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WEEKLY MEDIA REPORT

August 28, 2008

Al-Qa'ida Masters of Terrorism on the Cheap

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, al-Qa'ida has increasingly turned to local cells that run extremely low-cost operations and generate cash through criminal scams, bypassing the global financial dragnet set up by the U.S. and Europe. Although al-Qa'ida spent an estimated \$500,000 to plan and execute the 9/11 attacks, many of the group's bombings and assaults since then in Europe, North Africa, and Southeast Asia have cost one-tenth as much or less. The inexpensive plots are reportedly evidence that the U.S. government and its allies fundamentally miscalculated in assuming they could defeat the network by hunting for wealthy financiers and freezing bank accounts. Investigations into several plots in Europe have shown that operatives were often flush with cash, raising far more than necessary through common criminal rackets such as drug dealing and credit card theft. Authorities said it is often impossible to monitor fundraising by such cells because they generally keep little money in the bank. Instead of receiving wire transfers or making large deposits that would trigger automatic alerts, they move cash in person and are discreet about how they spend it.

Source: [The Washington Post](#)

Georgia Chaos Halts Nuclear Security Effort

Georgia has been identified by U.S. officials as a transit point for terrorists seeking to obtain weapons of mass destruction. The chaos in Georgia has forced the U.S. to halt a high-priority program that was helping Georgia identify possible smugglers of nuclear bomb components across its borders. The Georgia program is part of a series of U.S.-led international "threat reduction" projects designed to improve the security of nuclear research facilities and to prevent the spread of radioactive materials that terrorists could use to build a crude nuclear weapon such as a "dirty bomb." Twice in the last five years, Georgian authorities have thwarted attempts to smuggle quantities of weapons-grade enriched uranium. Over the past decade, other radioactive materials including plutonium have been intercepted on the black market. Officials fear the current situation in Georgia could loosen security at several facilities inside the country containing radioactive materials.

Source: [New York Times](#)

Nation Remains at Risk of Cyberattacks

Internet security experts believe that an attack carried out in cyberspace by hackers could be just as devastating to the U.S. economy and infrastructure as a deadly

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bombing. Experts say the recent attack on the former Soviet republic of Georgia, in which a Russian military offensive was preceded by an Internet assault that overwhelmed Georgian government websites, signals a new kind of cyberwar for which the U.S. is not fully prepared. Hackers mounted coordinated assaults on Georgian government, media, and banking, and transportation sites in the weeks before Russian troops invaded. These distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks employ multiple computers to flood networks with millions of simultaneous requests, overwhelming servers and crippling websites. Hackers shut down the website of the Georgian president for 24 hours and defaced the Georgian parliament site with images of Adolf Hitler. Georgian leadership blamed Russia for the attacks, although the Russian government said it was not involved. While websites and computer networks have been targeted by hackers for decades, large-scale, coordinated cyberattacks are still a relatively new phenomenon. Some Internet-security experts believe that the Georgia conflict marks the first time a known cyberattack has coincided with a ground war, but others said that similar computer attacks have accompanied military operations in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Source: [CNN](#)

Dams Remain Vulnerable to Terrorist Attack

While the country's dams have become significantly safer since September 11, 2001, a new federally commissioned study found the dams at the nation's largest reservoirs remain vulnerable to terrorist attack. According to a National Research Institute study released last week, water managers at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation who monitor water and power at the dams are disconnected from the security teams and law enforcement officials protecting them. Among some of the findings are the need for better communications systems and security plans to meet realistic, site-specific threats at the Bureau of Reclamation's 479 dams and dikes. Although roads have been closed, cameras installed and fences erected since 9/11, the dams' security appeared "brittle" and "lacking in depth," with officials having planned only for a certain amount of "threat scenarios." For example, there were no plans for the possibility of an employee attacking a dam. The chain of command during an attack also is unclear, and what security procedures that are in place are not well understood by Reclamation officials.

Source: [Santa Barbara News-Press](#)

Terror Threat Lurks in Drug Smuggling Subs



Skimming just below the surface, semi-submersibles are extremely difficult to detect from surveillance aircraft or patrol boats. Ranging size up to 80 feet in length, this next generation smuggling craft can secretly carry several tons of cargo thousands of miles. These vessels exhibit some of the same characteristics as military submarines and mark a significant advancement in the ability of drug smugglers to slip past coastal defenses. So far this year, the Coast

Guard says it has encountered at least 27 such vessels headed toward the southern

and western U.S., more than in the previous six years combined, while far more are believed to have gone undetected. The growing number and increased sophistication of the vessels, officially designated "self-propelled semi-submersibles," has garnered increased attention by the U.S. military and the DHS. Counterterrorism officials fear that what drug runners now use to deliver cocaine, terrorists could one day use to sneak personnel or massive weapons into the U.S. The commander of the U.S. Southern Command, the military command that concentrates on Latin America, recently warned, "If drug cartels can ship up to 10 tons of cocaine in a semi-submersible, they can clearly ship or rent space to a terrorist organization for a weapon of mass destruction or a high-profile terrorist." U.S. intelligence officials have concluded the pod-like vessels are being constructed by outside specialists working in "expeditionary shipyards"- remote, makeshift facilities nestled along rivers or estuaries in the jungles of Colombia, from which they are transported to the coast for the journey north.

Source: [The Boston Globe](#)

Illegal Immigrants Working at VA Military Base Arrested

Sixty-two illegal immigrants have been arrested this year while trying to enter Fort Lee, and all have been prosecuted for violating U.S. immigration laws. In 2006, there were 15 arrests. Most have reportedly been Hispanics who were commercial delivery drivers or were entering the base to do construction and landscaping work. While detained immigrant workers generally are not considered direct security threats to the installation, enforcement is a security priority because even if illegal workers don't have ill intent against the U.S., they can be subject to blackmail by someone who does. Illegal immigrants are one of many possible security threats to military installations and the Defense Department responds accordingly. The department's law enforcement agencies do not enforce immigration laws, but they do criminal background checks on contract workers, and when they believe someone is an illegal immigrant they contact Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Source: [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#)

DHS to Cooperate with Fusion Centers During DNC and RNC

The Department of Homeland Security is working with state and local governments through their respective fusion centers in Colorado and Minnesota to support the sharing of information during the Democratic and Republican national conventions. The Office of Intelligence and Analysis will provide support to state and local governments to help groups connect and exchange data during the national conventions. The office plans to provide support from its Washington, DC headquarters to existing fusion centers in the two cities, which will collect and analyze reports of suspicious activity. DHS also will provide on-site support to both fusion centers.

Source: [Government Executive](#)

U.S. Treasury, Muslim Charities Intensify Dialogue on Safe Giving

The U.S. Treasury held an August 15 "Charity Roundtable" of U.S. officials and representatives of Arab and American-Muslim organizations to discuss terrorist fundraising. The roundtable focused on an initiative that calls for U.S.-based Muslim charities to undergo a tough vetting process conducted by a charity watchdog arm of the Better Business Bureau in order to reduce terrorist financing through charities. The

initiative does not address the issue of how to conduct charitable work overseas in areas affected by terrorist activities without giving terrorists inadvertent support.

Source: [News Blaze](#)

Former Female Gang Member Exposes Secrets

A former member of the Bounty Hunter Bloods in Norfolk, Virginia, revealed disturbing details about her dangerous years with the gang. She joined the gang when she was fifteen and immediately became involved with drugs and robbery of homes and individuals. Another former member testified that children as young as eight and nine years of age were involved in home invasions, beatings, and drug deals for the gang.

Source: [WAVY.com](#)