attack). For their release, the FARC demands the release of its jailed compatriots. On December 12, 2003, a Warden Message was distributed by the US Embassy in Bogota, alerting recipients to the possibility of impending terrorist attacks—presumably by the FARC--in Bogota or Cartagena ([Intel Report](#)).

Colombia also struggles to control its right-wing paramilitary group, called the AUC ([Group Profile](#)), that was borne in the 1980s to fight against the two leftist guerrillas. Of late, groups of the AUC militias have voluntarily disarmed, and, according to the AP, the group has pledged to completely disarm within two years if leaders are not punished with harsh prison terms.

Colombia is not safe for tourism. A Travel Warning dated June 16, 2003 from the US Department of State advises against travel to Colombia. It is simply foolish, and dangerous, to travel to Colombia, especially to the rebel strongholds, if such travel is not absolutely necessary. If it is necessary, the utmost strenuous security measures and training must be taken to prevent a kidnapping.

France, Spain

(7) French Arrest 2 Basque Separatist Chiefs -- French anti-terrorism police delivered a powerful — perhaps decapitating — blow Tuesday to the Basque separatist group ETA, arresting its military and logistics chiefs. Spanish authorities said the arrests marked "one of the most important days" in the decades-long fight against the organization. ETA, which in the Basque language stands for Basque Homeland and Freedom, is blamed for more than 800 killings since the late 1960s in its campaign to carve out a homeland from territory straddling northern Spain and southwest France. The Basque region of France, which is peaceful, has served as a haven for ETA members. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: The four members of ETA ([Group Profile](#)) who were arrested near the southwestern French border on December 9, 2003 were: Gorka Palacios Alday, the group's military boss; Juan Luis Rubenach, the group's logistics boss; Inigo Vallejo, a member who allegedly prepared attacks during the European summit in Seville in 2002 ([Terrorist Attack](#); [Terrorist Attack](#); [Terrorist Attack](#); [Terrorist Attack](#)); and Jose Miguel Almodoz Eruit, a less senior member. Authorities uncovered false identity papers and a weapons cache. Alday, who joined ETA's Madrid commando unit in 1996, was added to the US and EU list of people supporting ETA in 2002. According to Europe Press, "It calms me to know that more absurd deaths have been avoided," said Rosario de La Torre, who's husband, a prosecutor, was killed by Alday in 2000. Spain will issue an extradition request for Alday, who is accused of multiple killings throughout Spain. According to CNN, "He is the number one of the ETA terrorist organization who directs the commandos and, therefore, gives instructions for the attacks and assassinations," making Alday one of the most sought after members of ETA. Rubenach had been a member of the Madrid, the Donosti, and the Nafarroa commando units. Vallejo, a fugitive since 2002 who awaits a 17-year sentence for setting fire to a public bus, was a member of the Basuntza and Kromar commando units and is believed to also be a key element to training ETA's new recruits. The arrests came just one day after an ETA warning of impending attacks, naming, but not specifically threatening, the Ertzaintza (Basque regional police force), according to OSAC; however, authorities believe those arrested issued the communiqué.

The arrests were deemed "magificant news for all democrats" by Spanish Interior Minister Angel Acebes, who continued, "we are witnessing one of the most important days in the fight against the terrorist organization ETA." However, the French Interior Minister warned against overconfidence from these arrests, saying, "so long as ETA exists, so long as it is not completely defeated, nobody is safe from an attack." In an alarming analysis, Madrid La Razon reported that refugee ETA leaders hiding throughout Latin America may be returning to "take control of ETA's 'military apparatus.'" Because a generation of ETA is either in prison or dead, these refugee leaders, who have been essential to logistical and operational planning as well as money laundering of "revolutionary taxes" on businesses from afar, may feel obliged to return to pick up the slack left by this leadership vacuum.

This was the second major blow to ETA in one week. According to the AP, on December 4, authorities arrested Ibon Fernandez de Iradi (aka Susper), after a year's pursuit, from whom Alday had assumed control of armed operations.

Greece

(8) Members of Terror Group In Greece Found Guilty --A special tribunal on Monday convicted the leader, chief gunman and 13 other members of the cell known as November 17 for killings and attacks spanning a generation, capping the prosecution of a terrorist group that for decades taunted authorities. The verdicts, delivered after a nine-month trial in a bunker-like prison courtroom, were cited by the government as evidence of Greece's commitment to fighting terrorism ahead of next year's Olympic Games. The rulings ended one of the last major prosecutions of European militants who were inspired by Marxism and social revolution in the 1970s. "Greek justice spoke today," said Athens Mayor Dora Bakoyianni, whose husband Pavlos, a spokesman for the New Democracy party, was killed by the group in 1989. He was among 23 people killed by November 17, starting with the ambush of CIA station chief Richard Welch as he was returning home from a Christmas party in 1975. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: For details on the conviction of the 15 members of Greece's main terrorist group November 17 ([Group Profile](#)), please review the TRC Intel Report published on December 8, 2003 ([Intel Report](#)).

Israel

(9) Israeli forces 'foil suicide bomb attack on school' -- Israeli security forces said yesterday they had foiled a plan by Palestinian militants to carry out a suicide bombing inside a school, which would have been the first large-scale, deliberate attack on children by the militants. Islamic Jihad, the militant group accused by Israel of being behind the planned attack, denied it and accused Israel of trying to discredit it. News that the Israeli army had captured two alleged militants who were planning the attack came as talks to persuade Palestinian militants to agree to a new ceasefire began in Cairo. The Israeli army said it had arrested a 23-year-old man on his way from the West Bank to Israel with a suicide bomb belt ready for use. The army said he had admitted under interrogation that he was planning a suicide bombing inside a school in the northern Israeli town of Yokne'am. The man planned to cross into Israel from the Jordan Valley, part of the West Bank where Israel's controversial "separation fence" has not yet been completed. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: The alleged suicide bomb attack aimed at a school that was foiled would certainly be a shift in tactics for militant groups. Especially during a time of negotiations to end suicide attacks, militant groups have been wondering whether to downgrade their attack profile to just soldiers and settlers rather than civilians at large. Of course, negotiating to cease suicide attacks does not work well when one group is pondering more attacks. Palestinian Islamic Jihad ([Group Profile](#)) has denied any involvement in such a plot, although they usually admit their role. Questions remain: "was this threat real, was the militant really given tasking by a group, or was this something on his own, and finally why would militants specifically target schools and children?" Any of these groups that sponsor suicide bombers are certainly capable of launching an attack on a school. Children have died as part of collateral damage through the indiscriminateness of suicide bombs in traditionally civilian areas, such as shopping centers, stores, restaurants, buses, bus-stops, etc.

When daily lives are shattered by bombing, the media conveys that grief and outrage to sympathizers, but when children are killed, a more visceral outrage is felt. At the other end of the spectrum, however, most militants and outside supporters who feel that the particular group "deserves the bombing" shrug their shoulders and say that their children are being killed every

day, why should they care, it may be unfortunate but they are at war. Interestingly enough, political rhetoric and the war for hearts and minds uses the children issues as a rallying point. Even the Oklahoma City bomber, Timothy McVeigh in his bid to strike out at the Federal government showed no remorse for the children who died in the day care center as a result of his bombing the Murrah building. It employs the ends justifies the means argument.

However, while it is callous that children are considered part of the collateral damage in a terrorist campaign, does that mean that a militant or terrorist organization would deliberately target them? Could they be only one part of the equation, what would the other be? There have been allegations that the International School in Jakarta was a target, and that Disneyland in Anaheim, CA may also have been a potential target. Other threats against children have also been made. So it is probable that terrorists have been thinking about it operationally. One possible motive for militant groups in the Israeli context is to up the ante of the current situation. The fact is that suicide bombings have also become a professional industry with their increased sophistication and redundancy not to mentioned increased frequency. It is meant to terrify the population as part of an asymmetric strategy. If you cannot fight your enemy head on, hit them in soft spots so they will have to take action and answer for their actions. Either bomb them into submission or get them to crack down so hard that they look like the oppressor and you become the victim to the outside world and gain sympathy. Violence begets more violence. Deliberately targeting children would certainly instigate the authorities to an even greater crack-down. However, to do so would be a very risky strategy, both for internal and external support. Children evoke a protective and nurturing response in most cultures, they tend to be viewed as the last "innocents," so to specifically single them out would probably be viewed as a heinous act that could turn some members and supporters of militant and terrorist groups against each other. For outsiders, it would be very difficult to garner sympathy and support for deliberately killing children.

Italy, Iraq

(10) Italy Was Warned of Iraq Attack -- Reports of Threats to Nasiriyah Base Were Disregarded. More than a month before suicide bombers blew up Italian military headquarters in the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah on Nov. 12, Italian intelligence officers warned three times of an imminent attack on their country's contingent in the city, according to intelligence reports. The warnings were communicated up the Italian chain of command but resulted in no new security precautions at the headquarters, Western sources said. The Italian government has denied receiving specific warnings of an impending attack. Kamikaze drivers were able to navigate a Soviet-built truck bearing more than 800 pounds of explosives into the entrance of the compound, where they detonated a huge explosion that ripped off the façade of the headquarters. The blast killed 13 members of the carabinieri paramilitary police, four Italian soldiers, two Italian civilians and 11 Iraqi bystanders. It was the worst attack in an expanding series of assaults on U.S. allies in Iraq. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: Although the Italian government has been criticized for not heeding at least several intelligence warnings about an attack on their coalition forces, it is still surprising that they did take more precautions to protect their forces even if they only thought these were vague, non-specific threats. What the bombing of the Italian military headquarters in Nasiriyah ([Terrorist Attack](#)) demonstrates is an initial naiveté on behalf of the Italian government and forces and a more coordinated and sophisticated strategy on the part of the forces behind the recent suicide bombings and shootings of coalition forces, diplomatic forces and aid groups.

Italian forces mistakenly thought that they were safe in the southern part of the country like Nasiriyah where Shiites were in the majority and where they thought they would be left alone to

carry out their reconstruction projects. There is no safe area in Iraq, and their presence would have made them a target regardless of where they were located. Whoever these forces are made up of--former Saddam loyalists, the Fedayeen, Ansar-al-Islam ([Group Profile](#)) or foreign fighters--there is a concerted strategy tying these groups together. If the situation becomes so dangerous for military, diplomatic, or aid representatives, then they may withdraw from the country, as well as withdraw their support for the US and leave it to US forces to go it alone. For coalition forces where the war is not popular domestically, body counts would put pressure on the government to withdraw their forces.

Continual bombings have already lessened the commitments of outside organizations to the peace process and reconstruction efforts in Iraq. Immediately after the bombings at the Italian complex, Japan declared that they would delay sending troops to Iraq, and South Korea ordered to suspend operations outside coalition bases. The Italian government, however, pledged to continue their commitment to Iraq. However, the Italian government is wary of their status as a target of terrorism and realize that their political, diplomatic, and military support of the United States can have repercussions for them home and abroad. The Interior Minister recently stated that numerous sites were at risk in Italy as terrorist targets, and authorities have arrested dozens of people under suspicion of terrorist activity, to include a suspect involved in recruiting for suicide attacks in Italy and in Iraq and elsewhere. Staying the course in Iraq will require increased vigilance both home and abroad for Italy.

Lebanon

(11) Lebanon Charges 10 for U.S. Fast-Food Bombings -- Lebanon formally charged 10 people Monday with terror links over a string of bombings against American fast-food outlets, judicial sources said. They said the men, some believed to have links to Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network, would be tried by a military court on charges that include trying to set up a "terrorist group" and membership of a "terrorist group" that planned attacks against the public. Some of those charges could carry life sentences. The defendants include Yemeni national Moammar Awwama, also known as Ibn al-Shahid, who is accused of masterminding the attacks which began last year. Awwama was arrested in October by Palestinian Fatah gunmen in the Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp and handed over to Lebanese authorities. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: An often-neglected Middle East terror campaign gained some notoriety this week when the first 10 individuals were formally charged in supporting and conducting bombings targeting Western fast food chains in Lebanon at least as far back as May 2002. This latest development leads to a variety of interesting observations. First, these 10 suspects were originally detained in October 2003 by Palestinian Fatah security forces, which bolsters the conclusion that the captives were not part of mainstream Palestinian struggle against Israel or the West. Second, the cooperation between Fatah and the Syrian backed Lebanese government simultaneously gives credence to the belief that this terror bombing cell is not a local or regional group nor has it engendered local support for its anti-Western activities. Third, the discovery that cell leadership was headed by a Yemeni among other foreign-born Lebanese residents supports press reports that the group likely has ties to al Qaeda. Fourth, the tactic of targeting soft Western interests reinforces prior analyses suggesting the likely al Qaeda modus operandi into 2004 and beyond. As a corollary, it demonstrates that such small scale attacks are not directly originating from the al Qaeda core leadership, rather is signals a trend toward increasingly isolated factions making the best of the local situation to apply pressure on Western interests.

Pakistan, Afghanistan

(12) AP: Pakistan Leader Works to Stop Taliban -- Pakistan's prime minister said Tuesday that Afghan President Hamid Karzai is wrong to blame his country for failing to stop al-Qaida from launching cross-border attacks. Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali told The Associated Press that Pakistan is doing all it can to curb assaults by Taliban rebels and their al-Qaida allies in neighboring Afghanistan, and that the problem rests with the Afghan government. "If they (Afghanis) can't stand up on their own feet, it's not the fault of Pakistan," Jamali said in an AP interview. "They're shifting the blame to Pakistan. We don't accept it." He said Pakistan "openly supports" Karzai's government and has taken steps to stop assaults. "Pakistan has moved its forces to the tribal areas in the border belt to curb the situation," said Jamali, on a state visit to France. "Afghanistan should come up with more responsible statements." [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: Pakistan's President General Pervez Musharraf has been publicly supportive of the US-led war on terrorism, and on Afghanistan, specifically. On Sunday, he was targeted in an assassination attempt, presumably because of his affiliation with the US and, thus, his rejection of the Taliban's legitimacy. For more details on this attack, please review our Terrorist Attack database ([Terrorist Incident](#)).

Saudi Arabia

(14) Saudis Boost Protection of Western Areas -- Saudi Arabia issued the names and photos of its 26 most wanted terrorist suspects and increased protection around Western housing compounds in the capital Saturday as the United States upgraded its security warning, restricting its diplomats' movements. The new U.S. warning ordered embassy and consulate staff not to leave the heavily guarded diplomatic quarters in Riyadh and other cities, except for essential duties. The steps came days after the United States and Britain warned that militants were scoping out Western residence complexes for a possible new terrorist attack following two suicide bombings on compounds this year that killed a total of 52 people. Separately, an American and a Briton have been detained by Saudi authorities in Jiddah, the U.S. and British embassies said Saturday, but embassy officials said they did not know the reason. A state-controlled newspaper identified the American as the brother of two people who have pleaded guilty in the United States to conspiring to help al-Qaida. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: The published list included one Yemeni, two Moroccans, and 22 Saudis (one Saudi—Ibrahim Mohammed Abdullah al-Rayes--was killed by security forces on December 14), all of whom are accused of complicity in recent terrorist events. A Saudi Press Agency official said that some \$267,000 reward would be paid out for information resulting in the arrest of any one of the 26 on the list; the reward would rise to \$1.3 million for multiple arrests; and, the agency would pay out \$1.9 million to foil a terrorist attack.

Security forces have fortified their security presence in reaction to the possible threats. The Riyadh Diplomatic Quarter is the priority for Saudi security forces to secure. Special Forces troops armed with heavy machine guns and new roadblocks replaced policemen at Seder Village. National Guardsmen in armored personnel carriers could be found at the Arabian Homes compound. These are all compounds where affluent Westerners tend to live.

Saudi Arabia has been victimized by two tragic suicide attacks, blamed on al Qaeda ([Terrorist Attack](#)) ([Terrorist Attack](#)), that have resulted in hundreds of Islamic militants' arrests. A Briton who was arrested has been identified as David Heaton, a Muslim convert. The American is thought to be Abdullatif Ibrahim Bilal, but this has not been confirmed.

Since the sets of terrorist attacks, Britain has issued a warning for travel to Saudi Arabia: its citizens are advised against "all but essential travel...we...believe terrorists are planning further attacks in Saudi Arabia." The US issued a Travel Warning on December 8 advising citizens "to

defer non-essential travel to Saudi Arabia....[and of] further terrorist actions against US citizens abroad.”

Oman

(13) US warns Americans in Oman -- British embassy spokesman says killing of German visitor in Oman, wounding of British resident apparently unrelated. The United States has advised US citizens in Oman to step up their security precautions after a German visitor was shot to death in the capital of Muscat this week, the State Department said Wednesday. The department said details of Monday's murder - as well as an October incident in which a British resident was shot and seriously wounded in the capital - were not entirely clear but that the US embassy in Muscat was seeking specifics from Omani authorities. A British embassy spokesperson said Thursday the two incidents appeared unrelated. "A German national was apparently shot on Monday in the Shati al-Qurum area," the spokesperson said. The victim "appears to have been visiting" Oman, the spokesperson said. Monday's shooting, which took place near the Japanese embassy in Oman, was the second since October, when a "British national was shot while parked in his car," the spokesperson said. [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: Despite the shrill headline, two recent attacks in Oman targeting Europeans have not been identified as terrorist attacks, nor have they prompted U.S. Department of State to issue significant warnings or even advisories about the small country. A German tourist was shot and killed in the capital city, Muscat, in early December, and a British expatriate teacher was wounded by gunfire in October. Oman authorities have not been able to link the attacks, nor do they ascribe a terror motive to the incidents. "It appears that these incidents took place in daylight hours in open, public areas," the US Embassy said in a local announcement. "The victims were alone at the time of the shootings and neither was an obvious target for attack." Nonetheless, the State Department did update their Oman Consular Information Sheet on December 11, 2003 (<http://travel.state.gov/oman.html>).

DOMESTIC ANALYSIS

(1) States Unprepared for Health Emergencies –Report -- California, Florida, Maryland and Tennessee are the states best prepared for a biochemical terrorist attack or other medical emergency and Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Mexico and Wisconsin are the least prepared, a new report found on Thursday. The study conducted by the Trust for America's Health found that only nine of the 50 states met more than half of 10 preparedness targets drawn up by an advisory panel of past and present public health officials. None met more than seven targets and most states met five or fewer. Washington, D.C., believed to be a key target for potential attacks given its concentration of government offices and national monuments, achieved only 3 out of the 10 targets. "Are we ready or not? The answer is not," Shelley Hearne, executive director of Trust for America's Health, said in a statement. "Now is the time to get serious about developing an all-hazards approach to public health to ensure we are ready for the range of possible threats we face." [Full Story](#)

TRC ANALYSIS: Raising the readiness of the public health sector for response to terrorism presents a formidable challenge, and it is critical that government officials at the federal, state, and local levels understand how best to invest money in improving public health capabilities for terrorism response. Unfortunately, a mechanism does not exist to help government planners target their investments in public health capabilities most efficiently.

Preparedness in the public health sector presents issues not necessarily present in increasing the capabilities of other emergency response sectors, such as law enforcement, fire prevention, or emergency management. One important issue is that many public health providers – hospitals,

clinics, doctors, etc. – are for-profit entities, as opposed to the public service entities that comprise the fire services, law enforcement, etc. Thus, in addition to the issues of funding, readiness, capabilities, training, and others that face all emergency response organizations, many public health entities also must answer to shareholders. Shareholders' expectations of business efficiencies and investment return can run counter to the needs of public health and emergency response. For example, business imperatives usually dictate that a hospital achieve maximum efficiency in bed occupancy by not having too many beds unoccupied at any given time. However, the needs of public health might require a certain percentage of beds remain empty and available as emergency capacity, for example, in a terrorist attack of smallpox. Preparedness might run counter to business efficiency, and public health planning for terrorism must balance such mutually exclusive interests.

The Trust for America's Health report issued on December 11th describes how the benefits of federal funding to the public health sector are being undercut by state budget emergencies. On top of this, federal providers of funds to states – especially the Department of Health and Human Services – are unable to track precisely how federal investments are increasing the public health readiness for terrorism response.

Without metrics and a system for measuring those metrics, federal planners have few ways to target their financial investments in state and local public health, to make sure those investments make the highest payoff. In addition, state and local planners may not know where to invest their own or federally provided money toward increasing their own public health capabilities, especially if they do not understand how their local public health services fit within the overall national homeland security strategy.

Next year, the CDC is slated to begin the first-ever comprehensive assessment of how well every state is prepared for bioterrorism and other health emergencies. This is the correct focus – federal investments should go toward increasing the public health capacity to respond to all hazards, not only terrorism. However, a critical first step in producing a useful assessment is to establish a process and meaningful metrics, for assessing, reporting, and monitoring states' public health readiness and the increase on that readiness resulting from investment dollars at any level. This readiness certainly must include the public health capability to respond to bioterrorism or natural disease. However, this also must include public health readiness to respond to mass casualties resulting from any catastrophe – natural, accidental, or terrorist attack – that might not include biological agents, but rather chemical, radiological, high-explosive/incendiary, or even nuclear catastrophes. Finally, a readiness measuring system and its associated metrics must be able to balance adequately the preparedness imperatives for public health against the efficiency imperatives of corporate public health providers.

Once one has defined metrics and a process for assessing, reporting, and monitoring readiness based on these capabilities, one must decide what level of readiness the public health sector requires, and target investments toward increasing readiness to that level. This level will be defined by taking into account the highly localized vulnerabilities and natural hazards of specific jurisdictions, the strategic objectives of the national strategy for homeland security, and many variables in between those two levels. But once that level is set, and supported by a national system for measuring and increasing readiness, the nation can have confidence that federal investments are being targeted appropriately, and that the public health sector is capable of responding to whatever Mother Nature or evil terrorists perpetrate.

RELEVANT NEWS ITEMS

(1) EU to Embrace Libya if Gaddafi Shows Goodwill –Prodi -- The European Union is ready to work with Libya as long as its leader Muammar Gaddafi resolves international disputes in a "thorough and fair manner," Commission President Romano Prodi said Friday. Tripoli's return to the international stage hit a snag earlier this week when Libyan officials walked out of talks in Paris to compensate families of the victims of the bombing of a French UTA plane in 1989, according to the families' representatives.

[Full Story](#)

(2) UK Man Linked to 'Shoebomber' Remanded in Custody -- A British Muslim was remanded in custody Thursday after appearing in court on charges of having explosives and conspiring with convicted "shoebomber" Richard Reid to carry out terror attacks. Sajid Badat, 24, who was arrested in the southwestern town of Gloucester last month, was ordered to return to the Old Bailey for another court hearing on April 12. Badat faces a charge that he "unlawfully and maliciously conspired with Richard Reid and others unknown to cause ... an explosion likely to endanger life or cause serious injury to property in the United Kingdom or elsewhere." Reid, a follower of Osama bin Laden whose al Qaeda group is blamed for the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington, was jailed for life in January in the United States after admitting to trying to blow up a transatlantic airliner using explosives hidden in his shoe. [Full Story](#)

(3) Ivory Coast Rebels Abandon Disarming Plan -- A drive to disarm fighters in Ivory Coast was in jeopardy Friday, with rebels backing away from the plan just hours after President Laurent Gbagbo announced it was imminent. Gbagbo had declared a Dec. 15 start date for nationwide disarmament, meant to secure peace after a nine-month civil war. The announcement Thursday night was enough to disperse mobs of angry pro-government activists who had maintained a four-day siege of the main French army base in Abidjan, the commercial capital of the West African nation. The loyalist protests, at times violent, demanded French and West African peacekeepers pull away from cease-fire lines, allowing the government to reopen attacks on rebels. [Full Story](#)

(4) Western tourists abducted in Iran -- A group of Western tourists has been kidnapped in south-eastern Iran. Iranian Government sources have said there are three missing people, two German and one Irish. They say the tourists were abducted as they cycled between the city of Bam and Zahedan near the Pakistani border - a notorious drug-smuggling area. German Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Antje Leendertse said a crisis team had been set up amid indications that Germans may be involved. It is thought that a ransom has been demanded. The kidnapping reportedly took place in the Sistan-Baluchistan province several days ago. The area is on a route used to smuggle opium from Afghanistan to Western Europe. But kidnappings there, as in the rest of the country, have been rare in recent years. A number of European tourists were abducted in southern Iran in 1999. All hostages were eventually freed unharmed, and the convicted kidnappers publicly executed. [Full Story](#)

(5) Zimbabweans fear more repression after Abuja summit -- Zimbabweans are predicting a new round of repression after President Robert Mugabe's decision late on Sunday night to pull his country out of the Commonwealth. "There is no end in sight. It means more sanctions and more suffering," said Charity Charidza, recently laid off from her clerical job at a bank. "I think Zimbabwe has everything to lose from getting out of the Commonwealth while the Commonwealth itself has nothing to lose." Mr Mugabe announced his decision after the organisation extend his country's suspension over electoral irregularities, despite opposition from some African leaders, including President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. The South African government is now muttering darkly about quitting the Commonwealth

unless Zimbabwe is re-admitted, after a "robust" exchange that lasted at least four hours at the Commonwealth summit in the Nigerian capital, Abuja. [Full Story](#)

(6) Italian alert over water saboteur -- Thousands of bottles of water have been withdrawn from Italian supermarkets after traces of bleach were found in at last 10 bottles in different parts of the country. In each case, a syringe appears to have been used to inject a mild dose of household bleach, leaving a pin-prick hole in the bottle neck. In most cases, people noticed the smell before drinking. No one has claimed responsibility. A carabinieri team has been assigned to hunt for the so-called "Aquabomber". As yet, there have been no serious injuries, but several children and babies have been hospitalised with stomach irritation. Fresh cases emerged yesterday in the mountain region of Trentino and near the cities of Turin and Genoa. [Full Story](#)

(7) Six Cuban men found guilty of hijacking -- A jury convicted six Cuban men this afternoon of hijacking a passenger plane from Havana and commandeering it to Key West. After deliberating for six hours over two days, the 12-member jury found all six men guilty of air piracy. The convicted hijackers -- Alexis Norniella Morales, Eduardo Mejia Morales, Yainer Olivares Samon, Neudis Infantes Hernandez, Alvenis Arias Izquierdo and Miakel Guerra Morales -- face a minimum of 20 years in prison on the air piracy charge and a maximum of life in prison. In a rare show of cooperation with U.S. prosecutors, Cuban authorities allowed some of the crewmembers aboard the plane to return to South Florida to testify against the six defendants. Pilot Daniel Blas Corria Sánchez told the jury that Norniella, the accused ringleader, burst into the cockpit minutes before the DC-3 was to land in Havana from Nueva Gerona on Cuba's Isle of Youth. Corria said Norniella held a knife to his throat and ordered him to divert the plane to Florida. Another crewmember testified that some of the hijackers said they were holding women and children against their will in the passenger cabin. [Full Story](#)

(8) Bush's Iraq a Magnet for Terrorists - Saudi Envoy -- Far from quelling a terrorist threat, President Bush's war on Iraq created a new one, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Britain said on Thursday. "When the United States and Britain invaded Iraq, the promise of bringing peace and security was important in the expositions of both the American and British leaderships," Prince Turki al-Faisal said. "Unfortunately, that promise still has to be realized. The daily firefights, explosions and violence are making even those who believed the initial promise skeptical," he told a conference at London's Royal United Services Institute. "Instead of removing the terrorist threat which President Bush saw in Saddam's Iraq, we find today that Mr Bush's Iraq has become a magnet for terrorists," Prince Turki said. The United States has blamed foreign Islamic militants, as well as loyalists of ousted dictator Saddam Hussein, for guerrilla attacks that have killed 195 American soldiers since Bush declared major combat in Iraq over on May 1. Saudi Arabia, a key U.S. regional ally, opposed the war despite tensions with Iraq since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. [Full Story](#)

OVERHEARD

“The capture of Saddam Hussein does not mean the end of violence in Iraq” – George Bush

COLOR GUIDE/DISCLAIMER

The Color Guide, based on the US Department of Homeland Security color alert system, is an illustration of the level of severity of each article analyzed in the WAR Report by TRC staff. Below is a brief explanation of what each alert level signifies.

Severe Alert	High Alert	Elevated Alert	Guarded Alert	Low Alert
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Severe Alert: a serious threat, risk, or development is anticipated or expected. This category is used to announce major, concerning developments that may require immediate action.

High Alert: a higher level of threat or risk is likely. This category is used to warn clients of likely dangerous and significant developments that may require attention.

Elevated Alert: a level of threat or risk is evident. This category is used to alert clients to the potential for security-related developments.

Guarded Alert: a general level of threat or risk. This category is used to bring developments to the attention of clients, but these developments require only monitoring; action is not necessarily required.

Low Alert: a low level of threat or risk. This category is used to make clients aware of developments that are security-related but are not an imminent threat.

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