

**CONFRONTING AL-QAEDA: UNDERSTANDING THE
THREAT IN AFGHANISTAN AND BEYOND**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2009

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:40 p.m. in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John F. Kerry, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Kerry, [presiding], Feingold, Menendez, Casey, Shaheen, Lugar, and Risch.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN F. KERRY, U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

My apologies to all for being a little late. I had a couple thousand veterans, actually, on the phone simultaneously, all of whom have an interest in this and a couple of other issues.

We come together today by happenstance on the eighth anniversary of our entry into Afghanistan. Today we begin the ninth year of the war in Afghanistan. If my memory serves me right, I think the war in Vietnam was 10 years, and it was the longest war in American history.

So we are obviously in a very different kind of war from that. 869 Americans have died in Operation Enduring Freedom, 220 of our British allies, and 357 from other allied nations, and unknown numbers of civilian casualties and of collateral damage.

This is an important time for us to be reevaluating our strategy as we go forward. Senator Lugar and I yesterday came out of the White House meeting and made very clear our sense that it is appropriate to determine the best strategy, the best way forward. Before you start committing X amount of dollars, X number of troops, you have to know exactly what you are trying to achieve and what is achievable.

This is also part of a larger challenge to all of us, which is the nature of this ongoing struggle against violent religious extremism, violent radicalized ideology, people who don't hesitate to take civilian lives, sometimes for the most nihilistic of rationales. In fact, sometimes it is very difficult to even wrap some kind of a legitimate description of the rationale around some of these acts. But this is the world we live in today.

What we are going to do today is to consider the threat posed by al-Qaeda, specifically, in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and beyond, and to

understand the progress that has been made toward our goal of disrupting, dismantling, and defeating the terrorist organization that attacked us on September 11th.

This was, as everybody knows, at the center of President Bush's strategy in taking us into Afghanistan originally, together with the near unanimous consent of the United States Congress. and it is critical to understanding what our mission should be as we go forward.

This hearing takes place at the center of this backdrop of a significant national debate over the future of American policy toward Afghanistan. And I say significant because what the President decides to do, and what we decide to do, either in consent or dissent, will be critical to the amounts of money that we ask Americans to pay over a long period of time. Much more significantly, in the light of what I said about those lives lost, is number of Americans who will be called on to go abroad and into harm's way and potentially give their lives in furtherance of that policy.

So it is important for us to get this right because I dare say we have been down the road before where a year and a half, 2 years, 5 years later, we wind up a Nation deeply divided and debating after the fact why we don't like being where we are or how we got there. So this is the time, and the stakes are high.

The specter of a reenergized al-Qaeda safe haven in Afghanistan, I believe, is real. You have to have several scenarios to make that happen, and we are duty bound to examine those scenarios. And the reality of a worrisome al-Qaeda presence in Pakistan is existent and significant in that discussion.

As I have said before, the history of past wars has taught us to question our assumptions at every turn in order to ensure that conventional wisdom doesn't harden into dogma. I have also said repeatedly that wars and history don't repeat themselves exactly. There are lessons that you can draw from them and that we should draw from them.

But just because something happened a certain way 35 or 40 years ago doesn't mean it is going to happen the same way or that the circumstances are the same today. So we have to be discerning in drawing the similarities, in drawing the distinctions, and of appropriately drawing the right lessons from all of that.

In a series of recent hearings before this committee, we have tried to balance some of these questions. We are not finished. But today, we are going to hear about al-Qaeda specifically, about our ongoing efforts against al-Qaeda. Also, we are going to hear about our efforts to counter terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan and how those efforts fit into the larger fight against a global network.

Remember, the al-Qaeda that was in a very few countries—and most specifically in Afghanistan in September of 2001—is now an al-Qaeda that is in about 58, 59—who knows precisely, but we put it at around 60 countries. It is a global network, which it wasn't in 2001. We need to examinewhat our offshore counterterrorism efforts in places like Somalia and Yemen may tell us with respect to what is possible and not possible in Afghanistan or Pakistan, whether there is, in fact, legitimacy to thinking about some kind of a narrower focus like the one that al-Qaeda enjoyed in Afghanistan before 9/11.

When al-Qaeda terrorists bombed American embassies in Africa and then attacked us on our own soil, their declaration of war against us was clear. Our response in the years since, while far from perfect, has been forceful and it has been tireless. And it is true that we have severely damaged al-Qaeda.

We should acknowledge the enormous debt that we owe to the courageous men and women of our intelligence community who have worked night and day, often without recognition, without adequate thanks, in many cases without anybody knowing who they are in order to ensure that the unthinkable doesn't happen again.

And I want to say a word about those real successes that we have had. We have hunted down much of al-Qaeda's leadership. We have disrupted terrorist networks in South and East Asia, Europe, and right here in the United States. And while many Americans have been killed fighting terrorists overseas, we are blessed to note that there has not been an attack on the soil of the United States in 8 years.

But let me say a word about that. I remember, and I think many of you do, how the last administration—particularly the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State—reminded us frequently that it was not a question of if, it is a question of when. And all of us need to be sober-minded about that reality, notwithstanding the last 8 years.

U.S. and international intelligence officials tell us they have succeeded in recruiting spies inside al-Qaeda and around it who have helped us disrupt future attacks. Targeted air strikes and enhanced assistance from allied governments have broadened our reach and diminished the effectiveness of the al-Qaeda network.

Just last week, The Washington Post reported that these tactical advances have led to the deaths of more than a dozen senior figures in al-Qaeda and allied groups in the past year alone. A U.S. counterterrorism official said that Osama bin Laden and his main lieutenants are isolated and unable to coordinate high-profile attacks.

Now, of course, defeating terrorist networks is more than just killing terrorists and disrupting their operations. In many ways, our efforts to combat terrorism can best be thought of as a global counterinsurgency campaign, where deterring tomorrow's terrorists is every bit as important as killing or disrupting today's.

At its core, this is a battle against the extremists for the future of people's minds in many different parts of the world, and success will require a comprehensive strategy to address the root causes of terrorism. We must delegitimize terrorists and win over the hearts and the minds of those in the Muslim world.

Even as we mark our progress in this endeavor, we are going to have to remain vigilant. We cannot confuse the absence of an attack on our soil for the absence of a threat. The Director of National Intelligence told Congress that, for all of our programs, al-Qaeda and its affiliates continue to pose a significant threat to America and that the group's central leadership has been able to regenerate the core operational capabilities needed to conduct at least small-scale attacks inside the United States.

As our tactics have evolved, so have the terrorists'. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have begun hitting softer Western targets—a subway

train in Madrid, buses in London, and the business district in Istanbul. U.S. law enforcement officials remain vigilant against the possibility of attacks against U.S. transportation hubs, tourist attractions, and anywhere that people gather.

Some places, however, are more dangerous today than they have ever been. Yemen and Somalia present two very serious challenges—fragile societies made even more lawless by the presence of terrorists trained in camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is something we have to consider as we think about our policies toward both of those countries.

Morocco and Algeria have suffered attacks by al-Qaeda, with dozens of civilians losing their lives. The Philippines faces a daunting challenge from groups allied with al-Qaeda seeking to forge an Islamist state in the country's south.

We are succeeding in our efforts to disrupt al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, but there remains an enormous amount of work to do in places like Pakistan and Somalia and many other parts of the world. The issue is going to be with us, I fear to say, for years to come, and our thinking needs to evolve along with the threat.

We are fortunate to have with us today three highly regarded experts on al-Qaeda and its tactics, each of whom has already made real contributions to our understanding of terrorism and how to prevent it.

Robert Grenier is the former director of the DCI Counterterrorist Center and former CIA station chief in Pakistan.

Peter Bergen is the Schwartz senior fellow at the New America Foundation, where he co-directs the Terrorism Strategy Initiative. And Mr. Bergen produced Osama bin Laden's first television interview in 1997 in which he declared war on the United States.

Dr. Marc Sageman is the senior fellow in the Foreign Policy Research Institute Center on Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and Homeland Security.

So we thank you, all three. Did I pronounce that correctly—Sageman?

Dr. SAGEMAN. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. It is not Seg-man? I apologize. And we are very, very grateful to each of you being here to help us think through this very important topic. Thank you.

Senator Lugar?

**STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD G. LUGAR,
U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA**

Senator LUGAR. Well, I thank the chairman for holding this important hearing.

As we debate policy in Afghanistan and the merits of our approach to stability in the region, we take this opportunity to explore the broader issues presented by the continuing terrorist threat emanating from al-Qaeda. The Director of National Intelligence, Admiral Dennis Blair, released the National Intelligence Strategy in August. It identified key countries and issues of concern to our national security for the next 4 years.

The report explains that violent extremists "are planning to use terrorism—including the possible use of nuclear weapons or devices if they can acquire them—to attack the United States. Working in

a number of regions, these groups aim to derail the rule of law, erode societal order, attack U.S. strategic partners, and otherwise challenge U.S. interests worldwide.”

A loose network of extremist al-Qaeda cohorts has sprung up across the globe. Its affiliates have aligned their actions and rhetoric with the core al-Qaeda leadership in Pakistan to gain notoriety and financing.

The largest al-Qaeda affiliate, although greatly diminished, remains al-Qaeda in Iraq. Some of its foreign fighters are returning home to local terrorist branches. For example, a fading domestic Algerian rebel group absorbed fighters from Iraq, expanded its aspirations, and transformed itself into “al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb.”

Affiliates of al-Qaeda also emerged in Somalia, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. The Saudi and Yemeni groups recently merged into “al-Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula,” as both accepted fighters returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. These and other extremists well beyond the region are connected to the Pakistan core and its nexus of training, planning, and operations.

Reportedly, al-Qaeda no longer has a major presence in Afghanistan, although witnesses in our previous hearings have indicated that its reestablishment would be nearly inevitable if a Taliban government returned to Kabul. Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, Michael Leiter, testified in the Senate last week that al-Qaeda’s core in Pakistan still represents the most dangerous component of the wider network.

He stated that our intelligence community assessed that “this core is actively engaged in operational plotting and continues recruiting, training, and transporting operatives, to include individuals from Western Europe and North America.”

In addition, thousands of virtual adherents are connected to al-Qaeda through the Internet. These autonomous affiliates exist across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Because of this diversification, eliminating al-Qaeda leadership in Pakistan would not solve the global terrorism problem. But al-Qaeda’s leadership continues to be an operational and ideological threat that requires our strongest efforts.

Successes in arresting or killing terrorists and disrupting terrorist plots are essential in keeping the threat at bay, but insufficient for solving the problem. There is a far more enduring undercurrent of finance and ideology fueling terror.

Consequently, one of the most important aspects of combating al-Qaeda is the international effort to identify and to eliminate its sources of finance. Money is a key ingredient for recruitment of new terrorists and the staging of any large operation. Despite some success in narrowing al-Qaeda’s funding options, its financing system has adapted over time.

The United States and its allies should be more forceful and vocal about sources of finance for extremist groups. The information might prove disquieting to some friends, but governments must be held accountable for tacitly enabling those who fuel violent extremism.

We also must ask if our current strategy sufficiently accounts for the roles of diplomacy, international exchange, and foreign assist-

ance, so that we can reach Muslims who currently hear a message of hate from their most radical ranks. How do we counter not just al-Qaeda's tactics, but enlist support to discredit this strategic plan and vision within the worldwide Muslim community?

I welcome our witnesses and look forward to their assessments of the current state of the terrorist threat and the effectiveness of U.S. policies to combat it.

And I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Lugar. Thanks for helping to take part in this and lead it. I appreciate it.

Gentlemen, if you would begin? We look forward to your testimony very much and to a good dialogue with the members of the committee.

Mr. Grenier, if you would begin, and we will just run right down the line. Thanks.

Mr. GRENIER. Very good.

The CHAIRMAN. Your full statements will be placed in the record as if read in full and welcome any summary comments. Thanks.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT GRENIER, FORMER DIRECTOR, DCI COUNTERTERRORIST CENTER AND FORMER CIA STATION CHIEF IN PAKISTAN

Mr. GRENIER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank you and the other members of the committee for the opportunity to come and testify before you today. It is a great honor and a privilege.

I take very seriously the admonition that we have been given to keep our opening remarks brief. I will attempt to do that. And so, rather than trying to answer all conceivable questions at the outset, instead I will try to take a couple of minutes just to frame some of the issues in ways that I hope will be useful to our subsequent discussion.

I should also say at the outset that I confront the questions that we will be discussing today not as a scholar—God knows that the scholars are off to my left here—but rather, as a former operator, albeit a former operator who is now 3 years out of Government and whose sources of information, therefore, are largely confined to what he reads in the newspaper.

But as I read the newspaper and I attempt to read between the lines, it seems to me that there are aspects of our overall confrontation with al-Qaeda that are going quite well and others substantially less so.

As we look at the confrontation with al-Qaeda, it seems to me that it consists of three distinct, discrete aspects. One is what we might call the tactical fight, the international cooperative effort to track down, to capture, and to kill terrorists. Secondly, it is the effort to deny al-Qaeda safe haven. And the third is what the chairman just referred to as a global counterinsurgency, what is often referred to as the war of ideas, the effort to confront al-Qaeda as an ideological movement as opposed to a terrorist organization.

Well, without belaboring the point, it seems to me that the tactical fight is going quite well. Whether we look at North America or Europe or much of North Africa, much of the Arabian Peninsula, Southeast Asia, we can see that al-Qaeda is fundamentally on the

back foot. They have suffered significant losses, and those losses extend, importantly, to the relative safe haven that they now enjoy along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

And it seems to me that at the end of the day, one of the more prominent—in fact, from our perspective, the most prominent indication of that success in that global cooperative effort will prove to be the recent arrest of Najibullah Zazi. Again, I am reading between the lines. I am speculating here. But I suspect that the end of the day, as more of the onions are peeled back, we will discover that our ability to thwart the threat that he poses, such as it may prove in the end to be, will have come as a result of effective cooperation among a number of countries extending back over a significant period of time.

But as we look at the parts of the struggle that aren't going as well, as we look at the areas that cause the experts and the security officials concern, almost without exception, those involve ungoverned space. Whether we are talking about desert areas in Mauritania and Southern Algeria, where there is a relative resurgence of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, whether we are talking about Somalia and the growing strength of al-Shabaab and its AQ adherents, whether we are looking at Yemen, whether we are looking, yes, at Afghanistan and Pakistan, the areas that are highly problematic for us now involve ungoverned space and, therefore, the real or the potential for terrorist safe haven.

Now there are those who raise a fundamental question. There are those who ask whether safe haven is actually important to al-Qaeda or, otherwise put, is safe haven of sufficient importance to al-Qaeda as to justify the effort and the losses that we must incur if we are to counter those safe havens?

Well it seems to me that the answer to that question, without necessarily knowing what the costs will be, is yes.

And I come at that as a former operator. I spent much of my career engaged in clandestine operations, working against hostile governments, trying to hide my activities from those who were charged with discovering those activities, operating on turf that was controlled by them and not me. It is not a place that you want to be if you can help it.

If you don't have safe haven, you are very limited in terms of what you can achieve, sustainably, over time. And as an operator, as a clandestine operator in the past, we had safe haven. We would not have been as successful as we were without it. And the same, I believe, is true of al-Qaeda.

And you can say that in this day and time, yes, there is safe haven that you can find on the Internet. There is safe haven in apartments in Hamburg. But unless you have a real safe haven, there are certain aspects of your mission that you simply are not going to be able to do effectively, particularly involving recruitment and training. We can drill into that further.

So as we take a look at those issues in the context of Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the two key aspects that we are discussing today of the confrontation with al-Qaeda come together, the tactical fight and the fight to deny safe haven, there are those who raise a number of significant questions. There are those who say, well, look, our objective at the end of the day is to counter al-Qaeda and

affiliated groups. Well, everyone concedes that al-Qaeda does not have a substantial presence currently in Afghanistan. So why are we there?

Well, we know that al-Qaeda has a substantial presence across the border in Pakistan. And the fact that they are on the Pakistani side of the border right now is a matter of tactical convenience to them. If the pressure were reduced on the Afghan side and it were increased on the Pakistani side, it would be very easy for them to cross the border.

More fundamentally, though, there are those who say, well, look, even if the Taliban were to gain control of substantial portions of Afghanistan, as it has in the past, we don't know that they would provide a safe haven to al-Qaeda. Haven't they learned the lesson of 9/11?

Well, I think they have learned a lot of lessons since 9/11, but they are not the ones that we would have them learn. There are at least two factors that I would point to. One is that as you look at the number of disparate groups that are active in Afghanistan, Pakistan, elsewhere, in South Asia—whether it is the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, the Kashmiri groups, sectarian groups—they all cooperate far more closely now than they did at the time of 9/11. Pressure on all has forced them to cooperate in ways that would have been unthinkable before 9/11.

Secondly, there has been an evolution in their thinking. They think of themselves differently now than they did 8 years ago. Yes, they are seized with their own parochial interests, but they see the pursuit of those parochial interests as being part of a global effort. They see themselves as part of a global jihad that most of them simply did not, apart from a handful of leaders, back before 9/11.

For the Taliban, the question as to whether they should provide safe haven for al-Qaeda is not an open-ended strategic discussion. For them, it is a very simple religious question. The question for them is, are we enjoined to support co-religionists who are engaged in a legitimate struggle against infidel oppressors, or can we simply pursue our own ends and ignore them?

And if you ask the question, the answer for them is very, very clear. There is only one answer that they can reach. If they are asked for support by al-Qaeda, they cannot and they will not say no.

Leaving aside this whole question of the importance of safe haven, even if we don't accept that, there are those who say, well, couldn't we limit ourselves to a counterterrorism effort in Afghanistan much more narrowly defined? Well, that is a long discussion, which I hope that we will get into, but I would raise two points.

One is that even to do the counterterrorism effort based in Afghanistan, we need a very robust presence there.

Much of our relative success against the al-Qaeda leadership, particularly across the border in Pakistan, is owing to the intelligence and military platform that we have inside Afghanistan. If that were to be diminished, I believe our success would diminish along with it.

Secondly, there is the whole issue of Afghan tolerance. The Afghans are much less interested in al-Qaeda. They are much more interested in wresting control of their country from the Taliban. It

is hard to imagine that they would continue to welcome us in the way that they do if there weren't something in it for them.

And there are those who pose the question in even more stark terms. Well, couldn't we simply do this as a counterterrorism effort from offshore? Well, we considered whether we could do that when I was sitting in Islamabad immediately after 9/11, and the short answer is no. We can't. You absolutely have to have a platform there on the ground if you are to conduct counterterrorism operations effectively. It was the Pakistanis who provided that to us initially.

Which gets us down to the final question—the one that we haven't been asked today, but which, obviously, the administration is struggling with—and that is the question of troops. If we accept that we need to do both a counterterrorism effort and a counter-insurgency effort to deny safe haven, what sort of a force posture do we need? Well, I don't think that I can answer that question.

But it seems to me that the more fundamental question, the far more important one, quite apart from the numbers of troops required, is do we have an achievable objective, and do we have an effective strategy to achieve that objective?

And as I look at the situation right now, unfortunately, my answer to both questions is no.

I fear that we are trying to achieve the unachievable in Afghanistan. I fear that we are trying for an outcome which current reality will not admit. And secondly, I think that the tactics or the strategy that we are employing to achieve that objective is simply not going to work over time, relying as it does on building up national institutions in Afghanistan of a sort that have never existed in the past.

So having raised more questions than answers, I will terminate my remarks.

The CHAIRMAN. Those are good remarks and good questions, and ones we want to pursue. So we look forward to that.

Mr. Sageman?

STATEMENT OF MARC SAGEMAN, SENIOR FELLOW, FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Dr. SAGEMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, members of the committee.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the threat of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and beyond.

I also talk not only as a scholar, but as a former operator being involved in the insurgency, Afghan insurgency against the Soviets in the 1980s where I had the privilege of serving under Milt Bearden, who was here last week.

Al-Qaeda is once again at the forefront of U.S. Government policy debate. To clarify its threat to the homeland and to those of other Western nations, I would like to share with you the result of a comprehensive survey that I conducted of all plots, successful and unsuccessful, over the past 20 years carried out by al-Qaeda, its transnational allies, and homegrown groups inspired by al-Qaeda.

I included all the plots that had any loose link to al-Qaeda, its ideology, had reached a level of maturity, were violent in nature, and were initiated by the terrorists.

The top graph that you see over there demonstrates that there were 60 plots carried out by 46 different networks. It started out in New York City with the first World Trade Center bombing. The first peak that you see over there is a large wave of GIA bombings in France in the summer of 1995. Then the number of plots kind of diminished. It spread around the world, peaked again in 2004, probably as a reaction to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and it has declined ever since. Last year, I think there were only three plots around the world.

The bottom graph that you see there demonstrates the command and control of the various plots by transnational terrorist organizations. I erred on the side of being over inclusive. That is including plots as being under a group's command and control.

As you see, there were 12 al-Qaeda core plots in blue, 15 al-Qaeda affiliate—other terrorist organization—in red, and 32 homegrown plots in green without any physical link to any formal terrorist organization.

After the Algerian plots of the 1990s, al-Qaeda plots started after bin Laden's 1998 declaration of war against the West. It peaked in 2001 and then decreased thereafter to about one plot a year. Over the past 5 years, 80 percent of the plots were homegrown, autonomous plots.

In terms of training, about 57 percent of the terrorist group had received some training with a terrorist organization in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Over the past 7 years, it has only been Pakistan. The trained networks have a 20 percent probability of inflicting a casualty on the Western population, which was much greater than 5 percent probability of success of an untrained group.

In terms of damages, of all the 60 plots, only 14 succeeded in inflicting any casualty. Of these, 9 were that Algerian group in 1995, 2 were al-Qaeda—namely, 9/11 and the London 7/7 bombing—and 3 were independent plots. The fact that only two al-Qaeda plots in the West were successful in the past two decades has been obscured by the horrible lethality, of course.

So what are the implications of this comprehensive survey for the present policy options? One, the threat to the West has expanded beyond al-Qaeda to include Pakistani and Uzbeki groups. None of these groups are located in Afghanistan, and there really is no Afghani al-Qaeda. However, almost 80 percent of the plots in the past 5 years are homegrown groups with no physical links to any transnational terrorist group.

Two, counterterrorism is working. There has been no casualty in the United States for the past 8 years and no casualty in the West in the past 4 years, thanks a lot to the effort of Mr. Grenier here.

At home, counterterrorism consists of a combination of good domestic police work, good domestic intelligence, and good cooperation with foreign and domestic intelligence agencies. Abroad, it consists of an effective strategy of containment of young wannabes going to Pakistan through good airport security abroad, good border control at home, keeping up the pressure on al-Qaeda and its transnational allies in Pakistan, supporting the Pakistan military

to dislodge foreign militants from Waziristan while sealing the border on the Afghan side, and continuing sanctuary denial.

Three, this counterterrorism strategy will continue, no matter what. So the real question is whether there is any added value to the military surge in Afghanistan for protection of the homeland. Clearly, such a surge would not help us protect the homeland from al-Qaeda and its allies because they are not in Afghanistan. The Afghan Taliban is not al-Qaeda and does not share internationally its ambition.

Will the military surge prevent the return of al-Qaeda to Afghanistan? The assumption is that the Taliban return to power will automatically allow al-Qaeda to reconstitute in Afghanistan and threaten the homeland.

The capture of Afghanistan by the Taliban is not a sure thing. It took more than 3 years for much better armed and a far more popular insurgency to capture the power after the complete withdrawal from the Soviet forces in Afghanistan 20 years ago. The Taliban is really a collection of rival and fractious groups united against us, but lacking the ability to coalesce in the future or in the near future, I should say, into an offensive force capable of marching on to Kabul.

Taliban return to power does not automatically mean an invitation to al-Qaeda to return to Afghanistan. The relationship between al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups with a major faction constituting the Afghan Taliban has always been strained. This provides the U.S. government with the opportunity to play on internal rivalries and use political skills and economic incentive to discourage the Taliban from hosting al-Qaeda again.

And even if al-Qaeda returns to Afghanistan in some form, it is not going to be in the same form as in the 1990s, when not so benign neglect by Western forces allowed them to grow to the threat that we saw on 9/11.

Sanctuary denial is the appropriate mission for the military. So there is definitely no necessity and little added value to the military surge in this counterinsurgency option. It is the most costly in terms of blood and treasure, probably the least likely to succeed, and may even increase terrorism in the homeland through home-grown wannabes' reaction to the inevitable increase in killing of Muslims by Western forces.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Sageman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARC SAGEMAN, M.D., PH.D.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, and Members of the Committee: I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the threat of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and beyond.

Al-Qaeda is once again at the forefront of U.S. Government policy debate. Our strategic interest in Afghanistan is linked to the protection of the homeland and that of our Western allies against terrorist attacks. A moment's reflection will demonstrate this. Al-Qaeda found sanctuary in the Sudan for four years, from 1992 to 1996, when the Sudanese government expelled it. During this Sudanese phase, al-Qaeda developed its strategy to target the West, and especially the United States and trained potential terrorists there. Indeed, the planning of the simultaneous bombings of our Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam was done in Khartoum. Had al-Qaeda not been thrown out of the Sudan, I have no doubt that we would be discussing strategy options about the Sudan rather than Afghanistan.

Our ultimate goal of homeland security will be served through a better understanding of the threat confronting it in order to “disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al-Qaeda and its allies.” Let me describe this global threat through a comprehensive survey that I conducted of all the al-Qaeda plots in the West, all the al-Qaeda affiliate plots in the West and all the plots done “in the name of al-Qaeda” in the West since the formation of al-Qaeda in August 1988. It is necessary to expand our inquiry because al-Qaeda is now only one of the many actors in this global neo-jihadi terrorist threat against the West. I call it neo-jihadi because the terrorists have appropriated this contested concept to themselves much to the protest of respected Islamic scholars and the mainstream Muslim communities worldwide.¹ Terrorism for the purpose of this project is the use of violence by non-state collective actors against non-combatants in the West in pursuit of a self-appointed global jihad.

I conducted this survey when I spent a year at the U.S. Secret Service and an additional year at the New York Police Department as its first scholar-in-residence. Although both organizations helped me immensely, the following remarks are my own and cannot be read as their position or opinions. Because homeland security in the West essentially means population protection in the West, I have limited the inquiry to violent plots to be executed in the geographical territory of the West. By the West, I mean North America, Australia and Western Europe, with the exception of the civil war in the Balkans since terrorism is often a tactic of war, but wartime terrorism may not teach us much about terrorism during peace time. To be included in the survey, each plot had to have some loose operational or inspirational link to al-Qaeda or its affiliates; it had to reach a certain level of maturity, characterized by overt acts in furtherance; it consisted of violent acts targeting people in the West, and therefore excluded cases of purely financial or material support for terrorist acts committed elsewhere; some planning had to be done in the West; and terrorists had to initiate the plot. To accurately evaluate the threat, I of course included both successful and unsuccessful plots, which are the true measure of the extent of the threat, rather than just the successful ones. The global neo-jihadi terrorist threat includes plots under the control of al-Qaeda core; al-Qaeda affiliates like the Algerian Groupes Islamiques Armes (GIA), Pakistani Lashkar e-Toyba (LT), the Uzbek Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), the Pakistani Tehrik e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP); and threats by autonomous groups inspired by al-Qaeda like the Dutch Hofstad group. I excluded lone wolves, who were not physically or virtually connected to anyone in the global neo-jihad, for they often carry out their atrocities on the basis of delusion and mental disorder rather than for political reasons.

My sources of information were legal documents, trial transcripts, consultations with foreign and domestic intelligence and law enforcement agencies, to which my position gave me access. Although all these plots are within the open source domain, I did corroborate the validity of the data in the classified domain.

The specified criteria yielded a total of 60 global neo-jihadi terrorist plots in the West, perpetrated by 46 terrorist networks in the past two decades, from the first World Trade Center attack on February 26, 1993 to the December 16, 2008 arrest of Rany Arnaud, who was plotting to blow up the Direction Generale du Renseignement Interieur, the French FBI equivalent, in a suburb of Paris. Although people associate al-Qaeda plots with airplanes or bombs, the plots were quite diverse: simple assassinations, attempted kidnapping and decapitation, car/truck bombs, airplane hijacking, and improvised explosive devices. Some operations were suicidal, but most were not. Of all the plots, only one is completely unsolved—the bombing of the Port Royal Metro station in Paris on December 3, 1996, which resulted in many casualties. Although completely unsolved, the timing, context and mode of operation seem to point to the GIA, trying to avenge its followers, who were put on trial around that time. The following graph is the timeline distribution of the plots.

¹For an analysis of the concept of jihad through Muslim jurisprudence and history, see Richard Bonney, 2004, *Jihad: From Qur'an to bin Laden*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

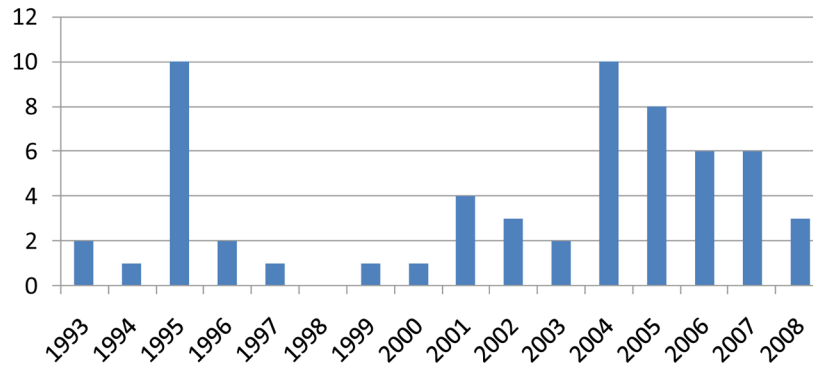


Figure 1. Timeline distribution of global neo-jihadi terrorist plots in the West.

We can see from the above graph that global neo-jihadi terrorist plots preceded the 9/11/01 attack when the Western public first started to appreciate the true extent of the threat confronting it. The first plot in the West was the first World Trade Center bombing in February 1993, or about four and a half years after the creation of al-Qaeda proper. The timeline distribution of the plots is bi-modal. The first peak consisted of raids by the Algerian GIA against France and stopped in 1996; the later plots were more widely geographically distributed and reached a peak in 2004, after which they declined. In the recent controversy over whether al-Qaeda (however defined, here I am using a more inclusive and therefore much wider definition of the threat in the West) is on the move or on the run, we can see that the wider “al Qaeda” threat or the global neo-jihadi terrorist threat is definitely on the run since its high water mark of 2004.

Some networks of terrorists, who temporarily escaped arrest, carried out multiple plots in the West. This is especially true of the 1995 wave of ten GIA plots against France, carried out by the same network in France. In order to understand the actual threat, as opposed to the inability of local police forces to disrupt existing networks, I also coded the global neo-jihadi threat to the West according to the specific terrorist networks carrying out operations (as opposed to plots). Coding the data according to networks rather than plots gives the following graph.

What is most affected by this coding is the collapse of the GIA wave of bombings in France in 1995, now represented by the same group rather than the ten separate plots. Again, loosely global neo-jihadi networks in the West preceded the 9/11/01 operation. Here, the graph indicates that global neo-jihadi networks in the West became more numerous in 2001, experienced a temporary small decline, and reached its 2004 high water mark, after which it declined, especially after 2007. So, here again, “al-Qaeda” is on the run and not on the move. I suspect the post 2003 bump in the number of networks threatening the West in the name of AQ was a reaction to the Western invasion of Iraq.

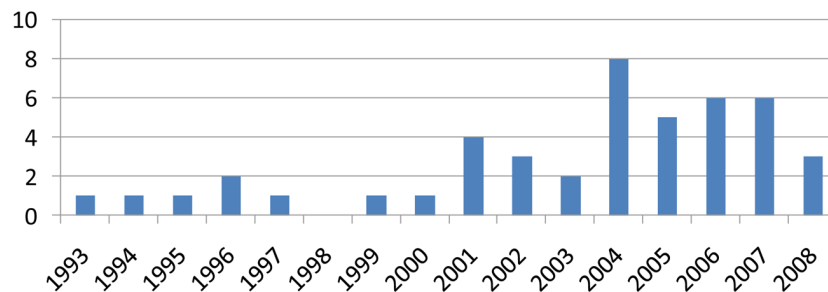


Figure 2. Timeline distribution of global neo-jihadi terrorist networks in the West.

Although the press likes to call any militant Islamist plot an al-Qaeda plot, let us see how many are truly al-Qaeda plots. I coded the command and control of each plot according to the following classification (I did not code the 1996 Paris Metro plot because it is still unsolved):

- AQ Core means that AQ proper directed and controlled the operation.
- AQ Affiliated means that an international terrorist organization affiliated with AQ, such as LT or IJU, directed and controlled the operation.
- AQ Inspired means that there was no direction or control by any of the above organization for the plot. In other words, the plot was completely autonomous. In this coding system, I leaned backward to give credit to a terrorist organization when there was any doubt about its command and control over an operation. I did this to increase the probability of detecting any coordination of global neo-jihadi terrorism by a single entity, a sort of neo-jihadi equivalent of the Comintern—the Soviet Central Committee in Moscow that tried to coordinate Communist activities worldwide.

The result is:

12 AQ Core controlled operations (20%)

- LAX millennial plot (1999)
- Strasbourg Christmas Market bombing plot (2000)
- 9/11/01 attack (2001)
- Paris Embassy bombing plot (2001)
- Belgian Kleine Brogel US Air Force base bombing plot (2001)
- Shoe bomber plot (2001)
- London fertilizer bomb plot (Operation Crevice, 2004)
- London limousine bombing plot (Operation Rhyme, 2004)
- London 7/7 bombings (Theseus case) (2005)
- London 7/21 bombing plot (Vivace case) (2005)
- London airplanes liquid bomb plot (Operation Overt) (2006)
- Danish Glasvej bombing plot (Operation Dagger) (2007)

15 AQ affiliated terrorist organizations controlled operations (25%)

- 11 GIA plots against France (1994–5)
- German al-Tawhid bombing plots (Zarqawi group) (2002)
- Sydney bombing plot (Brigitte-Lodhi, LT controlled) (2003)
- German Sauerland bombing plot (IJU controlled) (2007)
- Barcelona bombing plot (alleged TTP control) (2008)

32 AQ inspired terrorist plots, carried out either on behalf of al-Qaeda or other transnational terrorist organizations (54%)

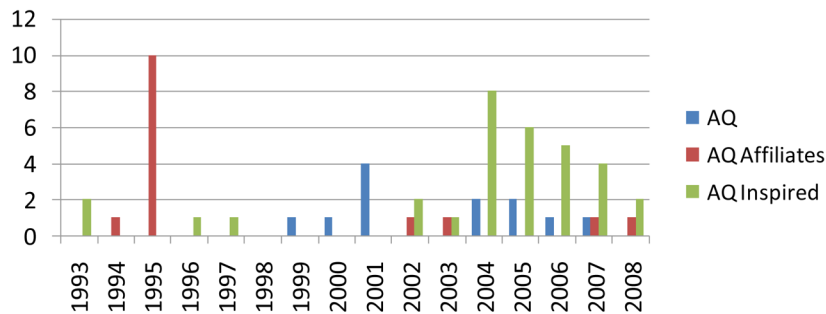


Figure 3. Timeline of global neo-jihadi terrorist plots in the West: Command & Control.

Al-Qaeda-inspired autonomous plots constitute the majority of all the plots, followed by al-Qaeda affiliated plots, with true al-Qaeda plots closing out the sample at only 20%. Viewing the graph chronologically, al-Qaeda Core did not start this terrorist campaign against the West. Indeed, all al-Qaeda Core plots in the West took place after bin Laden's 1998 hukm (his 'considered judgment,' not fatwa as is incorrectly reported in the West and which carries much less authority than a fatwa).² Two attacks in New York City conducted by former Afghan Arabs inaugurated this worldwide wave of bombings against the West. They were conducted locally, and there is no evidence that there was any guidance, direction or control by al-Qaeda Core. If anything, they were more closely connected with the Egyptian Islamic Group than al-Qaeda or its ally, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. These attacks were followed by a large wave of GIA attacks against France, which had to do with the internal dynamics of the Algerian civil war in the 1990s, and again had no guidance, direction or control from al-Qaeda Core. The actual al-Qaeda Core plots in the West began in late 1999, as part of a wave of worldwide bombings to mark the dawn of the new Western Millennium, peaked in 2001, and decreased thereafter to about one plot per year, with a small uptick in 2004–2005 and fading over the next two years. Despite even recent claims that al-Qaeda is on the move, it is clear that al-Qaeda in the West has been on the decline since its apogee of 2001. When studying a phenomenon, it is important to count and look at the trend. When one relies on out of context anecdotal evidence, it is easy to make mistakes. I suspect that the recent advocates for a "resurgent" al-Qaeda were confused by the complexity of the 2006 London airplanes liquid bomb plot (Overt case) and mistook complexity for resurgence. The fact is clear that since its loss of sanctuary in Afghanistan in 2001, al-Qaeda proper has had trouble projecting to the West. It was able to operate locally in South Asia and Iraq, especially after al Zarqawi proclaimed a merger of his organization with al-Qaeda.

Let's look at the past five years:

- 6 AQ Core plots (2004 Rhyme and Crevice plots; 2005 Theseus and Vivace cases; 2006 Overt case, all in Britain, and 2007 Dagger plot in Denmark)
- 2 AQ Affiliated plots (2007 Sauerland & 2008 Barcelona Plots)
- 25 AQ Inspired autonomous plots, conducted by homegrown perpetrators, with no connections whatsoever with any formal transnational terrorist organizations

The above statistics are crystal clear: 78% of all global neo-jihadi terrorist plots in the West in the past five years came from autonomous homegrown groups without any connection, direction or control from al-Qaeda Core or its allies. The 'resurgent al-Qaeda' in the West argument has no empirical foundation. The paucity of actual al-Qaeda and other transnational terrorist organization plots compared to the number of autonomous plots refutes the claims by some heads of the Intelligence Community (Hayden, 2008) that all Islamist plots in the West can be traced back to the Afghan Pakistani border. Far from being the "epicenter of terrorism," this Pakistani region is more like the finishing school of global neo-jihadi terrorism, where a few amateur wannabes are transformed into dangerous terrorists.

The graph also shows a sporadic involvement of al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist groups in plotting against the West in the past six years. These groups located in Pakistan are showing an increased ability to project against the West, although most of their operations are still confined to South Asia. However, in the internal rivalry among terrorist groups in South Asia, the quickest way to establish one's reputation is to demonstrate an ability to strike in the West. Although it is rare for al-Qaeda core to claim credit for its operations in the West, its rivals in South Asia have been quick to claim credit, even for failed plots. The Islamic Jihad Union claimed credit for the failed Sauerland group plot in September 2007 and Baitullah Mehsud, the deceased chief of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan claimed credit for the failed Barcelona Plot of January 2008—although this last claim must be taken with a great deal of caution because he has claimed credits for mishaps in the West that had nothing to do with his organization, like the power outage in the U.S. Midwest in 2007 and the mass murder incident in Binghamton, New York on April 3, 2009. These empty self-promotions have been categorically refuted by federal authorities. The West may well find itself caught in this militant rivalry for global neo-jihadi supremacy.

My coding probably overestimated the importance of formal terrorist groups. Most of the recent plots coded as under al-Qaeda command and control, like the 2004 London fertilizer bomb plot, did not involve such frequent communication with al-

² See Lawrence, Bruce, ed., 2005, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*, London: Verso, page 61.

Qaeda, but included instead a short meeting with a high level representative of al-Qaeda, where local Western terrorist wannabes informed al-Qaeda representatives, Abdal Hadi al Iraqi and his lieutenant, of their own initiative to conduct operations in the West. In such cases, it seems that the meeting with al-Qaeda leadership did not affect the desire of the local terrorists to conduct such operations. Here the role of the al-Qaeda was passive agreement with little influence on the plot.

The dramatic increase in global neo-jihadi terrorism in the first decade of the 21st Century has come from al-Qaeda inspired autonomous groups with no link to formal transnational terrorist groups. This is especially true since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which has inspired local young Muslims to strike out against the West. It seems clear that this invasion has created more terrorists in the West, refuting the thesis that “we are fighting them there, so we don’t have to fight them here.” The fact that these plots peaked in 2004, one year after the invasion of Iraq provides empirical support linking the two events. These scattered plots, not coordinated by any central terrorist body and constituting almost 80% of the plots against the West in the past five years, illustrate how the threat against the West is degenerating into a “leaderless jihad.”³ Far from being directed by a Comintern, global neo-jihadi terrorism is evolving to the structure of anarchist terrorism that prevailed over a century ago, when no such global coordinating committee was ever found despite contemporaneous belief in its existence.

Within this cluster of al-Qaeda inspired autonomous groups is a troubling emerging pattern of lone wolves, directly linked via the Internet to foreign al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist organizations: the 2004 Rotterdam Plot (Yehya Kadouri), the 2007 Nancy plot (Kamel Bouchentouf), the 2008 Exeter plot (Nicky Reilly) and the 2008 French Direction Centrale du Renseignement Interieur plot (Rany Arnaud). Although these young men are willing to sacrifice themselves for these affiliate terrorist groups, they have never met them face to face. This may become a trend that will increase in the future.

Another dimension of allied al-Qaeda involvement in plots against the West is financial support of these plots. Again, in examining each global neo-jihadi terrorism network for such support, I have erred on the side of inclusiveness of al-Qaeda support in this coding scheme.

Out of forty-five global neo-jihadi terrorist networks in the West, al-Qaeda at least partially funded ten. But this overstates its importance in this regard. The funding of the 1993 World Trade Center plot was minimal, and consisted of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed sending a few hundred dollars to his nephew Ramzi Yousef. It is unclear where the money came from, but for the sake of this study, let us assume it came from al-Qaeda. The same goes for the GIA wave of bombings in France in 1995. Bin Laden funded the Al Ansar newsletter in London via Rachid Ramda, who funded the bombing campaign. I do not know where the money for this campaign (as opposed to the newsletter) came from. I suspect that it came from the GIA itself through its fund raising campaign throughout Europe. However, let us again assume that it came from bin Laden either directly or indirectly.

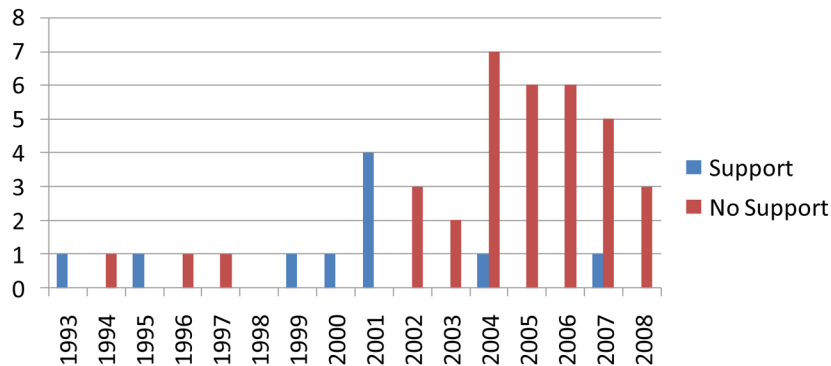


Figure 4. Al-Qaeda Financial Support for Terrorist networks in the West.

³See Sageman, Marc, 2008, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

We can see that from 1999 to 2001, al-Qaeda either partially or fully funded its operations against the West. This was either in the form of seed money (\$10,000 given to Ahmed Ressam for the 1999 LAX bombing plot or the 2000 Strasbourg Christmas Market bombing plot). In each case, the perpetrators were supposed to supplement their initial funds via their own means (robbery in Ressam's case; drug sales for the other). Sometimes, the funding was paid in full, as in the 9/11/01 plot. I assume that al-Qaeda at least partially funded the rest of the 2001 al-Qaeda plots since I came across no evidence that these perpetrators raised any money on their own. The two alleged al-Qaeda plots in 2005 were a departure from this pattern, as there is no evidence that the two London bombing plots of July 2005 received any money from al-Qaeda. The last alleged al-Qaeda plot, the Danish Glasvej (Dagger) case indicates that the main perpetrator, Hamad Khurshid, came back from Pakistan with \$5,000 in cash. It is true that, except for the 9/11/01 operation, terrorist plots are not expensive to carry out. Autonomous terrorists had no choice but to raise the funds for their operation themselves.

On the other hand, the al-Qaeda-affiliated transnational terrorist groups seemed to have funded their own operations. The GIA plots were fully funded from outside and none of the perpetrators were tasked with raising money for the plots. The 2002 German al Tawhid plot was probably funded by Zarqawi. LT funded the Sydney plot through money transfers to Willie Brigitte in 2003, and the IJU seemed to have funded the 2007 German Sauerland plot. It is unknown the degree of financial support that the potential perpetrators of the 2008 Barcelona plot received from Mehsud's organization.

For those who like to follow the money, only a very few plots have been funded from the outside in the past five years. Of the twenty-nine global neo-jihadi terrorist networks involved during that period, al-Qaeda core funding has been implicated in only two—Hamad Khurshid and the London Rhyme case. Even if we add the non-al-Qaeda funded Sauerland case and possibly the TTP Barcelona case, the total increases to only three or four out of twenty-nine cases (10% or 14%). Since the money involved was mostly in the form of cash, following the trail of money will not detect global neo-jihadi terrorism plots in the West. The vast majority these networks in the past five years have raised their own money.

It has been argued that training by a formal terrorist organization is critically important because it transforms amateurs into seasoned terrorists. Several Western intelligence leaders have stated that all significant global neo-jihadi terrorist plots lead back to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA). The next graph tests this claim. I plotted the overseas training for all the terrorist networks and coded them as receiving training from al-Qaeda, an al-Qaeda affiliate, or no training at all—just al-Qaeda inspired. Again, I erred on the side of over-inclusiveness of such training, even if just one person in the network, who might not have been involved in the planning of the plot, had simply undergone familiarization training, which did not teach any significant bomb making skills. For this graph, I coded Bouyeri as being separate from the Hofstad network because he carried out the assassination of Theo van Gogh on his own in 2004 and had not gone to any training camp.

Out of 46 different networks attempting terrorist operations in the West,

- 16 had at least one member that underwent training at an AQ Core facility (35%)
- 10 had at least one member that underwent training at an AQ affiliated facility (22%)
- 20 had no training at all (43%)

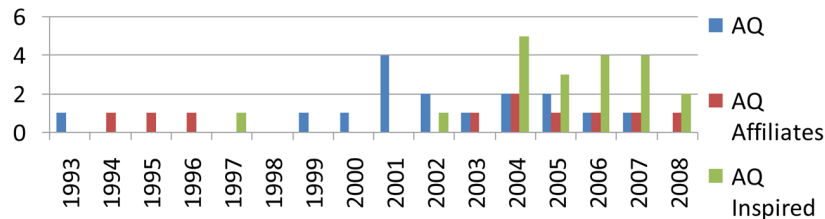


Figure 5. Global neo-jihadi terrorist overseas training.

Lumping the data together hides some important trends. First, more people have trained from al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda affiliates than are under the control of these respective organizations. Lately, in the press and perhaps the intelligence community, there is a presumption that attendance in a formal terrorist organization training camp is equivalent to being under control of that organization. So, I included the 2004 London fertilizer plot (Operation Crevice) and the two 2005 London underground bombing plots as al-Qaeda controlled because the perpetrators had allegedly received al-Qaeda training. However, there was no evidence of extensive communication between the perpetrators in the field and al-Qaeda Core in Pakistan, unlike the 9/11/01 plot or the 2006 London airplanes liquid bomb plot, where the perpetrators were in almost daily communication with al-Qaeda core, or the 2007 Sauerland plotters, who were in constant e-mail contact with their IJU sponsors.

This equation of training camp attendance with foreign terrorist organization control was not presumed for the pre-2001 plots, when attendance in an al-Qaeda camp did not mean al-Qaeda control. For example, Ramzi Yousef, the bomb maker for the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, never belonged to al-Qaeda, but had undergone extensive training at al-Qaeda funded camps and had taught at Abdal Rabb Rasul Sayyaf's University of Jihad. Likewise, members of the 2002 al Tawhid plot had been trained at al-Qaeda camps before joining Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's al Tawhid organization. Again, the two ricin plots (the 2002 French Chechen network and the 2003 British ricin plot [Operation Earth]) included members who had trained in al-Qaeda camps, even though neither plot seemed to have been known or sanctioned by al-Qaeda as far as I know.

Al-Qaeda funded most of the training camps in Afghanistan before the U.S. invasion in the fall of 2001. Anyone who had traveled to Afghanistan for training at that time was bound to have been trained in an al-Qaeda funded camp. The cases just cited included members who had been in Afghanistan before the fall of the Taliban regime. The result was that graduates from al-Qaeda camps in the 1990s dominate global neo-jihadi terrorism from 1999 to 2002. By the time they were planning their operations in the West in 2002 or 2003, they no longer had any active link to al-Qaeda. Since 2002, al-Qaeda trained terrorists averaged just one plot a year.

As the availability of al-Qaeda training faded over time, al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist organizations in Kashmir or the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, such as Laskhar-e Toyba or the Islamic Jihad Union, began to fill in the gap starting in 2003 and the graduates of their camps also average about one plot a year. So, while terrorist networks that had training dominate the overall sample (57%), this trend has been reversed in the past five years as only 40% had such training. Indeed, all those who underwent training in the past five years, acquired it in Pakistan, not Afghanistan.

Although I use the generic term "training camp" to describe the place of training before and after 2001, the meaning of the term has since changed dramatically and overestimates the formality and sophistication of training received by global neo-jihadi terrorist networks in the West after 2001. Gone are the large formal camps like Khalden, Farooq or Darunta in Afghanistan, which could accommodate hundreds of novices and had a formal curriculum with increased levels of sophistication sometimes lasting up to a year for the select few (see Ahmed Ressam's training for the 1999 LAX millennium plot). After the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, these formal training facilities were destroyed. People traveling to Pakistan afterwards either went to formal training facilities conducted by Kashmiri terrorist groups in Kashmir (see the legal judgment on Willie Brigitte for a description of such camps) or had to arrange for their training through hiring of a private trainer. These new "camps" were nothing like the former ones: they were small rented housing compounds or even two tents in a goat patch, where one instructor and his son gave private lessons to at most a dozen students, who directly paid for their instruction, the duration of which could be as short as two days to about three weeks (see the transcripts of the 2004 Crevice or the 2005 Theseus cases, which describe this process).

Later, after a series of truces signed between FATA tribal leaders and the government of Pakistan between 2004 and 2006, al-Qaeda or IJU provided more formal training in Waziristan, but they never reached the level of sophistication in instruction that prevailed before 2001. These new facilities in Waziristan were more visible than before and could accommodate up to about twenty trainees at a time. Indeed, the presence of these camps probably led to alarms that al-Qaeda was resurgent. Strangely enough, the presence of these new "camps" did not affect the frequency of al-Qaeda linked plots in the West. The slight bump in frequency of terrorist trained arrests or actual bombings in 2004 and 2005 was not due to these truces, because the training of the perpetrators preceded the truce agreements. Despite the

widespread alarms in the West, the truces do not appear to have any effect on global neo-jihadi terrorism in the West.

In any case, the graph shows clearly that the majority of global neo-jihadi terrorist networks from 2004 onwards did not have any formal training from foreign terrorist groups (60%), contrary to the statements of Intelligence agency chiefs on both sides of the Atlantic. They were purely homegrown and had no link to the FATA, which some have called “the epicenter of terrorism.” Instead, they had to rely on themselves and the Internet for their acquisition of terrorist skills, consistent with the leaderless jihad argument.

How dangerous is global neo-jihadi terrorism? In other words, what is the result of global neo-jihadi terrorist plots in the West? I coded all 60 plots in the West in terms of whether they caused any injuries; were carried out but failed (no explosion because of a technical error); or were interrupted through law enforcement arrests.

The results are as follows:

14 Plots were successful in terms of incurring any injury and or death (23%)

- Only 2 al-Qaeda core plots in the West in the past two decades were successful (9/11/01 and 7/7/05). Of course, they were among the most devastating, resulting in about 3,000 fatalities for 9/11 and 52 fatalities for 7/7.
- 9 were GIA plots against France, from 1994 to 1996 (I have counted the 1996 Paris Port Royal metro station bombing in this total. The total for all of these attacks is 17 fatalities)
- 3 were al-Qaeda inspired plots (1993 World Trade Center bombing, resulting in 6 fatalities; 2004 Madrid bombing, resulting in 191 fatalities; 2004 Bouyeri’s assassination of Theo van Gogh)

10 Plots resulted in failure to explode (17%)

- 3 failures in networks that had succeeded elsewhere (2 by 1995 GIA network in France; and by 2004 Madrid network when bomb on the AVE train line near Toledo failed to detonate)
- 2 failures by al-Qaeda trained networks (2001 Shoe bomb plot and 7/21/05 London underground bombing plot)
- 1 failure in network of French Bosnian war veteran (Roubaix group)
- 4 failures in networks that had no foreign terrorist organization training (2004 Rotterdam plot; 2006 Koblenz train plot; 2007 Doctors’ plot; and 2008 Exeter bomb plot)

36 Plots were interrupted through arrests (60%)

It is interesting to note that for all the fear of al-Qaeda, the organization managed only two successful plots in the West in the last twenty years! The fact that they were so deadly overshadows this truth. Indeed, successful independent plots outnumber successful al-Qaeda plots in the West. However, both are eclipsed by the GIA, which infiltrated a team of trained terrorists to France, whose wave of terror in the mid-1990s accounts for almost two thirds of all successful global neo-jihadi bombings.

This low rate of success (23%) should not be much comfort to intelligence or law enforcement agencies. In ten plots, the terrorists succeeded in setting their bombs down without being detected. The bombs simply did not detonate, which cannot be due to good intelligence or police work. So, the rate of a plot going to termination without being detected is 40%, a very high rate indeed, no cause for comfort.

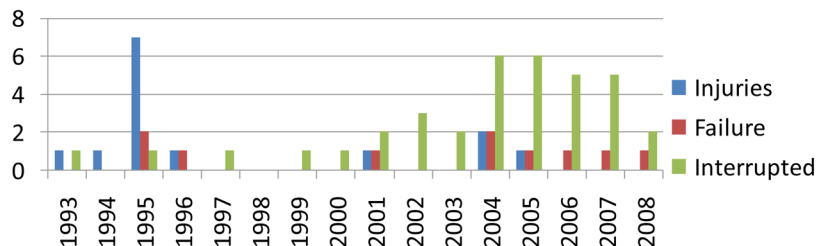


Figure 6. Extent of damages of global neo-jihadi terrorist plots.

Let the reader think that the cause for failure to detonate was the lack of training by homegrown wannabes, six out of the ten failures happened to groups that had been trained or been successful before. So, 60% of the failures to detonate were not due to poor training but to poor execution by experienced terrorists.

It appears that either we are getting luckier or this terrorist threat is diminishing. In the United States, the last casualty dates back eight years to 9/11/01. There has not been even one plot that went to termination since then. In the rest of the West, there has not been a single casualty in the past four years. The last casualty dates back to 7/7/05, the first London underground plot. However, in the past four years, Europe has witnessed a series of bombs that failed to detonate: the 2005 second London underground plot (Vivace case); the 2006 German Koblenz trolley bombs; the 2007 London and Glasgow Doctors' plot; and the 2008 Exeter bomb plot by Nicky Reilly. The last three plots have no physical link to any transnational terrorist groups.

How effective is formal terrorist training for the successful completion of a plot? Several critics have tried to downplay the recent surge of autonomous homegrown plots as less dangerous than those of formally trained terrorists. I analyzed the results of global neo-jihadi terrorist networks according to their type of training: al-Qaeda core training; al-Qaeda affiliates' training; or no formal training at all (al-Qaeda inspired). Excluding the unsolved 1996 Paris Port Royal metro bombing because of lack of information, this leaves forty-five networks. But an untrained member of the Hofstad network, Mohammed Bouyeri, carried out a successful assassination on his own. His "trained" colleagues, Jason Walters and Ismail Akhnikh, had not been aware of his plan and provided no guidance or help. Therefore, I decided to code Bouyeri's assassination of Theo van Gogh as a separate network, and as al-Qaeda inspired.

The results are the following:

16 AQ Core trained networks:

- 3 succeeded (1993 World Trade Center bombing; 9/11/01; and 7/7/05 London underground bombing) [19%]
- 2 failed to explode (2001 Shoe bomber; 7/21/05 London underground plot)
- 11 were detected and arrested before hand

10 AQ Affiliate trained networks

- 2 GIA networks succeeded (1994 AF hijack; 1995 wave of bombing in France) [20%]
- 1 failed to explode (1996 Lille plot)
- 7 were detected and arrested beforehand (including Hofstad network)

20 AQ Inspired networks (no formal training)

- 2 succeeded (2004 Madrid bombings & 2004 Bouyeri assassination of van Gogh)[10%, but only 5% if we don't count the assassination, which requires no training]
- 3 failed to explode
- 16 were detected and arrested beforehand.

The above results seem to indicate that formal training matters. Both al-Qaeda core and al-Qaeda affiliate formal training resulted in an approximate success rate of 20%, while lack of training led to a success rate of 10%. So, training doubles the probability of success in a terrorist network. However, if the assassination of Theo van Gogh is eliminated from the sample, the resulting rate of success of the untrained networks falls to 5%. In this case, training would quadruple the probability of success in a terrorist network.

Viewing the sample as a whole obscures the degradation of the importance of training in the past five years. During this period, of twelve trained terrorist networks, only one succeeded in causing any casualty, the 7/7/05 London underground bombing. Two untrained networks out of sixteen succeeded in inflicting casualties: the 2004 Madrid bombing—where the bombers got access to dynamite, det-cord and detonators, and did not have to manufacture their explosive—and the 2004 Bouyeri assassination of van Gogh.

I am sorry to have been so lengthy in the presentation of the survey, but the devil is in the empirical details to escape another round of hysterical rhetoric so common in discussion of global neo-jihadi terrorism. Now that I've laid down the facts, let me address some of the unexamined assumptions, myths and misconceptions about the "al Qaeda threat" in Afghanistan and beyond.

1. The threat to the West has unfortunately expanded beyond al-Qaeda per se. The various terrorists attempting to carry out operations in the West for al-Qaeda allies or in its name clearly outnumber al-Qaeda operations. In the past five years, al-Qaeda core has been responsible for only 18% of these plots. 78% of these plots during this period have been carried out by homegrown terrorists, inspired by al-Qaeda, but with no connection with any formal transnational terrorist organization—evolving into a Leaderless Jihad. This survey does not include the new al Shabaab threat to the West, which has too recently surfaced to be included. But it stems from Somalia and not Afghanistan.

2. The dichotomy of the present policy options between counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency is a false one. The choice is not between counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency, but between counter-terrorism and counter-terrorism plus counter-insurgency. No matter what happens in Afghanistan, all Western powers will continue to protect their homelands with a vigorous counter-terrorism campaign against al-Qaeda, its allies and its homegrown progeny. The policy option really boils down to, what is the added value of counter-insurgency in Afghanistan to a necessary and continuing counter-terrorism strategy worldwide?

3. The proposed counter-insurgency strategy in Afghanistan is at present irrelevant to the goal of disrupting, dismantling and defeating al-Qaeda, which is located in Pakistan. None of the plots in the West has any connection to any Afghan insurgent group, labeled under the umbrella name “Afghan Taliban,” be it a part of Mullah Omar’s Quetta Shura Taliban, Jalaluddin Haqqani’s Haqqani Network, or Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami. There has not been any Afghan in al-Qaeda in the past twenty years because of mutual resentment between al-Qaeda foreigners and Afghan locals. In the policy debate, there is an insidious confusion between Afghan Taliban and transnational terrorist organizations. Afghan fighters are parochial, have local goals and fight locally. They do not travel abroad and rarely within their own country. They are happy to kill Westerners in Afghanistan, but they are not a threat to Western homelands. Foreign presence is what has traditionally unified the usually fractious Afghan rivals against a common enemy. Their strategic interest is local, preserving their autonomy from what they perceive as a predatory corrupt unjust central government. They do not project to the West and do not share the internationalist agenda of al-Qaeda or its allied transnational terrorist organizations.

4. The second prong of the proposed counter-insurgency strategy in Afghanistan is the prevention of al-Qaeda’s return to Afghanistan through a military surge. The assumption is that the return to power by the Taliban will automatically allow al-Qaeda to reconstitute in Afghanistan, complete with training camps and resurgence of al-Qaeda’s ability to project to the West and threaten the homeland.

a. The possibility of Afghan insurgents winning is not a sure thing. Twenty years ago, it took a far better armed and far more popular insurgency more than three years to take power after the complete withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Unlike 1996, when the Taliban captured Kabul, the label Taliban now includes a collection of local insurgencies with some attempts at coordination on a larger scale. The Taliban is deeply divided and there is no evidence that it is in the process of consolidating its forces for a push on Kabul. Local Taliban forces can prevent foreign forces from protecting the local population, through their time honored tactics of ambushes and raids. General McChrystal is right: the situation in the countryside is grim. But this local resistance does not translate into deeply divided Taliban forces being able to coalesce in the near future into an offensive force capable of marching on to Kabul. Command and control frictions and divergent goals hamper their planning and coordination of operations. They lack popular support and have not demonstrated ability to project beyond their immediate locality.

b. Taliban return to power will not mean an automatic new sanctuary for al-Qaeda. First, there is no reason for al-Qaeda to return to Afghanistan. It seems safer in Pakistan at the moment. Indeed, al-Qaeda has so far not returned to Taliban controlled areas in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda’s relationship with Taliban factions has never been very smooth, despite the past public display of Usama bin Laden’s pledge of bayat to Mullah Omar. Al-Qaeda leaders seem intimately involved in the Haqqani network in North Waziristan, less so with Mullah Omar’s Quetta Shura, and even less with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s forces. Indeed, the presence of al-Qaeda in Afghan-

istan divided Taliban leaders before their downfall. Likewise, loyalty for Taliban leader Mullah Omar also divided al-Qaeda leadership. This complex relationship between al-Qaeda and Afghan Taliban factions opens up an opportunity for the U.S. Government to mobilize its political savvy based on a deep understanding of local history, culture and politics to prevent the return of a significant al-Qaeda presence in Afghanistan.⁴

c. Even if a triumphant Taliban invites al-Qaeda to return to Afghanistan, its presence there will look very similar to its presence in the FATA. Times have changed. The presence of large sanctuaries in Afghanistan was predicated on Western not so benign neglect of the al-Qaeda funded camps there. This era is gone because Western powers will no longer tolerate them. There are many ways to prevent the return of al-Qaeda to Afghanistan besides a national counter-insurgency strategy. Vigilance through electronic monitoring, spatial surveillance, a networks of informants in contested territory, combined with the nearby stationing of a small force dedicated to physically eradicate any visible al-Qaeda presence in Afghanistan will prevent the return of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. The proper military mission in Afghanistan and elsewhere is sanctuary denial.

5. Counter-terrorism is working. The escalation from a more limited and focused counter-terrorism strategy to a larger combined counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency strategy (in a country devoid of the al-Qaeda presence!) is predicated on the assumption that the terrorist threat is either stable or increasing—meaning that counter-terrorism has failed. The timeline graphs clearly show that the threat is fading, from its high water mark of 2004. There has been no global neo-jihadi terrorist casualty in the United States in the past eight years and none in the West in general in the past four years. Of course, al-Qaeda is not dead as long as its top leadership is still alive. This cannot be attributed to a loss of intent from al-Qaeda and its militant rivals. From all indications, including recent debriefs of terrorist wannabes captured in Pakistan and the West, the respective leaders of global neo-jihadi terrorism are still enthusiastically plotting to hit the West and do not hesitate to proclaim their desire on the Internet. Nor is this due to the counter-insurgency in Afghanistan because al-Qaeda and its allies all have their training facilities in Pakistan. It is due to effective counter-terrorism strategy, which is on the brink of completely eliminating al-Qaeda. A dead organization will not be able to return to Afghanistan.

6. The reasons for the effectiveness of the counter-terrorism strategy so far are multiple. First and foremost is al-Qaeda's inability to grow. Unlike the pre-9/11/01 period, al-Qaeda leaders have generally not incorporated new recruits among its ranks. The leadership of al-Qaeda still harks back to the fight against the Soviets in the 1980s. Because he has been hiding full time, Osama bin Laden has not been able to appoint and train a new group of top leaders and there is no evidence that he trusts anyone whom he has not known from the anti-Soviet jihad. In the 1990s, al-Qaeda incorporated the brightest and most dedicated novices who came to train in its network of camps in Afghanistan. They became its cadres and trainers. In the past five years, al-Qaeda has not been able for the most part to incorporate new recruits among its ranks. Western novices traveling to Pakistan in the hope of making contact with al-Qaeda have been turned around and sent back to the West to carry out terrorist operations. Meanwhile, the success of the predator drone strike campaign on the Pakistani border has dramatically thinned the ranks of both al-Qaeda leaders and cadres. Now it appears that these strikes are also targeting al-Qaeda allies with a transnational agenda.

7. Protection of Western homeland involves an effective strategy of containment of the threat in the Afghan Pakistan area until it disappears for internal reasons. In the past five years, al-Qaeda or its transnational allies have not been able to infiltrate professional terrorists into the West, as Ramzi Yousef did in New York in 1993 or the GIA did in France in 1995. None of the plots during that time involved any full time professional terrorist. This is probably due to good cooperation among intelligence agencies around the world, good in-

⁴ See Mountstuart Elphinstone, 1815, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul, and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India; Comprising a View of the Afghaun Nation, and a History of the Dooraunee Monarchy*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown; Olaf Caroe, ., 1958, *The Pathans: 550 B.C.–A.D. 1957*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; and Akbar Ahmed, 2004, *Resistance and Control in Pakistan: Revised Edition*, London: Routledge, for sophisticated examples of effective governance in the Afghan tribal areas.

telligence databases and increased vigilance and security at airports around the world. To carry out operations in the West, these global neo-jihadi terrorist organizations are completely dependent on Western volunteers coming to the Pakistani border to meet terrorist groups or on inspiring young Western terrorist wannabes to carry out operations on their own without any guidance or training. These organizations are stuck with the people traveling to the border area to meet with them, mostly through chance encounters. These travelers are relatively few in number, totaling in the dozens at most. The emerging details from the terrorist trials and the interrogations of the Westerners captured in Pakistan are quite clear on this score. Terrorist organizations can no longer cherry pick the best candidates as they did in the 1990s. There is no al-Qaeda recruitment program: al-Qaeda and its allies are totally dependent on self-selected volunteers, who come to Pakistan. Global neo-jihadi terrorism also has no control over the young people who wish to carry out operations in the West in its names. The result is a dramatic degradation of the caliber of terrorist wannabes, resulting in the decrease in success of terrorist operations in the West despite the increased number of attempts. Containing those who travel to Pakistan for terrorist training is a counter-terrorism problem and is much easier problem to solve than transforming an adjacent nation through a national counter-insurgency strategy. The West has been doing well in this strategy of containment with Pakistan's active collaboration.

8. The decrease of global neo-jihadi terrorism in the last five years is testimony to the effectiveness of international and domestic intelligence as well as good police work. The timeline analysis of global neo-jihadi terrorism shows that the major threat to Western homelands is al-Qaeda inspired homegrown networks. Disrupting such homegrown plots has always been a domestic counter-terrorism mission through domestic intelligence and law enforcement. Indeed, there is a strong probability that the proposed counter-insurgency military surge may result in moral outrage in young Muslims in the West, who would take it upon themselves to carry out terrorist operations at home in response to the surge—just as the invasion in Iraq resulted in a dramatic increase in terrorist operations in the West. So, far from protecting the homeland, the surge may actually endanger it in the short term. After going through a learning process, Western law enforcement agencies, in coordination with their foreign counterparts, have done an effective job in protecting the homeland.

9. In conclusion, counter-terrorism works and is doing well against the global neo-jihadi terrorist threat. It consists of a combination of good domestic police work, good domestic intelligence, good cooperation with foreign domestic intelligence agencies, good airport security, good border control, keeping up the pressure on al-Qaeda and its transnational allies in Pakistan through arrests and Predator drone attacks, using political and economic skill to deny terrorist sanctuary in Pakistan, supporting the Pakistan military to dislodge foreign militants from Waziristan while sealing the border on the Afghan side, and continued sanctuary denial in Afghanistan. These are measures that will continue regardless of what is done in Afghanistan. There is definitely no necessity and very little value added for the counter-insurgency option, which is the most costly in terms of blood and treasure, probably the least likely to succeed and may even make things worse in the short run.

10. Counter-insurgency and nation building in Afghanistan may be important for regional reasons and I would be honored to address these complex issues at another time. I am pleased to see that the committee invited my former chief, Milton Bearden, to testify on these issues last week. I had the privilege to serve under him in Islamabad, where I spent almost three years in personal contact with the major Afghan Mujahedin commanders fighting against the Soviet Union. I stand ready to comment on counter-insurgency strategy and tactics in Afghanistan based on my personal experiences with important Afghan insurgents. But counter-insurgency in Afghanistan has little to do with global neo-jihadi terrorism and protecting the homeland.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Sageman.
Mr. Bergen?

**STATEMENT OF PETER BERGEN, SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW
AND CO-DIRECTOR, COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY INITIATIVE,
THE NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Mr. BERGEN. Thank you very much, Senator Kerry and Senator Lugar and other members of the committee for this invitation to speak today. It really is an honor and a privilege to be here.

I guess I am going to provide something of a threat assessment. First of all, the threat to the United States of a 9/11 attack is close to zero now. Al-Qaeda itself, if it got lucky, might be able to pull off something like the first Trade Center attack or maybe the Oklahoma City bombing. These would be second-order threats. They wouldn't change, reorient our entire national security policy.

But al-Qaeda is able to kill hundreds of Americans overseas still. If the planes plot of the summer of 2006 had succeeded, seven American, Canadian, and British airliners would have gone down. Fifteen hundred people would have been in the middle of the Atlantic. Mostly, it would have been Brits, Canadians, and Americans.

So that is sort of a threat assessment in terms of our—the United States interests. What are the pressure points that are being put on al-Qaeda right now? al-Qaeda is slightly pressured. The drone attacks obviously we have heard. Half the leadership in the federally administered tribal areas have been killed.

I do caution something about the drone attacks. You know, when Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed, the violence in Iraq actually went up. So they are not a sufficient policy, but obviously, they are quite useful.

Second, one of the biggest and most important strategic shifts since 9/11 is the changing view of the Pakistani public, military, and government. This is seismic. If you think about the center of gravity of this whole war, in a sense, it is for the Pakistani population.

If they believe that it is in their interest to get rid of the Taliban, if they believe it is in their interest to get rid of al-Qaeda, we are in a very different situation. Now the operation in Swat by the Pakistani government against the Pakistani Taliban was very popular in Pakistan.

Support for al-Qaeda, support for bin Laden, support for suicide bombing is cratering in Pakistan. It used to be 33 percent support in Pakistan for suicide bombings. It is now 5 percent. So this is a very positive development.

This situation is also mirrored in the Muslim world in general, where support for suicide bombing has gone down to 12 percent in Indonesia from something like 30 percent, to 12 percent in Jordan from something like 30 percent—in country after country—because al-Qaeda keeps killing Muslim civilians.

And this gets to the four strategic weaknesses that al-Qaeda has. It kills a lot of Muslim civilians. It doesn't have a positive vision of the future. If bin Laden was here testifying, you ask him, "What are you trying to do?"

He would say the restoration of the caliphate.

Well, when the caliphate existed, it was the Ottoman Empire, a relatively rational group of people. But what bin Laden means is

Taliban-style theocracies from Indonesia to Morocco. Most Muslims don't want to live in that kind of utopia.

The third problem that these groups have is that they have made a world of enemies. This is never a winning strategy. You are supposed to add to your allies, not your enemies. But bin Laden and al-Qaeda have said they are opposed to pretty much every government in the world—Jews, Christians, Muslims who don't precisely share their views, the Shia, international media, the United Nations. The list goes on and on.

And because they won't make the real-world political compromises that are necessary, they will not be able to turn themselves into mass political movements like Hezbollah. So they have major strategic problems. These are being recognized around the Muslim world. They are even being criticized from people who used to be their supporters—for instance, major religious clerics in Saudi Arabia, former militants who have come out publicly against them. So in terms of losing the war of ideas, they are certainly losing those.

On the other hand, al-Qaeda's obituary has been written many times, and it would be premature to be writing it during this hearing. The group has still preserved its leadership. Leadership is important. If Hitler had been killed in 1944 by von Stauffenberg, World War II would have ended a year earlier.

Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri may not be in operational control of this movement because they can't call people on the phone, but they don't need to because they have the global communications revolution. They just release a videotape or an audiotape.

And on those tapes are not only commanders' intent—kill Westerners, kill Jews—but often specific instructions like, for instance, we are going to react to the Danish cartoon controversy. Well, about 3 months after bin Laden made that statement in 2008, a suicide attacker blew up the Danish embassy in Islamabad, and there are many other examples.

Another factor in their longevity is al-Qaeda—and I have got to disagree with my friend and colleague Marc Sageman here a little bit. Al-Qaeda has influenced the Taliban ideologically and tactically to a very great degree. The reason that we are having an epidemic of suicide attacks and beheadings of hostages and IED attacks is because the Taliban sent people to Iraq to learn from the insurgency, and they copycatted the insurgency.

And al-Qaeda and the Taliban today are far closer than they were before 9/11. The idea that if the Taliban were in power, they wouldn't bring back al-Qaeda is absurd. The whole Taliban project has been about protecting al-Qaeda. And if international forces pulled out of Afghanistan or we lowered our commitment, the Taliban would eventually take control of parts of the country and could even take it over entirely not because the Taliban is so strong, but because the Afghan government and the Afghan military right now are so weak.

And I have 7 seconds left, and I would just like to say then—because I will keep the 5-minute rule—that one of the most common myths, by the way, about Afghanistan is that Afghans are resistant to foreign forces. In poll after poll since the fall of the

Taliban, 83 percent favorable, in 2005, views of international forces.

In the most recent poll, 63 percent of Afghans had a favorable view of the U.S. military. Can we think of a country in the world, other than our own, which would have this kind of view?

So Afghans want us to perform. They want international forces. They have had a totalitarian invasion, a civil war, and the Taliban. Obama doesn't have to be turning Afghanistan into Belgium, but they do want us to get it right and they do want us to stay.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bergen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PETER BERGEN

Senator Kerry, Senator Lugar and other members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My testimony will attempt to cover the following areas: al-Qaeda's current threat to the United States; to American interests around the world, and to US allies; likely targets that al-Qaeda will attack over the coming years and the kinds of tactics the group is likely to employ in the future; the impact of US counterterrorism measures on al-Qaeda as well as other factors that have an impact on the group's viability; the current status of al-Qaeda's closest allies; and will conclude with some broad observations about American policy in Afghanistan, and how that might impact al-Qaeda in the future, as this is a matter of current interest to many policymakers.

A. AL-QAEDA'S THREAT TO THE AMERICAN HOMELAND.

Al-Qaeda's ability to attack the United States directly is currently low. Why? First, the American Muslim community has rejected the al-Qaeda ideological virus. American Muslims have instead overwhelmingly signed up for the "American Dream," enjoying higher incomes and educational levels than the average. Second, when jihadist terrorists have attacked the United States, they have arrived from outside the country. The 19 hijackers of 9/11, for instance, all came from elsewhere, while Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the 1993 Trade Center bombing, flew to New York from Pakistan. Today's no-fly list and other protective measures make entering the country much more difficult. Third, measures like the establishment of the National Counterterrorism Center, where officials from different branches of government share information and act on terrorist threats have made us safer. And so, a catastrophic mass-casualty assault in the United States along the lines of 9/11 is no longer plausible.

But the recent case of Najibullah Zazi, an Afghan-American resident of Denver Colorado, does raise some serious concerns about al-Qaeda's continued ability to target the United States. Unlike many of the post-9/11 American terrorism cases, Zazi's case does not appear to have been informant-driven. Zazi appears to have been either the leader or a foot soldier in the first genuine al-Qaeda sleeper cell discovered in the United States in the past several years.

Zazi travelled to Pakistan in late August 2008 where by his own admission he received training on explosives from al-Qaeda in the Pakistani tribal regions along the Afghan border. On Zazi's laptop computer the FBI discovered he had stored pages of handwritten notes about the manufacture and initiation of explosives and the components of various detonators and fusing systems, technical know-how he had picked up at one of al-Qaeda's training facilities in the tribal regions sometime between the late summer of 2008 and January 2009, when he returned to the United States.

In the Denver area over the summer of 2009 Zazi bought at least 18 bottles of hydrogen peroxide-based hair products and was allegedly planning to use the seemingly innocuous hair bleach to assemble deadly homemade bombs. Early last month, in a Denver motel room that he had rented for that purpose, Zazi laboriously mixed up batches of the noxious chemicals before he was arrested.

The Zazi case is a reminder of al-Qaeda's ability to attract recruits who are "clean skins" without previous criminal records or known terrorist associations and who are quite familiar with the West-Zazi's family first arrived in the United States when he was fourteen. And although much of the case still remains murky, Zazi appears to have had associates in the U.S. who traveled with him to Pakistan and may have been helping him to assemble large quantities of hydrogen peroxide. And if the government's allegations are correct and Zazi had managed to carry out his plans, he could have killed scores of Americans.

That said, today the al-Qaeda organization no longer poses a direct national security threat to the United States itself, but rather poses a second-order threat in which the worst case scenario would be an al-Qaeda-trained terrorist managing to pull off an attack on the scale of something in between the 1993 Trade Center attack, which killed six, and the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995, which killed 168. While this, of course, would be tragic, it would not constitute a mass casualty attack sufficiently large in scale to reorient American national security policy completely as the 9/11 attacks did.

B. AL-QAEDA'S THREAT TO AMERICAN INTERESTS AND ALLIES OVERSEAS.

The threat posed by al-Qaeda to American interests and allies overseas continues to be somewhat high. Despite all the pressure placed on al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan since 9/11, training has continued in Pakistan's tribal areas and is the common link between the terrorist group's "successes" and its near-misses since then; for instance, the deadliest terrorist attack in British history—the four suicide bombings on London's transportation system on July 7, 2005, which killed 52 commuters—was directed by al-Qaeda from the tribal regions.

The four bombs that detonated in London on what became known as 7/7 were all hydrogen peroxide-based devices. This has become something of a signature of plots that have a connection to Pakistani training camps. Two weeks after the 7/7 attacks on July 21, 2005 there was a second wave of hydrogen peroxide-based bombs set off in London, this one organized by a cell of Somali and Eritrean men who were first-generation immigrants to the U.K. Luckily their bombs were ineffective.

Hydrogen peroxide-based bombs would again be the signature of a cell of British Pakistanis who plotted to bring down seven passenger jets flying to the United States and Canada from the U.K. during the summer of 2006. The plotters distilled hydrogen peroxide to manufacture liquid explosives, which they assembled in an apartment-turned-bomb factory in East London that they had recently purchased for the cash equivalent of some \$200,000. The case resulted in the immediate ban of all carry-on liquids and gels, and rules were later put in place to limit the amounts of these items that travelers could bring on planes.

The 'planes plot' conspirators were arrested in August 2006 and in subsequent congressional testimony Lieutenant General Michael Maples, the head of the US Defense Intelligence Agency, said the plot was "directed by al-Qaeda leadership in Pakistan."¹

During the trial of the eight men accused in the 'planes plot' the prosecution argued that some 1,500 passengers would have died if all seven planes had been brought down. The plot, which was entering its final stages in the summer of 2006, seemed designed to "celebrate" the upcoming fifth anniversary of 9/11 by once again targeting commercial aviation, a particular obsession of al-Qaeda. Most of the victims of the attacks would have been Americans, Britons and Canadians.

The seriousness of the intent of the plotters can be seen in the fact that six of them made "martyrdom" videotapes recovered by British investigators. At their trial prosecutors played the video made by the ringleader, 25-year old Abdullah Ahmed Ali. Against a backdrop of a black flag adorned with flowing Arabic script and dressed in a Palestinian-style black-and-white checkered head scarf. Ali lectured into the camera, "Sheikh Osama warned you many times to leave our lands or you will be destroyed. Now the time has come for you to be destroyed."

Last month, Ali and two of his co-conspirators were found guilty of planning to blow up the transatlantic airliners. Some of the key evidence against them was emails they had exchanged with their handler in Pakistan Rashid Rauf, a British citizen who has worked closely with al-Qaeda, who ordered them "to get a move on" with their operation in an email he sent them on July 25, 2006.² Those emails were intercepted by American spy agencies which led to the arrests of Ali and his cell.

Pakistan's tribal regions have continued to attract Westerners intent on inflicting jihadist mayhem against American targets, like the two Germans and a Turk residing in Germany who were planning to bomb the massive US Ramstein airbase there in 2007. Before their arrests, the men had obtained 1,600 pounds of industrial strength hydrogen peroxide, enough to make a number of large bombs.

Today the al-Qaeda the organization continues to pose a substantial threat to US interests overseas and could still pull off an attack that would kill hundreds of Americans as was the plan during the 'planes plot' of 2006. No Western country is

¹ Michael Maples, "Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States," Statement for the record, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 11, 2007. <http://www.dia.mil/publicaffairs>.

² Henry Chu and Sebastian Rotella, "Three Britons convicted of plot to blow up planes," Los Angeles Times 8 September 2009 <http://www.latimes.com>.

more threatened by al-Qaeda than the United Kingdom, although a spate of arrests and successful prosecutions over the past four years have degraded the terrorist's group's capability in the UK.

C. FACTORS PUTTING PRESSURE ON AL-QAEDA AND ALLIED GROUPS.

Al-Qaeda is today facing a combination of circumstances that is putting a great deal of pressure on the organization, including ramped-up American drone attacks in the tribal regions of Pakistan where the group is headquartered; far better intelligence on militants based in those tribal areas; increasingly negative Pakistani public and governmental attitudes towards militant jihadist groups based in Pakistan; and similar sentiments among publics and governments around the Muslim world in general.

1. Drone attacks.

The relatively slow pace of drone attacks against al-Qaeda's leaders quickened dramatically in the waning six months of the Bush administration after it had become clear that the terror group was reconstituting itself in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).³

Since the summer of 2008 U.S. drones have killed scores of lower-ranking militants and at least a dozen mid-and upper-level leaders within al-Qaeda or the Taliban in FATA. One of them was Abu Laith Al Libi, who orchestrated a 2007 suicide attack targeting Vice President Dick Cheney while he was visiting Bagram air base in Afghanistan. Al Libi was then described as the number-three man in the al-Qaeda hierarchy, perhaps the most dangerous job in the world, given that the half-dozen or so men who have occupied that position have ended up dead or in prison.

Other leading militants killed in the drone strikes include Abu Sulayman Al Jazairi, an Algerian jihadist; Abu Khabab al Masri, a WMD expert; Abdul Rehman, a Taliban commander in South Waziristan; Abu Haris, al-Qaeda's chief in Pakistan; Khalid Habib, Abu Zubair Al Masri, and Abdullah Azzam Al Saudi, all of whom were senior members of al-Qaeda; Abu Jihad Al Masri, al-Qaeda's propaganda chief; and Tahir Yuldashev, the leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, an insurgent group with long ties to al-Qaeda.

One consistent target of the drone attacks has been the South Waziristan stronghold of Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban. American and Pakistani officials identify Mehsud as the mastermind of Benazir Bhutto's assassination in December 2007. He was killed in a drone strike in early August.

None of the strikes has targeted Osama bin Laden, who seems to have vanished like a wraith.

Officials in both the Bush and Obama administrations have been leery of discussing the highly classified drone program on the record, but a window into their thinking was provided by the remarks of then-CIA director Michael Hayden on November 13, 2008, as the drone program was in full swing. "By making a safe haven feel less safe, we keep al-Qaeda guessing. We make them doubt their allies; question their methods, their plans, even their priorities," he explained. Hayden went on to say that the key outcome of the drone attacks was that "we force them to spend more time and resources on self-preservation, and that distracts them, at least partially and at least for a time, from laying the groundwork for the next attack."⁴

This strategy seems to have worked, at least in terms of limiting the ability of al-Qaeda and other FATA-based militant groups to plan or carry out attacks in the West. Since the summer of 2008 when the drone program was ramped up, law enforcement authorities have uncovered only one plot against American targets traceable back to Pakistan's tribal regions (the Zazi case mentioned above).

President Obama has not only continued the ramped-up drone program he inherited from President Bush, he has ratcheted it up further. In 2007, there were three drone strikes in Pakistan; in 2008, there were 34; and, by the date of this hearing in early October 2009, the Obama administration has already authorized 39.

Two officials familiar with the drone program point out that the number of "spies" al-Qaeda and the Taliban have killed has risen dramatically in the past year, suggesting that the militants are turning on themselves in an effort to root out the sources of the often pinpoint intelligence that has led to what those officials describe as the deaths of half of the top militant leaders in the FATA. This death rate also

³This section draws on Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "The Drone War," *The New Republic*, June 3, 2009. <http://www.tnr.com/>.

⁴Transcript of Director's Remarks at the Atlantic Council, Michael Hayden, Washington, DC, November 13, 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/news-information>.

demonstrates that American intelligence operations have dramatically improved in FATA.

One way of measuring the pain that the drone program has inflicted on al-Qaeda is the number of audio-and videotapes that the terrorist group has released through its propaganda arm, As-Sahab (“the clouds” in Arabic). Al-Qaeda takes its propaganda operations seriously; bin Laden has observed that 90 percent of his battle is waged in the media, and Zawahiri has made similar comments. In 2007, As-Sahab had a banner year, releasing almost 100 tapes. But the number of releases dropped by half in 2008, indicating that the group’s leaders were more concerned with survival than public relations. However, since the beginning of 2009, al-Qaeda is on track to produce a record number of tapes, suggesting that its media arm has moved from the FATA deeper into Pakistan, likely to cities such as Peshawar.

There are three important caveats about the success of the drone operations: First, the Afghan-American Najibullah Zazi was still able to receive training on explosives from al-Qaeda in the tribal regions of Pakistan during the fall of 2009 after the drone program had been dramatically ramped up there. Second, militant organizations like al-Qaeda are not like an organized crime family, which can be put out of business if most or all of the members of the family are captured or killed. Al-Qaeda has sustained and can continue to sustain enormous blows that would put other organizations out of business because the members of the group firmly believe that they are doing God’s work and tactical setbacks do not matter in the short run. Third, it is highly unlikely that the drone program will be expanded from FATA into other non-tribal regions of Pakistan because of intense Pakistani opposition to such a move. Understanding that fact, some militants have undoubtedly moved out of FATA and into safer parts of Pakistan.

2. Increasingly negative Pakistani attitudes toward the militants based on their territory.

If there is a silver lining to the militant atrocities that have plagued Pakistan in the past several years it is the fact that the Pakistani public, government and military are increasingly seeing the jihadist militants on their territory in a hostile light. The Taliban’s assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the country’s most popular politician; al-Qaeda’s bombing of the Marriott hotel in Islamabad; the attack on the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore; the widely circulated video images of the Taliban flogging a 17-year-old girl; a cell phone video recording of militants executing a couple for supposed adultery—each of these has provoked real revulsion among the Pakistani public, which is, in the main, utterly opposed to the militants.

In fact, historians will likely record the Taliban’s decision to move earlier this year from the Swat Valley into Buner District, only 60 miles from Islamabad, as the tipping point that finally galvanized the sclerotic Pakistani state to confront the fact that the jihadist monster it had helped to spawn was now trying to swallow its creator.

The subsequent military operation to evict the Taliban from Buner and Swat was not seen by the Pakistani public as the army acting on behalf of the United States as was often the case in previous such operations, but something that was in their own national interest. Support for Pakistani army operations against the Taliban in Swat increased from 28% two years ago to 69% today.⁵

In fact, arguably not since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 have American strategic interests and Pakistani strategic interests so closely aligned. This month it looks virtually certain that the Pakistani military will launch an operation into Waziristan in FATA against the militants based there. That comes on the heels of an aggressive American drone campaign in the Waziristan region that Pakistani leaders have privately encouraged.

Support for suicide bombing has dropped from 33% to 5% in Pakistan over the past several years and the number of Pakistanis who feel that the Taliban and al-Qaeda operating in Pakistan are a “serious problem” has risen from 57% to 86% since 2007.⁶ When Baitullah Meshud—the Taliban leader who had unleashed his suicide bombers across Pakistan in the past two years—was killed two months ago in a US drone strike, the tone of the Pakistani media coverage was celebratory. “Good Riddance, Killer Baitullah” was the lead headline in the quality Dawn newspaper.⁷

⁵ International Republic Institute, Survey of Pakistan Public Opinion, October 1, 2009. <http://www.iri.org>.

⁶ Juliana Menasce Horowitz, “Declining Support for bin Laden and Suicide Bombing,” Pew Global Attitudes Project, September 10, 2009. <http://pewresearch.org>.

⁷ Ismail Khan, “Good Riddance, Killer Baitullah,” Dawn 8 August 2009 <http://www.dawn.com>.

The changing attitudes of the Pakistani public, military and government constitutes arguably the most significant strategic shift against al-Qaeda and its allies in the past several years as it will have a direct impact on the terrorist organization and allied groups that are headquartered in Pakistan. However, changing attitudes in Pakistan do not mean, for the moment, that the Pakistani military will do much to move against the Taliban groups on their territory that are attacking US and other NATO forces in Afghanistan such as Mullah Omar's Quetta shura, the Haqqani network and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezbi-Islami.

3. Increasingly hostile attitudes towards al-Qaeda in the Muslim world in general.

Hostility to militant jihadist groups is growing sharply in much of the Muslim world today. This is because most of the victims of these groups are Muslim civilians. This has created a dawning recognition among Muslims that the ideological virus that unleashed September 11 and the terrorist attacks in London and Madrid is the same virus now wreaking havoc in the Muslim world in countries like Pakistan and Iraq. It is human nature to be concerned mostly with threats that directly affect one's own interests and so as jihadi terrorists started to target the governments and civilians of Muslim countries this led to a hardening of attitudes against them. Until the terrorist attacks of May 2003 in Riyadh, for instance, the Saudi government was largely in denial about its large scale al-Qaeda problem. There have been some twenty terrorist attacks since then in the Kingdom and as a result the Saudi government has taken aggressive steps—arresting thousands of suspected terrorists, killing more than a hundred, implementing an expansive public information campaign against them, and arresting preachers deemed to be encouraging militancy.

A similar process has happened in Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, where Jemaah Islamiyah, the al-Qaeda affiliate there, is more or less out of business; its leaders in jail or dead, and its popular legitimacy close to zero. Polling around the Muslim world shows also sharp drops in support for Osama bin Laden personally and for suicide bombings in general. Support for suicide bombings has dropped in Indonesia, for instance, from 26% to 13% in the past seven years and in Jordan from 43% to 12%.⁸

4. Jihadist ideologues and erstwhile militant allies have now also turned against al-Qaeda.

It's not just Muslim publics who have turned against al-Qaeda; it is also some of the religious scholars and militants whom the organization has relied upon in the past for various kinds of support. Around the sixth anniversary of September 11, Sheikh Salman Al Oudah, a leading Saudi religious scholar, addressed al-Qaeda's leader on MBC, a widely watched Middle East TV network: "My brother Osama, how much blood has been spilt? How many innocent people, children, elderly, and women have been killed ... in the name of al-Qaeda? Will you be happy to meet God Almighty carrying the burden of these hundreds of thousands or millions [of victims] on your back?"⁹

What was noteworthy about Al Oudah's statement was that it was not simply a condemnation of terrorism, or even of September 11, but that it was a personal rebuke, which clerics in the Muslim world have shied away from. Al Oudah's rebuke was also significant because he is considered one of the fathers of the Sahwa, the fundamentalist awakening movement that swept through Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. His sermons against the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia following Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait helped turn bin Laden against the United States. And bin Laden told CNN in 1997 that Al Oudah's 1994 imprisonment by the Saudi regime was one of the reasons he was calling for attacks on U.S. targets. Al Oudah is also one of 26 Saudi clerics who, in 2004, handed down a religious ruling urging Iraqis to fight the U.S. occupation of their country. He is, in short, not someone al-Qaeda can paint as either an American sympathizer or a tool of the Saudi government.

More doubt about al-Qaeda was planted in the Muslim world when Sayyid Imam Al Sharif, the ideological godfather of al-Qaeda who is also known as Dr. Fadl, sensationally withdrew his support in a book written last year from his prison cell in Cairo. Dr Fadl ruled that al-Qaeda's bombings in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere were illegitimate and that terrorism against civilians in Western countries was wrong. He also took on al-Qaeda's leaders directly in an interview with Al Hayat newspaper describing "bin Laden and other leaders of al-Qaeda as "extremely

⁸Horowitz op. cit. <http://pewresearch.org>.

⁹Quoted in Turki Al-Saheil, "Reaction to Salman Al Ouda's Bin Laden Letter," Asharq al-Awsat, September 18, 2007. <http://www.aawsat.com>.

immoral. I have spoken about this in order to warn the youth against them, youth who are seduced by them, and don't know them."¹⁰

And leaders of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, which was once loosely aligned with al-Qaeda, have this past summer officially turned against the terrorist group issuing statements against al-Qaeda from their prison cells in Libya and their offices in London. This is the first time that an affiliate has withdrawn its support from al-Qaeda.

5. *Al-Qaeda's four key strategic problems.*

Encoded in the DNA of apocalyptic jihadist groups like al-Qaeda are the seeds of their own long-term destruction: Their victims are often Muslim civilians; they don't offer a positive vision of the future (but rather the prospect of Taliban-style regimes from Morocco to Indonesia); they keep expanding their list of enemies, including any Muslim who doesn't precisely share their world view; and they seem incapable of becoming politically successful movements because their ideology prevents them from making the real-world compromises that would allow them to engage in genuine politics.

a. *Al-Qaeda keeps killing Muslims civilians.*

This is a double whammy for al-Qaeda as the Koran forbids killing civilians and fellow Muslims.

b. *Al-Qaeda has not created a genuine mass political movement.*

While bin Laden enjoys some personal popularity in the Muslim world that does not translate into mass support for al-Qaeda in the manner that Hezbollah enjoys such support in Lebanon. That is not surprising—there are no al-Qaeda social welfare services, schools, hospitals or clinics.

c. *Al-Qaeda's leaders have constantly expanded their list of enemies.*

Al-Qaeda has said at various times that it is opposed to all Middle Eastern regimes; Muslims who don't share their views; the Shia; most Western countries; Jews and Christians; the governments of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Russia; most news organizations; the United Nations; and international NGOs. It's very hard to think of a category of person, institution, or government that al-Qaeda does not oppose. Making a world of enemies is never a winning strategy.

d. *Al-Qaeda has no positive vision.*

We know what bin Laden is against, but what's he really for? If you asked him, he would say the restoration of the caliphate. In practice that means Taliban-style theocracies stretching from Indonesia to Morocco. A silent majority of Muslims don't want that.

Al-Qaeda is, in short, losing the war of ideas in the Islamic world, although as Bruce Hoffman has pointed out, even terrorist groups with little popular support or legitimacy such as the Baader-Meinhof gang in 1970s Germany can continue to carry out frequent terror attacks.

FACTORS THAT CONTINUE TO WEIGH IN AL-QAEDA'S FAVOR

1. *Preservation of the group's leadership.*

The two top leaders of the organization, bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al Zawahiri, are still at liberty. Why does this matter? First, there is the matter of justice for the almost 3,000 people who died in the September 11 attacks and for the thousands of other victims of al-Qaeda's attacks around the world. Second, every day that bin Laden remains at liberty is a propaganda victory for al-Qaeda. Third, although bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al Zawahiri aren't managing al-Qaeda's operations on a daily basis, they guide the overall direction of the jihadist movement around the world, even while they are in hiding through videotapes and audiotapes that they continue to release on a regular basis.

Those messages from al-Qaeda's leaders have reached untold millions worldwide via television, the Internet and newspapers. The tapes have not only instructed al-Qaeda's followers to continue to kill Westerners and Jews, but some also carried specific instructions that militant cells then acted on. In March 2008, for instance, bin Laden denounced the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper as a "catastrophe" for which punishment would soon be meted out. Three months later, an al-Qaeda suicide attacker bombed the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, killing six.

¹⁰This section draws on The New Republic piece by Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling," June 11, 2008, <http://www.newamerica.net>.

2. *Al-Qaeda's ideological influence on other jihadist groups is on the rise in South Asia.*

This influence has been particularly marked on the Taliban on both sides of the Afghan/Pakistan border. The Taliban were a quite provincial group when they ran Afghanistan before 9/11 and many of their leaders opposed bin Laden's presence in their country on the grounds that he was interfering with their quest for recognition by the international community. But since the 9/11 attacks the leadership of the Taliban has adopted al-Qaeda's worldview and see themselves as part of a supposedly global jihadist movement. They have also imported wholesale al-Qaeda's tactics of planting roadside bombs and ordering suicide attacks and beheadings of hostages, which until recently were largely unknown in Pakistan and Afghanistan. These tactics are a key reason why the Taliban insurgencies have become far more effective on both sides of the Durand line in the past three years.

One of the key leaders of the Afghan Taliban as it surged in strength in 2006 was Mullah Dadullah, a thuggish but effective commander who like his counterpart in Iraq, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, thrived on killing Shia, beheading his hostages, and media celebrity. In interviews with al Jazeera and CBS Dadullah conceded what was obvious as the violence dramatically expanded in Afghanistan: that the Taliban had increasingly morphed together tactically and ideologically with al-Qaeda. He said, "Osama bin Laden, thank God, is alive and in good health. We are in contact with his top aides and sharing plans and operations with each other."¹¹ Mullah Dadullah explained that bin Laden himself had supervised the suicide operation targeting Vice President Dick Cheney in Bagram Air Force base during his visit to Afghanistan on February 27, 2007, an attack that killed nearly two dozen, including an American soldier. The US military dismissed that claim but said that another al-Qaeda leader Abu Laith al Libi was behind the operation, which seemed more of a confirmation than a denial of al-Qaeda's role in the attack.¹²

And in 2008 for the first time the Taliban began planning seriously to attack targets in the West. According to Spanish prosecutors, the late leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Baitullah Mehsud dispatched a team of would-be suicide bombers to Barcelona in January 2008. Pakistani Taliban spokesman Maulvi Omar confirmed this in August in a videotaped interview in which he said that those suicide bombers "were under pledge to Baitullah Mehsud" and were sent because of the Spanish military presence in Afghanistan.¹³

And the Mumbai attacks of 2008 show that al-Qaeda's ideas about attacking Western and Jewish targets have also spread to Kashmiris militant groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), that had previously focused only on Indian targets. On November 28, 2008 LeT burst on to the international stage with its multiple attacks in Mumbai on two five star hotels housing Westerners, a Jewish center and a train station. The attacks showed that LeT had learned from the al-Qaeda playbook of multiple simultaneous attacks on symbolic Western and Jewish targets.

3. *Al-Qaeda's affiliates in the Middle East and Africa are proving resilient.*

In 2008 there was a sense that al-Qaeda in Iraq was on the verge of defeat. The American ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker said last May, "You are not going to hear me say that al-Qaeda is defeated, but they've never been closer to defeat than they are now."¹⁴ Certainly al-Qaeda in Iraq has lost the ability to control large swaths of the country and a good chunk of the Sunni population as it did in 2006, but the group has proven surprisingly resilient as demonstrated by the fact that American officials say that it pulled off the bombings in central Baghdad on August 19 that destroyed two Iraqi ministry buildings and killed more than one hundred.

And al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) could regain a role in Iraq despite its much weakened state today. There are some signs that AQI is trying to learn from its mistake of imposing Taliban-style social policies on the Iraqi population. One of AQI's leaders in January 2008 issued a directive to his flock, "Do not interfere in social issues such as head covering and other social affairs which are against our religion until further notice."¹⁵ AQI could also play the nationalist card quite effectively in the north, especially over the disputed city of Kirkuk, which is claimed by both Iraq's

¹¹ BBC News, "Afghanistan: Taleban second coming," June 2, 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

¹² Carlotta Gall, "A mile from Cheney, Afghan bomber kills at least 23," The New York Times 28 February 2007 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/28/world/asia/28cheney.html>; Alisa Tang, "Libyan blamed for bomb at Cheney visit," 3 May 2007 <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

¹³ Anne Stenersen, "Are the Afghan Taliban involved in international terrorism?" CTC Sentinel, September 2009, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu>.

¹⁴ Andrew Kramer, "Iraqi military extends control in northern city," 1 June 2008 <http://query.nytimes.com>.

¹⁵ Bill Roggio, "Al Qaeda in Iraq under pressure in Balad, Anbar," Long War Journal, Februar 10, 2008. <http://www.longwarjournal.org>.

Arabs and Kurd, after all, despite its largely foreign leadership, AQI is made up of mostly Iraqis. Also Iraqi officials believe that AQI is entering into new marriages of convenience with Sunni nationalist groups that only two years ago it was at war with.

Similarly al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which has taken a punishing beating from the Saudi government in the past several years, remains capable of pulling off significant attacks. The group almost succeeded in killing Saudi Arabia's leading counterterrorism official Prince Mohammed bin Nayef in August. A Saudi government official characterized it as a "miracle" that the al-Qaeda assassin, who had secreted a bomb in his underwear, did not manage to kill the prince.¹⁶ And in neighboring Yemen the group has found something of a safe haven taking advantage of the weak government control of that country.

In Africa, the Somali Islamist insurgent group Al Shabbab pledged allegiance to bin Laden last month and has recruited dozens of Somali-American and other Muslims from the United States, including two Americans who have conducted suicide operations there, the first US citizens to undertake suicide missions anywhere. And the North African group al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has in the past two years since it announced its alliance with al-Qaeda conducted a wide range of operations including bombing the United Nations building in Algiers, murdering French tourists and attacking the Israeli embassy in Mauritania, and in May executing a British citizen in Mali who the group had kidnapped earlier in the year.

FUTURE AL-QAEDA TARGETING AND TACTICS

1. *Commercial aviation*

From the so-called shoe bomber Richard Reid to the 9/11 attacks to the 'planes plot' of 2006 attacking commercial aviation continues to preoccupy al-Qaeda and its allies. In 2007 two British doctors who are reported to have had links to al-Qaeda in Iraq attempted to crash a SUV they had set on fire into an entrance at Glasgow airport. And in 2002 an al-Qaeda affiliate in Kenya almost succeeded in bringing down an Israeli passenger jet with a surface to air missile. And in 2003 a plane belonging to the DHL courier service was struck by a surface to air missile as it took off from Baghdad airport. The same year militants cased Riyadh airport and were planning to attack British Airways flights flying into Saudi Arabia. Bringing down a commercial jet with a missile and attacking an airport will remain important goals for al-Qaeda, goals that could well be realized in coming years.

2. *Western economic targets, particularly hotels*

Since the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups have increasingly attacked economic and business targets. The shift in tactics is in part a response to the fact that the traditional pre-9/11 targets, such as American embassies, war ships, and military bases, are now better defended, while so-called 'soft' economic targets are both ubiquitous and easier to hit.

Al-Qaeda and its affiliated terrorist groups are also increasingly targeting companies that have distinctive Western brand names. In 2003, suicide attackers bombed the J.W. Marriott hotel in Jakarta and attacked it again this year. They also attacked the Ritz Carlton hotel in the Indonesian capital. Similarly a Marriott was bombed in Islamabad Pakistan in 2008. In 2002 a group of a dozen French defense contractors were killed as they left a Sheraton hotel in Karachi, Pakistan, which was heavily damaged. In October 2004 in Taba, Egyptian jihadists attacked a Hilton Hotel. In Amman, Jordan in November 2005, al-Qaeda in Iraq attacked three hotels with well known American brand names—the Grand Hyatt, Radisson and Days Inn.

3. *Attacking Israeli/Jewish targets*

Attacking Jewish and Israeli targets is an al-Qaeda strategy that has only emerged strongly post-9/11. Despite bin Laden's declaration in February 1998 that he was creating the "World Islamic Front against the Crusaders and the Jews," al-Qaeda only started attacking Israeli or Jewish targets in early 2002. Since then, al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups have directed a campaign against Israeli and Jewish targets, killing journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi, bombing synagogues and Jewish centers in Tunisia, Morocco and Turkey, and attacking an Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, which killed thirteen. As mentioned above, one of al-Qaeda's North African affiliates attacked the Israeli embassy in Mauritania in 2008.

¹⁶Peter Bergen, "Saudi investigation: Would-be assassin hid bomb in underwear," CNN.com, September 30 ,2009. <http://www.cnn.com>.

4. American suicide bombers?

The news that two American citizens have engaged in suicide operations in Somalia raises the possibility that such operations could also start taking place in the United States itself. To discount this possibility would be to ignore the lessons of the British experience. On April 30, 2003, two Britons of Pakistani descent walked into Mike's Place, a jazz club near the American Embassy in Tel Aviv, the Israeli capital. Once inside one of the men succeeded in detonating a bomb, killing himself and three bystanders, while the other man fled the scene. Similarly, Birmingham-born Mohammed Bilal blew himself up outside an army barracks in Indian-held Kashmir in December 2000, killing six Indian soldiers and three Kashmiri students, becoming the first British suicide bomber.

Despite these suicide attacks the British security services had concluded after 9/11 that suicide bombings by British citizens would not be much of a domestic concern in the U.K. itself. Then came the four suicide attackers in London on July 7 2005, which ended that complacent attitude.

AMERICAN POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR AL-QAEDA

Why is the Afghan-Pakistan safe haven so important to al-Qaeda? The answer lies in its own history. Al-Qaeda was founded in Pakistan in 1988 by bin Laden and some one dozen other militants who had cut their teeth in the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. And bin Laden and Zawahiri have spent most of their adult lives in Afghanistan and Pakistan arriving in the region for the first time respectively in the early- and mid-1980s, so it's an area they are deeply familiar with. In recent years Zawahiri has even married into a local tribe. And al-Qaeda's leaders have had close relations going back to the mid-1980s with key Taliban leaders based along the Afghan-Pakistan border such as the Haqqani family and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

If the Taliban did come back to power in Afghanistan, of course they would give safe haven to al-Qaeda. Despite all the pressures military and otherwise exerted on them over the past decade, giving safe haven to al-Qaeda has been at the heart of the Taliban project; first in the five years before 9/11 when they ran Afghanistan, and since then in the areas of Pakistan's tribal regions that they now control. Taliban leader Mullah Omar was prepared to lose everything on the point of principle that he would not give up Osama bin Laden after the 9/11 attacks. And he did lose everything: after 9/11, the Taliban were swiftly removed from power by U.S. forces. This does not suggest a talent for realpolitik. Foreign policy "realists" often take the view that everyone else is also a realistic and rational as they are, but history does not provide much comfort in this matter.

In a speech in August, President Obama laid out the rationale for stepping up the fight in Afghanistan: "If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al-Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting. This is fundamental to the defense of our people." Obama's "Af-Pak" plan is, in essence, a counter-sanctuary strategy that denies safe havens to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, with the overriding goal of making America and its allies safer.

This is a sound policy. If U.S. forces were not in Afghanistan, the Taliban, with its al-Qaeda allies in tow, would seize control of the country's south and east and might even take it over entirely. A senior Afghan politician told me that the Taliban would be in Kabul within 24 hours without the presence of international forces. This is not because the Taliban is so strong; generous estimates suggest it numbers no more than 20,000 fighters. It is because the Afghan government and the 90,000-man Afghan army are still so weak.

The objections to an increased U.S. military commitment in South Asia rest on a number of flawed assumptions. The first is that Afghans always treat foreign forces as antibodies. In fact, poll after poll since the fall of the Taliban has found that a majority of Afghans have a favorable view of the international forces in their country. A BBC/ABC News poll conducted this year, for instance, showed that 63% of Afghans have a favorable view of the U.S. military.¹⁷ To those who say you can't trust polls taken in Afghanistan, it's worth noting that the same type of poll consistently finds neighboring Pakistan to be one of the most anti-American countries in the world.

Another common criticism is that Afghanistan is a cobbled-together agglomeration of warring tribes and ethnic factions that is not amenable to anything approaching nation-building. In fact, the first Afghan state emerged with the Durrani Empire in 1747, making it a nation older than the U.S. Afghans lack no sense of nationhood; rather, they have always been ruled by a weak central state.

¹⁷BBC/ABC polling, February 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.

A third critique is that Afghanistan is simply too violent for anything constituting success to happen there. This is highly misleading. While violence is on the rise, it is nothing on the scale of what occurred during the Iraq war—or even what happened in U.S. cities as recently as 1991, when an American was statistically more likely to be killed than an Afghan civilian is to die in the war.¹⁸ Finally, critics of greater U.S. involvement suggest that there is no realistic model for a successful end state in Afghanistan. In fact, there is a good one relatively close at hand: Afghanistan as it was in the 1970s, a country at peace internally and with its neighbors, whose towering mountains and exotic peoples drew tourists from around the world.

These flawed assumptions underlie the misguided argument that the war in Afghanistan is unwinnable. Some voices have begun to advocate a much smaller mission in Afghanistan, fewer troops and a decapitation strategy aimed at militant leaders carried out by special forces and drone attacks. Superficially, this sounds reasonable. But it has a back-to-the-future flavor because it is more or less the exact same policy that the Bush Administration followed in the first years of the occupation: a light footprint of several thousand U.S. soldiers who were confined to counterterrorism missions. That approach helped foster the resurgence of the Taliban, which continues to receive material support from elements in Pakistan. If a pared-down counterterrorism strategy works no better the second time around, will the United States have to invade Afghanistan all over again in the event of a spectacular Taliban comeback?

Having overthrown the ruling government in 2001, the U.S. has an obligation to leave to Afghans a country that is somewhat stable. And a stabilized Afghanistan is a necessary precondition for a peaceful South Asia, which is today the epicenter of global terrorism and the most likely setting of a nuclear war. Obamas 'Af-Pak' plan has a real chance to achieve a stable Afghanistan if it is given some time to work.¹⁹

The CHAIRMAN. Well, very provocative by all of you, very thoughtful, and there is a lot of experience at this table. Mr. Bergen, you have written extensively on it, and others of you have been on the ground and understand this.

So help us dig into this now.

Mr. Bergen, you and Mr. Grenier have both sort of made some conclusions about the Taliban. This is pretty essential to the judgments that we are trying to make here because the underlying assumptions are—I mean, if the Taliban are X or Y or al-Qaeda is X or Y, maybe we have to do something, but if they are not, maybe we don't. And so, we want to try to understand that.

Mr. Grenier, you have made a couple of statements here about al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Now the President's strategy is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. That is sort of the first part of the strategy. Is it a fair judgment to say that that has happened, that has been accomplished?

Mr. GRENIER. Mr. Chairman, I don't think that it has been accomplished in a sustainable way. Yes, they—

The CHAIRMAN. I want to get to that. Is it you said in your testimony al-Qaeda is not really in Afghanistan.

Mr. GRENIER. That is right.

The CHAIRMAN. So in terms of in Afghanistan, they have been disrupted and dismantled and defeated. They are not in Afghanistan. Correct?

Mr. GRENIER. That is true.

The CHAIRMAN. They are an influence maybe there, but they are not there?

¹⁸U.S. Department of Justice, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>; "Afghanistan: Annual report on protection of civilians in armed conflict, 2008," United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, January 2009. <http://www.reliefweb.int>.

¹⁹This section draws on Peter Bergen's piece in TIME magazine, "Give it time," October 5, 2009. <http://www.time.com>.

Mr. GRENIER. That is substantially true.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Bergen, do you agree with that?

Mr. BERGEN. al-Qaeda is a force multiplier. It is like having U.S. special forces. So even General Jones, the national security adviser, said there were 100 members of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan right now. Those are the people who are helping with the IEDs. Those are the people helping with the training. Those are the people with the experience.

So while the number may be small, and al-Qaeda has always been a small organization, just fixating on the numbers isn't very helpful because it is about their influence ideologically and tactically that is important.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, let us pursue that. From a larger strategic interest of the United States or how do we protect the interests of the United States, the larger piece goes to the next step, isn't it, Mr. Grenier, which is you don't want them coming back to have a sanctuary where they can plot at will against the United States?

I mean, that, it seems to me, is sort of the next tier. He also said in his strategy to prevent their return to either country. So to what—I mean, some people are alleging that the Taliban of today will not behave in the same way because we—as you said in your testimony, when the Soviets left, we departed the playing field.

We actually assisted in the transfer of Osama bin Laden from Sudan to Afghanistan, and he was kind of given free rein. Here is the country, and the Taliban took over and took it down into the chaos. There was chaos, and they sort of took over. But we didn't play. We weren't there at all. Is that fair?

Mr. GRENIER. We certainly didn't have a presence on the ground in Afghanistan, and we certainly had no effective means of countering al-Qaeda or bin Laden or, for that matter, by extension, the Taliban from Pakistan. We would have required a certain amount of cooperation from the Pakistanis to do that, and we didn't have it.

The CHAIRMAN. So today, as we think about the threat, is it your judgment that we do need to think about the legitimacy of a new union with the Taliban that winds up again threatening the United States, and therefore, we have to think about the Taliban as central to any considerations we have?

Mr. GRENIER. Yes. Obviously, to us, whether al-Qaeda has safe haven on the Afghan side of the border or the Pakistani side of the border is almost a matter of indifference. We don't want them to have safe haven for all the reasons that we can describe.

With regard to their ability, al-Qaeda's ability to establish an effective safe haven for itself within Afghanistan, that very much relies—certainly with the current configuration of forces in Afghanistan, that very much relies on their relationship with the Taliban and on the future intentions of the Taliban.

So I think you are absolutely right, Mr. Chairman. That is a critical question. You have got to get that one right.

The CHAIRMAN. And help us to do that. I mean, you had a rather fascinating, amazing experience as a station chief in Islamabad, and it was your decisions, many of them, that resulted in—and advice that helped 300 operatives and the Northern Alliance to topple the Taliban very easily.

Share with us sort of your judgment of what could flow now if you, let us say—I mean, the President made it pretty clear yesterday he is not planning to draw down on the current numbers right now, and also that there is no discussion—as many of us have said for some time, there has been no discussion of just pulling up stakes. We all understand there is an interest here.

So is there, in your judgment, a more effective way to be able to prevent the Taliban from gaining a stronger foothold, from preventing al-Qaeda from creating a relationship that threatens us, but engaging in less kinetic kind of activity? I mean, do you see a different equation here?

Mr. GRENIER. Mr. Chairman, you just made reference to some of the decisions that we made immediately after 9/11 as we considered how we were going to move the campaign forward. And it seemed to me very strongly at the time and, in fact, it became one of the touchstones of our effort that we couldn't go in on our own. It was simply not a matter of U.S. forces invading Afghanistan. That we had to be in a situation where we were helping Afghans to be instruments of their own liberation from the Taliban.

In the case of the Northern Alliance, well, that was easy. They were already engaged in a civil war with the Taliban. We knew that we had allies there. In the south, it was far more problematic, and we had a pretty good picture about the situation in southern and eastern Pashtun-dominated Afghanistan before 9/11. It got a lot better in the days and weeks immediately afterwards.

But essentially, you had a great deal of discontent with the Taliban and really no real support for al-Qaeda. The question was finding Afghans who were brave enough to take the lead, who could marshal tribal forces that we could then support to topple the Taliban in the south as the Northern Alliance was doing in the north and up to Kabul.

There were only two Pashtun warlords, if you will, who were willing under those circumstances to take that up. One of them was Hamid Karzai, currently president of the country. And the other one was a traditional tribal leader, his family had traditionally been the governors of Kandahar, by the name of Gul Agha Sherzai.

And they went in. They rallied their tribal followers. And then, as you have pointed out, we sent in very amazingly small numbers of special forces operatives to work with them, and through them and bringing U.S. air power to bear, we were able to drive the Taliban out.

Now I hasten to add that the Taliban, in terms of its tactics, was far less sophisticated then than it is now. They were almost laughably unsophisticated then. They have learned a great deal since.

But it seems to me that there is a fundamental issue here. And that is that at the end of the day, it is Afghans who need to be the agents, with our help, but the agents of their own liberation. In any part of the country that we are talking about, unless we have the active support of the Afghans against the Taliban, we will not succeed.

And my concern is that the Afghan army in much of the country is essentially a foreign army. It doesn't mean that it has the active opposition of much of even the Pashtun population, but it is not

Pashtun army. And if they come in, I think most people will be content to do with them as they are essentially doing with American forces now, and that is to sit on the fence and wait and see who wins this thing.

Unless we have their active cooperation, I just don't think that we are going to get any real traction in this campaign. And so, the concern that I have is that we are placing much too much of the emphasis currently on the buildup of an Afghan army which is essentially unsustainable.

I am no expert in this area. If we were to build up an Afghan army, as some are talking about, in the range of over 200,000, the people who claim to know something about this talk about the yearly expense of maintaining such an army in multiples of Afghan GDP. Not multiples of the Afghan national budget, multiples of GDP. It is simply not sustainable.

The CHAIRMAN. What is sustainable?

Mr. GRENIER. What I think is sustainable is actually something which is far harder, and that is to work with local officials, local warlords, in many cases, to help empower them and to—and to sustain them in their efforts to build up local armed power.

One of the real mistakes I think that we have made for most of the last 8 years is that we have made the excellent the enemy of the good. We have had opportunities to build up local leaders. We have had opportunities to build up local militias of the sort, frankly, that we did with great success finally in western Iraq. And we refused to do it because our knee-jerk reaction has been, no, those are the bad old days. That is what we want to avoid. We don't want to build up more warlords.

Well, yes, we would love to have a coherent government powerful in Kabul that could sustain its benign control over the entire country. I just don't think it is going to happen. I don't think that they are capable of it. And so, I would argue that we need not fewer warlords, but more warlords.

Now, there are warlords, and there are warlords. Warlords, as we learned during the active part of the campaign immediately after 9/11, can be influenced. We need to be working on a sustainable relationship between the national government in Kabul and other centers of power out in the provinces, and the Afghan army plays a role in all of that.

The CHAIRMAN. The role of our troops. How do you provide adequate security to be able to do that, or do you not? They do it. Do you let the Afghans who invest, i.e., local warlord, provide the security?

Mr. GRENIER. Well, I think that, initially, the security has to come from some combination of U.S. and Afghan forces. In many cases, the Afghan army simply is not large enough and/or not willing to show up. And so, in some of those cases, I think the initial effort has to come from the Americans.

But again, focusing primarily on significant population centers, I think that the key is to incentivize local leaders who are oriented in the right way to build up local militias that we can then support.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Lugar?

Senator LUGAR. Mr. Sageman, in the charts that you have given to us, you have indicated that at least the number of terrorist plots

in the West has been in decline from 2004 to the present. In the case of the United States, there hasn't been an attack in 8 years. When it comes to Europe or various other places, the number of attacks that have been carried out is in the single digits. The logic of what you are saying is that the al-Qaeda groups, given the cover of the Taliban, have not been very productive in creating terrorist attacks.

Let me be the devil's advocate for a moment, and ask the following question. What if the Taliban not only continued to operate in the part of the country which they still are dominant—we are told it is 37 percent or some such amount—but expanded their control to an even larger area? How many more attacks are likely to occur as a result?

In other words, describe to us why what we are discussing today, which is how we need to maintain control of the country—by “we,” I mean the allies, plus “reliable” Afghan forces—is important with regard to the prevention of terrorist acts throughout the world?

Dr. SAGEMAN. I have only focused on the homeland and Western homeland because that is the crux of our goal. We are getting a little bit too bogged down in Afghan politics here, and I am not really sure that we have a real vital interest outside of terrorism in Afghan politics. Had al-Qaeda not been kicked out of the Sudan in 1996, we would be talking about the Sudan right now, not Afghanistan.

So let us see what is our interest in Afghanistan? And I completely agree with Bob here on the necessity of playing the tribal game. That is what everybody has done in Afghanistan because, frankly, you can't really control those areas.

Right now, none of the plots that you see in the West, you cannot trace any one of them to Afghanistan. They all right now, in the last 7 years, have come from the Pakistani side of those people who traveled back to that area. So if let us say the Taliban controls part of the country, we are making a mistake by, first of all, using the same term for a lot of different groups.

I think General McChrystal was correct in his analysis showing that we are not really facing one large network, but really three networks, namely, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Jalaluddin Haqqani, and then the Quetta Shura of Mullah Omar. But even within those networks, you have tremendous rivalries, mostly cousins—cousins vying for leadership within that group.

We are seeing right now in the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan internal fight that we have witnessed in the last few weeks that people are getting killed in trying to vie for that leadership. So I don't really think that even if one of those groups can get some control locally that we are going to see an increase in plots in the West. We will see far more plots locally.

We may even see plots elsewhere in the world. They actually have a lot of trouble, even now from Pakistan, to project to the West because of a fairly coordinated strategy that Bob did when he was the chief at CTC at the CIA. So, you know, it is a very difficult question.

We should focus on the foreigners in Afghanistan. Afghans have not projected out of Afghanistan for a very long time, for about almost 250 years since the last time they sacked New Delhi. Other-

wise, they are very much local. It is a kind of local jealous egalitarianism to make sure that nobody is too big because then it is a threat of the other guy. So you are going to have alliances against him to take him down. We can play on that. That is exactly what the British did.

Senator LUGAR. Let me interrupt for a second because you are now, I think, on the same track that Mr. Grenier was that we shouldn't necessarily play the network game. But a very difficult situation has become apparent when you look at our insistence upon the purism of democracy as opposed to the current nature of governance in Afghanistan. Let me just ask this, though.

Part of the debate here in the Senate and elsewhere consists of people who say we ought to have something comparable to Iraq, a surge of American forces going after whoever. And that means a lot more soldiers, Americans on the ground, maybe our allies.

And now the question I raise and you have been trying to respond is who would we be surging against? How would this have any effect whatsoever on the incidence of terrorism in the United States, Western Europe, or what have you?

Dr. SAGEMAN. Yes, let me answer that with an old Middle Eastern proverb. It is me and my brother against my cousin, but me and my cousin against a foreigner.

So if we send 40,000 Americans, they are going to be foreigners, no matter what, even though they are well seen. But that will coalesce every local rivalry. They will put their local rivalry aside to actually shoot the foreigners, and then they will resume their own internecine fight.

Senator LUGAR. To what extent could we find the Pashtun, who stretch over Afghanistan and Pakistan and are at least at the heart of the matter, useful to our efforts? They are not all Taliban, certainly not very many of them are al-Qaeda. But at the same time, they are a group of people who, as I believe all three of you suggested—have been very instrumental in the difficulties we have faced.

To what extent is it possible for us to find Pashtun as allies, and to introduce President Karzai again to some Pashtun who might be allies in the coalition? In other words, is it possible to have some effective Afghan governance as well as Pakistani support because of this Pashtun affiliation?

Dr. SAGEMAN. Well, I think we can. I mean, Afghans are for rent. You can't buy them, but you can rent them. Because you do flip-flop very often. Am I wrong?

Mr. GRENIER. No, that certainly, of course, was my experience.

Dr. SAGEMAN. Well, and so you have to really have a local expert, a real expert on the internal dynamic, and that means posting people there for years to really acquire this type of expertise, to really know the people, to really understand how to play that game. Most political agents under the British were in the British civil service for about 30 years. They knew those guys very well. We don't have any equivalent right now in our country to be able to do that, and sending troops with weapons just will unify everybody against those troops, unfortunately.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

Senator Feingold?

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to commend you again on what has turned out to be one of the most thorough series of hearings this committee has held since I have had the opportunity to serve on the committee, which is 17 years.

The key question we face in this region is how do we disrupt and dismantle the al-Qaeda network without further destabilizing the region in the process? And while I certainly supported the decision to go to war in Afghanistan, I am concerned that our military-centric approach in Afghanistan has had a counterproductive effect of mobilizing militants in the region, many of whom do not share al-Qaeda's international terrorist agenda. And I think Dr. Sageman's remarks just reinforce that.

Rather than finding ways to divide them from al-Qaeda, I think our current approach may be driving them together. So one option we should certainly be considering is whether simply stating the obvious, that we don't plan to stay in Afghanistan forever, would help divide those with local agendas from al-Qaeda.

This does not mean that we should set a firm deadline or leave tomorrow. That is the distortion that is always placed on the end of any attempt to suggest that maybe this shouldn't be an eternal operation. It is simply a statement designed to assuage fears that all we are offering the Afghan people is a state of perpetual war.

And, Dr. Sageman, do you believe that completely denying al-Qaeda access to Afghanistan is an achievable objective? Does the current debate and focus on this goal in Afghanistan distract us from a broader goal, which is relentlessly pursuing al-Qaeda and its affiliates globally and ensuring that they cannot conduct training and plotting in Afghanistan and elsewhere?

Dr. SAGEMAN. I agree with Peter on this one that until you eliminate the top leadership of al-Qaeda—

The CHAIRMAN. Is your mike on?

Dr. SAGEMAN. Oh, I am sorry. Until you eliminate the top leadership of al-Qaeda, it is still a threat. But however, having said that, right now, as I said, they are in Pakistan. And even if they return to Afghanistan, I think they will return in the same way they are now in Pakistan—in hiding. They don't really want to be targets for either our drones, missiles, or special forces units going there to eliminate them.

So the type of threat—things have changed. It is not going to be the type of training camps, huge training camps that we saw in the 1990s. Right now, what we see, even in the few plots that are projected to the West, are really small, rented houses, half a dozen people who get a few days' training, and they are not as well trained as the previous guys in 1990s. So you are talking about a very different threat.

So even if they do come back to Afghanistan, and I am not sure that it is absolutely possible to prevent them from coming back, if they have—whether it is Taliban or not, whatever we call them, if they have friendly tribal leaders who are willing to not so much welcome them, but hide them, their threat and their ability to project is still not going to be what it was in the 1990s because of the counterterrorist measures that we have worldwide, namely,

good airport security, good coordination with the Pakistanis, good coordination around the world, or even stopping them in Istanbul when they change planes. There is no direct plane from Afghanistan to the United States right now.

Senator FEINGOLD. Well, Doctor, I think it is a very wise remark, and it really helps advance the debate because all we get is a simplistic notion if we don't stay in Afghanistan for very long term, Taliban or the al-Qaeda will be right back. Well, what does "right back" mean?

And you are starting to truly address that in a substantive way, and it begs the question of what happens if they go to Yemen? What happens if they go to Somalia? What happens if they stay in Pakistan?

How can it be that an international strategy against a global network can be that heavily concentrated on one place, on the assumption that they will reconstitute themselves in a way that is exactly the same as that which allowed them to conduct the 9/11 attacks? It is far too simplistic for something that is that important to our national security.

Mr. Grenier, recent polls show that despite some support among Afghans for U.S. troops, the majority want all foreign troops to leave within 2 years, and only 18 percent support an increase in foreign troops. What impact are these public attitudes likely to have on the viability of any plan that involves a massive open-ended foreign military presence?

Mr. GRENIER. Senator Feingold, I haven't seen those poll results that you are citing. But they do accord at least with my experience of the Afghan mentality, if one can characterize it that way. And in this, I agree very much with Mr. Sageman that there is a high degree of xenophobia that is endemic among Afghans, and they do tend to coalesce against what is perceived as an outsider.

So I guess in the context of the question you previously raised, well, what about the reaction to a surge, and would a surge be effective? My view is that you are best advised to begin as you mean to go on.

My concern is that if there is a large surge in U.S. troops, we would be using them to do what essentially Afghans must do. I am not sure that having that surge in the early stages would make it easier for us to bring Afghans on in the role that we need, and as I mentioned before, I don't think that that role is going to be primarily played by the Afghan National Army.

But another aspect of this I think is something that, again, I think Dr. Sageman touched on, and that is what is a reasonable objective here? And tell me if I have got this right, but it seems to me that what he is suggesting, and what I would believe as well, is that the best that we can hope for is not a permanent elimination of safe haven or the opportunity for safe haven on the part of al-Qaeda, but rather, the elimination of uncontested safe haven, that we need to be in a place where we can continue to play the game, which means that we need to be able to do that on a sustainable basis.

The chairman just mentioned that we have been in Afghanistan for we are now beginning our ninth year. I suspect that we need

to be able to sustain the kind of effort that we are talking about probably for another 10. It is very, very difficult to say.

But again, I think, therefore, that needs to be a sustainable effort. What we are currently doing, I believe, is not sustainable either by us or by the Afghans.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thanks so much. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Feingold.

Thank you for your comments.

Before I recognize Senator Risch, and then, obviously, we will just keep going, Senator Lugar and I need to go and receive the Dalai Lama. So we are going to leave the chair in the hands of the good Senator from New Hampshire, Senator Shaheen.

If I could ask, just indulgent of one question before we run out of here, is there an impact on Pakistan, any kind of negative or positive, whatever kind of impact, as a consequence of an increase of troops in Afghanistan? And if you could just kind of really quickly, both—Mr. Grenier?

If we increase troops in Afghanistan and there is an increased kind of confrontation there, is there any—I don't know if there is. Is there any kind of—you spent so much time in Pakistan, and you have a sense of it. Is there any negative consequence to that? Some have argued there is a destabilization in Pakistan or something. I just don't know.

Mr. GRENIER. Well, I think that a large increase in the U.S. presence in Afghanistan would not be welcomed by the majority of Pakistanis. I think that it would make the struggle seem all the more starkly one of the U.S. against Muslims as opposed to the U.S. supporting Afghans in their own struggle.

Everything that Mr. Bergen stated before about popular Pakistani support against extremists who are targeting Pakistan is absolutely true. When you look at this in the context of Afghanistan, they see things rather differently.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Thank you very much.

And if you want to comment on that in my absence, I would appreciate anything.

Senator Shaheen, do you want to take the chair?

Senator Risch?

Senator RISCH. Dr. Sageman, your graph shows a decline in recent years. What—in a sentence or two, to what do you attribute the decrease?

Dr. SAGEMAN. There are many internal and external factors. One is that, Peter is right, the ideology of al-Qaeda is not attracting as many young people as before. But many young people go elsewhere, like in Somalia, not so much because of the ideology, really, it is to fight off the infidel. And so, by sending more troops and killing more Muslims, Westerners killing Muslims, may actually increase a greater flow.

But I think that, one, the bomb in 2004 was very much a reaction to Iraq. And as that faded and especially when Iraq was not this very simple sound bite like it is Westerners killing Muslims, where it was very much Muslims killing Muslims and it became very confusing to a lot of young people, they became less attracted in terms of going to Iraq, and at the same time, they were less attracted doing things at home.

Senator RISCH. Well, can an argument be made that, in fact, the campaign that the United States has mounted against al-Qaeda leadership—be it through drones, be it through assets, be it through whatever, direct confrontation—and successes in that regard, can an argument be made that that has contributed to this?

Dr. SAGEMAN. The drones, no. But I think the counterterrorist measures, such as airport security, stopping people from going to Afghanistan, arresting them in Pakistan, that has contributed.

The drone campaign really started too late to really have an effect on these graphs. Because if you look at even the 2008, the three plots in 2008, they were really trained in 2007 for it, and the drone campaign really started ramping up in 2008. I think it is contributing to eliminating future plots, but I don't think that it is reflected in the graph.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Mr. Bergen, I don't think a person can go over there and travel and meet with the people and not come away with at least a suspicion that our view of governance is such that we will never be able to impose or facilitate or encourage or establish that type of governance in that country. Am I right or am I wrong on that?

Mr. BERGEN. I am suspicious of that view as a general proposition because we used to think that about Latin American countries, and we used to think that about other countries that have now become democracies. And the notion that is somehow embedded in the cultural psyche of—I am not saying that Jeffersonian democracy is the natural tendency in Afghanistan, but I think representative government, as they understand it, certainly is.

The participation in that last Afghan election, it was a 70 percent turnout. The United States hasn't had an election since 1900 where there was a 70 percent turnout. In the most recent election, it was lower because of concerns about security. So—

Senator RISCH. The thing that troubled me was the lack of sense of nationality amongst the people. I mean, if you ask them “what are you,” the answer is Pashtun, or it is one thing or another. But it just doesn't seem like they have the nationality that a group needs in order to coalesce.

Mr. BERGEN. Again, I would mildly disagree. I mean, Afghanistan, as a modern state, was founded in 1747. So it is an older country than the United States. Afghans do have a sense of nationhood. What they do not have is they have never lived under a strong central state. So, in that sense, I agree with you.

And trying to impose some sort of strong central government on them doesn't really make sense. Tribal identity, of course, is very important.

Senator RISCH. We have common ground there. For you, let me ask this question. One thing that we haven't touched on at all today is the drug situation. And when I was there, again, I don't see—everybody says, well, there is so much corruption, and they want to get rid of the drugs and what have you.

But you know, corruption is going to exist as long as they depend on drugs, it seems to me. I kind of put it in terms of, well, all right, we are telling the mafia you can be in charge of drugs, but we don't want any corruption within your ranks.

I don't see how you can stand up a government or an army or a police force so long as that drug influence is there. To me, it is just staggering the influence that that has in the entire Afghan society.

Dr. SAGEMAN. I agree. If you look at the history of Afghanistan, it has really been resistance to a predatory corrupt central government. And sorry, Peter, but they did have a strong central government between 1880 and 1901 under King Amir Abdurrahman. And he was involved every year into a large campaign where he slaughtered thousands and thousands of people.

The problem with Afghanistan is that you don't have this relationship between the central government and its people. The central government has always relied on foreign aid, whether it was Russian, British, and now ours. And that is what is different between Afghanistan and Latin American people where they actually do raise taxes. They do have this type of relationship between people and government. That has never existed in Afghanistan.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Sageman.

Can you comment on the drug situation?

Mr. GRENIER. Yes. One thing I would point out is that in recent history, poppy production in Afghanistan was very nearly wiped out, and it was done by the Taliban in 2001.

Now if you had asked me beforehand whether that was possible, I would have felt very strongly that it was not. And yet Mullah Omar and the Taliban and managed to do it. It was absolutely extraordinary.

Now I am not saying that that would be easy to duplicate, and I think that there were elements of power that were available to the Taliban that would not be available to anyone with whom that we would be allied. And I agree with you that so long as you have this very large illicit economy, it is almost inconceivable to think that you can do away with corruption.

I don't tend to see a line of causality between drug production and the rise of the Taliban. It seems to me that the issue there is who controls the turf where narcotics are being produced. If it is people who are allied with Hamid Karzai and the government in Kabul, well, then they will get the benefits. And if it is the Taliban, then they will manage to tax it, the benefits.

These are institutions that have existed for a long, long time in Afghanistan. It is not like these are institutions that have now been taken over and are currently dominated by the Taliban.

Senator RISCH. Thank you. Time is up. Madam Chairman?

Senator SHAHEEN. [presiding] Thank you, Senator Risch.

Senator Menendez?

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Madam Chairlady.

Thank you all for your testimony.

As I think about the President trying to make this decision, it seems to me that the central question is how do you strike at the core of al-Qaeda in a way that does significant damage? We love to always say we want to eliminate them, but that is a much more difficult proposition.

But strike them in such a way at their core, which is largely within the Pakistan region, as I understand it, and how do you do that—how do you do that most successfully? And secondly, what

does that mean in the context of our policy in Afghanistan as it relates to that central mission?

I mean, if our central mission at the end of the day is to do everything we can to disrupt, to kill its leadership, to ensure that at the end of the day they are not a threat to the national security of the United States, then it seems to me all of your focus is how is that best achieved? Afghanistan, which is the topic of today's hearing, is a part of that.

And if I had you all in the situation room with President Obama and he was trying to make a decision, and I asked you what is it that, in fact, your recommendations would be to strike successfully at al-Qaeda and what that policy should be, what would each of you say?

Mr. GRENIER. Well, Senator, I would say that we need to be in a position where we can deny al-Qaeda not necessarily some form of safe haven—because I think that is going to be the task of a generation on both sides of the border—but rather, that we put ourselves in a position where we can deny them uncontested safe haven.

I don't think that the Pakistanis are going to be able in the short term to exert a level of control in the tribal territories that will preclude al-Qaeda from being able to operate there. I think that with our assistance, they can make it problematic for al-Qaeda.

With a wink and a nod, there are some things that perhaps we can do unilaterally, provided that we have a base in Afghanistan. And over time, they need to be drying up the pond within which those alligators thrive. But as I say, that is a long project, and it involves as much political and economic development as it does military action.

The same I would say is true on the Afghan side of the border. We should not fool ourselves that there are policies that we can pursue in the near term that will solve this problem for us in a definitive way in either the short or the medium term. I think we need to be very realistic about what is going to be required. And if we don't think that we can sustain those costs, then maybe we need to rethink this entire enterprise.

Senator MENENDEZ. So it sounds like you are talking about constant disruption of safe haven.

Mr. GRENIER. Constant disruption and over time a diminution of the area in which al-Qaeda can effectively find safe haven.

Senator MENENDEZ. And one other question before I turn to the others. You have mentioned several times in your testimony "ungoverned spaces." Is this part of what you are just defining now? When you say "ungoverned spaces," how is it that we best try to deal with ungoverned spaces?

Mr. GRENIER. Well, again, at the end of the day, whether we are talking about Afghanistan or Somalia or virtually anywhere else, a permanent solution to a substantial physical space, which is not under the effective control of a responsible government or, in many cases, any government at all, is a natural safe haven for terrorists. Not to say that all ungoverned spaces are safe havens for terrorists, but the safe havens for terrorists are all ungoverned spaces.

And at the end of the day, we cannot permanently exert control over any of them. At the end of the day, it is the native inhabitants who have to do that, and that is what makes this so difficult.

Senator MENENDEZ. Doctor?

Dr. SAGEMAN. In a few days perhaps, the Pakistani army is going to have a fairly large sweep in south Waziristan, the same way they are trying to re-create the success that they had in Swat Valley and in Buner. This may be critical because, in a sense, that region has always been a huge rivalry between two large tribes, the Mehsud and the Waziris.

And right now, the Mehsud tribe has been more welcoming of al-Qaeda and its ally, namely, the IJU and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan is very much a Mehsud tribe, and all three organizations seem to have the ability to project outside of the area, the IJU threatening our ally Germany. Not so much the United States, but most German plots seemed to have some connection with those Uzbeki terrorists.

So, traditionally, what happened is that when the British always tried to have a sweep like that, a punitive sweep, to thin out the enemy is what happened and that people don't recognize that you are applying that is a border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. They just go on the other side of the border, wait it out, and come back.

So what we need to do is to try to seal that border to prevent some of the bad guys that we are trying to thin out from that region from taking temporary refuge to Afghanistan at this point. This is a critical issue that is very urgent because it has to be coordinated with the Pakistani campaign that is going to take place down there. They are not going to be—

Senator MENENDEZ. Sealing the border is a really—

Dr. SAGEMAN. I am sorry?

Senator MENENDEZ. Sealing the border in that region is an enormously tough challenge.

Dr. SAGEMAN. Absolutely.

Senator MENENDEZ. I mean, I don't even understand how many troops would be necessary to do that.

Dr. SAGEMAN. I think that we can get some people to really—I mean, through various ways to try to prevent people from just going and taking refuge across the border. But in that sense, we shouldn't really fool ourselves that once we thin out people, all the Pakistan army is going to maintain control.

No, like anything else, it is usually a large raid. You thin out your enemy, and then you play the internal rivalries. So perhaps the cousin of the various Hakimullah Mehsud at this point or to then deny the return of the people who took temporary refuge in Afghanistan from coming back and playing the Waziri tribe against the Mehsud.

I mean, again, you need some kind of push to kind of disrupt all of this, and then you consolidate through playing internal rivalries.

Senator MENENDEZ. Mr. Bergen?

Mr. BERGEN. I would say the following to the President. We have tried three approaches in Afghanistan. The first is doing nothing. We closed our embassy in '89. We zeroed out aid. We got the Taliban, and then we got al-Qaeda.

Then in 2001, we did it on the cheap. We got the Taliban coming back, which had morphed together with al-Qaeda.

Now we have a somewhat serious plan, which has a real chance of success, and we should give it time. And we should explain that we plan to be in Afghanistan—I would disagree with Senator Feingold on this. We should not say that there is—we should say that we are going to be there for a while because the most important thing we have to do is persuade the Pakistanis that it is in their interest to stop supporting the Afghan Taliban.

If they feel that we are going to be there for some period of time, they are going to change their hedging strategy. Right now, they have not taken the Afghan Taliban card off the table because they are not convinced that we are going to be there for a long time.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Senator Casey?

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for taking over the hearing. I know everyone is busy, and we are grateful for you doing that.

I want to thank all three of our witnesses for your appearance here and for your work on these issues. The title of the hearing is confronting al-Qaeda. That is the first part of the hearing title. But of course, our policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan is going to be impacted by what we discuss today.

I really have a two-part question, and there is an obvious overlap. The first question I will direct at Mr. Bergen. We have talked a little bit about—but not a great deal—about what is often described on the Afghan-Pakistan border as the three insurgencies: QST, Quetta Shura Taliban; the Haqqani network; and also HIG, and their relationship to al-Qaeda. Mr. Bergen, looking at page 11 of your testimony, I think you made an important point. In your testimony, but also in the last part of your answer to Senator Menendez about the connection between al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the point you made, I am not sure it is believed by enough people in Washington. You say in the first paragraph on page 11, “The leadership of the Taliban has adopted al-Qaeda’s world view and sees themselves as part of a supposedly global jihadist movement.” That is one reference. And then the second paragraph, you state in part, “The Taliban has increasingly morphed together tactically and ideologically with al-Qaeda.”

So the general point about the Taliban’s connection to al-Qaeda—but in particular those three insurgencies—is it that all three of these groups are connected, or two out of the three connected more than the others? Or is one—I guess there is an implicit assumption that Haqqani—has more connections to al-Qaeda than the other two. Please tell us what you can about these connections.

Mr. BERGEN. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who runs Hezb-e-Islami, has been a close friend of bin Laden’s probably since 1988 or 1989. In the case of the Haqqanis, the relationship goes back to the early ‘80s. Haqqani himself, the senior, speaks Arabic, has at least one Arabic wife. His kids also speak Arabic, have taken over the family network.

In the case of Mullah Omar, Mullah Omar was prepared to lose everything on the point of principle in not handing over Osama bin Laden. This doesn’t suggest a sort of Kissinger-like aptitude for re-

alpolitik. This is somebody who is at the heart of the Taliban project, has been protecting al-Qaeda, and it is crazy to think that somehow just because we are foreign policy realists doesn't mean that everybody else in the world is a foreign policy realist. We have learned from history that people behave irrationally.

So the Taliban, if they came back to power, would bring al-Qaeda back.

Senator CASEY. So you made a connection between all three insurgencies and al-Qaeda?

Mr. BERGEN. Absolutely.

Senator CASEY. I, also, think that is an important point because we are hearing a lot on this subject. You know how Washington gets. We get pretty simplistic around here. The President said dismantle, disrupt, and defeat al-Qaeda, and people say that is a great goal, but they are not the right goals in Afghanistan. So let us change the policy. So I just wanted to establish that point.

The second point is to Mr. Grenier—did I pronounce it right? Okay. The second point is about the connection between those three insurgencies now and the government of Pakistan or at least the ISI. What can you tell us about their connections because these connections are also part of this equation? So it is the same question, but just substitute the word "Pakistan" for the word "al-Qaeda."

Mr. GRENIER. Well—

Senator CASEY. At least for the purposes of the question.

Mr. GRENIER. The calculus for the Pakistanis, I would start out by saying that I absolutely agree with Peter Bergen that there is nothing among any element of the Taliban which resembles Kissingerian realpolitik. The same, however, is not true of the Pakistanis. The Pakistanis are, I think, working multiple simultaneous equations in all of this.

I can tell you from personal experience that while after 9/11 we had very, very close cooperation with and effective cooperation with the Pakistanis focusing on al-Qaeda in the settled parts of the country where essentially they controlled the turf. There was nothing that we asked them to do that they wouldn't do, and I think that that is still the case now.

When it comes to tribal areas where they don't control the turf, then their calculus becomes much more complicated. There they have to make judgments between those who are—who pose primarily a threat to others and those who pose primarily a threat to themselves. The people that they are most concerned about are what we now refer to loosely as the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Pakistani Taliban.

The most prominent among whom, at least until his recent demise, was Baitullah Mehsud. Well, they were very concerned about Baitullah Mehsud. They were very concerned about Nek Muhammad and a range of other individuals, those who were responsible for the infiltration of the Swat Valley and local areas. And to the extent that the Pakistanis think that they can manipulate the Gulbuddin Hekmatyars and the Haqqanis with whom they have relations that go back literally a couple of decades, as well as the Afghan Taliban with whom that they have had a very close relationship in the past, they are prepared to try to do that.

And these individuals and these organizations, not being foolish, are quite willing to get into that game and try to manipulate it in ways that benefit themselves.

When you add Afghanistan into the equation and the strategic concerns that the Pakistanis have with the government in Kabul, it becomes more complicated still. And one of the things that Peter just brought out a moment ago and which I don't think we have spent nearly enough time on, but which I think is an extremely important aspect of this entire question, is if there were a substantial drawdown of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, such that there were essentially a recurrence of the civil war that pertained back when the Taliban was in power, essentially a Taliban-dominated Pashtun part of the population in civil war with the ethnic minorities that were formerly grouped under the Northern Alliance and are now disproportionately represented in the government in Kabul, the Pakistanis clearly would see their national interest in support of the Afghan Taliban. I don't think there is any question about that.

They are concerned about being surrounded. They see a close relationship between the government in Kabul and India, and it literally drives them crazy. I don't think there is any question that they would shift policy there.

And under those circumstances and with a diminished U.S. pressure on them focused on preserving our troops and stopping cross-border attacks on our troops, I think that it would be very easy for the Pakistanis to devolve to along the path of least resistance, if you will, and to try to strike some sort of separate peace at least with those elements in the tribal territories that don't directly threaten them. And that would put us overall in a strategic situation which would not be at all positive.

Senator CASEY. Doctor, I didn't have time. I ran out of time for you, but if you want to say anything or add something to the record that is a lot longer?

Dr. SAGEMAN. No, actually, I disagree with Peter. The Taliban and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar have not seen eye to eye. As a matter of fact, when the Taliban was in control of Afghanistan between '96 and 2001, they exiled Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to Tehran. He was not in Afghanistan at the time.

Mr. BERGEN. The question was about al-Qaeda's relationship with these groups.

Dr. SAGEMAN. Right. And al-Qaeda's relationship was with Abdul Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf and not Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in the early days.

Senator CASEY. I am going to let you guys figure this out with the new chairwoman.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Senator Casey.

Just to dispel anybody's notions, I have the least seniority. So I always go last. So that is why I am chairing the remainder of the hearing.

And thank you all for really fascinating presentations.

I want to see if I understand what I think you said, which was I think there has been general agreement that one way forward would be to try and engage with certain factions within the Af-

ghanistan—I hesitate to call them the warlords, but I think that is essentially what you were saying.

Would you also promote the notion that we can reconcile with certain elements of the Taliban and that that would be one of the ways forward?

Mr. GRENIER. Senator, a little truth in advertising here. I have not been in Afghanistan since 2005. And there is a lot about the situation on the ground that I think I understand imperfectly. And one of those is the real—the texture of the Taliban. Yes, I think as part of the shorthand, we refer to these three elements of the insurgency. I suspect that the picture on the ground, district to district, is a lot more complicated than that.

I believe that it is quite possible—that the different elements of the Taliban in different areas have different motivations. I think many of them are young men who could be won over and who would just as soon take a paycheck from the local governor and serve in his militia as they would serve with the Taliban, or if you had more constructive engagements for them that benefited them, that they would pursue those instead.

There are other elements of the insurgency, however, that are clearly ideologically oriented and that you really can't deal with. I suspect that on a local level, there are elements of the insurgency who could be won over to the other side, if you will. But in terms of striking some sort of a grand bargain with Mullah Omar that would allow him to come in and take a share of power in Kabul and that somehow you would reach some grand negotiated solution, I just don't think that is possible.

I think that he is ideologically driven. I don't think that—he does not recognize the legitimacy of the government in Kabul, and I don't think you could ever reach that sort of an agreement with him.

Senator SHAHEEN. But you do see the potential to engage with some elements of the Taliban?

Mr. GRENIER. Oh, yes.

Senator SHAHEEN. Is there agreement among the rest of you about that?

Dr. SAGEMAN. Oh, absolutely. I think that we make a mistake in kind of labeling everybody that is not for us with the same name, and I completely agree with Bob that on the ground what you have is a collection of a lot of young—groups of young people who resist the central government because they are foreigners anyway, and those really are not ideologically motivated.

I don't think we can cut a deal with Mullah Omar, but we certainly can take most of his followers and a huge part of his followers away from him.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Bergen?

Mr. BERGEN. I am going to take a very different tack.

Who are the moderate Taliban? Are they the people who send their kids to school, their daughters to school once a month or once a week, as opposed to not at all? This whole concept of moderate Taliban I think is not a particularly very helpful one.

We are now 8 years into this. The moderate Taliban who might have come over have already done so. The people engaged in the peace talks with the Afghan government are not the people running the insurgency, the ones that met in Saudi Arabia. Mullah

Omar has repeatedly rejected any kind of deal. The Taliban either think that they are winning Afghanistan or at least they are not losing, which in an insurgency amounts to the same thing. So why would they negotiate?

I am agreeing with Marc and also with Bob. The local guys, you can always do a deal with. You can buy them. You can co-opt them. You can pressure them, give them jobs, or whatever. But the people who are actually running the insurgency, the Mullah Omars, the Haqqanis, these are not people you can negotiate with, and I can say that with a great deal of confidence because it has already been tried.

In Pakistan, there have been three separate major peace deals with the Taliban—in Waziristan in 2005, 2006, and again in Swat. Every time the peace deal was done with the Taliban, they used it as an opportunity to extend their power.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, so you talked about some of the liabilities of al-Qaeda now. How can we exploit those liabilities in a way that allows us to be successful against them?

Mr. BERGEN. I wouldn't do anything. I mean, there is the kiss of death problem the United States has in this area. This is happening anyway. It is happening in the Islamic world. It is even happening, you know, the jihadists themselves, lot of them are turning against al-Qaeda. So just let this process play out.

Senator SHAHEEN. So are you arguing that we should withdraw?

Mr. BERGEN. From Afghanistan?

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes.

Mr. BERGEN. No, I thought you were talking about the ideological disputes. Sorry, I thought you were talking about the lack of support they have in the Muslim community increasingly. But I don't think we should withdraw from Afghanistan, no.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, given then I think I understand you and the other panelists to be talking about some type of a third way that doesn't rely on a military buildup but looks at developing another strategy. So what would a fully resourced, nonmilitary-focused campaign against al-Qaeda look like?

Mr. BERGEN. In Afghanistan, for instance?

Senator SHAHEEN. You could start there.

Mr. BERGEN. I was just in Helmand. There are 11,000 Marines in Helmand, and there are probably three American officials working for the Government directly, not contractors. And our stated policy as a counterinsurgency strategy is 80 percent nonmilitary, 20 percent military. Yet in practice, we are doing quite the opposite.

And the President has talked about a civilian surge, which I think is very important, but it is an ooze right now. No one is surging. People are not coming. And we need to change that equation, I think, if we are going to be successful in Afghanistan.

Senator SHAHEEN. I don't disagree with that, and that is what we have heard from other folks. But what we have also heard is that it is very difficult to do the civilian economic aid, the support, without having security to back up what is going on there. So how do we do a civilian surge without at the same time having the military to support that?

Mr. BERGEN. I agree. You have to have—I mean, security precedes everything else. And right now, as in terms of the overall Afghan strategy, the one thing we are not providing that everybody wants is security. And that does have an implication about the troop commitments.

Senator SHAHEEN. Can I ask if either one of you want to comment on that?

Dr. SAGEMAN. The way you phrased the question is what would a strategy against al-Qaeda look like, and I think you are confusing al-Qaeda with the Taliban.

Senator SHAHEEN. No, I am not confusing the Taliban with al-Qaeda. He asked me about going after al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. I said you could start there.

Dr. SAGEMAN. Well, there is no al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. It is mostly in Pakistan.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, right. I think you testified there were about 100. Intelligence officials suggest about 100 al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Dr. SAGEMAN. Well, that is actually in dispute. What we are looking at the al-Qaeda, the al-Qaeda that project to the West because our goal is homeland security. It is really to defend our homeland, and the people in Afghanistan do not project abroad.

There is none—I mean none of the plots in the last 7 years that originate in Afghanistan. They all originate in Pakistan. So our strategy in al-Qaeda is to eliminate it. I don't think that you can negotiate with them. They are beyond the pale.

If they are al-Qaeda right now, they know very well what they are doing. These are really true, hard-core, hardened people, and but they are mostly on the Pakistan side. On the Afghan strategy, to try to perhaps develop the country a little bit more, we have to start relying on the Afghans themselves and not so much on American troops to protect Americans who are there.

We have to almost remove ourselves and to allow in terms of long term, we can't make Afghans dependent on the United States because we are going to leave at some point. And at that point, they are going to be very upset, just like they were in 1989. You have to gradually shift it to an Afghanized, the Afghan strategy.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, can I just follow up with you on are you suggesting then that we don't need to continue a campaign in Afghanistan in order to address al-Qaeda?

Dr. SAGEMAN. That is correct.

Senator SHAHEEN. And so, can you then answer my initial question about what that nonmilitary focused campaign against al-Qaeda would look like?

Dr. SAGEMAN. I think that a nonmilitary campaign would be to try to flip some of the locals who are hiding al-Qaeda and protecting al-Qaeda to betray them and to allow us to either arrest them or eliminate through other means.

Mr. GRENIER. I think that, Senator, the problem with the approach that was just articulated by Dr. Sageman is that while there may be many local leaders and tribal leaders in Afghanistan who would be quite willing to be flipped and who would like to get the resources that are potentially available to them from the Amer-

icans and from their own government, they are afraid to do that simply because they are under threat of the Taliban.

The Taliban, even today in most of the Pashtun-dominated parts of the country, is not a popular force. They primarily thrive on the basis of intimidation. And therefore, while I think it is true that there has to be a very strong nonmilitary, development-focused effort as part of the overall strategy, security also has to be a key part of the strategy.

And then, I think that as I mentioned before, I only know these days what I read in the newspapers. But I read recently about an area where, which I think eventually served as a model. It is a district just outside of Kandahar called Dand. And it is an area that fell within the Canadian area of operations.

And what the Canadians did, one of the things that made Dand particularly susceptible to this approach, actually, was that it is dominated by the Barakzai tribe. And so, you don't have the mixture of competing tribes there that you do in other districts. There are a number of other tribes represented, but they are primarily Barakzai.

Well, the Canadians went to the tribal leaders of the Barakzai in that district, and they said, look, we are going to extend you protection. Oh, and by the way, we would like for you to come up with economic development projects that we can support, which they did. And these projects went forward.

It strengthened them in the eyes of their own people, and it gave a motivation to their tribal members to try to make sure that they protected these projects because they were deriving clear benefit from it. And you had local village defense forces that were springing up, again with the Canadians to back them up and support them. And a clear message was sent from those tribal leaders to Taliban in the district to stay out of our district because if you do—if you do come in, we will resist you.

Now I am not saying that it is going to be easy in all places. But I think that, roughly speaking, is the sort of a model that we need going forward.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

My time is up. But I actually have a final question that I would like to ask each of you, and that is about the funding for al-Qaeda and where they are getting their funding and whether it would be worthwhile for us to try and pursue those funding streams as a way to address how they are operating?

Mr. BERGEN. Terrorism is a very cheap form of warfare. The London attacks cost maybe 8,000 pounds, self-finance, credit cards. Even 9/11 was only \$500,000, very transformational event in the world for a relatively small amount of money.

So I think it is a case of mirror imaging to sort of think that because money is important to a lot of things that we do, that somehow it is important to terrorists. Terrorists tend to be volunteers. They don't need to be paid.

What is important on the money front is the Taliban because insurgencies cost money to run. You have to pay people to plant IEDs. You have to have to pay them money to be on the payroll. And so, certainly, the Taliban funding streams are something that

we should be looking at, whether it is drugs or donations from the Gulf.

Kidnappings are a very important part of this. If you kidnap a journalist in southern Afghanistan now, you can make \$2 million. That is a lot of money in southern Afghanistan.

So as far as the al-Qaeda element, I think that money is sort of a red herring. For the Taliban, for any insurgency, whether it is the insurgency in Iraq or Afghanistan, financing is very important.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Do you both agree with that?

Dr. SAGEMAN. Yes. Yes.

Mr. GRENIER. I would as well.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you all very much for your very insightful testimony.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:33 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
BY SENATOR CASEY TO PETER BERGEN

AL-QAEDA AND ASSOCIATED MOVEMENTS (AQAM)

Al-Qaeda has morphed into a fractured network of groups across Asia, the Middle East and Africa. We've seen an increase in the activities associated with these groups as our operations have driven al-Qaeda from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Question. What role is al-Qaeda's core leadership playing in supporting the associated movements we see such as those in Yemen, Somalia, and North Africa?

Answer. Al-Qaeda's core leadership plays an inspirational role more than an operational role in these movements. However, in the cases of al-Qaeda in both Saudi Arabia and Yemen and also al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) they operate very much in line with al-Qaeda Central policies; attacking, for instance, in the past two years the American Embassy in Yemen and the Israeli embassy in Maruitania, and in the case of AQIM attacking the United Nations building in Algiers.

Question. Do any of the major associated movements pose a significant threat to U.S. interests?

Answer. They pose a real threat to American Embassies, businesses, and Americans working in the oil business in the region.