

Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

February 1, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A Taliban suicide car bomber attacked a convoy of foreign troops in Kabul, injuring two civilians and a French soldier. – *Reuters, February 1*

February 1, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Suspected Abu Sayyaf Group-linked militants kidnapped a nine-year-old boy on Basilan Island in the southern Philippines. – *AFP, February 1*

February 2, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A Taliban suicide bomber in a police uniform killed 21 police in Tirin Kot, Uruzgan Province. The bomber entered the police compound before detonating his explosives. – *Reuters, February 2*

February 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): John Solecki, an American and the head of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, was abducted by unidentified gunmen while on his way to his office in Quetta, Balochistan Province. The assailants shot and killed his driver during the kidnapping. It was not immediately clear whether the abductors were Islamist militants, criminals, or Baloch separatists. – *Guardian, February 3*

February 2, 2009 (SAUDI ARABIA): The Saudi government issued a list of 85 wanted militants based outside of the country. Authorities said the men had “adopted the straying ideology,” which signifies that they are suspected of al-Qa`ida involvement. The government called on the men to turn themselves in overseas to “return to a normal life.” Out of the group, 83 are Saudis and two are Yemenis. Saudi officials also announced that 11 Saudis who were released from Guantanamo Bay and subsequently passed through the Saudi rehabilitation program for former jihadists have left the country and joined terrorist groups abroad. – *Reuters, February 2; New York Times, February 3*

February 2, 2009 (SOMALIA): A roadside bomb exploded next to an African Union peacekeeping vehicle in Mogadishu. The blast, and the subsequent return gunfire from African Union soldiers, left at least 18 people dead. – *New York Times, February 2; Voice of America, February 2*

February 2, 2009 (THAILAND): Suspected Muslim separatists killed and then beheaded two Thai paramilitary rangers in southern Thailand. – *Reuters, February 2*

February 3, 2009 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new audio message, in which he condemned Israel for its recent actions in the Gaza Strip. Al-Zawahiri called on Muslims around the world to target U.S. interests to avenge American support for Israel’s offensive in Gaza. The message referenced President Barack Obama’s inaugural speech. – *CNN, February 3; AP, February 3*

February 3, 2009 (SPAIN): Spanish officials arrested 13 people in the cities of Barcelona and Valencia for allegedly forging passports and other documents for criminal and terrorist groups. The detainees include 11 Pakistanis, one Nigerian and one Indian. – *RTTNews, February 3; AP, February 3*

February 3, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants blew up a highway bridge in the Khyber Pass region, halting the transportation of supplies to NATO forces in Afghanistan. Approximately 80% of supplies for U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan pass through Pakistan. – *New York Times, February 3*

February 4, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb ripped through a vehicle carrying the guards for Mullah Salam, the district chief of Musa Qala in Helmand Province. Six of his guards were killed. – *AP, February 5*

February 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants set fire to 10 supply trucks returning from Afghanistan to Pakistan. – *Los Angeles Times, February 5*

February 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani Taliban released 29 paramilitary soldiers and policemen in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province. Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan said that the men were released on the promise that they would quit their jobs and not act against the Taliban. The men were initially captured only 24-hours earlier. – *Reuters, February 4*

February 4, 2009 (SOMALIA): The director of Horn Afrik radio in Mogadishu, Said Tahliil Ahmed, was

assassinated in that city by unknown gunmen. He was killed in Mogadishu’s Bakara Market. Al-Shabab spokesman Shaykh Ali Mohamed Hussein denied that the group was behind the assassination. – *Shabelle Media Network, February 4*

February 5, 2009 (FRANCE): A French court sentenced Christian Ganczarski to 18 years in jail for his role in a 2002 attack that killed 21 people at a Tunisian synagogue in Djerba. Ganczarski, a German convert to Islam, was arrested in France in 2003. Walid Nouar, the brother of the suicide bomber, was also sentenced by the court to 12 years in jail. The Djerba bombing—which was claimed by al-Qa`ida—killed 14 German tourists, five Tunisians and two French nationals. – *BBC, February 5*

February 5, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed 16 people at a crowded restaurant in Khanaqin, Diyala Province. – *Los Angeles Times, February 6*

February 5, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed 30 people after detonating his explosives outside a Shi`a mosque in Dera Ghazi Khan district of Punjab Province. – *Bloomberg, February 5*

February 6, 2009 (GERMANY): A 30-year-old German citizen was arrested at Stuttgart airport on charges of being an al-Qa`ida member. Authorities also allege that the man supplied range finders, night vision equipment and cash to al-Qa`ida. – *AP, February 7*

February 6, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber wounded six people at a checkpoint on the Khyber Pass in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *BBC, February 6*

February 7, 2009 (PAKISTAN): The Taliban said that it had killed and beheaded Polish engineer Piotr Stanczak who was kidnapped in Pakistan on September 28, 2008. On February 8, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan released a videotape showing Stanczak’s beheading. The authenticity of the videotape was later confirmed. – *AFP, February 7; AFP, February 9*

February 7, 2009 (SOMALIA): New Somali President Shaykh Sharif

Shaykh Ahmad arrived in Mogadishu to hold consultations to form a broad coalition government. On January 31, Shaykh Sharif was elected Somalia's new president by lawmakers in nearby Djibouti. – *AFP, February 7*

February 8, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Speaking at a security conference in Munich, Afghan President Hamid Karzai said, “We will invite all those Taliban, who are not part of al-Qaida, who are not part of terrorist networks, who want to return to their country, who want to live by the constitution of Afghanistan, and who want to have peace in the country and live a normal life to participate, to come back to their country.” – *Voice of America, February 8*

February 8, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A bomb killed two U.S. nationals, an Afghan interpreter and a policeman in Helmand Province. – *Sydney Morning Herald, February 8*

February 8, 2009 (YEMEN): A Yemeni security official told reporters that authorities have decided to release 176 people suspected of having ties to al-Qa`ida. Of the group, 95 were freed on February 6. According to the BBC, “The ruling excludes those convicted of terrorism, unless they have completed their sentence.” – *AFP, February 8; BBC, February 8*

February 9, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber detonated his explosives near a U.S. Army patrol in Mosul, Ninawa Province, killing four U.S. soldiers and their Iraqi interpreter. – *Los Angeles Times, February 10*

February 9, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber attacked a police and Frontier Corps checkpoint in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Five policemen were killed. – *AFP, February 8*

February 9, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani Taliban commander Noor Syed Mehsud was injured when a remote-controlled bomb exploded near his vehicle in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. His driver was killed in the blast. Noor Syed Mehsud is a key aide to Taliban commander Baitullah Mehsud. – *AFP, February 9*

February 9, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Al-Qa`ida's commander for Afghanistan, Shaykh Sa`id Mustafa Abu'l-Yazid, appeared in a new video warning India against attacking Pakistan. “India should know that it will have to pay a heavy price if it attacks Pakistan,” he said. “The mujahidin will sunder your armies into the ground, like they did to the Russians in Afghanistan.” Al-Yazid also called on Pakistanis to overthrow their government and president. – *BBC, February 9*

February 10, 2009 (GLOBAL): Interpol issued a rare “orange” global security alert for 85 suspected al-Qa`ida-linked terrorists wanted by Saudi Arabia. On February 2, the Saudi government issued a list of 85 wanted militants based outside of the country. – *CNN, February 11*

February 10, 2009 (YEMEN): The Yemeni Embassy in Washington, D.C., released a statement denying a February 8 report which claimed it released more than 170 al-Qa`ida suspects from its prisons. The new statement said that authorities have released 108 prisoners, but they were “not affiliated in any way to al Qaeda.” – *CNN, February 10*

February 11, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants attacked three government buildings in Kabul, killing at least 20 people. The near-simultaneous attacks targeted the prisons directorate, the Justice Ministry and the Education Ministry. The attack involved multiple suicide bombers and gunmen. A total of at least seven militants were killed. – *Daily Telegraph, February 11; Canberra Times, February 12; New York Times, February 11*

February 11, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A provincial minister, Alam Zeb, was killed in a bomb attack in the North-West Frontier Province. – *CNN, February 11*

February 12, 2009 (IRAQ): Abdul-Karim al-Sharabi, a high level Mosul official with the Sunni Arab National Dialogue Front, was assassinated by gunmen as he drove to his office in the morning. He was killed in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *New York Times, February 12*

February 12, 2009 (IRAQ): A bomb exploded amidst a crowd of Shi`a pilgrims in Karbala, killing at least eight

people. – *New York Times, February 12*

February 12, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside the entrance to the provincial security headquarters in Paktika Province, killing one police officer. – *Reuters, February 12*

February 13, 2009 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber dressed in a black abaya killed at least 30 Shi`a pilgrims as they traveled on foot along the route from Baghdad to the holy city of Karbala. Most of the dead were women and children. – *Sydney Morning Herald, February 14*

February 13, 2009 (SOMALIA): Al-Qa`ida leader Abu Yahya al-Libi released a new video statement in which he called on Somali militants to increase their attacks against the country's new government. “Aim your arrows towards them...direct your battles against them and intensify your campaign against them,” he said. “Prepare to fight against the campaign of conspiracies illustrated by the recent farcical presidential election [in Somalia]...which America—the world leader of infidels—was the first to welcome.” – *Reuters, February 13*

February 13, 2009 (MALAYSIA): According to a Malaysian newspaper, authorities in the country released from jail three men suspected of ties to Jemaah Islamiya. One of the men allegedly released, Zaini Zakaria, was suspected of involvement in the so-called “second wave” of attacks on the United States following September 11, 2001. According to Reuters, “The U.S. government had said Zaini was one of three potential pilots recruited by the al Qaeda to carry out a Sept.11-style attack on the U.S. west coast in 2002.” – *Reuters, February 14*

February 14, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants assassinated the chief of Nadir Shah Kot district in Khost Province. He was killed by a roadside bomb. – *AFP, February 14*

February 14, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. missile strike by an aerial drone killed at least 25 alleged al-Qa`ida-linked militants in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. A Taliban official claimed that most of the dead were Uzbek fighters. Three separate

compounds were targeted in the attacks. – *Reuters, February 14; New York Times, February 14*

February 14, 2009 (PAKISTAN): The Taliban in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province released a Chinese engineer, Long Xiaowei, who had been held captive since August 29, 2008. Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan said he was released as a goodwill gesture. – *AP, February 15*

February 15, 2009 (IRAQ): Mosul politician Talib Muhsen, a member of the al-Hadbaa electoral list, was injured after a bomb attached to his vehicle exploded. – *CNN, February 15*

February 15, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A coalition airstrike killed Ghulam Dastagir, a powerful Taliban commander, in Badghis Province. Eight other militants were also killed in the strike. According to the former police chief of the province, Dastagir “was like the shadow governor of Badghis.” – *AP, February 16*

February 15, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan announced a 10-day cease-fire with the government in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province. – *AP, February 15*

February 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani officials announced that they had struck a peace deal with the Taliban in the Swat region of the North-West Frontier Province. In exchange for peace, the government said that they would accept a legal system compatible with Shari`a law. According to the *New York Times*, “Government officials said on Monday that the agreement was struck with Maulana Sufi Mohammad, who has long pressed for Shariah law to be restored in Swat and who had pledged to persuade Taliban fighters in Swat to lay down their arms.” The government will apparently recognize Shari`a for the entire Malakand Division, which includes Swat District of the NWFP. – *New York Times, February 16; CNN, February 18*

February 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. aerial drone fired missiles at a building in Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing approximately 30 people. If verified, the attack would mark the “first suspected drone attack

in Kurram.” – *Voice of America, February 16; Reuters, February 16*

February 17, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): U.S. President Barack Obama announced that he will send 17,000 more troops to Afghanistan in the spring and summer. Currently, approximately 36,000 U.S. troops are deployed to the country. – *New York Times, February 17*

February 17, 2009 (SAUDI ARABIA): Muhammad al-Awfi, a former detainee at Guantanamo Bay who became an al-Qa`ida commander after his release, turned himself in to Saudi authorities. Last month, al-Awfi appeared in an al-Qa`ida video claiming that he had joined al-Qa`ida in Yemen. He allegedly turned himself in to Yemeni authorities after securing his repatriation to Saudi Arabia. – *Reuters, February 17*

February 18, 2009 (UNITED KINGDOM): Britain’s highest court ruled that Abu Qatada, an extremist Muslim preacher accused of having links to al-Qa`ida, could be deported to Jordan despite fears that he could face torture there. His deportation will not occur, however, until the European Court of Human Rights hears his expected appeal. British Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said, “I am keen to deport this dangerous individual as soon as I can.” – *AP, February 18*

February 18, 2009 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Jazira broadcast an audiotape from a purported member of al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) who claimed to be holding captive two Canadian diplomats and four European tourists who were kidnapped from Niger on December 14 and January 22, respectively. The two Canadian diplomats include the UN envoy to Niger, Robert Fowler, and his colleague, Louis Guay. In the statement, the purported AQIM member said, “We announce to the general public that the mujahidin reserve the right to deal with the six kidnapped according to Islamic Shari`a law.” – *BBC, February 18; AP, February 18*

February 18, 2009 (SOMALIA): Sufi clerics in Somalia declared their support for the new government of Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad. The country’s Sufi clerics have thrown their support behind a newly armed Sufi group known as Ahlu-Sunna wal-Jama, which

recently scored military successes against al-Shabab in central Galgaduud region. – *Voice of America, February 18*

February 19, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a Shi`a funeral procession in Dera Ismail Khan of the North-West Frontier Province. At least 20 people were killed. – *AFP, February 19*

February 19, 2009 (SAUDI ARABIA): Alleged al-Qa`ida operative and Saudi national Ahmed Owaidan al-Harbi was handed over to Saudi authorities after he was arrested in eastern Yemen. – *AP, February 19*

February 19, 2009 (YEMEN): Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula leader Nasir al-Wahayshi released a new audio message urging Yemenis to rise up against the government. – *AP, February 19*

February 20, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Federal agents arrested Ahmadullah Sais Niazi, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Afghanistan, at his home in Tustin, California. Authorities allege that Niazi lied about his ties to terrorist groups on citizenship and passport papers. According to CBS News, the indictment reads that Niazi lied about his ties to al-Qa`ida, the Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami. The news report states that Niazi “faces charges of perjury, naturalization fraud, procuring a passport by fraud and making a false statement,” charges that could carry a sentence of up to 35 years. – *CBS News, February 20*

February 20, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Authorities announced that Guantanamo Bay inmate Binyam Mohamed will soon be released and sent back to the United Kingdom. Mohamed is a former UK resident who was accused of conspiring to participate in a dirty bomb attack. He was also accused of training in al-Qa`ida camps in Afghanistan. Charges against him, however, were dropped in October 2008. – *AP, February 20*

February 20, 2009 (KYRGYZSTAN): Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev signed a bill to close a key U.S. airbase used to stage military operations in neighboring Afghanistan. The signing of the bill marked the final step before authorities issue a 180-day eviction notice. According to the Associated Press, Manas airbase is “a transit point for 15,000 troops and 500 tons of cargo

each month to and from Afghanistan.”
– AP, February 20

February 20, 2009 (THAILAND): Suspected Muslim separatist fighters killed and then beheaded two Thai soldiers in Yala Province in southern Thailand. – Reuters, February 20

February 21, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A senior government official told reporters that Taliban fighters have agreed to a “permanent cease-fire” in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province. – Reuters, February 21

February 22, 2009 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new audiotape on Islamist web forums, titled “From Kabul to Mogadishu.” During the message, al-Zawahiri spoke about Somalia, Yemen, Gaza, Afghanistan and Pakistan. – CNN, February 23

February 22, 2009 (EGYPT): A bomb exploded in the popular Khan al-Khalili bazaar in Cairo, killing a Frenchwoman and wounding 17 people. Police quickly discovered a second bomb, but managed to detonate it safely. The bazaar is popular among tourists. – AP, February 22

February 22, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants abducted Khushal Khan, a senior Pakistani official, and six of his guards in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province. The Taliban spokesman for Swat, Muslim Khan, said that the official “is our guest. We have to discuss some issues with him. We will serve him with tea and then free him.” – Reuters, February 22

February 22, 2009 (PAKISTAN): In a new statement, Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province government announced that it will provide 30,000 rifles to rural area residents in an attempt to counter Taliban militants. The initiative is called the “Village Defense Rifle” program. – AFP, February 22

February 22, 2009 (SOMALIA): Al-Shabab took responsibility for a suicide car bomb attack in Mogadishu that killed 11 African Union peacekeepers from Burundi. Al-Shabab leader Muktar Robow warned AU troops after the attack to “go home, otherwise you will

meet our hell.” – Los Angeles Times, February 23

February 23, 2009 (UNITED STATES): FBI Director Robert Mueller said that a Somali-American man from Minnesota, Shirwa Ahmed, became the first known suicide bomber with U.S. citizenship. Ahmed, who was recruited into Somalia’s al-Shabab militant group, blew up an explosives-laden vehicle in northern Somalia in October 2008. According to Mueller, “It appears that this individual was radicalized in his hometown in Minnesota.” – Minneapolis Star Tribune, February 24

February 23, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Two suicide bombers targeted an anti-drug police station in Zaranj, Nimroz Province. One police officer was killed. – AP, February 23

February 23, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Tehrik-i-Taliban deputy chief Maulvi Faqir Muhammad declared a unilateral cease-fire in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – AFP, February 23

February 24, 2009 (IRAQ): Two Iraqi policemen opened fire on U.S. troops at a police outpost in Mosul. One U.S. soldier and an interpreter were killed. According to the Associated Press, “It was the fourth attack in the region since late 2007 with suspected links to Iraqi security units.” – AP, February 24

February 26, 2009 (UNITED STATES): U.S.-born Christopher Paul was sentenced to 20 years in prison for a terrorism conspiracy in which he joined al-Qa`ida to help plan bombings in the United States and abroad. Paul, who also went by the names Abdul Malek and Paul Kenyatta Laws, was accused by the Justice Department of discussing terrorist attacks during an August 2002 meeting with two other men at a suburban coffee shop. According to acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, Paul’s sentencing ended “the long, militant career of Christopher Paul, an Ohio native who joined Al-Qaeda in the early 1990s, fought in Afghanistan and Bosnia and conspired with others to target Americans both at home and abroad.” – Fox News, February 26; AFP, February 26

February 27, 2009 (UNITED STATES): The indictment against Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri was unsealed, one day after being filed. A federal grand jury in Peoria, Illinois has charged al-Marri with two counts of providing material support to al-Qa`ida. Al-Marri, the last enemy combatant held on U.S. soil, will now be released from military custody and transferred into the criminal justice system. The U.S. government alleges that al-Marri was a “sleeper agent” waiting to take part in a second wave of September 11-style attacks on the United States. He was arrested in the United States in December 2001. – ABC News, February 27

February 28, 2009 (IRAQ): Authorities announced the arrest of al-Qa`ida’s so-called “Oil Minister” for Iraq. The minister was identified as Ali Mahmud Mohammed. According to the AFP, “Mohammed was known for his involvement in hijacking tanker shipments of crude oil and petrol for Al-Qaeda and abducting the drivers.” He was detained north of Ba`quba, Diyala Province. – AFP, February 28

February 28, 2009 (PAKISTAN): The Pakistani military claimed that it had forced Taliban militants out of Bajaur Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). “We think that we have secured this agency,” said Major General Tariq Khan, the commander of military forces in Bajaur. “They have lost. They have lost their cohesion out here.” Separately, Colonel Saif Ullah, a commander in Mohmand Agency of FATA, told reporters that Pakistani forces repelled the insurgency in his agency and that it is now “under the control of law enforcement agencies.” – AFP, February 28

February 28, 2009 (SOMALIA): Somali President Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad agreed to a truce with his clan opponents—which have influence over al-Shabab—in exchange for the introduction of Shari`a in Somalia. “The mediators asked me to introduce Islamic Sharia in the country and I agreed,” Shaykh Sharif told reporters. Despite the statement, it is not expected that clan militias and factions from al-Shabab will stop fighting his government. – BBC, February 28