

## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

November 16, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber exploded near a NATO-led International Security Assistance Force convoy in Baghlan Province, killing two Afghan civilians. – *Sydney Morning Herald, November 16*

November 16, 2008 (PAKISTAN): The Pakistani government temporarily cut off NATO's main supply route into Afghanistan due to intensified military activity by Taliban and al-Qa`ida militants in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *The Australian, November 17*

November 17, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants rejected Afghan President Hamid Karzai's offer to hold peace talks. The militants said no peace talks could be held as long as foreign troops were in the country. – *Voice of America, November 17*

November 17, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber struck an army checkpoint in Swat District of the North-West Frontier Province, killing four soldiers. – *Voice of America, November 17*

November 17, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants ambushed a convoy of pro-government Mamoun tribal elders in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. During the firefight, the tribesmen killed three of the militants including their commander. The elders, however, then took refuge in a house, which was besieged by militants. Approximately four of the elders were killed, while others were abducted. – *AFP, November 18*

November 18, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine Marines apprehended Almid Jundam, a suspected Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) militant, in Sulu Province. Authorities claim that Jundam is a follower of ASG mid-level leader Gafur Jumdal, an explosives expert. – *The Nation, November 21*

November 19, 2008 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new videotape in which he chastised President-elect Barack Obama for representing “the

direct opposite of honorable black Americans like Malik al-Shabazz, or Malcolm X.” During the 11-minute video, al-Zawahiri said, “You were born to a Muslim father, but you chose to stand in the ranks of the enemies of the Muslims, and pray the prayer of the Jews, although you claim to be Christian, in order to climb the rungs of leadership in America.” – *Minneapolis Star Tribune, November 19*

November 19, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): NATO soldiers killed Taliban commander Mullah Asad in Garmsir district, Helmand Province. – *Reuters, November 23*

November 19, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Suspected U.S. aerial drones killed a “senior” al-Qa`ida commander, in addition to five other militants, in Bannu District of the North-West Frontier Province. The senior leader was identified as Abdullah Azam al-Saudi, an Arab who “was the man coordinating between Al-Qaeda and Taliban commanders on this side of the border, and also involved in recruiting and training fighters.” – *AFP, November 18*

November 19, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Major General Amir Faisal Alvi, a former head of Pakistan's leading anti-terrorist strike force—the Special Services Group—was killed when gunmen on a motorbike and in an SUV opened fire on his vehicle just outside Islamabad. He retired two years ago and was one of Pakistan's most high-profile former military leaders. – *The Australian, November 20*

November 19, 2008 (YEMEN): According to a security official, a clash between police forces and al-Qa`ida “sympathizers” left four policemen, two militants and a civilian dead. The incident occurred in the southern Yemeni town of Joaar. – *AFP, November 20*

November 20, 2008 (IRAQ): U.S. General David Perkins told reporters that U.S. troops killed Haji Hammadi, a leader of al-Qa`ida in Iraq, on November 11 in Baghdad. According to press reports, “Hammadi was accused of planning suicide bombings, killings and kidnappings, including the abduction and murder of a U.S. sergeant in 2004.” – *Voice of America, November 20*

November 20, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber attacked a government compound in Khost Province, killing nine people. Two U.S. soldiers were wounded. – *Reuters, November 20*

November 20, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a mosque in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing at least nine people, including the leader of an anti-government tribal militia. The leader was identified as Malik Rehmatullah. – *Voice of America, November 21; Dawn, November 21*

November 21, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A bomb exploded at a funeral for a Shi`a Muslim leader in Dera Ismail Khan in the North-West Frontier Province, killing at least 10 people. – *Voice of America, November 21*

November 21, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): Authorities arrested two suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf Group. The men were allegedly planning to attack malls, bus stations and other civilian targets in the metropolitan area of Manila, the country's capital city. – *GMA News.tv, November 24*

November 22, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Rashid Rauf, a dual British-Pakistani citizen, was killed by an alleged U.S. unmanned Predator aerial drone in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Rauf was wanted for involvement in the 2006 terrorist plot to blow up commercial jetliners flying from Britain to North America. Rauf's death cannot be officially confirmed until the results of DNA tests are known. At least four other militants were killed in the strike. – *Washington Post, November 23; ABC News, November 22*

November 24, 2008 (GLOBAL): Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, the former head of Egyptian Islamic Jihad who worked extensively with Ayman al-Zawahiri, released a new treatise in which he said that al-Zawahiri and Usama bin Ladin are “bloodthirsty and remain determined to commit mass killings.” According to Sayyid Imam, “Zawahiri finds it legitimate to kill anybody whose country fights Muslims.” Al-Sharif refuted the logic of *fatawa* supporting al-Qa`ida's actions: “The killing of

civilians in blocks, trains, markets, mosques or elsewhere is a declaration of impotence to face armies of enemy states and cowardice. Their impotence drew them to kill civilians who Islamic Shari`a said should not be killed." Al-Sharif is currently serving a 25-year sentence in an Egyptian prison. - *Los Angeles Times, November 23*

November 24, 2008 (IRAQ): A sticky bomb attached to a bus killed at least 13 female government employees working for the Trade Ministry. - *AP, November 24*

November 24, 2008 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber detonated her explosives just outside the Green Zone in Baghdad, killing five people. - *AP, November 24*

November 24, 2008 (MALAYSIA): Authorities released from jail a suspected Islamist terrorist who has been held in detention since January 2002. The man, identified as Yazid Sufaat, allegedly allowed his home to be used by al-Qa`ida operatives to plan the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. Yazid is a former military officer and a U.S.-trained biochemist. According to authorities, "We released him as he had shown remorse and repentance after almost seven years of rehabilitation. He was released on several conditions. He has to report to the police regularly and cannot leave (the state) without police permission." - *Asia Pacific News, December 10*

November 24, 2008 (MAURITANIA): Three men have been sentenced to 10 years in prison for being members of al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. A fourth suspect, who is already serving a three-year sentence for similar charges, was sentenced to five years for recruiting and financing terrorist activities. - *BBC, November 24*

November 26, 2008 (UNITED STATES): The FBI warned U.S. law enforcement officials of a possible al-Qa`ida plot to attack New York City's subway and transportation system. Although the FBI said the threat was unsubstantiated, extra police have deployed to major hubs around the city to increase vigilance. - *AFP, November 26*

November 26, 2008 (YEMEN): Various press agencies reported that Salim Hamdan, Usama bin Ladin's former

driver, was released from Guantanamo Bay and has arrived in his native Yemen to serve out the rest of his sentence. His sentence is scheduled to end December 28, 2008. - *BBC, November 26*

November 26, 2008 (INDIA): More than 150 people were killed when Islamist militants laid siege to multiple luxury hotels, hospitals, a train station and an upscale restaurant in Mumbai, among other targets. A previously unknown group calling itself the Deccan Mujahidin claimed responsibility, but authorities believe that the name is simply an alias. Authorities suspect that Lashkar-i-Tayyiba may have a role in the plot. - *Los Angeles Times, November 27*

November 27, 2008 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new video message in which he argued that the United States "is doomed to failure in Afghanistan and the tribal regions of Pakistan." Al-Zawahiri also attacked the Cairo-based al-Azhar Islamic schools "as having been corrupted and not following true Islam." He also offered his views on the weakening U.S. financial sector. - *AFP, November 27*

November 27, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber exploded as a military convoy passed by outside the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. Four people were killed. - *Reuters, November 27*

November 27, 2008 (TURKEY): Court officials in Turkey announced that 11 suspected al-Qa`ida-linked individuals will go on trial next month over an alleged bombing plot in western Turkey. The men, who were arrested in August, apparently set up a group called the Muslim Vengeance Brigade and were planning attacks in the country. The indictment states that the men received training in Afghanistan before traveling to Turkey. - *AFP, November 27*

November 28, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber blew himself up outside a mosque frequented by followers of Shi`a leader Moqtada al-Sadr. At least nine people were killed in the blast, which occurred in the town of Musayyib, about 50 miles south of Baghdad. - *Voice of America, November 28*

November 28, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber attacked a police

car in Bannu District of the North-West Frontier Province, killing at least seven people. - *Daily Times, November 29*

November 28, 2008 (INDIA): Indian commandos stormed a Jewish center in Mumbai to free hostages. The militants inside the facility were part of the terrorist strike team that besieged Mumbai beginning on November 26. - *BBC, November 28*

November 30, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a German diplomatic convoy in Kabul, killing three Afghan civilians. - *AFP, November 30*

December 1, 2008 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new audio message praising the three bombers who were recently executed in Indonesia due to their involvement in the 2002 Bali nightclub terrorist attack. The men were executed by firing squad on November 9. - *AP, December 1*

December 1, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at the back gate of a police academy in eastern Baghdad. Within minutes of the suicide blast, a car bomb exploded at the main entrance of a nearby government building. The two coordinated blasts killed approximately 15 policemen. - *Washington Post, December 1*

December 1, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber attacked a U.S. military patrol in Mosul, Ninawa Province, killing approximately 15 people. Initial reports stated that no U.S. soldiers were injured. - *Washington Post, December 1*

December 1, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Abdul Rahim Desiwal, the governor of Andar district in Ghazni Province, was assassinated by two men on a motorcycle. The Taliban claimed credit for the attack. - *AFP, November 30*

December 1, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a police car in Helmand Province, killing at least seven people. - *New York Times, December 1*

December 1, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Dozens of Taliban militants attacked a shipping terminal in Peshawar and killed two truck drivers transporting supplies for NATO and U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

They also set on fire a number of transport vehicles. - *Voice of America, December 1*

December 1, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber exploded at a security checkpoint in Swat District of the North-West Frontier Province, killing at least nine people. - *Voice of America, December 1*

December 2, 2008 (UNITED KINGDOM): A British court ordered radical cleric Abu Qatada back behind bars after he allegedly breached his bail terms. Qatada, who was once described as Usama bin Ladin's "right-hand man" in Europe, reportedly plotted to leave Britain. According to Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, "He poses a significant threat to our national security and I am pleased that he will be detained pending his deportation, which I'm working hard to secure." - *AFP, December 2*

December 2, 2008 (ITALY): Italian officials announced the arrests of two Moroccan men accused of planning an al-Qa`ida terrorist attack in the northern Italian province of Monza. The men, who were arrested in Milan, were charged with planning attacks on a supermarket and nightclub parking lot, and on two police stations. Through the use of wiretaps, authorities found that the men researched explosive devices. - *UPI, December 2*

December 3, 2008 (UNITED STATES): Ahmed Ressay, who was convicted of plotting to blow up Los Angeles International Airport, was resented to 22 years in prison. - *Seattle PI, December 30*

December 3, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani jets and helicopter gunships bombed Taliban positions in Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Authorities suspect that at least 30 militants were killed in the strikes. The offensive was just the latest in a series of operations launched by Pakistan's military in the country's tribal regions. - *AFP, December 3*

December 4, 2008 (IRAQ): Two suicide truck bombers targeted police stations in Falluja, Anbar Province, killing at least 16 people. - *Los Angeles Times, December 5; Reuters, December 4*

December 4, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber attacked a U.S. military patrol in Mosul, Ninawa Province, killing two soldiers. - *Los Angeles Times, December 5*

December 4, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Two suicide bombers attacked two government offices in the town of Khost, killing at least four people. One bomber targeted the department for counter-narcotics, while the other detonated his explosives inside the main intelligence headquarters. The latter bomber wore the uniform of an intelligence officer. - *Reuters, December 4*

December 5, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A bomb ripped through a crowded bazaar in Peshawar, killing at least 27 people. - *International Herald Tribune, December 5; New York Times, December 5*

December 5, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber killed at least six people in Orakzai Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. It is suspected that the bombing was aimed at a Shi`a tribal gathering, although the bomber apparently detonated his explosives early when stopped at a police checkpoint. - *Reuters, December 5*

December 5, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. aerial drone strike killed at least three militants outside the town of Mir Ali in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *AFP, December 5*

December 6, 2008 (IRAQ): The leader of an anti-al-Qa`ida Sons of Iraq group was killed when a bomb attached to his vehicle exploded in Baghdad's Dora district. - *CNN, December 6*

December 6, 2008 (IRAQ): A bomb exploded in a cafe near Ba`quba, Diyala Province, killing one person. Twenty-seven others, eight of whom members of a local Awakening Council, were injured in the blast. - *Reuters, December 6*

December 7, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Taliban fighters burned more than 100 trucks at a supply depot used to transfer equipment to NATO forces in neighboring Afghanistan. Security guards were apparently outnumbered by the more than 200 militants who attacked the two depots in Peshawar. According to one report, about 70 humvees, which were loaded onto the

trucks, were destroyed. - *Guardian, December 8*

December 7, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) fighters and Philippine Marines clashed on the outskirts of Basilan in the southern Philippines. During the encounter, five Marines and at least 50 ASG fighters were killed. One authority figure said of the incident, "This is part of our punitive operations against the Abu Sayyaf kidnappers in Basilan." - *Sun Star, December 9*

December 8, 2008 (UNITED STATES): Al-Qa`ida operative Khalid Shaykh Muhammad and four other men accused of plotting the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States appeared in a war crimes court at Guantanamo Bay. According to one press report, the men offered "a tribute to Osama bin Laden" and called "on fellow holy warriors to strike the United States with weapons of mass destruction." - *Chicago Tribune, December 9*

December 9, 2008 (IRAQ): Iraqi authorities announced the arrests of 10 al-Qa`ida suspects charged with organizing the December 4 truck bombings in Falluja. Five of the men were arrested on December 7, while the other five were arrested on December 8. - *AFP, December 9*

December 9, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan and NATO forces killed Muhammed Bobi—a Taliban commander allegedly responsible for suicide bombings, kidnappings and torture—in Logar Province. - *CNN, December 9*

December 10, 2008 (GLOBAL): According to a new press report that quotes a statement posted on a jihadist website, the leader of the al-Qa`ida-inspired Fatah al-Islam group may have been killed in Syria. Shaker al-Absi, the head of the Lebanese group, appears to have disappeared during a mission to link up with jihadists in Iraq. The militant statement reads, "Three days after the loss of the sheikh and his companions, the shura council of the organization appointed the brother, Shaykh Abu Muhammad Awad as successor to Sheikh Shaker al-Absi. With the absence of Sheikh Shaker al-Absi, the new period starts. The organization started regaining its

strength and spreading in all of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine.” - *Reuters, December 10*

December 10, 2008 (SOMALIA): Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad, one of Somalia's main Islamist leaders, returned to Mogadishu approximately two years after being forced out of power by Ethiopian forces. Shaykh Ahmad is viewed as one of the more moderate leaders in the Islamic courts movement. - *BBC, December 10*

December 11, 2008 (BELGIUM): Belgian police arrested 14 suspected al-Qa`ida members, including one man who may have been plotting a suicide attack. The alleged suicide bomber had recorded a farewell video and appears to have been in the final stages of the plot. According to the federal prosecutor, “It could have been an operation in Pakistan or Afghanistan, but it can't be ruled out that Belgium or Europe could have been the target.” The suspects, which include men and women, had links back to Afghanistan and Pakistan. No weapons or explosives were found during 17 house searches in Brussels and Liege. - *AFP, December 11; Bloomberg, December 11*

December 11, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed at least 55 people in a crowded restaurant near Kirkuk. According to the Associated Press, “It appeared, however, that the target was a reconciliation meeting between Arab tribal leaders and officials of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Kurdish party of President Jalal Talabani, on ways to defuse tension among Arabs, Kurds and Turkomen in the Kirkuk area.” - *Reuters, December 11*

December 12, 2008 (BELGIUM): Authorities charged six suspected al-Qa`ida operatives with membership in a terrorist group. The suspects were arrested on December 11 in Brussels and Liege. Eight other suspects arrested with the charged group were released due to insufficient evidence. - *AP, December 12*

December 12, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): The Taliban deployed a 13-year-old suicide bomber in Helmand Province, in an attack that killed three British Marines. According to reports, the boy was pushing a wheelbarrow laden with explosives when it detonated. - *Bloomberg, December 15*

December 13, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants attacked and destroyed transport vehicles used to bring equipment to NATO in neighboring Afghanistan. The attack occurred outside Peshawar. - *CNN, December 13*

December 14, 2008 (NETHERLANDS): Tjibbe Joustra, the Netherlands' counter-terrorism head, told reporters that al-Qa`ida does not have a presence or network in the country. He did say, however, that the risk of a terrorist attack in the country remained “substantial.” - *DutchNews.nl, December 15*

December 14, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives in front of the Chinese hospital in Kandahar, killing at least four policemen. - *Reuters, December 14*

December 14, 2008 (SOMALIA): Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf fired his prime minister, Nur Hassan Hussein, citing “corruption, inefficiency and treason.” Hours after the announcement, a spokesman for the Islamic al-Shabab insurgent group held a news conference in Mogadishu stating, “We will never accept any political power sharing. Our aim is only to see Islamic law running this country.” - *AP, December 14*

December 15, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber attacked a police checkpoint on the western outskirts of Baghdad, killing nine policemen. - *Reuters, December 15*

December 15, 2008 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber killed the leader of a U.S.-backed neighborhood patrol unit in the Tarmiyya area, north of Baghdad. - *Reuters, December 15*

December 15, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. missile strike killed two people in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *AP, December 15*

December 15, 2008 (YEMEN): Three Germans were kidnapped by Bani Dhabyan tribesmen in Dhamar Province. The Germans consist of an aid worker and her visiting mother and father. - *AP, December 18*

December 17, 2008 (TURKEY): Turkish authorities detained 15 suspected al-Qa`ida members during an operation in Istanbul. - *Reuters, December 17*

December 17, 2008 (TURKEY): Authorities in Turkey charged two suspected al-Qa`ida militants with having ties to a July terrorist attack outside the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul. Six people were killed during the July attack. - *Voice of America, December 17*

December 17, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): A Philippine court convicted four Abu Sayyaf Group members for the killing of two people during a 2001 attack on a resort in Davao del Norte Province. - *AP, December 17*

December 17, 2008 (ALGERIA): A court convicted and jailed an Algerian man for traveling to Iraq to fight against U.S. forces there. The man, identified as Raked Brahim, apparently joined the Islamic State of Iraq. He left Iraq, however, after being asked to execute a suicide attack. He was later apprehended in Syria and deported back to Algeria. - *AP, December 17*

December 18, 2008 (YEMEN): Bani Dhabyan tribesmen in Yemen who kidnapped three Germans on December 15 are demanding the release of Shaykh Mohammed Ali Hassan al-Moayad, a cleric currently imprisoned in the United States. Al-Moayad was sentenced in 2005 to 75 years for conspiring to support al-Qa`ida and Hamas. - *AP, December 18*

December 19, 2008 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. military announced that it would put on trial Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, the alleged planner of the 2000 attack on the USS *Cole*. Al-Nashiri is a Saudi citizen of Yemeni descent, and he has been held at Guantanamo Bay since 2006. - *Washington Post, December 20*

December 19, 2008 (UNITED KINGDOM): The United Kingdom convicted Rangzieb Ahmed of being a member of al-Qa`ida and of directing a terrorist organization in Britain. His co-defendant, Habib Ahmed, was also found guilty of belonging to al-Qa`ida. On December 20, Rangzieb Ahmed was sentenced to life in prison while Habib Ahmed received 10 years. - *Reuters, December 19*

December 19, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Three people were killed when suspected Taliban militants opened fire on an oil tanker used to supply international forces in Afghanistan. The incident occurred in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *AFP, December 19*

December 19, 2008 (YEMEN): Three German citizens being held by tribesmen in Yemen were released to authorities. According to an Agence France-Presse report, "Unconfirmed reports on a Yemeni Internet site, Marebnews, said the mediator had promised a ransom of 100,000 dollars and an assurance that the kidnapper would not face prosecution." - *AFP, December 20*

December 19, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): A top military official announced that there is a high probability that Abu Sayyaf Group leader Sahiron was killed during a December 7 clash with Philippine troops. - *PNA, December 19*

December 20, 2008 (SOMALIA): Ethiopia announced that it has begun preparations to withdraw troops from Somalia. - *AFP, December 20*

December 21, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani fighter jets killed four militants in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *AFP, December 21*

December 22, 2008 (UNITED STATES): Five Muslim immigrants were convicted of conspiring to kill U.S. soldiers at Fort Dix, New Jersey. The men, who will be sentenced in April, could get life in prison. - *AP, December 22*

December 22, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Suspected U.S. missile strikes killed eight people in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *AP, December 22*

December 23, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): A grenade exploded amid a crowd attending a concert on Basilan Island in the southern Philippines. At least 16 people were injured. The Abu Sayyaf Group was suspected as being responsible for the blast. - *AP, December 23*

December 24, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): Seven inmates, including two accused

of membership with the Abu Sayyaf Group, escaped from a Philippine jail in Basilan Province in the southern Philippines. Three of the seven were immediately recaptured, but the others evaded authorities. - *PNA, December 24*

December 26, 2008 (IRAQ): Prisoners in an Iraqi prison in Ramadi mounted an escape bid, causing a shootout in which six policemen and seven detained militants were killed. Three of al-Qa`ida's local "amirs" escaped, including Imad Ahmed Farhan. Iraqi authorities have launched a manhunt in order to recapture the escapees. - *AFP, December 26*

December 27, 2008 (IRAQ): A car bomb ripped through a Shi`a area of Baghdad, killing at least 22 people. - *AP, December 27; Los Angeles Times, December 28*

December 27, 2008 (IRAQ): Imad Ahmed Farhan, who escaped from prison with a group of inmates on December 26, was killed by policemen in Ramadi. - *AP, December 27*

December 27, 2008 (ISRAEL): The Israeli military began a large offensive in the Gaza Strip against the Palestinian militant organization Hamas. Israeli officials state that one of the offensive's main goals is to reduce militant rocket fire into Israeli towns. - *AP, January 13*

December 28, 2008 (IRAQ): Two al-Qa`ida prisoners who escaped from jail on December 26 were captured in Ramadi. - *AFP, December 27*

December 28, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed 16 people, 14 of whom were children, in Khost Province. The Taliban claimed credit for the attack. - *Reuters, December 28*

December 28, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A car bomb ripped through Buner District of the North-West Frontier Province, killing at least 41 people. The bomber targeted voters at a polling station. - *Voice of America, December 28*

December 29, 2008 (IRAQ): A sniper shot and killed a tribal leader in Jalawla district of Diyala Province. - *Reuters, December 30*

December 29, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber attacked a

governor's compound in Parwan Province, killing two Afghan civilians and wounding two U.S. soldiers. - *AP, December 28*

December 29, 2008 (SOMALIA): Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf resigned from power. He immediately returned to his native Puntland region. - *Los Angeles Times, December 30*

December 30, 2008 (UNITED STATES): A federal judge declined to release two detainees from Guantanamo Bay, agreeing with the U.S. government that the men are enemy combatants. - *Washington Post, December 31*

December 30, 2008 (PAKISTAN): The Pakistani military launched a major offensive against Taliban-linked militants in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The offensive, however, temporarily closed a major supply route for international forces in neighboring Afghanistan. - *Washington Post, December 30*

December 31, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters ambushed the Musa Qala governor's convoy and killed 20 of his bodyguards. The governor was not with the convoy at the time of the attack. - *Reuters, January 1*

December 31, 2008 (SOMALIA): Shaykh Muktar Robow, the leader of Somalia's al-Shabab Islamist insurgent group, vowed to "not stop fighting even if the Ethiopian troops withdraw because our aim is to implement Islamic law across Somalia." Ethiopian troops plan on withdrawing from Somalia in the near future, but have not set a concrete date. - *AP, December 31*