

Terrorist Training Centers Around the World: A Brief Review

JAMES J. F. FOREST

The most common and important places where indoctrination and operational teaching for terrorism (on strategic and tactical levels) takes place are the various training camps scattered throughout the globe. These are places where a new terrorist recruit travels to learn (for example) how to mount rocket launchers in the beds of pickup trucks; how and where to launder money; how to successfully conduct a kidnapping; how to conduct target identification, surveillance, and reconnaissance; how and where to build camouflage-covered trenches; and how to covertly communicate with other members of a group or network—for example, using personal messengers (particularly on horseback, motorcycle, or bicycle) rather than electronic communications, or changing frequencies when using electronic communications in battle.

Ahmed Ressay, an Algerian who intended to set off a suitcase bomb at Los Angeles International Airport around New Year's Day 2000, admitted at his trial that he received training at the Khaldan camp in Afghanistan, learning how to fire handguns, machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenade launchers, as well as how to assemble bombs and TNT from the plastic explosive C4.¹ He also talked of studying urban warfare, “how to block roads and storm buildings” and “how to blow up the infrastructure of a country . . . such installations as electric power plants, airports, railroads, large corporations, and military installations.”² At the trial in Hamburg, Germany, of Mounir al-Motassadek, a Moroccan man accused of involvement in the 9/11 attacks, German police claimed that upwards of 70,000 militants received weapons training and religious instruction in al Qaeda's training camps in Afghanistan.³

According to research conducted in the 1990s by a member of the U.S.

Marine Corps, a typical day at a PLO training camp began with early morning physical fitness exercises, and as the day progressed, students generally conducted a parade. Daily instruction included education in explosives and detonators, the art of setting mines in munitions dumps and on bridges and vehicles, the rudiments of chemical and biological warfare, field command and escape tactics, marksmanship and camouflage, and the use and employment of Soviet RPG rockets and shoulder-borne Strela missiles.⁴ Clearly, life in a terrorist training camp was not your ordinary Boy Scout campfire outing.

In 2002, *New York Times* reporters C. J. Chivers and David Rohde examined hundreds of documents collected from “terrorist training schools” during the U.S. military assault on the Taliban and found “signs that in developing martial curriculums, the [terrorist] groups were cannily resourceful in amassing knowledge.”⁵ The documents included student notebooks, instructor lessons plans, course curriculums, training manuals, reference books, and memorandum—collectively, the same sorts of materials one would expect to find at a conventional military academy. Analysis of the documents revealed that students began their training by learning all about Kalashnikov rifles, the ubiquitous Soviet-era weapon used by many insurgent organizations around the world. Once the history, design, and operation of these weapons were mastered—mainly through rote memorization—students turned their attention to “PK machine guns, 82-millimeter mortars and the RPG-7, a shoulder-fired rocket effective against armored vehicles and trucks.”⁶ In this program of study, a sort of “infantry weapons 201,” some students learned sniper rifle skills and how to fine-tune a rifle sight at short range to ensure accuracy at longer distances, while others studied how to direct weapon fire at targets on the ground and in the air. Training in four-man unit deployments and formations, including wedges, columns, echelons, and lines, reflected similar techniques used by U.S. Marines and Army Rangers.⁷ Demolition instruction was also provided, covering mines and grenades, pressure and trip-wire booby traps, and the basic knowledge of electrical engineering that would allow students to figure out “the wiring, power sources and fuses required to spark an explosive charge.”⁸

According to an archive of videotapes obtained by CNN in 2002, al Qaeda has also trained recruits in urban guerilla tactics. These tapes show how the group “replicated a small Western-style city on a hillside in eastern Afghanistan, using canvas and stone” and how trainees used explosives to destroy simulated houses, office buildings, and bridges.⁹ Also included on the tapes were “step-by-step instructions on how to use a surface-to-air missile” and “lessons on complex hostage taking techniques and assassination operations.”¹⁰ And according to terrorist trial testimony and other sources, many training camps offer instruction in basic hand-to-hand combat skills, including the use of knives and martial arts.¹¹

In addition to strategic and tactical learning, terrorist training camps in-

corporate a number of psychological development processes—as described in the earlier chapters of this volume—which advance the ideological motivations that brought the students to the camps in the first place. The physical isolation of the training camps is an important aspect to this process, in part because members come to rely on each other for success and survival and thus build bonds of mutual trust within the organization. In sum, training camps for terrorism are obviously places of great concern for the civilized world, because they bring enthusiastic learners with a willingness to kill together with experts who teach them how to kill.

The Geographic Diversity of Terrorist Training Camps

It is important to recognize that the training centers covered in the chapters of this volume are but a small sample of the impressive array of terrorist facilities that exist throughout the world. Indeed, contrary to the mainstream media's focus on the training camps of Afghanistan (and to a lesser extent Indonesia), terrorist training facilities can be found throughout the world. The geography of former and current terrorist centers of learning includes the following, listed alphabetically rather than by order of importance:

Afghanistan and the Anti-Soviet Jihad. By some estimates, several thousand camps were established throughout Afghanistan between 1980 and 1989, providing military training and seminars in Islamic history and theology to Afghans, Arabs, and others committed to the goal of driving Soviet forces out of the country. Training was provided by seasoned veterans from other armed services. For example, in 1986 Osama bin Laden established a base camp for non-Afghan fighters in the mountains southeast of Jalalabad, at which two former Egyptian servicemen and senior Egyptian Islamic Jihad members (Abu Ubaydah al-Banshiri and Abu Hafs al-Masri) led combat training and operations.¹² Other camps for the mujahideen were established across the Pakistani border, in and around the city of Peshawar and the tribal region of Waziristan. The curriculum at these camps typically included a broad range of learning objectives, including the operation of Stinger missiles, the production of explosives and poisons, vehicle driving and maintenance, basic engineering, farming, and even urban guerilla tactics.¹³ These were harsh learning environments: mud huts, dusty classrooms, obstacle courses, mazes of barbed wire, trenches, and of course, no basic utilities.¹⁴ Once the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, thousands of the combat-trained veterans returned home, some to comfortable environs and regular lifestyles, others to join Islamist groups elsewhere in the world, including the Chechen Mujahideen, the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria, the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines, and Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia.

Algeria, the Armed Islamic Group, and the GSPC. Beginning in the 1960s, Islamists in Algeria began training in urban guerilla tactics, for the purpose of driving the French colonial government out of the country. Political developments after Algerian independence eventually marginalized the extremists, who formed a number of organizations such as the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), and the Al Takfir wal Hijra (Excommunication and Migration) movement (one of the most extreme jihadi groups, whose members seek to identify and target Muslim civilians and regimes that do not meet their standards of piety). In the early 1990s, particularly with the return home of many veterans of the Afghanistan jihad, attacks against the government began to increase in number and lethality. Training camps both in Algeria and across the border in Tunisia were used to teach combat tactics, explosives production, and weapons handling to new recruits. After a decade of open civil war with the government, the Islamic radical organizations in Algeria have recently begun to abandon the cities in the north of the country and head south in search of opportunities to regroup, establish new training camps and plan new attacks.

Bosnia and the Balkan Mujahideen. The war in Bosnia played an important role in providing training to members of the global Islamic jihad network. During the early 1990s, thousands of mujahideen left Afghanistan and other parts of Central Asia to fight alongside Bosnian Muslims against the Serbs. Weapons and fighters were smuggled through Croatia and other locations to support the Muslims in their struggle, and “on the job” combat training for new fighters was common. By 1994, major Balkan terrorist training camps included Zenica, Malisevo, and Mitrovica in Kosovo, where experienced veterans taught new recruits.¹⁵ In February 1996, NATO forces conducted a raid at a former ski chalet located about six miles south of Fojnica, in central Bosnia, and found it was being used as a training camp, complete with classrooms and an extensive armory, explosives, handguns, sniper rifles, rocket and grenade launchers, and assault rifles.¹⁶ Some of the explosive devices found were built into small plastic toys for children, including a toy car, an ice cream cone, and a helicopter. NATO officials said that they also found extensive instructional materials on explosives and conducting ambushes and sabotage. Students were apparently being trained to attack both military and civilian targets, conduct covert bombings, and lay booby traps. After the war, many foreign Islamic extremists chose to become Bosnian citizens, establishing normal lives (and, incidentally, providing convenient safe havens for the movement of jihadi elements to and from Europe), while others took their experience in search of a new place to continue the jihad.

Chechnya and Anti-Russian Separatists. In 1995, a group of veterans from the Afghanistan conflict, led by a Saudi citizen named Samer ben Saleh ben Abdallah al Swelem (known locally as Amir Khattab), arrived in

Chechnya to assist the out-gunned Chechen separatists in their struggles against Russian Federal Forces.¹⁷ Khattab's so-called International Islamic Battalion (IIB) were instrumental in aiding local Chechen commander Shamil Basayev's ability to facilitate the withdrawal of Russian forces a year later. Khattab married a local woman from neighboring Dagestan and established a series of training camps in southeastern Chechnya, largely with funding from Saudi charities like the Al Haremein foundation. As with other centers of learning, the precise number of jihadis trained at these camps remains unknown, but their contribution to the ongoing conflict in the region is widely accepted.

Egypt, EIJ, Jamaat al Islamiyya, and the Muslim Brotherhood. During the 1990s, alumni of the Afghan jihad were blamed for a series of attacks in Egypt, including the 1997 attack in Luxor by Jamaat al Islamiyya ("the Islamic Group"), which killed fifty-eight tourists and four Egyptians.¹⁸ The November 1995 attacks on an Egyptian diplomat in Switzerland and the Egyptian Embassy in Pakistan were also attributed to Egyptian-born alumni of the Afghan training camps. However, most observers point to the much older Muslim Brotherhood as a prominent ideological source of Islamic extremists movements in Egypt and elsewhere. Founded in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood produced the likes of Sayyid Qutb, who wrote the influential jihadist pamphlet *Ma'alim* (Guideposts), as well as many members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ)—including al Qaeda members Ayyman al-Zawahiri (Osama bin Laden's deputy) and Mohammed Atef (believed by many to be the strategic architect behind the attacks of September 11th).¹⁹ As early as 1940, the Muslim Brotherhood's militant wing, increasingly disenchanted with perceived corruption throughout the country's political system and thus committed to armed revolutionary struggle, established guerilla training camps in the Mukatam Hills overlooking Cairo. Graduates of these camps then conducted a series of attacks, including the 1948 bombing of the Circurrel Shopping Complex and the assassination of Prime Minister Noqrashi Pasha, Judge Ahmed al-Khizindaar, and several internal security officials.²⁰ After decades of mass arrests and financial crackdowns by the government's security forces, there are no longer any known terrorist training camps in Egypt, although the Muslim Brotherhood has continued to play a vital role in the spread of global jihad.

Indonesia and Jemaah Islamiyah. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) is a religious extremist organization which seeks to create a pan-Islamic state uniting Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Southern Philippines. Some estimates suggest that more than a thousand Southeast Asian Muslims were trained by (and fought with) the Afghan mujahideen during the 1980s, returning home afterward with valuable combat knowledge, experience, and the belief that they contributed to the fall of a world superpower. JI's own training facilities include several camps located in the southern Philippines (see below) and Camp Jabal Quba on Mount Kararao, which provides courses in weapons and explosives.²¹

Iraq and the Anti-Coalition Insurgency. Since May 2003, parts of Iraq have become new centers of terrorist learning, much of which could be called “on the job training.” Indeed, according to Robert Hutchings, director of the National Intelligence Council, post-Saddam Iraq has become “a magnet for international terrorist activity.”²² A mix of Sunni extremists, foreign regime elements, and foreign fighters have caused a significant number of deaths (the majority of them Iraqi civilians) throughout the country, primarily through the use of explosives and light weaponry. While ideological support varies from group to group, and little strategic coordination is likely between the groups, the ongoing conflict is providing a forum for new terrorist recruits to gain tactical and operational learning, particularly in the area of urban guerilla warfare. Indeed, one could argue that al-Tahir—the terrorist group established by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, which claims responsibility for many of the explosions, beheadings, and other attacks in Iraq—might not exist without the opportunity to gather motivated individuals who could subsequently gain operational knowledge in the Iraqi theatre of combat.

Japan and the Aum Shinrikyō. In 1993, the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyō (or “Supreme Truth”) built Satian 7, a nondescript building within the Aum complex at Mt. Fuji, which housed one of the most sophisticated chemical manufacturing facilities in the world. While new recruits were brought to the Aum complex (as well as Aum monasteries and other locations in Japan) mainly for ideological indoctrination, this particular building had only one purpose: to develop the group’s capacity to manufacture sarin gas (a deadly nerve toxin), as well as VX, mustard gas, and phosgene gas, which the group used in several attacks on individuals and the general public around Japan.²³ Under the leadership of Masami Tsuchiya, a gifted chemist, the lab was capable of producing two tons of liquid sarin a day, and on 20 March 1995 the group released sarin in the Tokyo subway system, killing twelve people and injuring more than 5,500. When police raided Aum properties two days later, they found enough chemicals to kill 4.2 million people.²⁴ In 1998, Satian 7 became the first chemical production facility destroyed under the United Nations Chemical Weapons Convention.²⁵ While this unique center of operational knowledge transfer was used exclusively by members of Aum, its development and use certainly provides a model for other like-minded organizations.

Kashmir and Pakistani Terrorist Groups. The main Pakistani terrorist organization, Lashkar-e-Taiba, is mostly active in and around the northern region of Kashmir and receives local support for their fight against the Indian police and soldiers in the southern part of Kashmir. Kashmir has also been an important center of learning for al Qaeda, primarily because of the specialized training experience available there. For example, while the Afghanistan camps offered training for a guerrilla fight against conventional military forces, terrorist training in Kashmir has included actual penetration across the Indian border, sabotage actions, assassinations, and urban guerilla warfare.²⁶

Lebanon, Amal, Hizballah, and the PLO. Between the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 and the Six Day War in 1967, the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon grew to 350,000, providing an important recruiting ground for the recently-formed Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). In 1968, the PLO began to launch guerrilla raids against Israel from bases within Lebanon. Israeli reprisals against the PLO led to increasing Lebanese casualties, and a political rift between supporters and critics of PLO's presence in the country contributed to ongoing religious tensions (particularly between Shia Muslims and Maronite Christians), which erupted into civil war in 1975 (a war which continued until 1990). For their part, the PLO provided arms and training to militias who supported their cause, the most prominent of which was Musa Sadr's Shiite group *Afwaj al-Muqawama al Lubnania* (Amal), or Lebanese Resistance Detachments.²⁷ In 1982, after several years of internal chaos and cross-border attacks, Israeli Defense Forces crossed into Lebanon and began occupying the southern part of the country, resulting in a Shiite resistance force that came to be known as Hizballah.²⁸ This group—along with others, like the so-called Islamic Jihad—began using suicide bombers (often driving cars packed with explosives) to attack convoys of Israeli soldiers. Young men from the Palestinian refugee camps and other places in the north of the country were trained and brought into the theatre of conflict for such operations.²⁹ Several of the these training camps have been established in the Bekaa Valley (in eastern Lebanon), which has been under the control of Syrian forces since it intervened in Lebanon's civil war.³⁰

Libya and State-Sponsored or Sanctioned Training Camps. Until very recently, Libya's leader Muammar Qaddafi has viewed his country's destiny as a revolutionary catalyst, a guide to the future that should sponsor every one of the faithful (particularly those faithful to Islam) as well as those opposed to imperialism.³¹ Thus, since the early 1970s, Libya has provided a safe haven for a variety of terrorist training camps, and particularly for groups committed to the spread of Islam. According to Israeli terrorism expert Boaz Ganor, Libya opened its military bases to terrorist organizations and provided a variety of courses in military expertise to members of the PFLP and other Palestinian groups at Sinawin, Zuwarah, and Tubruq, and the Ras al Hilal facility, among other locations.³² The group responsible for the May 1990 seaborne attack against Israel were trained at the Bilal Port Facility near Sidi. Bin Ghashir, just south of Tripoli, is said to have been used to train dissidents from Africa, Asia, and Latin America in terrorist/guerrilla tactics. In addition to Palestinian and Islamic terrorists, groups that have received training in Libya (particularly at the Seven April Training Camp) include the Irish Republican Army, the Basque separatist group ETA, Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front, the Ecuadorian Alfaro Vive, Carajo organization, Colombia's M-19, the Haitian Liberation Organization, the Chilean Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic

Front, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia, and the Japanese Red Army.³³

Northern Ireland and the IRA. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was founded on an island where weapons, even sporting guns, are closely controlled, licensed, and monitored, and where no great war has left the countryside littered with discarded military gear.³⁴ Nonetheless, through the cooperation of the Irish diaspora, and especially Irish Americans, a variety of weapons were imported, including the civilian version of the military's M-16, the Armalite, that could be purchased in America as a deer-hunting rifle. Used on semiautomatic, the weapon proved ideal for poorly-trained gunmen, and the .223 cartridge could pierce the shell armor of British personnel carriers. Training for the IRA took place in a small number of locations in Northern Ireland, and more commonly in locations scattered throughout the Irish Republic. According to one account, IRA training was "carried out in most parts of the republic, even as far south as Cork. . . . Training camps [were] of various types: a deserted farmhouse, a beach or remote wood, dependent mainly on the security of the area."³⁵ At firing ranges constructed in isolated places, including abandoned mines and convenient cellars, new IRA recruits were trained on the Armalite—along with the AK-47, during the 1980s—as well as how to properly handle the explosive compound Semtex.³⁶ Although the IRA did not really use anything dramatic—no heavy weapons, no exotic explosives, no high-tech equipment that could not be bought at Radio Shack—they did prove ingenious in creating all sorts of explosive devices and traps, in the use of high-tech monitoring equipment, and in adapting their weapons to rural and urban conditions.³⁷ Many members improved their bomb manufacturing skills through knowledge acquired in their civilian occupations as electricians, and surprisingly, as pinball machine repairmen.³⁸

Peru, Sendero Luminoso, and Tupac Amaru. One of the most ruthless terrorist groups in the world, Sendero Luminoso (the Shining Path) is based in the Peruvian countryside. Its forces have occupied villages, established revolutionary governments, and organized schools through which they have indoctrinated locals and evaluated their potential as new recruits. Training in and outside the schools has included guerilla strategy, the use of firearms and explosives, and on-the-job training in militant action against government forces, organized peasants, or collaborators with rival organizations.³⁹ Tupac Amaru (officially, the *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru*) was founded on many of the communist principles that led to the Cuban revolution. The group wants to rid Peru of all imperialist elements and is best known for its 1996 takeover of the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima. The group is estimated to have only a few hundred members at present and operates mainly in the upper Huallaga Valley, a vast jungle area in eastern Peru controlled by guerrillas and drug traffickers. For both groups, the dense jungle canopy and wide-open spaces of the Peruvian

countryside allow for a significant amount of guerrilla warfare training to take place undetected.

The Philippines, the MILF, and the Abu Sayyaf Group. Three major JI terrorist training camps—Camp Vietnam, Camp Palestine, and Camp Hudaibiya—were located in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front’s (MILF) Camp Abu Bakar complex in Mindanao, the Philippines.⁴⁰ Research has pointed to al Qaeda involvement with both organizations; both JI and MILF camps have, according to Philippine military intelligence, played host to several hundred trainers from the Middle East.⁴¹ Abu Sayyaf, an organization with more criminal tendencies than jihadist sentiment, established a central base on Basilan’s Mohadji mountain called Camp Abdurajak—one of at least nine Abu Sayyaf camps hidden in the jungles of the Philippines.⁴²

Somalia and Islamic Terrorist Groups. Because it is a chaotic, poor, battle-weary Muslim country with no central government, there is great concern that Somalia will become another Afghanistan-like safe haven for Islamic fundamentalist terrorism.⁴³ In fact, Al Ittihad Al Islamiya (AIAI), a Muslim radical organization in Somalia that was recently designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State, is reported to have once hosted Osama bin Laden and had, during the 1990s, militia training camps set up in the southeastern corner of the country.⁴⁴ As noted in a recent USIP report, “With 2,000 members, AIAI is the most powerful radical band in the Horn of Africa, and it has been funded by Al Qaeda in the past. Other reports have identified the Dabaab refugee camp on the Somalia-Kenya border as a training ground for Islamic extremists, through a Muslim charity, al Haramain, that has established religious schools and social programs. In 1998, Kenya revoked the registration of Muslim NGOs, including al Haramain, because of their links to terrorism.”⁴⁵ According to U.S. government allegations, AIAI camps in Somalia were used by al Qaeda members in preparing and executing the attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.⁴⁶ Investigations into the 1993 shooting down in Mogadishu of two U.S. helicopters (as featured in the movie *Black Hawk Down*) suggested that members of Mohamed Farrah Aidid’s militia reportedly trained in al Qaeda camps.⁴⁷ However, despite these observations, it is widely believed that Somalia’s role as a safe haven for training camps is limited, largely because the lawlessness that exists throughout the country—extortion, kidnapping, betrayal—creates conditions of insecurity that constitute a risky environment for terrorist operations.⁴⁸

Spain and the Basque Homeland and Freedom (ETA). Founded in 1959, the aim of ETA (an acronym for the Spanish phrase *Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna*) is to establish an independent homeland, based on Marxist principles, encompassing the Spanish Basque provinces of Vizcaya, Guipuzcoa, and Alava, as well as the autonomous region of Navarra, along with the southwestern French Departments of Labour, Basse-Navarra, and Soule.⁴⁹

Since the 1960s, ETA has been accused of, and often taken credit for, more than 1,000 deaths, including a number of bombings and assassinations of Spanish Government officials, security and military forces, politicians, and judicial figures.⁵⁰ ETA's most notorious attack was the assassination in December 1973 of Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, who was seen at the time as Franco's most likely successor. In the early 1960s, they also attempted to derail a train transporting politicians and army veterans. While ETA is believed to have received training at various times in the past in Libya, South Yemen, Lebanon, and Nicaragua, more recently ETA activities have been coordinated from France. For example, in February 2003, French police discovered a training area in the secluded Landes forest in southwestern France which had been used to teach ETA activists how to use homemade grenade-launchers capable of piercing armored cars.⁵¹

Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers. Since the 1970s, one of the world's most fearsome organizations has been the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a guerrilla/terrorist group representing the minority Tamil community, fighting for an Eelam (or homeland) in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. This separatist-terrorist organization is widely viewed as being at the cutting edge of insurgent and terrorist technology, military adaptation, and innovation—credited with, among other things, the invention of the speedboat suicide attack.⁵² A unique, if macabre feature of its tactics has been the use of suicide commandos, both men and women, some in their early teens, for individual assassination as well as mass attacks.⁵³ Through intense training and conditioning, as well as societal isolation, the LTTE camps, many of them located in Jaffna and remote areas in the northern part of the Sri Lanka, provide important centers of operational knowledge transfer. While several LTTE training camps are known to have existed in India—particularly in the state of Tamil Nadu—there are as yet no indications that this group has provided training for anyone other than Tamils committed to the goal of establishing a separatist state.

Sudan and Islamic Terrorist Groups. During the early 1990s, Osama bin Laden was exiled from Saudi Arabia and settled in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. He brought with him a number of seasoned veterans from the Afghan conflict and established military training camps throughout the country. Some reports say more than twenty camps were built near Khartoum, Port Sudan, in the Damazin areas of eastern Sudan, and in the southern Equatoria Province, near the Ugandan border.⁵⁴ A recent report by the U.S. Institute of Peace indicates that

the Sudanese government has used its territory to provide safe haven, training bases, and staging areas to numerous terrorist organizations, including Al Qaeda, Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), Hizballah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Abu Nidal, and Gama'at al Islamiyya. Operatives not only moved

freely in and out of Sudan, but also established offices, businesses, and logistical bases for operations. Training camps were opened in the east of the country, which sent fighters from Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Algeria across the border into neighboring Eritrea and Ethiopia.⁵⁵

Syria and Palestinian Terrorist Organizations. When Lebanon's civil war erupted in 1975, Syria (a predominately Sunni Muslim country) came to the aid of the Christians, who were being pounded by Shiite Muslim groups like Amal.⁵⁶ According to the U.S. Department of State, several radical terrorist groups have maintained training camps or other facilities on Syrian territory in the last 20 years, including the Turkish separatist group PKK and Palestinian groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Abu Nidal Organization, and the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ).⁵⁷ Many of the training camps have been located in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley, in eastern Lebanon. One notorious example is the Ayn Tzahab terrorist training camp in Syria, allegedly supported by Iran and used for operational training for Palestinian terrorists, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives.⁵⁸

Turkey and the PKK. According to Ely Karmon (1998), Islamic terrorist groups in Turkey—including the Hizb ut-Tahrir (Islamic Liberation Party)—have been active since the 1960s, recruiting new members from poor towns and villages with a large Kurdish population (Diyarbakir, Silvan, Cizre, Kiziltepe and others), especially among the young and unemployed.⁵⁹ He notes how in 1993, a Turkish minister of interior declared at a press conference that members of radical Islamic organizations underwent months of military and theoretical training in Iranian security installations, traveled with Iranian real and forged documents, had weapons and explosives of Iranian origin and participated in attacks on Turkish citizens and also Iranian opposition militants.⁶⁰ However, while some Turkish terrorist organizations may have profited materially from Iranian backing in training, logistical support, weapons, and explosives, the more worrisome centers of terrorist knowledge are found among the training camps of the PKK.⁶¹ Aside from the previously mentioned training camp in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, the PKK has maintained centers of learning throughout southern Turkey and northern Iraq.

The United States and Extremist Groups. In addition to far-away places like Indonesia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan, the United States has also played host to several terrorist training camps in recent decades. From Alabama to Montana, centers of motivational, and sometimes operational, knowledge transfer are cause for increasing concern. In Northern Idaho, the Aryan Nations Church's 20-acre, gated fortress with guard towers provided a sanctuary in which Christian Identity adherents received weapons training, combat tactics, and indoctrination. According to James Aho, the closely-related Covenant, Sword and the Arm of the Lord, headquartered

on the Missouri-Arkansas border, amassed one of the largest private arms caches ever uncovered in American history on its 224-acre base, Zarepath-Horeb, consisting of a 30-gallon oil drum of arsenic, at least one improvised armored vehicle, facilities for retooling machine guns out of semiautomatic weapons, grenades, RPGs, silencers, and thousands of rounds of ammunition.⁶² Another U.S.-based extremist group, the Christian Patriots Defense League, established a perimeter of armed encampments around the American heartland to protect it from a planned incursion of troops from Africa, allegedly stationed on America's borders awaiting orders from the UN to invade.⁶³ And Timothy McVeigh, who was convicted and executed for his deadly 1995 attack on the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, was a frequent visitor to Elohim City (literally, the City of God), a Christian Identity enclave located nearby.⁶⁴ These and other "centers of learning" have played an important role in transforming motivated individuals into dangerous terrorists. Without violating the crucial civil liberties of the United States (such as the freedom of association), widespread community vigilance must play a vital role in identifying and closing or preventing future training camps in this country.

Uzbekistan and the IMU. During the Soviet era, the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan became host to a number of underground mosque and religious schools, and over time, a supportive environment for Islamic radicalism allowed the establishment and maintenance of jihad terrorist training camps.⁶⁵ From this environment was launched the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the most active group of its kind in Central Asia. While the IMU purportedly has used training camps and military bases in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan, as well as a "forward base of operations" in Batken, Kyrgyzstan, the group operates largely in the Ferghana Valley on the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border, where it receives support and some protection from local inhabitants.⁶⁶

Yemen and the Training of Political and Religious Terrorists. Located at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen is a poor Muslim country with a weak central government, armed tribal groups in outlying areas, and porous borders, which makes it fertile ground for terrorists.⁶⁷ During the Cold War, the Soviets and their satellites from East Germany and Cuba established a network of training facilities in South Yemen for members of national liberation movements from Palestine, Somalia, Oman, and some other Arab countries. By one account, during the 1970s and 1980s there were at least 1,000 active Soviet military personnel in South Yemen, together with some 3,000 Cuban advisors in militia and terrorist training camps.⁶⁸ For example, Cuban instructors trained members of the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman in a training camp located in the region of Shabwah. The Shabwah town of El-Geida served as the major hub for the Front. Al Qaeda reportedly had several major training camps in Yemen until the late 1990s, when the Yemeni government uprooted them.⁶⁹ How-

ever, recent signs of activity indicate that Yemen is still seen by some as a safe haven for terrorism. For example, in June 2001, local authorities arrested eight Yemeni veterans of the 1979–89 Afghan mujahideen in connection with a plot to blow up the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, Yemen's capital, and in July 2002, an accidental explosion that killed two al Qaeda operatives led to the seizure of 650 pounds of plastic explosives from a Sanaa warehouse.

Conclusion

While this brief overview is clearly not inclusive of all countries in which terrorist training camps have existed, it is representative of the multifaceted and geographically diverse world of training for terrorism. Many of these training camps have a good deal in common. To begin with, geographic isolation is needed in order to foster group identity formation and group cohesion; it is also important to avoid disturbing one's neighbors with the sounds of live combat training. Obviously, there are many good reasons why almost all terrorist training camps are located in areas of low population density. Another element that is common to most of these camps is the lack of a state government with the will or ability to close the camps down or prevent new ones from forming. Further, as seen in the extreme cases of Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and Sudan, state sponsorship is obviously a beneficial element for the establishment and maintenance of terrorist training camps.

These centers of terrorist learning also require easy access to weapons and ammunition, including mortar rounds for heavy weapons training. Members with military combat experience play a critical role as the knowledge experts upon whom the students rely. And given the absence of municipal services in these places, a large amount of food, water, and shelter is obviously needed. To sum up, at a minimum an operational center of learning needs operational space (preferably isolated), teachers (experts in professionally relevant knowledge), committed learners, time, money, and basic necessities.

It must be noted that several of the countries mentioned above (like Northern Ireland) may no longer be considered centers of terrorist learning. Further, as the astute reader will notice, training camps are not always necessary for a country to become a place of operational knowledge transfer; as recent events in Iraq have clearly shown, a good deal of operational knowledge is (perhaps by necessity) acquired "on the job." As terrorism scholar J. Bowyer Bell observes, "it is impossible to simulate the impact of driving a live car-bomb; the anxiety generated that determines operational parameters must be experienced, not imagined."⁷⁰ Thus, when new recruits join an ongoing insurgency (such as the group in Iraq led by Abu Musab

al-Zarqawi), their training for terrorism is most likely limited to watching the more seasoned veterans carry out a particular attack.

As the chapters in this volume have demonstrated, training for terrorism is a multifaceted process which takes place at a significant number and variety of locations throughout the world. Also, while the majority of effective terrorist training takes place in a face-to-face setting, an important role is played by print and online information resources, although much of it is of questionable value to improving an individual terrorist's operational capabilities. For example, real training for explosives requires experienced teachers and well-prepared students. Too many idle followers of website bomb-making instructions are likely to blow themselves and their families to bits. Thus, training camps and "on the job" training will continue to play a crucial role in developing the operational capabilities of terrorist groups for the foreseeable future. Our ability to identify future centers of terrorist learning will thus prove vital in the global war on terrorism. To this end, the chapters in the third and final volume of this series will address political, social, and environmental dimensions of countries, particularly weak or failing states, which could become new safe havens for terrorist training camps, and thus warrant considerable attention.

Acknowledgments

The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not purport to reflect the position of the United States Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.