



# TRANSNATIONAL THREATS UPDATE

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*“Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government. Today, that task has changed dramatically. Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us.”*

President George W. Bush, 2002 National Security Strategy

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## Al Qaeda

### Violence in Somalia Said to Be Fueled by Al Qaeda-linked Fighters

In the wake of violent clashes in Mogadishu, militias of the Somali Supreme Islamic Courts Council are in control of the city and are pressing outward to the northwest and south. The militias, led by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, have captured the town of Jowhar, the former seat of the interim government before it evacuated to Baidoa. The militia forces are currently advancing toward Baidoa yet may be forestalled by the transitional government. President Abdullahi Yusuf claims that 1,000 gunmen are prepared to defend Baidoa and Somalia’s UN-backed interim government.

The Somali Supreme Islamic Courts Council, formerly the Islamic Courts Union, is composed of several shari’a courts of leading Mogadishu clans that

practice Sufi Islam. The council’s militias are reportedly led by Aweys’s al Ithaad al Islaami militia, which has been linked to Osama bin Laden from his days in Sudan in the early 1990s. According to a May 2006 UN report, the al Ithaad militia has been importing weapons through Eritrean contacts. Aweys took power on June 25 and has since announced that the only possible government in Somalia is an Islamic government. The transitional constitution does not mention Islam.

The interim authorities are adamant that the militias seized Mogadishu with the help of foreign fighters, a claim the militias deny. Reports filtering out from a camp on the site of a former Italian cemetery, however, suggest that al Qaeda has a presence within al Ithaad. Those who have seen inside the heavily fortified post describe it as a training camp with a mosque and a field hospital run by men from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Pakistan. Aweys’s al Ithaad also purportedly harbors al Qaeda leaders who masterminded the 1998 attacks on two U.S. embassies in East Africa.

The prime minister of Somalia’s transitional government has offered to talk with the Islamist militias. It remains unclear if talks will produce positive results. The interim government structure does not have sufficient sovereignty to force the Islamists to the bargaining table. The Islamic groups currently have a sizeable amount of public support because citizens lived through years of lawlessness and fighting. With control of Mogadishu and much of the southern part

of the country, they must now prove themselves capable of governing in a responsible manner.

The presence of a group allegedly affiliated with al Qaeda follows a consistent pattern of neo-Salafist jihadi groups spreading throughout North and East African nations. This remains a deeply troubling sign for U.S. policymakers. (*Combined dispatches*)

## Organized Crime

### Colombian Drug Lord Captured; Submarines Used for Transport

Drug kingpin “Don Pablo” Rayo-Montano was captured in São Paulo, Brazil, by U.S. agents coordinating with police forces from nine countries. In addition, 36 of Don Pablo’s associates were seized in simultaneous raids in Miami, Indianapolis, and São Paulo. Don Pablo presided over a massive narcotics cartel based in Cali, Colombia, and is considered by many to be the natural successor to Pablo Escobar.

The Rayo-Montano organization operated an extensive network of narcotics production and trafficking and money laundering. It also operated a small navy of submarines packed with cocaine and was responsible for the delivery of an estimated 15 tons of cocaine per month to U.S. and European streets for distribution.

The raid was the result of a three-year investigation conducted by security services in the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama, and Venezuela. It was dubbed “Operation Twin Oceans,” reflecting the cartel’s shipment method using ports along Colombia’s Caribbean and Pacific coasts. Agents confiscated three islands off the coast of Panama owned by Rayo-Montano. Additional seizures included \$3.5 million in paintings, four Miami mansions, three yachts, and a Brazilian gallery used as a front to launder money. U.S. authorities have issued a transfer warrant for Rayo-Montano in Miami, who first faces prosecution in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico. (*Combined dispatches*)

### Imprisoned Organized Crime Figures Wield Power from behind Bars in Brazil

In São Paulo, Brazil, a series of at least 181 violent attacks lasting several days occurred. Four civilians, 41 police officers, 18 inmates, and 107 suspected members of the criminal gang First Command of the

Capitol (PCC) were killed. Brazilian authorities have blamed the “terrorist attacks” on the PCC, a prison-based gang that has evolved from a large group of prisoners to a criminal network with an estimated 124,000 members. The PCC now controls a substantial portion of Brazil’s narcotics trafficking operations. Armed with guns, the attackers targeted police stations and convoys as well as private businesses and incited revolts in 36 prisons throughout the São Paulo region.

Initially, the Brazilian government downplayed the situation. It blamed criminal gangs for using the violence as retaliation for its transferring PCC leaders to remote maximum-security facilities. After several days, it became apparent from the magnitude and coordination of the violent attacks that the PCC’s capabilities posed a threat to government authority. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva conceded that the attacks were part of a deeper problem rooted in Brazil’s wealth and education gap. Governor Geraldo Alckmin of São Paulo maintained, however, that the government had warning of the attacks and police made preparations that saved many lives. (*Combined dispatches*)

## Money Laundering

### North Korean Counterfeiting Ring Spreads Worldwide Ripples

The Chinese enclave of Macau has long been known for its black market gambling, sex trade, and organized crime groups. The former Portuguese colony is now the focal point of an international crackdown targeting North Korea, which has used Macau to launder money. Macau’s Banco Delta Asia has been blacklisted by the U.S. government for allegedly laundering counterfeit North Korean-made U.S. dollars. The bank thus far has denied charges of wrongdoing. Banco Asia also was involved in illegal activities, including smuggling counterfeit tobacco products and counterfeit pharmaceuticals for over a decade.

U.S. authorities point to the Zokwang Trading Company, which is staffed by North Koreans with diplomatic passports. In the mid-1990s, several Zokwang employees were arrested by Macau police for passing counterfeit U.S. bills. The North Koreans used their diplomatic status to flee, however, before going to

trial. The investigation linked the bills to Banco Asia, which has had many of its North Korea–linked accounts, worth over \$20 million, frozen.

The counterfeit U.S. bills, known as “supernotes,” are \$100 bills of extremely high quality and are considered impossible to detect by the untrained eye. The United States has long accused North Korea of manufacturing and circulating tens of millions of these supernotes around the world. “Our investigation has revealed that the supernote continues to be produced and distributed from sources operating out of North Korea,” said Secret Service agent Michael Merritt. The high-quality bills have turned up in the possession of Chinese organized-crime groups on both the western and eastern coasts of the United States. (*Combined dispatches*)

## Terrorism

### Courts Sentence Islamist Terrorists for Plotting Chemical Attacks in Paris

A French court convicted 25 people of plotting chemical attacks in Paris. The group received the name the “Chechen Network” in reference to several members who had trained with Chechen rebels in the Caucasus mountains. Five of the main defendants were former members of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and received 10-year jail sentences. Others who had been recruited in the Lyon and Paris suburbs received lesser terms. All members were charged with “criminal association in relation with a terrorist enterprise.”

French prosecutors claimed the group planned to use chemicals such as ricin against targets, including the Eiffel Tower; Les Halles, a commercial center; the Russian Embassy; and Israeli interests in Paris. While prosecutors were unable to prove the group intended to commit a chemical attack, authorities found ample supplies during two raids on homes in the Paris suburbs in 2002 and in the southeast of France in 2004. The arrest of this terrorist network has been part of operations by French authorities against extremists among France’s population of 6 million Muslims. (*Combined dispatches*)

### Planned Attack on Israeli Airliner in Geneva Connected to Cells in France and Spain

Swiss authorities have taken seven North Africans into custody after it was discovered that the group

planned to shoot down an Israeli airliner on takeoff from Geneva. The Federal Prosecutor’s Office said the arrests were made in Basel and Zurich in conjunction with a larger counterterrorism sting. The operation included the apprehension of associated terrorists in France and Spain. In each instance, the cell would commit thefts in the country of residence, sell the stolen items, and send the money to the Salafist Group for Call and Combat. The Salafist organization is based in Algeria and has links to al Qaeda, according to French authorities who made arrests in Alsace, Paris, and Marseilles. Early reports mentioned the seizure of weapons and explosives, but Swiss authorities later discounted those inaccuracies.

The Swiss believe that one of those taken into custody has links to Mohamed Acraf, an alias of Abderrahmane Tahiri. He is currently awaiting trial in Spain on charges of plotting to bomb the National Court in Madrid in 2004. Tahiri was apprehended in Switzerland before being extradited to Spain in April 2005.

The arrests are a result of a monthlong cooperative effort between intelligence, counterterrorism, and police officials in France, Spain, and Switzerland. Concurrently, Salah Edinne Berkoun, an Algerian, was sentenced to prison in Spain for being the leader of a terrorist cell in southern Spain that also financed and provided logistical support to the Salafist organization. Evidence gathered in that investigation was instrumental in foiling the plot against the Israeli airliner and also led authorities to the cells in France and Switzerland. (*Combined dispatches*)

### Australia Convicts First Terrorism Crime

Pakistani-born Australian Faheed Khalid Lodhi gained notoriety as the first person ever to be convicted of plotting a major terrorist attack in Australia. Lodhi, a Sydney architect, first came to the government’s attention because of his contact with Frenchman Willy Brigitte. Brigitte is an al Qaeda–linked terror suspect who is currently in a French prison awaiting trial.

Lodhi was the first person Brigitte contacted upon his May 2003 arrival in Australia. Although they had not previously met, Lodhi claims a mutual Pakistani connection put the two men in contact. Lodhi purchased a mobile phone for Brigitte under a pseudonym and created his own false phone account to keep his close interaction with Brigitte secret. In October 2003,

Brigitte was deported to France for his association with terrorist groups. Lodhi was arrested six months later and was recently convicted for committing “an act in preparation for a terrorist act.” Specifically, Lodhi sought information on the cost of chemicals used in homemade explosives and on keeping a handwritten “terrorism manual.” Lodhi also used a false identity to buy a map of the national electricity grid, a potential target, which earned him an additional 15-year maximum jail term.

Only two people, Zaky Mallah and Jack Thomas, had previously been charged for planning a terror attack under Australia’s new terrorism laws. Mallah was acquitted of the charges. Thomas was convicted of lesser charges that included receiving cash and an airline ticket from terrorists as well as falsifying a passport. *(Combined dispatches)*

## Maritime Security

### Israel to Participate in NATO Naval Exercise

Israel and NATO announced that Israel would send several missile boats to join NATO Black Sea exercises in July as part of “Cooperation Mako.” There has been growing speculation that Israel could apply for full NATO membership, but Israel has denied that it would become a member of NATO, citing a need for complete independence concerning matters of national security. Israel is a member, however, of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue, a political forum that includes Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, and Jordan.

This security cooperation enhancement is a clear example of a strengthening of ties between Israel and NATO. It can be traced to the mounting tensions in regard to the Iranian nuclear program and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s inflammatory remarks about Israel. *(Combined dispatches)*

## Trafficking

### Bangladesh is a Major Trafficking Route

Militant insurgent groups throughout Southeast Asia have turned Bangladesh into a major transit route for weapons and narcotics trafficking. Insurgents from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Myanmar have taken advantage of Bangladesh’s weak border security and governmental corruption.

Retired army officials stated that at least 400,000 illegal and 25,000 licensed firearms are being used in criminal activities across the country. This situation has allowed at least 128 organized crime syndicates to flourish. According to retired Maj. Gen. Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, the syndicates currently traffic drugs, weapons, and humans; launder money; rig elections; and engage in extortion and prostitution.

Bangladeshi prime minister Khaleda Zia stated that Bangladesh remains vigilant about not allowing its territory to be used by terrorist or criminal groups. She spoke of the need for collective cooperation and security for South Asia as the only way to ensure peace and prosperity. Her government has been widely criticized for not cracking down on Islamic militant groups who are blamed for deadly bombings. *(Combined dispatches)*

### Iranian Officials Assert Their Role in Stopping Narco-Trafficking to West

On May 27, the Iranian secretary general of the Headquarters for the Campaign against Narcotic Drugs issued statements claiming that Iran is the world leader in stopping the drug trade. He asserted that without Iran’s strong efforts to curb narcotics trafficking, the West would be inundated with narcotics and drug addiction. Iran also stated that the West is very much aware of its dependency on Iran’s counternarcotics operations. The official blamed the coalition presence in Afghanistan and other Central Asian nations for the increase in recent narcotics trafficking.

He added that more than 3,500 Iranians have been killed and tens of thousands wounded since the counterdrug campaign began in 1979. He touted Iranian security and counternarcotics officers for their success. The official issued vague threats about the repercussions for the West should Iran decide to end their program of counternarcotics.

The United States still maintains that Iran is home to one of the world’s most notorious drug lords. Ali Naway, an Iranian, has been described by the United States as a “foreign narcotics kingpin” and is considered an international threat. *(Combined Dispatches)*

## Border Security

### E-Passports to Be Issued in EU Member Nations

By October 2006, the United States will require facial biometric data to be included in passports for those EU nations currently in the visa-waiver program. The EU, however, has set an earlier deadline of August 26 for member states to implement biometric facial data in their passports. More than 40 nations, not limited to the EU, are converting to the new “e-passports.” The passports contain facial data and iris imaging. Fingerprinting will be included by 2009 in the next generation of biometric e-passports. This effort to combat fraudulent passports is just one of the latest applications of biometrics in border security. The EU expects to include related security-measure items in visas in the next several months.

In the United States, the Department of Homeland Security has been a strong proponent of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. The program would require U.S. citizens and Canadians to present a biometrically secure form of identification, ranging from a driver’s license to a passport, to enter the United States from Canada by land after January 1, 2008. Some options to fulfill the regulation without requiring citizens to purchase passports include a driver’s license-sized identification card that is similar to a passport. It would declare the individual’s citizenship and identity and include biometric data to deter and prevent fraud.

Similar cards are already in use along the United States–Mexico border near San Diego, where more than 100,000 Mexicans cross the border daily. The border passes, issued by the U.S. Consulate in Tijuana since 1998, are good for 10 years and contain biometric data, making secure and recurrent border crossings commonplace. (*Combined dispatches*)

## Counterterrorism

### U.S., Afghan, Pakistani Special Forces Conduct First Antiterror Drill

In an effort to bolster antiterror coordination aimed at the renewed Taliban-led offensive, U.S., Afghan, and Pakistani special forces took part in an antiterror cooperation exercise. The exercises were dubbed “Inspired Gambit” and included hundreds of troops.

They began at Cherat, Pakistan, a garrison roughly 75 miles west of Islamabad.

Though the exact location and scope of the weeklong exercise was withheld for security reasons, it is widely assumed to have occurred inside Pakistan near the Afghan border. Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan said that the drills involved helicopter assaults on suspected hideouts coordinated with rapid-response forces on the ground. He also promoted the exercises as being important to building cooperation, coordination, and understanding between the special forces of the three countries.

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a long, porous, and extremely rugged border area as well as a tenuous political relationship. Afghan officials have long charged Pakistan with supporting or turning a blind eye toward the remnants of the Taliban that plan and operate out of bases inside Pakistan to attack Afghan and coalition targets. Pakistan has consistently and adamantly denied these charges. Pakistani foreign minister Khursheed Kasuri recently offered to lay down land mines and build a fence along the border to curtail infiltration. The effectiveness of this proposal is uncertain, however, as the border extends over 1,000 miles through the rugged high reaches of the Hindu Kush mountains. “If the Afghans do not want that, let the Americans and the Afghans mine it on their side, fence it on their side,” Kasuri said.

In 2005, U.S. and Pakistani special forces held joint security exercises. This year marked the first time that Afghanistan was included in military operations and planning in the ongoing antiterror operations. (*Combined dispatches*)

## TNT Event

### Violent Jihad in the Netherlands: Current Trends in the Islamist Terrorist Threat

On June 1, 2006, CSIS’s Transnational Threats Project and the Royal Netherlands Embassy cohosted a roundtable to present the findings of the General Intelligence and Security Service of the Netherlands (AIVD) in their recently released report entitled *Violent Jihad in the Netherlands: Current Trends in the Islamist Threat*.

Immigration over the past 40 years has transformed the Netherlands into a multicultural society, which has brought increased crime and the growing threat of

Islamic radicalization. Currently, 3 million of the country's total population of 16 million are non-Dutch. One million of the non-Dutch population are also Muslim. Despite the fact that 10 percent of Dutch mosques support extremist Islam, it was not until after 9/11 that the government began to actively explore the problems of radicalization.

Jihadist networks are fluid, vaguely delineated structures comprising radical Muslims with a common interest. Jihadist networks can be transnational networks, internationally oriented local networks, or local, autonomous networks with local interests. Presently, there are about 20 known jihadist networks in the Netherlands. These networks have links to an estimated 300 to 400 networks outside the country. In addition to networks there are "lone wolves"—individuals who self-radicalize and engage in solo terrorist activities.

Jihadist terrorist motivations for committing violent acts are most often rooted in religious extremism. They include a desire to make a political impact and a feeling of helplessness resulting from discrimination, unemployment, and other factors. Many Moroccans grapple with identity issues, uncertain where they belong in either Dutch or Moroccan society. Such doubts regarding self-identity make young Moroccans particularly vulnerable to the influence of radicals. Moreover, the Dutch Moroccan community is not politically organized; as a result, the community lacks a political voice for articulating grievances.

The Global War on Terrorism has eroded the effects of al Qaeda's power over local terrorist networks. It is no longer the mastermind behind the world's foremost jihadist networks and cells. Al Qaeda is now viewed as an ideology and those ideas and goals persist in the minds of Muslim youth worldwide. This can occur even if they are not affiliated with the organization. In addition to impressionable young men, Muslim women and Dutch converts to radical Islam also play important roles in jihadist activities. The increased susceptibility of Dutch converts to radical Islam further demonstrates that al Qaeda has maintained a spiritual strength.

The report is available on the AIVD Web site:

[https://www.aivd.nl/actueel\\_publicaties/aivd-publicaties/violent\\_jihad\\_in\\_the](https://www.aivd.nl/actueel_publicaties/aivd-publicaties/violent_jihad_in_the).

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