

~~SECRET~~

(b)(3)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Zarqawi Targeting Iraqi Elections (U)

21 January 2005

Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's group Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (QJBR) presents a significant threat to participants in the 30 January 2005 elections in Iraq.

assassination of a candidate associated with Prime Minister Allawi, and the killing of seven other individuals associated with election campaigns.

Zarqawi intends to frighten potential Iraqi voters by waging a campaign of bombings, mortars, rockets, and harassment in the week before and during elections. Although QJBR's activity numerically constitutes a relatively small part of the overall level of preelection violence, the group continues to have a disproportionate impact because it focuses on high-profile attacks against Iraqi officials and infrastructure.

[Redacted]

(b)(1)(3)
(b)(3)
(b)(3)

QJBR's operations almost certainly will continue regardless of the election result. Any outcome that increases Sunni concerns about their minority status in Iraq could enhance the appeal of Zarqawi's brand of extreme Sunni chauvinism and further his already successful efforts to bring Iraqis into his organization.

Zarqawi has demonstrated the capability to conduct attacks throughout Iraq, especially in Mosul, Baqubah, and Ar Ramadi, as well as in the predominantly Shia cities of Karbala, An Najaf, and Basrah.

(b)(3)
(b)(1)
(b)(3)
(b)(1)
(b)(3)
(b)(3)
(b)(3)

Focusing on Election Preparations... (U)

QJBR is conducting attacks against targets directly related to the elections, hitting voting infrastructure and using intimidation tactics to scare off election officials and potential voters. Zarqawi apparently hopes to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the outcome, exacerbate Sunni discontent, and punish those who participate in the electoral process.

plans were in place as of mid-January 2005 to harass election workers, starting about six days before the elections so the government would not have time to replace any who are intimidated into quitting.

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

- Since late December 2004, the group has claimed responsibility for attacks on election centers in Balad and Basrah, the assassination of a polling center director in western Baghdad, the

- QJBR also planned to attack Iraqi police cars with small arms fire in the days before elections to undermine government efforts to portray a sense of control during the election period.

(b)(1)
(b)(3)
(b)(3)

This report was prepared by the DCI Counterterrorist Center's Office of Terrorism Analysis and the Office of Iraq Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief,

OTA, (U)

(b)(3)
(b)(3)

[Redacted]

CTC 2005-30006

~~SECRET~~

(b)(3)

~~SECRET~~ [redacted]

(b)(3)

Zarqawi probably assumes [redacted] compromised some of his plans, and he may decide to adjust them. We assess, however, that regardless of recent setbacks to his organization, he remains a serious threat to election workers and participants.

al-Hakim, the head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and leader of

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

[redacted]

Bin Ladin's Blessing (U)

Usama Bin Ladin's 27 December 2004 videotaped message called for a boycott of the elections and warned that any Muslim who participates in them is an "infidel" who has "rejected God Almighty." The statement welcomed Zarqawi's merger with al-Qa'ida, saying Zarqawi and the groups affiliated with him are good and fight according to the orders of God. He called upon "brothers in the group" in Iraq to heed Zarqawi's orders and "obey him in all that which is good." [redacted]

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

- [redacted] QJBR had assembled as of late December approximately 200 VBIEDs for use in various regions in Iraq on election day. This number may be exaggerated—Zarqawi has never taken credit for more than a half-dozen VBIEDs over a several-day period, and he lost some of his bombmaking facilities when Coalition forces swept Al Fallujah in mid-November. Still, we suspect he remains capable of deploying numerous VBIEDs on and during the runup to election day.

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

- QJBR also has demonstrated proficiency with IEDs, rockets, mortars, and small arms attacks. [redacted]

(b)(3)

...While Keeping Up the Overall Pressure (U)

Despite the group's loss of key logistic facilities and materiel in Al Fallujah and the dispersal of its leadership and personnel from that former safehaven, QJBR has continued to conduct VBIED attacks, assaults, and assassinations at a rate consistent with QJBR's operational tempo throughout the year. Since mid-December 2004, QJBR has claimed more than 30 attacks on Coalition and Iraqi forces and high-ranking Iraqi officials. The group has hit Baghdad and Mosul particularly hard recently, claiming responsibility for the 4 January 2005 assassination of the governor of Baghdad and for a series of attacks against US, police, and Iraqi National Guard forces in both cities. [redacted]

It is unclear whether Zarqawi will view Bin Ladin's statement as sanctioning more attacks against Shia—especially Shia civilians—a point of past contention between Zarqawi and Bin Ladin. While condemning all participating in the election, Bin Ladin's statement calls on jihadists to limit the killing of innocents. He also notes that Iraqis waging jihad against Multinational Forces or the Iraqi Interim Government are brothers in arms, "even if [they] are of Persian, Kurdish, or Turkomen origin." Since the March 2004 Ashura bombings, Zarqawi has opted to avoid indiscriminate attacks on Shia, targeting his attacks instead on Shia religious leaders, probably at least in part because of al-Qa'ida's concerns. [redacted]

(b)(3)

(b)(3)

the Unified National Coalition—the list of electoral candidates supported by Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

- QJBR also claimed it carried out one of two VBIED attacks against security forces on 11 January 2005 in the predominately Shia city of Basrah. [redacted]

(b)(3)

An Enduring Threat (U)

Zarqawi's group will persist regardless of the outcome of the election.

(b)(3)

- The transition to a new government will offer Zarqawi a range of targets and attack venues that

~~SECRET~~ [redacted]

(b)(3)

~~SECRET~~

(b)(3)

will present Coalition and incoming Iraqi authorities an even greater leadership and facility protection problem than exists now.

- An election outcome that increases concern among Sunnis about their loss of power may enhance the appeal of Zarqawi's brand of extreme Sunni chauvinism and further his already successful efforts to bring Iraqis into his organization.
- Even if the election launches a process that leads some elements of the insurgency to put down their arms, committed transnational jihadists like Zarqawi—concerned more with establishing a Salafist regime and a safehaven from which to expand the jihad than with protecting the rights of the Iraqi Sunni minority—will remain a long-term terrorist challenge for the nascent Iraqi security forces.

(b)(3)

~~SECRET~~

(b)(3)