

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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28 August 2003

# Al-Qa'ida's Ties to Other Key Terror Groups: Terrorist Links in a Chain [Redacted]

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**Al-Qa'ida's Ties to Other Key Terror**

**Groups:**

**Terrorist Links in a Chain**

[Redacted]

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**Al-Qa'ida's Ties to Other Key Terror**

Longstanding ties to numerous like-minded Sunni extremist groups worldwide, cultivated long before al-Qa'ida was ousted from Afghanistan, are serving increasingly as the weakened organization's lifeline, sustaining its goals of inciting worldwide jihad and anti-US and anti-Western terrorist operations. The personal, logistic, and operational ties between al-Qa'ida and associated groups are blurring the lines that hitherto had set them apart.

- Findings to date into the mid-May suicide bombings in Casablanca reveal that they were part of a highly intricate plot [Redacted] overseen by two established North African extremist groups—the **Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group** and **Libyan Islamic Fighting Group**—with the knowledge of at least some members of al-Qa'ida, and carried out by a loose grouping of young Moroccan militants known as the **Salafia Jihadiya**.

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The Casablanca plot is part of a growing pattern in which Sunni extremist groups in other regions show a similar willingness to put on al-Qa'ida's mantle and plot against the US and its allies in the war on terrorism.

- Al-Qa'ida-linked plots targeting US interests are on the rise in East Africa and the Horn from affiliates such as the Somali-based **al-Ittihad al-Islami**; in Southeast Asia the **Jemaah Islamiya**; the Iraq-based **Ansar al-Islam**, whose members are returning to postwar Iraq; in Central Asia the **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan**; and in Lebanon **'Asbat al-Ansar**, a predominantly Palestinian Sunni extremist group based in refugee camps there.
- Meanwhile, al-Qa'ida associate **Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi**—who was behind the murder in October 2002 of a US Embassy official in Jordan—is relying on a decentralized pool of semiautonomous North African and Middle Eastern operatives to plan attacks against US and Israeli interests in Europe and elsewhere.

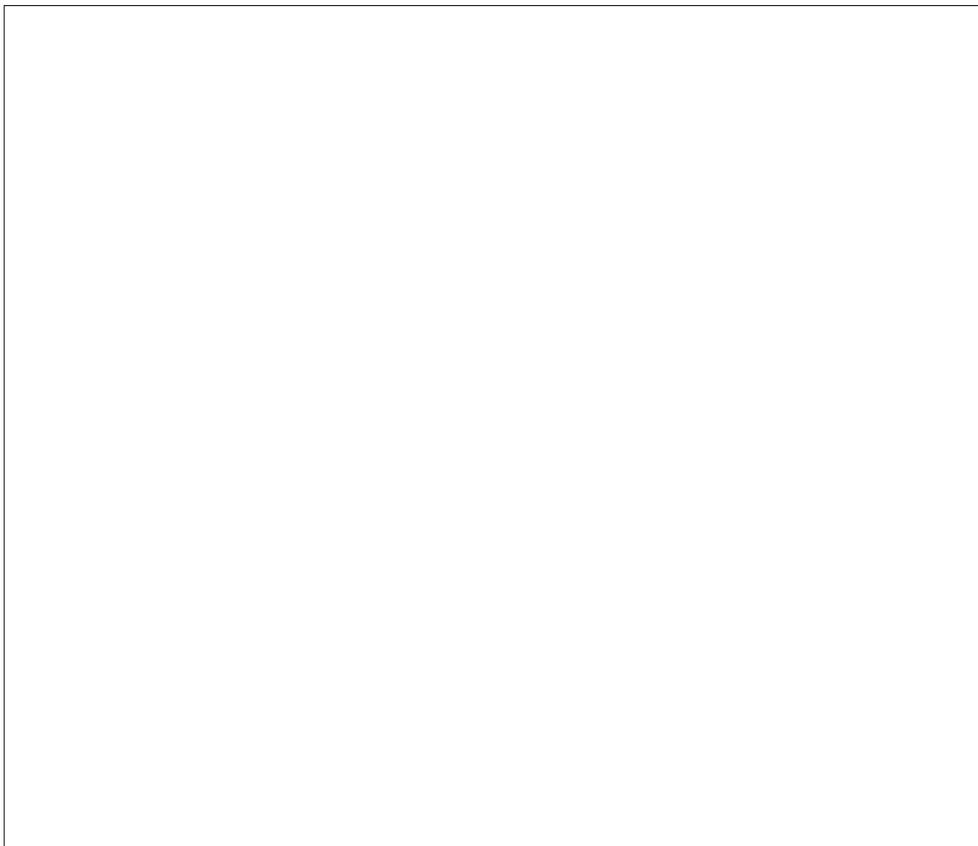
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Shared ideological commitment coupled with a strong sense of obligation for al-Qa'ida's past support also is prompting many affiliated groups to rally to al-Qa'ida's side, enhancing the odds that operatives from some groups will become involved in future al-Qa'ida plots while others will carry out their own plots against the US and pro-Western governments they seek to replace with strict Islamic states.

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Even if al-Qa'ida disassembles, remnants could migrate to indigenous Sunni extremist groups already primed to carry on the cause. Although the groups vary in terrorist skills, assimilated al-Qa'ida members could expand their capabilities and confidence, encourage networking, and increase cooperation between groups that previously have not worked together.

- Just as al-Qa'ida's involvement in the late 1990s with competing Kurdish Islamic factions in northern Iraq solidified them and led to the creation of today's Ansar al-Islam, al-Qa'ida could spark similar alliances among rival Islamic factions elsewhere, unifying them and further straining weak governments trying to suppress violence from local Islamic extremists.

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**Al-Qa'ida's Ties to Other Key  
Terror Groups: Terrorist Links  
in a Chain**

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The suicide bombings in Casablanca on 16 May 2003 by members of the Salafia Jihadiya, a loose grouping of young Moroccan Islamic militants who acted as the martyr footsoldiers in the plot, are one of the latest signs of the spread of al-Qa'ida's goals and ideology among Sunni extremist supporters worldwide, and indicate growing emphasis on attacking US and pro-Western targets and establishing strict Islamic regimes.

- Like Saudi Arabia, Morocco was one of several countries Usama Bin Ladin in an audiotape in February 2003 asserted was ripe for Islamic revolution.

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**Building a Legacy Through Other Sunni  
Extremist Groups**

The plot, [Redacted] hatched [Redacted] by the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group [Redacted] members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group [Redacted] is indicative of a trend in which the operational distinctions between al-Qa'ida and affiliated Sunni extremist groups are increasingly blurred.

The North African Casablanca plotters are part of a broad spectrum of like-minded Sunni extremists worldwide who were courted by al-Qa'ida long before the group was ousted from Afghanistan and who are now rallying to its side against the United States and its allies in the war on terrorism. Long-established ties to such groups are sustaining the weakened organization's program that promotes worldwide jihad and anti-US and anti-Western agendas. Trained at al-Qa'ida's terrorist camps in Afghanistan, extremists belonging to a variety of Sunni groups and loose networks, like that of al-Qa'ida associate Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, are building on Bin Ladin's "base" as he envisioned it

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This assessment was prepared by the DCI Counterterrorist Center's Office of Terrorism Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief [Redacted]

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and so named his organization, while adapting his legacy to their own objectives.<sup>1</sup>

- In the **Horn and East Africa**, the Somalia-based **al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI)** bolsters al-Qa'ida operatives by providing safehaven and operational support for plots against Western interests there

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For al-Qa'ida, the ties are paying off as radical Sunni groups once focused predominantly on local terrorist agendas take up a broader anti-US and anti-Western terrorist program. Several threats posed by such links are of priority concern.

Ties between al-Qa'ida and AIAI date back to the early 1990s

- In **Southeast Asia**, the capture in August 2003 of **Jemaah Islamiya (JI)** leader and senior al-Qa'ida operative Riduan bin Isomuddin, better known as Hambali, weakens al-Qa'ida's ability to advance joint large-scale anti-US and anti-Western plots in the region. The groups' increased operational collaboration has posed a serious threat to US interests there over the past year. Before Hambali's arrest, Indonesian authorities had already cited him as the key plotter behind the bombing in October 2002 of a Western tourist nightclub in Bali that killed more than 200 persons, including several US citizens. Investigations into the bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Jakarta on 5 August continue; Indonesian authorities have already linked the JI to that attack and are arresting suspects

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- Hambali's arrest represents a major blow for al-Qa'ida's network in the region given his operational stature but will not stamp out the group's ideology among some JI proponents.

**More Sunni Affiliates Waiting in Wings.**

There are growing numbers of Sunni extremist groups in other regions showing a similar willingness to put on al-Qa'ida's mantle and plot against US and pro-Western targets.

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- In **Iraq**, al-Qa'ida is looking to the **Kurdish Islamist group Ansar al-Islam (AI)** to enmesh US and Coalition forces.

the JI was preparing several terrorist options in Southeast Asia, suggesting other JI figures holding anti-US views may continue pursuing plots and retaliatory attacks.

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With AI members now returning to postwar Iraq, the group has reemerged as one of the best funded and organized Sunni extremist groups in Iraq and is intent on forcing the US out, echoing al-Qa'ida's goal in its propaganda.

<sup>1</sup>Al-Qa'ida in Arabic means "The Base" and is a term that underscores Bin Ladin's longtime goal of building a lasting foundation that, with or without him, will inspire, continue spreading his extremist ideology, and provide resources to future supporters.

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- **Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's** network of semiautonomous terrorist operatives from North Africa and the Middle East used Al's former safehaven in northeastern Iraq

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- In **Lebanon**, al-Qa'ida's ties with **'Asbat al-Ansar**, a Palestinian-Lebanese Sunni extremist group based in refugee camps there, have grown, with some al-Qa'ida members having relocated to Lebanon from Afghanistan

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Al-Qa'ida's ties with the **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)** and the Lebanon-based **'Asbat al-Ansar** are growing. Although skewed, the IMU's rationale for considering US nationals "legitimate targets" may parallel anti-US views of other Sunni extremists.

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but **'Asbat al-Ansar** has shown only a limited operational ability. It probably was behind the bombings of seven US franchise restaurants since April 2002, with the most recent in April 2003, possibly at al-Qa'ida's urgings. Further al-Qa'ida pressure and support could give **'Asbat al-Ansar** the incentive and skills to conduct more sophisticated attacks in Lebanon or abroad.

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**Most Radical Palestinian Groups Still Leery**

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Al-Qa'ida's message has not resonated with major radical Palestinian groups in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

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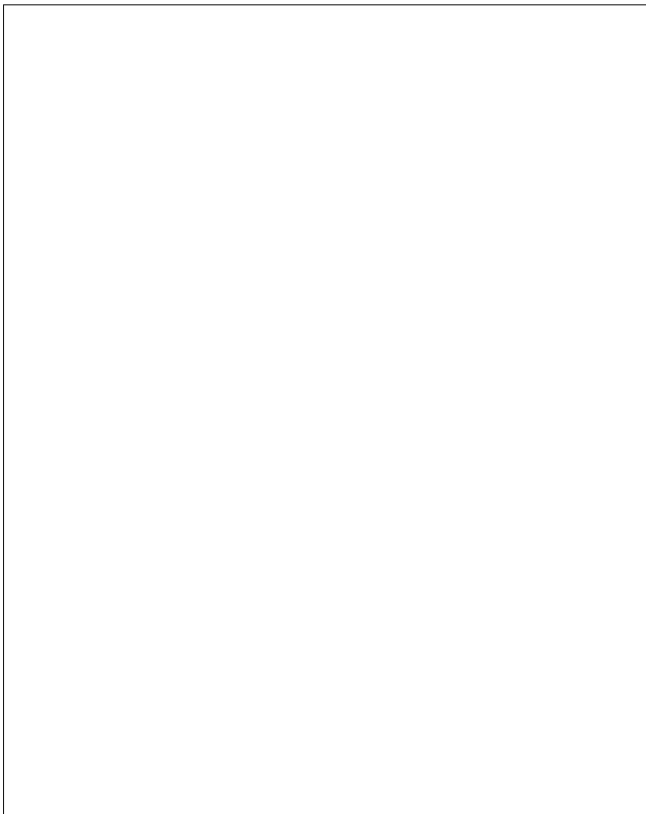
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**Lebanese Hizballah Keeping al-Qa'ida at Arms Length**

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[redacted] al-Qa'ida does not appear to have established strong ties to Hizballah, despite some contact over many years fueled by relationships with mutual associates, enmity toward common enemies, and geographic proximity. The EIJ, for example, which merged with al-Qa'ida in 2001, had previous ties with Hizballah in the mid-1990s when some EIJ members trained at Hizballah camps in Lebanon. Several former EIJ, now al-Qa'ida, members have remained in Lebanon through 2003.

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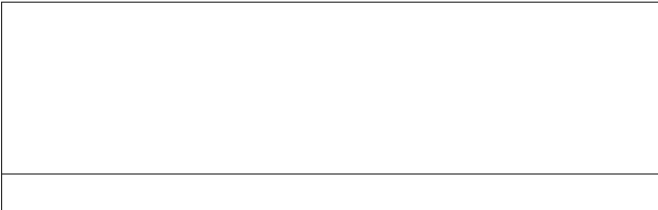


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Although HAMAS and al-Qa'ida use the term "jihad" in their rhetoric, they differ on goals, strategy, and attitude toward the US and Arab states. Both believe the use of violence against non-Muslims perceived as aggressors is justified and prescribed by Islamic law. The groups differ, however, in defining the scope and priorities of jihad. HAMAS has publicly shunned Bin Ladin's call for a worldwide jihad and taken pains in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks to distance its perceived "legitimate resistance activities" against Israel from al-Qa'ida's global holy war.

Closer cooperation between Hizballah and al-Qa'ida has been hampered by differences in the two groups' primary agendas, as well as al-Qa'ida's general reluctance to work extensively with Shia Muslims.

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appears to be motivating some groups involved in operations that were conceived after al-Qa'ida and its associates fled Afghanistan.

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Even if al-Qa'ida disassembles, its remnants are likely to migrate to indigenous Sunni extremist groups already primed to continue Bin Ladin's goals and anti-US agenda. Assimilating al-Qa'ida members into their ranks could strengthen the capabilities of individual groups, further encourage networking, and increase cooperation among groups not previously known to do so, similar to the Casablanca plotters. Dispersed al-Qa'ida members also could help unify fractious groups elsewhere similar to competing Kurdish factions in northern Iraq, further straining weak governments struggling to suppress indigenous extremists.

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**Motives and Implications of Increased Cooperation**

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Al-Qa'ida's vision is proving a strong magnet for pulling other Sunni extremist groups closer to help replace waning operational resources and become willing partners in future attacks against the US and pro-US governments. Longstanding ties, shared ideological commitment, and a strong sense of obligation for past al-Qa'ida support are prompting many affiliated groups to step forward. Moreover, the desire to retaliate against the United States and undermine our allies in the war on terrorism also



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**Al-Qa'ida-Linked Sunni Extremist Groups** [redacted] page 1 of 3

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To clarify the level and extent of al-Qa'ida's affiliations with other Sunni extremist groups, we use the term "affiliates" to refer to groups heavily influenced by al-Qa'ida and that sometimes operate under al-Qa'ida's direction but are technically independent and pursue their own local agendas. Affiliates are at least partially dependent on al-Qa'ida for training, expertise, logistic, and/or financial support. [redacted]

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We use the term "allies" to refer to established, independent groups that sporadically work with al-Qa'ida but act on their own authority, pursue their own agendas, and do not act at al-Qa'ida's behest. Allies may provide or receive various types of aid—training, funding, logistics—to/from al-Qa'ida. [redacted]

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All of the affiliates and allied groups are either officially US Government-Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations, appear on the Department of State's Terrorist Exclusion List, or on a US Government watchlist. [redacted]

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Name	Stated goal	Primary area of operations	Links to al-Qa'ida
<b>Affiliates</b>			
<b>Al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI)</b>	Establish Islamic state in Somalia	Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya	Has received training and funding—including funds for current terrorist plotting—from al-Qa'ida; gives al-Qa'ida safehaven in Somalia. [redacted] [redacted] AIAI training camps emphasize al-Qa'ida ideology and military combat skills; [redacted] [redacted] AIAI possibly sent members to Afghanistan in late 2001 to support al-Qa'ida against Coalition forces. [redacted]
<b>Al-Zarqawi's network</b>	Attack US, other Western, Israeli, and Jordanian interests	Europe, the Levant, northern Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Chechnya	Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian-Palestinian and veteran of Afghan-Soviet war, previously in direct contact with al-Qa'ida leaders in Afghanistan; has received funding and logistic aid from al-Qa'ida; sometimes operates as an al-Qa'ida subsidiary in that he coordinates closely with al-Qa'ida on some operations but conducts others independently, using his network of Arab operatives primarily from the Levant and North Africa. [redacted] activities parallel al-Qa'ida's goals; responsible for murder of US Embassy officer in Jordan in October 2002; al-Zarqawi would very likely work with any Islamic extremist group that shares his hatred of the US and Israel. [redacted]
<b>Ansar al-Islam</b>	Expel US from Iraq; establish Islamic state in Iraq	Northern and central Iraq; also has members and associates elsewhere in Middle East, Europe, and North America	Al-Qa'ida instrumental in uniting Kurdish Islamic factions in northern Iraq that led to solidified group, formally founded in September 2001; worked before war in Iraq with al-Qa'ida and al-Qa'ida associate al-Zarqawi in north; received paramilitary, terrorist, and explosives training from al-Qa'ida. [redacted] Currently al-Qa'ida's primary affiliate in fighting Coalition forces in Iraq. Members predominantly Sunni Iraqi Kurds but also has Sunni Arab minority. [redacted]
<b>'Asbat al-Ansar</b>	Establish Islamic state in Lebanon	Southern Lebanon	Providing probable rank-and-file al-Qa'ida members safehaven; may have received funding from al-Qa'ida.

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**Al-Qa'ida-Linked Sunni Extremist Groups** (page 2 of 3)

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Name	Stated goal	Primary area of operations	Links to al-Qa'ida
<b>Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ)</b>	Establish Islamic state in Egypt	Remaining elements in Lebanon, Iran, possibly Egypt, Afghanistan-Pakistan, senior al-Qa'ida and EIJ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri probably in Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.	Most members formally merged under al-Zawahiri with al-Qa'ida in summer 2001; Al-Qa'ida-EIJ operatives involved in US Embassy bombings in East Africa in 1998.
<b>Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)</b>	Establish Islamic state in Uzbekistan	Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey	Has received training and funding from al-Qa'ida and may have received money from Arab al-Qa'ida donors [redacted] many IMU militants appear to operate under al-Qa'ida's direction, has ties to Chechen militants, the al-Zarqawi network, and Uyghur separatists, with which the IMU may collaborate on some local terrorist operations. [redacted]
<b>Jemaah Islamiya (JI)</b>	Establish Islamic states in Southeast Asia	Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Australia	Has received training and considerable funding from al-Qa'ida; JI leader Riduan bin Isomuddin, a.k.a. Hambali, al-Qa'ida's most senior operative in region, recently captured. Hambali had direct contact with senior al-Qa'ida leadership. JI collaborates with al-Qa'ida on some operations. [redacted]
<b>Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)</b>	Establish Islamic state in Libya	Europe, Middle East, South Asia	Ties to al-Qa'ida increased substantially in the late 1990s after many LIFG members moved to Afghanistan following Libyan Government's crackdown on LIFG insurgency. LIFG militants sometimes operate under al-Qa'ida and support its goals. In addition to providing support in the Casablanca bombings, LIFG has also supported al-Qa'ida-linked attacks in 2002 against US forces in Afghanistan. [redacted]
<b>Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM)</b>	Establish Islamic state in Morocco	Europe, Morocco	One of several Islamic extremist groups in Morocco; emerged in the late 1990s; comprises Moroccan recruits who trained in al-Qa'ida camps in Afghanistan; GICM members interact with other North African extremists. [redacted] investigations into the May 2003 Casablanca bombings indicate previously unknown GICM ties to the Salafia Jihadiya <sup>a</sup> , which until the May attacks had acted as a disorganized grouping of young Islamic militant gangs that assaulted Moroccan citizens for perceived un-Islamic behavior. [redacted]
<b>Tunisian Combatant Group</b>	Attack US interests	Europe, North Africa	Loosely organized group founded by Tunisian al-Qa'ida members, closely associated with al-Qa'ida and other North African extremist networks implicated in terrorist plotting over past two years; previously known as Tunisian Islamic Fighting Group. [redacted]

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<sup>a</sup> Salafia Jihadiya, not previously considered a formal terrorist group, does not appear on the USG listings as an FTO or Terrorist Exclusion List. [redacted]

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Al-Qa'ida-Linked Sunni Extremist Groups <span style="float: right;">(page 3 of 3)</span>			
Name	Stated goal	Primary area of operations	Links to al-Qa'ida
<b>Allies</b>			
<b>Abu Sayyaf Group</b>	Establish Islamic state in southern Philippines	Philippines, Malaysia	Has received training, funding from al-Qa'ida and al-Qa'ida-linked Arab donors. [redacted]
<b>Al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya</b>	Establish Islamic state in Egypt	Operatives worldwide	Historical ties to al-Qa'ida; has provided logistic assistance to al-Qa'ida. [redacted] previously received funding from al-Qa'ida. [redacted]
<b>Gulbuddin Hikmatyar's faction of Hizb-I Islami</b>	Restore Islamic state in Afghanistan	Eastern Afghanistan, Pakistan tribal areas	Hikmatyar has long-established personal ties to Bin Ladin; operational ties to al-Qa'ida. [redacted]
<b>Harakat ul-Jihad-I-Islami</b>	Establish Islamic state in Kashmir	Kashmir, based in Pakistan	Received training; provides logistic assistance to al-Qa'ida in Pakistan. [redacted]
<b>Harakat ul-Mujahidin</b>	Ending Indian rule, establishing Islamic state in Kashmir	Kashmir, based in Pakistan	Then leader Fazlur Rehman Khalil signed Bin Ladin's 1998 <i>fatwa</i> ; group has received al-Qa'ida training; provides logistic assistance to al-Qa'ida in Pakistan. [redacted]
<b>Jaish-i-Mohammed</b>	Ending Indian rule, establishing Islamic state in Kashmir	Kashmir, based in Pakistan	Has received al-Qa'ida training; provides logistic assistance to al-Qa'ida in Pakistan. [redacted]
<b>Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ)</b>	Involved in sectarian anti-Shia attacks	Pakistan	[redacted] despite subsequent arrests, the threat remains high of other possible anti-US plotting by LJ and sympathetic extremists. [redacted]
<b>Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LT)</b>	Ending Indian rule, establishing Islamic state in Kashmir	Kashmir, based in Pakistan	Pakistani militant group formed in 1993; has received al-Qa'ida training; provides logistic assistance to al-Qa'ida in Pakistan, to include facilitating movement of al-Qa'ida cadre there and possibly abroad. [redacted]
<b>Moro Islamic Liberation Front</b>	Establish Islamic state in Philippines	Philippines	Received training, funding from al-Qa'ida. [redacted]
<b>Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat</b>	Establish Islamic state in Algeria	Algeria, network of operatives in Europe	Contacts with al-Qa'ida leadership; received training. [redacted]
<b>Taliban Remnants</b>	Establish Islamic state in Afghanistan	Afghanistan, Pakistan	Personal contact; received funding; logistic assistance from al-Qa'ida. [redacted]

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