



INTEGRATED THREAT ASSESSMENT CENTRE

CENTRE INTÉGRÉ D'ÉVALUATION DES MENACES

INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT



ÉVALUATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS

08 /108

2008 07 23

This document is UNCLASSIFIED - FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY and is the property of the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre (ITAC). Prepared by ITAC, it is derived from various sources with information effective as of the date of publication. It is provided to your agency/department in confidence and is for official purposes only. It must not be reclassified or disseminated, in any way, in whole or in part, without the consent of the originator. Contact: ITAC through Threat Management Centre at

Le présent document est coté NON-CLASSIFIÉ - Réserve à des fins officielles seulement et est la propriété du Centre intégré d'évaluation des menaces (CIEM). Il a été préparé par le CIEM. Il provient de différentes sources et est basé sur l'information en vigueur à la date de publication. Il est envoyé à votre organisme ou ministère à titre confidentiel et réservé à des fins officielles. Il ne doit être ni reclassifié, ni communiqué, en tout ou en partie, par quelque moyen que ce soit, sans le consentement de l'expéditeur. Pour rejoindre le CIEM veuillez contacter le Centre de gestion des menaces au

ACQUISITION OF PARAMILITARY SKILLS BY AL QAEDA-INSPIRED EXTREMISTS IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

Key Points

- Al Qaeda (AQ)-inspired extremists in Western countries use online training, teambuilding activities, training at ad hoc domestic camps, international camps, and fighting in foreign conflicts to acquire paramilitary skills.
- The broad disparity in the capabilities of homegrown groups depends upon the quality of training acquired and the level of experience of the membership.

Background

1. The “AQ-inspired” threat referred to in this assessment refers to individuals and groups that have adopted the AQ ideology. While individuals within an AQ-inspired group may have individual links to AQ-Core, the group is neither led by nor affiliated with AQ. AQ-inspired groups may consist of “homegrown” individuals, (i.e., individuals who have become radicalized while residing in a western country) as well as individuals who were radicalized outside of their resident Western country.
2. There are several methods by which AQ-inspired terrorists acquire operationally relevant knowledge and skills, including online instruction, formal military training, combat experience in foreign conflicts, ‘team building’ activities, and paramilitary training at foreign and *ad hoc* domestic camps. Incidents involving these methods include cases of AQ-inspired homegrown groups in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Australia.

Online Training

3. The Internet contains a vast storehouse of Islamist extremist ideological information, doctrinal information, training manuals and propaganda as well as information from other militant extremists and general guides on violent tactics. Images, audio, and text on events that have just occurred or are occurring in real time can be communicated to Islamist extremists worldwide. This information facilitates the recruitment, radicalization, training, and participation in Islamist activities by willing candidates through the following:
 - Propaganda: Islamists can access multi-media propaganda for inspiration, in multiple languages through AQ-affiliated sites such as the Global Islamic Media Front;
 - Forums, and chat rooms: These allow Islamist extremists to discuss their beliefs, encourage one another in their pursuits, and exhort participants on how to behave and succeed as a terrorist;
 - Insurgent web sites: By broadcasting their actions online, Islamist extremists can benefit from almost instantaneous increase of information on tactics, techniques, and procedures. For example, beheading, a particularly brutal tactic contrived to have a severe psychological impact, was first employed by AQ in February 2002 with the kidnapping and beheading of American journalist

may have

spread to AQ-inspired groups elsewhere. For example, media reporting indicates that the "Toronto 18", had identified the kidnapping and beheading the Prime Minister of Canada as a possible attack option. Later, in January 2007, another AQ-inspired group in Birmingham, United Kingdom, was disrupted while planning to kidnap and behead a British Muslim soldier;

- Weapons manuals: AQ's online magazine, *Al-Battar*, written in Arabic with pictures and illustrations provides details on assembling, cleaning, and properly using a variety of common insurgent and terrorist weapons. Similar guides posted on AQ and other extremist forums explain how to manufacture and conceal Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and carry out assassinations;
- General guides on criminal and violent tactics: AQ-inspired individuals can also make use of online resources (of varying quality and veracity) created by other extremists (e.g., anarchists, multi and single issue extremists, right-wing militants), criminals and individuals interested in disseminating paramilitary information. Web publications such as *The Anarchist Cookbook* and *The Poor Man's James Bond*, describe how to modify weapons (usually for higher rates of fire), mix poisons, carry out assassinations, set booby traps, carry out surveillance and counter surveillance and make explosives using common household materials. Extremist training content can even be found on mainstream web sites such as YouTube. For example, the site has videos depicting the construction and use of such home-made explosive devices, such as the Drano bomb (a bottle filled with chemical drain cleaner and aluminum foil to produce a hydrogen-based explosion); and

Formal Military Training

4. A member of an AQ-inspired cell with formal military training from a Western military is extremely valuable to a terrorist cell. Such an individual can provide knowledge of tactics, weapons systems, and explosives useful in terrorist attacks as well as an inside knowledge of the methods that are used by a Western military adversary.

5. However, joining a Western military is a relatively difficult means for an AQ-inspired individual to acquire skills relevant to execute an attack. To acquire anything more than a basic familiarization with military life and small arms takes individuals years of training that progresses from basic military pre-requisites to advanced training and specialization in weapons and tactics. Furthermore, over the course of the individual's time in the military, he/she is exposed to increasing scrutiny and security interest thereby increasing the possibility of compromise of the individual's motivations and connections to a terrorist cell.

Paramilitary Training at Overseas Camps in Foreign Conflicts

7. Foreign training camps have served as one of the most important intersects for ideological and physical training. With instructors available from various international insurgencies, training covers techniques that are useful to both insurgents and urban terrorists. Graduates of training camps commonly learn to use small arms such as assault rifles, heavier weapons such as rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launchers, and instructions on building Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Typically, at least one member of an AQ-inspired group has been trained at a foreign camp. Training camps provide practical knowledge that cannot be gained from reading about small arms and explosives online. Overseas camps also provide candidates with the opportunity to network with like-minded Islamists and strengthen their ideological beliefs.
8. Analogous to military training, AQ training is a graduated process, involving a build up of training from basic to specialized skills. Occasionally, promising training camp graduates are offered more advanced training, such as mountain or urban warfare courses and they are selected to fight in foreign conflicts. Extra training combined with combat experience give an individual credentials with his colleagues as a true, committed believer. Participation in a foreign conflict is desirable for AQ-inspired individuals, who can gain skills and knowledge while simultaneously contributing to the Islamist cause. Members with advanced training or combat experience typically lead AQ-inspired cells, and train their colleagues in paramilitary skills.

Team Building and Training at Ad Hoc Domestic Camps

10. In order to increase familiarity with specific weapons the group plans to use in its attack, target practice at makeshift ranges commonly occurs.

In Canada, the "Toronto 18", had acquired a handgun, and become proficient in its use, and had attempted to smuggle other firearms into the country in the summer of 2005.

11. Commercially available substances such as ammonium nitrate are often ingredients used in IEDs constructed by AQ-inspired groups.