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Al-Qa'ida

(Also known as: **Al-Jihad al-Qaeda, Al Qaeda, Al-Qaeda, Al-Qaida, The Base, The Group for the Preservation of the Holy Sites, International Front for Fighting Jews and Crusaders, Islamic Army, The Islamic Army for the Liberation of Holy Places, Islamic Army for the Liberation of Holy Sites, Islamic Salvation Foundation, The Jihad Group, New Jihad, Usama Bin Laden Network, Usama Bin Laden Organisation, The World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders**)

This statement is based on publicly available information about al-Qa'ida. To the Australian Government's knowledge, this information is accurate and reliable and has been corroborated by classified information.

Basis for listing a terrorist organisation

Division 102 of the *Criminal Code* provides that for an organisation to be listed as a terrorist organisation, the Attorney-General must be satisfied on reasonable grounds that the organisation:

- (a) is directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur); or
- (b) advocates the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur).

Details of the organisation

Objectives

Al-Qa'ida emerged in the late 1980s from the Maktab al-Khidamat, a recruitment and fundraising network for the Afghan resistance to the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan. Al-Qa'ida was established to continue the jihad against perceived enemies of Islam following the end of the conflict with the Soviets. During the late 1990s, al-Qa'ida was transformed from providing a unifying function for extremist elements into a global network of cells and affiliated groups.

Al-Qa'ida seeks to remove governments, through violent means if necessary, in Muslim countries that it deems are 'un-Islamic' in order to establish an Islamic Caliphate. The United States (US) and its allies, including Australia, are believed by al-Qa'ida to represent the greatest obstacle to this objective, given their perceived support for these governments.

Leadership

Al-Qa'ida is a Sunni Islamic extremist organisation whose core leadership is located in the border regions in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Usama bin Laden co-founded al-Qa'ida with Dr Abdullah Azzam and gained full control of the organisation after

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the assassination of Azzam in 1989. Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri, Usama bin Laden's former deputy, now leads al-Qa'ida after the death of Usama bin Laden in May 2011.

Al-Qa'ida maintains core support networks and operations in the Afghanistan and Pakistan border region. This region has served as a sanctuary for al-Qa'ida's leadership since the loss of the group's facilities in Afghanistan in late 2001.

However, due to counter-terrorism measures in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, including unmanned drone attacks targeting senior al-Qa'ida leaders and operatives, al-Qa'ida's core leadership has become increasingly isolated, short of funds and is having more trouble recruiting and equipping fighters.

Continued successful operations by US and other forces over the past 18 months appear to have seriously degraded al-Qa'ida's capacity for planning and conducting large-scale terrorist operations.

Membership

The exact size of al-Qa'ida is unknown. While previous estimates have suggested a strength of several thousand fighters, today it is significantly less and more likely in the hundreds. While al-Qa'ida remains dominated by Arabs, non-Arabs are playing increasingly prominent roles in its operations.

Originally, al-Qa'ida recruited veterans of the Soviet-Afghan conflict of 1979-89 and from campaigns in places such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kashmir, Mindanao, Chechnya, Lebanon, Algeria and Egypt. More recent recruits include fighters who have gained experience in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Al-Qa'ida has inspired a new generation of extremists, including some from Western countries, but not all of those who travel to Afghanistan/Pakistan actually join al-Qa'ida. For some it is easier to join a local extremist group.

Despite declining membership, al-Qa'ida has significant reach and influence over the activities (and members) of other groups. Al-Qa'ida has strong relationships with official and unofficial affiliate groups around the world, who recruit independently of al-Qa'ida. While al-Qa'ida does not direct affiliate activity, al-Qa'ida broadly shapes global jihad and is still respected for its views on affiliates' operations.

Recruitment and funding

Al-Qa'ida funding has typically been obtained through donations from Muslim charities and individuals. The US 9/11 Commission report attributed much of al-Qa'ida's funding to money diverted from charities. In addition, funds are also probably raised through criminal means, such as credit card fraud. It is believed al-Qa'ida stopped using legitimate banking institutions for moving funds by mid-2002, turning instead to alternative systems such as the hawala system, couriers and precious stones.

Little is known about al-Qa'ida's recruitment methods since the loss of its training camp infrastructure in Afghanistan in late 2001. It is likely a similar system has been

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established in cooperation with local Pakistani militant groups in the tribal areas of Pakistan, but on a smaller scale, using covert training camps and safe houses.

US unmanned drone attacks have made it more difficult for al-Qa'ida's efforts in fundraising and recruiting. Reports suggest al-Qa'ida is struggling to raise funds and is having difficulty recruiting and equipping fighters.

Terrorist activity of the organisation

Directly or indirectly engaged in the doing of terrorist acts

Al-Qa'ida has directly or indirectly engaged in a number of terrorist attacks, including assassinations, suicide bombings, aircraft hijackings and attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including vehicle-borne and vessel-borne. Significant attacks which al-Qa'ida has claimed responsibility for, or that can be reliably attributed to individuals affiliated with al-Qa'ida, include:

- 7 August 1998: the bombing of the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing over 200 people;
- 12 October 2000: the bombing of the USS *Cole* in the port of Aden, Yemen, killing 17 sailors;
- 9 September 2001: the assassination of Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Masood in Afghanistan;
- 11 September 2001: the hijacking of four US passenger planes and crashing them into the World Trade Center buildings in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, and a field in Pennsylvania, killing approximately 3,000 people, including ten Australians;
- 11 April 2002: the bombing of a synagogue on the Tunisian island of Djerba, killing 20 people;
- 14 June 2002: the car bombing outside the US Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan, killing 12 people;
- 6 October 2002: the bombing of the French oil tanker MV *Limburg* off the coast of Yemen, killing one sailor;
- 28 November 2002: in Mombasa, Kenya, the car bombing of a hotel, killing 15 people, and the firing of two surface-to-air-missiles that missed an Israeli passenger plane after takeoff from Mombasa airport;
- 24 February 2006: the attack on the Abqaiq oil refinery in Saudi Arabia, killing two security guards;
- 2 June 2008: the bombing of the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, killing six people;
- 20 September 2008: the bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan, killing 60 people; and
- 13 August 2011: the kidnapping of US citizen and aid worker, Warren Weinstein, from his residence in Lahore, Pakistan. Weinstein is being held by al-Qa'ida.

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Directly or indirectly preparing and/or planning the doing of terrorist acts

Al-Qa'ida lost its primary base for training, planning, and preparing for terrorist operations following the US intervention in Afghanistan in late 2001. Since then, al-Qa'ida has sought alternative locations in which to train and regroup, including in North-West Pakistan, and members continued to gain combat experience in ongoing jihadist theatres such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Despite sanctions against al-Qa'ida's extensive financial networks, al-Qa'ida continues to find means of raising and transferring money for terrorist attacks, including through donations, criminal activity and via couriers.

Significant planned, yet disrupted, plots attributable to al-Qa'ida include:

- August 2006: disrupted plot by al-Qa'ida to bomb a number of transatlantic airliners flying from the United Kingdom (UK) to the US; and
- September 2010: disrupted plot by Pakistan-based al-Qa'ida militants to carry out commando-style raids on cities in the UK, France and Germany involving teams taking and killing Western hostages.

Directly or indirectly assisting in the doing of terrorist acts

Reporting indicates al-Qa'ida has encouraged, inspired and assisted like-minded individuals. Examples of this assistance include:

- 12 October 2002: assisting in funding attacks on night clubs and the US Consulate in Bali, Indonesia, killing 202 people, including 88 Australians;
- 15 November 2003: assisting in planning and preparing car bomb attacks on two synagogues in Istanbul, killing 20 people;
- 20 November 2003: assisting in planning and preparing car bomb attacks on the HSBC Bank headquarters and the British Consulate in Istanbul, killing 30 people;
- 7 July 2005: assisting in training those involved in IED attacks on London's transport system, killing 56 people, including one Australian; and
- 2 March 2006: assisting in bombing a diplomatic vehicle outside the US Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan, killing three people.

Directly or indirectly fostering the doing of terrorist acts or advocating the doing of terrorist acts

Senior leaders of al-Qa'ida have made numerous statements advocating the conduct of terrorist attacks against the US and countries perceived to have allied themselves with the US and Israel. The February 1998 statement issued under the banner of the 'World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders' decreed that civilians in these countries were legitimate targets for terrorist attack.

Al-Qa'ida continues to provide inspiration, encouragement and influence to other Sunni extremist groups around the world. Moreover, al-Qa'ida leadership relies on its

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affiliate organisations to plan and execute attacks. This is best demonstrated by the decisions of the Salafist Group for Call and Combat in Algeria and the Jamaat Tawhid wa'al-Jihad group in Iraq to merge with al-Qa'ida. Now known as al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb and al-Qa'ida in Iraq respectively, both groups accept strategic direction and have at times received funding from al-Qa'ida.

Al-Qa'ida has encouraged extremism in Somalia. A statement by al-Zawahiri in February 2009 and another by Usama bin Laden in March 2009 called on the mujahideen of Somalia to reject the government and fight for an Islamic state. In February 2012, Somali Islamist terrorist group al-Shabaab formally announced it had become an official affiliate of al-Qa'ida. In early November 2012, al-Qa'ida released a statement via Islamist websites in which al-Zawahiri urged al-Shabaab to fight back against the Kenyan 'crusader invaders', stating: 'Show them the fire of jihad and its heat. Chase them with guerrilla warfare, ambushes, [and] martyrdom [operations].'

Al-Qa'ida has sought to align itself with anti-government forces involved in the Syrian conflict, with al-Zawahiri releasing a video statement in February 2012 entitled 'To the Front, O Lions of the Levant,' in which he called on Muslims in Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan to come to the aid of anti-government forces in Syria, stating that a Muslim should help 'his brothers in Syria with all he can, with his life, his money, [his] opinion, as well as information.'

Senior al-Qa'ida leaders continue to make public statements promoting al-Qa'ida's ideology, supporting attacks undertaken by other groups and advocating violent jihad against the West. In late October 2012, al-Qa'ida released a video in which al-Zawahiri called on Muslims across the world to kidnap Western nationals in order to help secure the release of Islamist militants imprisoned across the world.

Al-Qa'ida is skilled and disciplined in using broadcasts and online postings to portray a clear message of global jihad, provide direction on targets and to promote recruitment and continued action of subordinate groups. As-Sahab, al-Qa'ida's media wing, has continued to produce high-quality videos that reinforce al-Qa'ida's ideology, defend its actions, recruit new members and inspire others to conduct terrorist attacks. In 2010 as-Sahab produced 31 hours of video; in 2011 it produced 21 hours of video; and in 2012 42 hours of video.

Al-Qa'ida also exploits terrorist attacks conducted by individuals and groups not linked with it to further spread its message. Following the suicide bombing on the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) base at Khost, Afghanistan, on 30 December 2009, the chief of al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan released a statement in which he praised the bomber, stating 'Your brothers will continue the march on your path and they will not rest and their populace will not part with the populace of the Americans till they inflict upon them the greatest and most astonishing deaths and wounds...'

Conclusion

On the basis of the above information, ASIO assesses al-Qa'ida continues to be directly and indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in and fostering the doing of terrorist acts and advocates the doing of terrorist acts, involving threats to human life and serious damage to property.

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In the course of pursuing its objectives, al-Qa'ida is known to have engaged in acts that:

- cause, or could cause, serious damage to property, the death of persons, endanger a person's life or create a serious risk to a person's safety;
- are intended to have those effects;
- are done with the intention of advancing al-Qa'ida's political, religious or ideological causes; and
- are done with the intention of intimidating sections of the public globally.

Such acts include actions which have been done or threatened with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause and with the intention of coercing, or influencing by intimidation, governments and individuals globally. The actions or threatened actions which al-Qa'ida is assessed to be involved in would, if successfully completed, cause serious physical harm and death to persons and serious damage to property.

On the basis of available information, we assess that while the incidence of terrorist attack by al-Qa'ida has declined significantly, core members of al-Qa'ida remain active and retain the intent to continue terrorist activities.

This assessment is corroborated by information provided by reliable intelligence sources.

Other relevant information

Links to other terrorist groups or networks

In 1998, key figures of five terrorist groups, including Usama bin Laden, issued a declaration under the banner of the 'World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders,' announcing a jihad and stating the US and its allies should be expelled from the Middle East.

In addition to the groups al-Qa'ida has incorporated 'officially' under its banner, al-Qa'ida also has provided encouragement and inspiration to other Islamic terrorist groups. Among such groups are: Abu Sayyaf Group, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Army of Aden, Asbat al-Ansar, Jemaah Islamiyah, Jamiat ul-Ansar/Harakat ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Ansar al-Islam.

Threats to Australian interests

Since 2004, a number of statements have been made by Usama bin Laden and al-Zawahiri calling for attacks against the US and its allies, including Australia. The most recent al-Qa'ida senior leadership reference to Australia was on 2 April 2008, when as-Sahab posted to an audio file to extremist Internet forums of al-Zawahiri responding to questions from forum participants. Al-Zawahiri referred to Australia when responding to a question criticising al-Qa'ida for killing Muslims in Muslim lands and not conducting attacks in Israel. Al-Zawahiri responded by citing attacks

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against the US and its allies, including Australia, in various locations and that these countries supported Israel.

The most recent reference to Australia generally by al-Qa'ida was via an as-Sahab video release posted on jihadist forums on 11 September 2012 which included the comment by the unknown narrator stating that: 'who submitted to the religion of truth, Islam, whether from America, Australia, Germany, or any other country, is considered a brother by the fighters, and anyone, even the aborigines in Australia, would find peace and tranquillity in Islam.'

Proscription by the UN and other countries

Al-Qa'ida is listed by the United Nations Security Council 1267 (al-Qa'ida) Sanctions Committee and as a proscribed terrorist organisation by the governments of Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US. Al-Qa'ida is also listed by the European Union for the purposes of its antiterrorism measures.

Peace and mediation processes

Al-Qa'ida is not engaged in any peace or mediation processes.