

A Look Behind the Al-Qaeda Terror Wave

by Dean Andromidas

In the space of two weeks, suicide bombers struck in Tel Aviv, Chechnya, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco—all attributed to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization. In a May 23 editorial, *EIR* cautioned those who would attribute these attacks to the "sociological phenomenon" of terror by enraged Islamic militants. *EIR* asked the questions: Who benefits? And who runs al-Qaeda?

The density of the attacks was stunning. On May 12, 41 were killed and 110 wounded in Chechnya; on May 13, three foreign compounds were bombed in Saudi Arabia; on May 14, another suicide bomber launched an attack in Chechnya; on May 16, five bombs killed over 40 people in Casablanca. On May 17-18, five suicide bombers struck in Israel and the Occupied Territories. These attacks led to terror alerts throughout the Arab world and East Africa, and an "orange"—second-highest level—security alert in the United States.

The answer to the *cui bono* is clear: the Clash of Civilizations crowd in Washington, including the gaggle of chicken-hawks determined to redraw the map of the Middle East by overthrowing all the governments in the region. As for "Who runs al-Qaeda?," back in the 1980s al-Qaeda was part of the Anglo-American intelligence operation in Afghanistan. When did this intelligence control stop?

A closer look at these attacks will confirm *EIR*'s warnings pointing to a destabilization of the region in support of a Clash of Civilizations policy. It will also point to the role of networks associated with Anglo-American intelligence services.

Who Let Suicide Bombers Into Israel?

The bombing spree actually began back on April 29, when a suicide bomber blew himself up in front of the Mike's Place restaurant in Tel Aviv, killing three people. A second bomber on the scene escaped after his bomb failed to explode. Unlike all previous suicide bombings in Israel, its perpetrators were neither Palestinians nor Arabs, but British citizens of Pakistani origin. The case went beyond the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and, in fact, pointed to a direct complicity by the Israeli intelligence networks themselves.

Links of these bombers to Hezbollah and Hamas were immediately suggested in international media; Syria was said to be the headquarters for the operation because one of the

bombers had pursued Islamic studies in Damascus. The fact that they had been in Gaza and appeared at a public memorial service for Rachel Corrie, a member of the pacifist International Solidarity Movement killed by Israeli troops, was used by the Israelis in an attempt to ban that organization.

It seemed as if Palestine, Israel, and Syria would become the epicenter of the "global war on terror." But something had gone wrong with this operation. Facts began to be revealed, that even to Israeli intelligence experts were very disturbing.

Why foreigners? The Palestinian militant groups, including Hamas, have no shortage of candidates for suicide bombings. Nor do they want international terrorists working on their turf. Senior *Ha'aretz* correspondent Akiva Eldar wrote on May 20: "Hamas leaders are worried about hitchhikers, like the two British-Pakistani terrorists who attacked Mike's Place in Tel Aviv or the terrorists in Casablanca who attacked Jewish targets. Hamas has always made sure to keep their agenda confined to the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. They are not interested in recruiting Islamic fanatics or joining their war against America."

For Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's purposes also, local Palestinian suicide bombings suffice. In the last two years, it has been a proven fact that when the Israelis conduct a certain number of targeted assassinations, house demolitions, and killings of innocent civilians, a suicide bombing is not only sure to follow, but even its date can be predicted. So why import a foreign operation unless it is meant for something much bigger—such as launching a scenario that will tar the Palestinians with the same brush as al-Qaeda, where Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will have to face the same fate as Saddam Hussein?

How did these Pakistanis manage to enter Israel, when no Pakistanis are allowed to do so? Hanif's Pakistani birth was clearly stated on his passport. Israel's leading military correspondent, Ze'ev Schiff, questioned how it was possible for the duo to travel about so easily and escape detection by the Israeli security services. "The question is: Why their passage through these checkpoints was so smooth, despite the fact that they looked distinctly Arab? True, they had British passports, but the names in the passports were Arab. In the United States, the two would surely have been carefully searched and interrogated each time. Furthermore, their names were in the border control computers. The fact that the men entered Israel from an Arab state, then crossed into Gaza and re-entered Israel from there, should have immediately told guards that they needed to investigate the pair thoroughly. At Ben Gurion Airport, people in similar situations are interrogated at length. Yet at the land crossing between Israel and Arab territories, people apparently pass through easily."

Israeli Minister of Defense Shaul Mofaz revealed that the two entered Israel through Jordan at the Allenby Bridge crossing—controlled by Israel—with their explosives hidden in their Korans. An Israeli journalist informed *EIR* that

the Israeli border police, after seeing that their names were in the computers, called the Shin Bet security service, and were told to allow them to enter. The journalist was unable to publish the story because of a gag order placed on the case.

According to the British investigation, the bombers were members of the British-based radical Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir, one among many terror-linked groups that British authorities never seem to find the “legal” justification to shut down. Many of these groups host militants who served in the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, financed and trained by the Anglo-American intelligence services, and their chief recruiter was Osama bin Laden.

Two weeks after the bombing, a badly decomposed body was discovered off the coast of Tel Aviv. Through a DNA test, the body was identified as that of the escaped bomber, Sharif. A senior Israeli crime journalist told *EIR*, “It’s perfectly clear to me.” The guy was grabbed by the Shin Bet or police right away, the journalist said, and they likely killed him for their own reasons.

Four weeks have passed since this bombing, with no official report, nor any call for an investigation of how the two entered the country. The five recent suicide bombers fit what can be now called the “normal” pattern, with no foreign links even suggested.

Two Atypical Attacks in Chechnya

On May 12, three suicide bombers drove a truck laden with 1.3 tons of explosives into a government compound in Northern Chechnya. The bomb destroyed a government administration building and badly damaged the regional headquarters of Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB). Russian President Vladimir Putin released a statement charging what appeared to be obvious, that the attack was aimed at undermining recent efforts to politically resolve the conflict. Two days later, and within hours of the attacks in Saudi Arabia, another suicide bomber blew herself up in the middle of the crowds attending the funeral ceremony of some of the 40 victims of the first bomb attack, killing another 14 people.

The second bombing occurred as President Putin was holding a tense meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, who was trying to convince the Russian President to approve a United Nations resolution backing U.S. occupation of Iraq. At the press conference after his meeting with Powell, Putin linked the bombings in Chechnya with those in Saudi Arabia, saying, “The signature in both places is identical.” Putin’s statements were backed up by Col. Ilya Shbalkin, head of FSB operations in Chechnya, who stated, “All terrorist acts committed on Chechen territory are financed by international terrorist organizations, including al-Qaeda.” The Russian media commented that suicide bombings are very rare among Chechen fighters, who have little problem inflicting serious casualties using traditional guerrilla tactics. The targeting of government buildings in the more secure and loyal regions of

Chechnya was seen as beyond the capabilities of the Chechen opposition.

Target: Saudi Arabia and Morocco

Saudi Arabia has been in the gunights of the Chicken-hawks ever since the strange Laurent Murawiac was invited by the notorious Richard Perle, to present a wild attack on Saudi Arabia before Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld’s Defense Policy Board last year. Acting Saudi Regent Prince Abdullah has been the target of the Chicken-hawks’ rage because of his refusal to endorse the war against Iraq. “Call it stupidity, call it short-sightedness; it is clear the hawks don’t want Prince Abdullah to become King,” a senior British Middle East expert told *EIR*.

A senior Israeli intelligence source also saw Abdullah as the target: “The terror attacks don’t target the United States or Great Britain, but Saudi Arabia and Morocco. . . . It is clear, whether through manipulation or—and I’m not one to speak of conspiracies, but in this case it cannot be ruled out, these operations are contributing to the clash of civilizations.”

The attacks in Morocco were unprecedented and seen as ordered from outside the country. Moroccan Foreign Minister Mohamed Benaissa said, “Similarities of action [and] the nature of the terrorists’ act lead us to believe that there is a foreign hand behind it.”

Senior diplomatic sources in the region confirm this assessment, pointing to the fact that opposition to Morocco’s monarchy—from the Islamic Social and Development Party—rarely takes the form of violence. Morocco did not support the war on Iraq. The targets—the Belgian consulate, a restaurant and hotel frequented by tourists, and three Jewish community centers—aim at destabilizing Morocco, and not hurting U.S. interests. This source pointed to the fact that King Mohammed VI is very close to French President Jacques Chirac, whose opposition to the war the king supported. He underscored that a destabilized Morocco targets European interests.

In the midst of this terror spree, the Arab satellite network Al-Jazeera aired a tape reputed to be by Ayman Al-Zawahri, a top lieutenant of Osama bin Laden, raising fears of fresh attacks. Zawahri’s fiery statement, denouncing most of the Arab governments as American lackeys, called for attacks on the embassies and interests of “America, England, Australia, and Norway.” The targeting of Norway raised many eyebrows, because it opposed the war, and is one of the states pressuring Israel to come to implement the Road Map. The statement cast doubt on the credibility of the tape.

No better credibility has Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who, at a press conference in Washington on May 21, charged that the al-Qaeda cell responsible for the Saudi bombings was safehoused in Iran. How far Rumsfeld’s attempt to replay the script recently used against Iraq will go, remains to be seen, now that that script has been proven to be based on lies.