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## AL QAEDA AND MARITIME TERRORISM [PART I]

*By Dr. John C. K. Daly*

Fears of atomic smuggling in ships date back to the very dawn of the atomic age. On August 2, 1939, Albert Einstein wrote a letter to President Franklin Roosevelt informing him that work by his colleagues Leo Szilard and Enrico Fermi indicated that uranium could shortly be an important source of power that should be developed with caution. Noting that uranium could “also lead to the construction of bombs,” Einstein speculated chillingly that “a single bomb of this type, carried by boat and exploded in a port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory.” Roosevelt received the missive on October 11 and passed the letter to an aide with the annotation, “This requires action.” Ten days later, on order of the President, the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on Uranium (the “Briggs Uranium Committee”) was held in Washington. Six years and US\$2 billion later, the world entered the atomic age.

Einstein's prophecy is now a security nightmare for the modern world. Maritime authorities worldwide are worried about ensuring the safety of their ports and ships from terrorist attack. Recent press reports have discussed a number of merchantmen

under al Qaeda control, but hard evidence is difficult to come by. Even estimates of al Qaeda's “fleet” vary widely, from a low of fifteen to a high of 300 vessels. The unhappy fact is that al Qaeda has already struck twice at sea against both warships and merchantmen. For overworked maritime security officials, it is no longer a question of “if,” but rather “when” and “where.” The grim reality is that, with a global maritime fleet of 120,000 vessels, any solution for inspection and search is going to be haphazard at best.

### **Al-Nasheri**

Fortunately, al Qaeda's top maritime specialist is in custody. Al Qaeda's chief of naval operations was “Prince of the Sea,” Abdulrahim Mohammed Abda al-Nasheri (also known as Mulla Ahmad Belal). Western intelligence believes that al-Nasheri masterminded the Octo-

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ber 12, 2000, USS Cole attack while the ship was refueling in Aden, Yemen. Seventeen sailors were killed and at least forty others injured in al Qaeda's first successful naval attack, which blew a forty-foot hole in the port side of the ship. Repairs eventually cost US\$287 million. U.S. officials concluded that al-Nasheri telephoned orders to the USS Cole bombers from the United Arab Emirates. According to U.S. intelligence, al-Nasheri subsequently fled to Afghanistan. U.S. intelligence believes that, after the 9-11 attacks, Khalid Shaikh Mohammad and al-Nasheri were "promoted" within al Qaeda, taking over operational planning for future attacks.

On May 15, 2003, the Department of Justice identified al-Nasheri as a veteran and instructor in the al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, and named him as an unindicted co-conspirator in the USS Cole attack. The indictment also charged that al-Nasheri was involved in an earlier failed attack against the USS The Sullivans while the ship was refueling in Aden on January 3, 1999. In June of 2002, Zuhair Helal al Tabaiti, one of three Saudis arrested in Morocco, admitted meeting Osama bin Laden and undergoing military training in Afghanistan. While al Tabaiti denied having been asked to carry out any military attacks, he admitted that he was gathering intelligence about the movements of NATO ships in Gibraltar for al-Nasheri, whom he had met while in Afghanistan.

Al-Nasheri was suspected of involvement in a number of other al Qaeda plots as well, including the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings. One of the suicide bombers in the attack on the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, known only as Azzam, was believed to have been his cousin. Al-Nasheri traveled under a number of false identities, including Umar Mohammed al-Harazi and Abu Bilal al-Makki. U.S. intelligence believes that al-Nasheri was in Ghazni, Afghanistan, when the U.S. campaign against the Taliban began in October, 2001. Al-Nasheri is believed to have fled to Pakistan when the Taliban fell and in recent months might have gone to Yemen. Some tribesmen in Yemen, however, said

he had gone to Malaysia.

U.S. authorities also suspect al-Nasheri of being behind plans to bomb the Fifth Fleet Headquarters in Bahrain, a plot disclosed in January of 2002 by another top al Qaeda guerrilla, who was captured by Pakistan after fleeing Afghanistan. The Fifth Fleet has responsibility for the Persian Gulf and provides ships for the operations of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). Among the Fifth Fleet's responsibilities is monitoring sea traffic from the Arabian Sea to the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf.

In Western custody since he was captured in an undisclosed country in November of 2002, al-Nasheri has allegedly confessed to planning additional attacks on U.S. and British warships in the Straits of Gibraltar and in the Mediterranean. At the time of his arrest al-Nasheri was the highest-

*The impact on the Yemeni economy was immediate, as maritime insurers tripled their rates.*

ranking al Qaeda operative apprehended since the CIA, FBI and Pakistani authorities captured bin Laden's operations chief, Abu Zubaydah, in Faisalabad, Pakistan, in March of 2002. Al-Nasheri is reputedly a Saudi of Yemeni ancestry who served as a founding member of al Qaeda in 1989.

The threat of al-Nasheri's operatives was taken sufficiently seriously by Western maritime powers that in the early spring of 2003 a preemptive policy was adopted of stopping and boarding suspicious ships and also of escorting tankers through the Straits of Gibraltar. NATO, which has been monitoring merchantmen in the Mediterranean since the September 11 attacks, is currently tracking fifty ships suspected of terrorist ties.

Al Qaeda not only attacked the USS Cole, but scored a grim success seventeen months later against a tanker as well. On the morning of October 6, 2002, a French tanker, the 299,364 DWT-ton Limburg, was rammed by an explosives-laden boat off the port of Ash Shihr at Mukallah, 353 miles (570 km) east of Aden. A crewman was killed and the double-hulled tanker was

breached. The impact on the Yemeni economy was immediate, as maritime insurers tripled their rates.

### **Piracy**

Despite the romantic image of pirates, the violent seizure of merchantmen on the high seas is a growing problem; in 2001, 335 incidents occurred, a figure that rose the following year to 370. In the first six months of 2003, 234 attacks against merchantmen were recorded, with the waters of the Indonesian archipelago being regarded as the most dangerous. The sixty-four attacks that have occurred there account for nearly a quarter of the global total. Because nuclear devices smuggled on ships are the ultimate nightmare, security specialists lose sleep over the possibility of terrorists making common cause with pirates. It is a worrying fact, therefore, that three of the worst piracy zones are the Muslim nations of Indonesia, Bangladesh and Somalia.

The problems of security are exacerbated by the nature of international shipping. Ironically, while maritime law was first codified in the seventeenth century, the sea remains a largely lawless frontier, where narrowly constrained national interests move with glacial slowness to develop international legislation. The International Maritime Organization, the UN's 162 nation maritime counterpart, is notorious for the plodding nature of its legislative process. Under current IMO regulations, merchantmen are forbidden to carry firearms for self-protection, a charmingly archaic bit of legislation that singly fails to address the realities of the post 9-11 world. The UN estimates that maritime traffic now accounts for 80 per cent of the world's commerce—5.8 billion tons in 2001. Cutthroat competition that reduces profits, flags of convenience, miserable wages—all are problems bedeviling the maritime community, creating a statistical nightmare for security specialists.

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## **FINANCING TERROR: FROM BOGUS BANKS TO HONEY BEES**

*By Alexei Vassiliev*

A comprehensive campaign against international terrorism is impossible without blocking the channels of its financing. This is no easy task. Currently, about US\$3 trillion are transferred daily from one party to another within international financial markets. But of that total, it is estimated that the annual amount used to finance terrorism does not exceed several hundred million dollars. The task of identifying the deals related to terrorist funding is akin to finding the proverbial needle in a haystack.

This is not the only problem. In many cases, terrorists' money is of legal origin, and cannot even be described as "laundered"—the process by which originally criminal income is organized to penetrate legal systems to hinder detection. Yet money laundering does play a role. For instance, an estimated US\$100 billion is laundered every year, most of it by drug dealers. Connections between terrorists and narcotics traffickers are well-known, including those that link al Qaeda with the heroin trade in South Asia.

Perhaps the greatest challenge arises in preventing the flow of money for and among terrorists through legal and sub-legal methods. Al Qaeda has been known to use several methods for its funding, including manipulating import and export receipts, utilizing correspondent accounts, purchasing foreign banks, taking advantage of the parallel "hawala" banking system, and establishing charitable front organizations; all of these are described in further detail below.

### **Overstatement**

One of the simplest methods for moving money is to overstate (over-invoice) the price of an imported commodity, enabling its exporter to obtain additional money and to then transfer it to a terrorist organization. Bin Laden's network used this practice in the case of honey supplied from the United States to Yemen and other

Arabian countries. The price of this honey exceeded the average world level by 50 percent. This enabled the Arabian honey importers to transfer almost a quarter of a million dollars to al Qaeda operatives in the United States.

In this case, however, the honey's price was so high that it attracted the attention of authorities and the

link was uncovered. In deals involving larger amounts of goods, the price deviation may be much less and therefore that much more difficult to detect.

### **Understatement**

Another related means of terrorist financing is through understatement of export value. This has been found to affect goods, particularly from South Asia, that make their way through middlemen in Gulf ports and are then re-exported to other countries through offshore zones. This allows exporters to evade high customs duties in their countries. The underground bankers and traders involved earn significant sums of money through such evasion.

One of the most active offshore zones is Dubai, of the United Arab Emirates. The former Taliban regime's diplomatic ties with the UAE likely helped facilitate Afghan-based terrorists in conducting financial deals through Dubai companies. It is believed that huge amounts of criminal income, including some of drug dealers, are also laundered in Dubai. While officially denying this charge, the UAE has begun to impose more rigid conditions on the activities of its national banks. After September 2001, illegal financial operations became punishable by lengthy prison terms and sizable monetary fines.

### **Correspondent Accounts**

Correspondent accounts are used in a large number of the millions of banking deals done daily throughout the world. They enable banks to finance operations in countries where they have no branches. On receiving an instruction from a correspondent bank to pay an amount,

however, the foreign bank has no idea regarding the company or person authorized to receive the money. Operations with correspondent accounts can be stopped only if the originating bank is blacklisted. In the early

1990s, the Ash-Shamal Islamic Bank of Sudan remitted about US\$250,000 to the branches of two large U.S.

banks. This amount was received by al Qaeda members in Texas. American authorities were able to put an end to this practice only after they identified Ash-Shamal as involved in financing terrorists.

### **Bank Control**

Another method of both money laundering and the use of legal channels for funding terrorist activity involves purchasing a foreign bank or controlling a significant portion of its shares. Bin Laden, for instance, is believed to have founded Ash-Shamal. When the remitted amounts are insignificant—not exceeding tens of thousands of dollars, enough to finance an individual terrorist—and the payment instruction is e-mailed, the transaction attracts little notice.

### **Hawala**

Money orders, especially through the so-called parallel banking system, are another means by which terrorists, including al Qaeda, are known to support their activities. This is a method of transferring money that goes back centuries and operates outside of the channels of official banks. The centers of this system are in the rich Gulf oil states. There it is known as “hawala,” which means “trust” in Arabic, since no documents fix the transfer. Some of these underground bankers work through small offices; others operate through businesses that serve as a shelter for their main activity or a source of an additional income. Most of the companies that do this—such as jewelry shops, travel companies or bars—are recipients of a significant amount of cash. An operator of such a system may receive cash in Dubai and tell his brother, cousin or nephew, who lives in New York or Texas, the password. Or he may send a coded

*The former Taliban regime's diplomatic ties with the UAE likely helped facilitate Afghan-based terrorists in conducting financial deals through Dubai companies.*

check to him, enabling him to receive the remitted amount. The password is told by phone, fax or e-mail. It is next to impossible to trace money remittances made via the hawala system. The annual turnover of hawala in South Asia and the Gulf countries is estimated at US\$20 billion.

### **Charities**

Terrorists also are financed through charitable organizations, especially religious ones. This has often proven successful because of the difficulty involved in distinguishing between a charitable foundation that simply grants money to mosques and religious schools to promote Islam and its culture from one that finances terrorists. International law enforcement and intelligence officials have been successful at uncovering some of these organizations, but it can be safely assumed that many others continue to exist.

The United States and other Western countries have recently attempted to tighten legislation to limit money laundering and the financing of terrorism through these various methods. Yet since drug dealers have successfully evaded similar measures aimed at their activities and have still managed to launder approximately one trillion dollars over the past decade, it is doubtful that the channels used to finance terrorism can be entirely blocked. Terrorist groups will continue to require and dispense money in order to motivate extremists, to hire killers and to purchase materials. Terrorism is the plague of the twenty-first century and must be combated by all means, but the struggle against it will undoubtedly be a prolonged one.

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## **AFGHANISTAN'S RESURGENT TALIBAN**

*By Victor Korgun*

Though Afghanistan today faces many threats, the greatest is that from Islamist extremists inside the country as well as those sheltering in the neighboring provinces of Pakistan. The most recent period has seen adversaries of the Karzai government and the US regroup their main forces. There are indications that both the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda militants have combined forces with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Islamic Party and have been rapidly building up their military capabilities. Hekmatyar and the Talibs have joined forces, a development that until recently was believed to have slim chances of ever materializing. Now this process is only gaining momentum.

What is more, some reports suggest that previously isolated and scattered Taliban armed groups have accepted Hekmatyar as their commander, and the number of such units is growing. Apparently, this process is taking place with the full knowledge and consent of Taliban leader Mullah Omar and, probably, Osama bin Laden himself. Missile attacks on installations of the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul demonstrate the

guerillas' growing military prowess, and the way these attacks were carried out strongly suggests that they were staged by people controlled by Hekmatyar who have extensive war experience.

### **Tactics and Capabilities**

Though likely to diminish in the coming winter months when fighting traditionally slows in Afghanistan, next spring — the most favorable season for conducting military operations — the militants will likely resume their warfare and launch a new phase of armed confrontation. Yet not only are Taliban leaders active militarily, but they are also involved in propaganda cam-

*Hekmatyar and the Talibs have joined forces, a development that until recently was believed to have slim chances of ever materializing.*



paigns among the population by having leaflets and other printed matter circulated. Their confidence is also revealed by their open granting of interviews. One example was an interview that Mullah Dadullah, a senior Taliban military commander, gave last spring in Pakistan to Rahimullah Yusufzai, a local reporter known to have maintained long-standing relations with the Taliban. In the interview, Dadullah urged Afghans not to cooperate with the Karzai government and to fight until “all the crusaders and Jews are annihilated.” “The fact that he dared to grant an interview speaking in his own voice is noteworthy,” the reporter observed, adding that “in recent months, the Taliban undertook a serious consolidation, and... they feel that they are capable of delivering a major blow.”

Since then, Taliban militants have indeed displayed a new assertiveness; they have even set up their own roadblocks. It was Talibs manning one such roadblock in the Shah Wali Kot district near Kandahar who stopped International Committee of the Red Cross irrigation engineer Ricardo Munguia, a citizen of El Salvador, and his Afghan co-workers. Acting on Mullah Dadullah’s orders after Munguia’s captors had used a satellite phone to request instructions as to his fate, the militants shot the engineer. (The murder was tragically ironic since the Talib leading the operation had once had his life saved by ICRC.) A few days later in Uruzgan province, Talibs gunned down Haji Gilani, Hamid Karzai’s close ally, who in November 2001 gave the future President shelter after Karzai secretly entered Afghanistan hoping to launch an anti-Taliban revolt.

### **Who’s Who**

Afghan Taliban and their foreign allies — mainly Arabs and Pakistanis — are developing a cohesive command structure in an effort to control the militia’s armed units and coordinate its operations. For example, remnants of Uzbek and Tajik militants have reportedly been brought under the command of Tahir Yuldash, a former

deputy of Juma Namangani, the leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan who was killed in October 2001 in the course of the US bombing campaign. Shortly before the American attack, Mullah Omar had appointed Namangani commander-in-chief of Taliban forces in Afghanistan’s northern provinces.

The Taliban have succeeded in setting up a clandestine military-administrative structure in the southeastern parts of the country populated largely by Pashtuns. Though this structure lacks a single center or an administration, the names of some senior Taliban field commanders are known. Reports suggest that these individuals possess sufficient resources and forces to establish military rule in several provinces. A number of provinces populated predominantly by Pashtuns have been divided into areas of responsibility and assigned to Taliban military leaders.

For example, all Taliban armed units in Pashtun areas are controlled by Mullah Baradar from the village of Deh Rawud. Taliban leader Mullah Omar himself is responsible for assigning such responsibilities. Baradar’s

*Taliban militants have indeed displayed a new assertiveness; they have even set up their own roadblocks.*

deputies are Akhtar Muhammad Osmani, an ex-governor of Uruzgan province; Mullah Dadullah, who took part in military operations against the

Northern Alliance in Kunduz in October 2001; and Abdurrazak, a former Minister of the Interior in the Taliban government.

Ghazni, Paktia, and Paktika provinces are the responsibility of Saifurrahman, who was in charge of Taliban units fighting against US-led forces during Operation Anaconda in spring 2002. The above-mentioned Abdurrazak and Osmani are responsible for Kandahar, Uruzgan, Helmand, and Zabol provinces. The eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar, and Laghman are controlled by Maulvi Abdul Kadir, the Taliban’s number three man. The central provinces of Parwan, Kapisa, Wardak, and Kabul are the responsibility of Anwar Dargar. These commanders and their military-adminis-

trative structures can hardly be viewed as an alternative authority. However, their clout among the local population should not be underestimated: the Taliban's escalating resistance does draw on a certain degree of popular support, especially among conservative elements within the population.

In early April 2003, for example, in the eastern province of Nangarhar, the Taliban circulated a declaration from Mullah Omar, signed by 600 clerics, which coincided with the start of a dramatic escalation in Taliban armed attacks. Even though it appears unlikely that these developments were directly related to the war in Iraq, the text of the declaration revealed a certain relationship: "No matter where Muslim land comes under attack by infidels, it is everyone's duty to rise against the aggressor. We were accused of harboring a terrorist, Osama bin Laden. But what is Iraq's fault? After all, that country is not harboring bin Laden."

The Taliban have continued to maintain the pace of their attacks throughout this past spring and summer. They have particularly targeted Afghans supporting president Hamid Karzai and those attempting to rebuild the country. It remains to be seen whether the US-led military operations directed against Taliban positions inside Afghanistan, which took place in late August and early September, will have an impact on the militia's ability to destabilize the country. One indication that these efforts were at least partially successful is revealed by the fact that the Taliban have had to reorganize some of their military command structure due to battlefield losses. But there likely will not be a definitive answer until next spring ushers in the beginning of a new fighting season.

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## WINNING THE ARAB STREET

*by Dr. Evgueni Novikov*

Military victories in Iraq and Afghanistan do little to alleviate continued U.S. defeats on the most important front in the War on Terror - the war of ideas. A recent report by the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, a subcommittee of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy created to provide oversight of U.S. attempts to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics, states:

*America has not excelled in the struggle of ideas in the Arab and Muslim world. As the director of the Pew Research Center said earlier this year, attitudes toward the United States "have gone from bad to worse" [as] "the bottom has fallen out of Arab and Muslim support for the United States." The Arab and Muslim world, however, cannot be addressed in isolation. Animosity toward the U.S. is part of a broader crisis worldwide. What is required is not merely tactical adaptation but strategic, and radical, transformation.(1)*

Perhaps most influential in the continued deterioration of Arab perceptions of the United States is the Arab satellite broadcasting network, al-Jazeera. Since its creation in 1996, al-Jazeera has become the CNN of the Arab world, reaching 35 million viewers. To counter this vast outlet of anti-American sentiment, the U.S. funded the creation of Radio Sawa. Operated by the International Board of Broadcasters, Radio Sawa has established a reputation in the Middle East for reaching out to the Muslim world by devoting the majority of its broadcasting content to Arabic and Western pop music, focusing its Arabic language service upon listeners below thirty. A recent AC Nielsen study showed that Radio Sawa led other international broadcasts in five Middle Eastern countries, with 31 percent listenership among the general population, and 42 percent in the all-important 15-29 age group.(2) Why then is the U.S. losing this battle for the support of the 'Arab Street'?

Despite conventional wisdom, Radio Sawa programming targets precisely the wrong audience, thereby unwittingly

sowing the seeds of defeat in the struggle for Arab hearts and minds. While it retains some popularity among young, educated, professional Arabs, Radio Sawa's hip-hop broadcasts do not reach the real powerbrokers in Middle Eastern societies: tribal leaders. Throughout the Arab world, tribal leaders act as decision makers and informal community leaders, having a decisive impact on the values and behaviors of the youth on the 'Arab Street'.

In order to understand the impact of tribal leaders, we must consider typical power structures in rural and urban Muslim communities, both in the Middle East and in the West. We must bear in mind, for instance, that children reared in a traditional Muslim community must obey two figures outside of their family: the village elder and the local religious leader, or sheik. Furthermore, it is important to note that the sheik controls the elder and therefore has the greater authority. If the U.S. hopes to be successful in swaying public opinion on the 'Arab Street', it must target these leaders.

As the United States weighs its options for formatting TV and radio broadcasting to counter the effectiveness of Arab stations like al-Jazeera, it would be worthwhile for the American policymaking community to take into account the manner in which the 'Arab Street' listens to radio and television. For Arab audiences, TV and radio broadcasting provide their most important link to the outside world. It is not a matter of listening briefly to short news releases in a car while traveling to an office or home; American officials should understand that Arab listeners, particularly unemployed individuals, use radio and television as an integral part of their everyday lives. They are prepared to sit in a local coffee house and listen to extended programs for hours or more in order learn more about a given topic.

If steps were taken to engage these critical leaders America might begin to regain the informational advantage in the Muslim world, winning over the important tribal elders residing in the rural regions of the Middle East - an area, it should be noted, where Radio Sawa does reach. In places like Iraq, this strategy might play a critical role in bringing community leaders to the side

of the United States, thereby turning the tide on this front in the war on terror.

### ***Overcoming the Soviet Legacy***

America won the war of ideas with Communism because it won the sympathy of the 'Soviet Street'. Now the United States seeks to apply its Cold War experience to present-day struggles with Islamists and Baathists. Direct application of the old paradigm, however, does much to impede progress toward vital U.S. objectives. Previous experience offers policymakers little or no help in dealing with the current struggle over ideas. Only through recognizing the significant differences between today's 'Arab Street' and yesterday's 'Soviet Street' will a winning strategy be forged that can overcome the efforts by al-Jazeera and other similar outlets to cast the United States as the enemy of Islam.

Most fundamentally, Soviet and Arab propagandists differ in their construction of the opposition between themselves and the West. To understand this, we need only look at Soviet and Arab propaganda's description of this perceived dichotomy. The core message of Soviet propaganda was: 'Our life is good and Western life is bad. We are happy and we do not need the West'. Soviet leaders erected the Iron Curtain in order to prohibit Soviet people from discovering the positives of Western life. Communist leaders had little difficulty in carrying out this agenda, as the few foreigners who managed through exceptional circumstances to live within the Soviet Union did so under strict KGB surveillance, aimed at block contact between them and ordinary Soviet people.

After the Second World War, the United States created the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, working with the BBC and Deutsche Welle to provide Soviet people with information about Western life; giving them the opportunity to see the better standard of living available in the West. In spite of all the efforts of Soviet propagandists, people living in the USSR and the Eastern bloc began to believe that what came from America was good. Even the word 'American' became a synonym of the word 'perfect' in Soviet youth slang.



And vice versa - the 'Soviet street' rejected things issuing from the Communist leadership. Those living behind the Iron Curtain admired Western dissidents and similarly considered Soviet defectors who fought their way through prison and repression to get to the West heroes. The United States achieved its goal of establishing for itself a positive connotation in the heart and mind of the ordinary Soviet person.

### ***Adapting to the Arab Mindset***

Unlike the Soviet bloc, Arab countries have a considerable American and Western presence through military and civilian projects which have a visible role for local people. No Iron Curtain separates the Arab people from the outside world. Ordinary Muslims have had a chance to find out that life in the USA and other western countries is better than in their own, and realizing this discrepancy, they blame their Arab governments. Thus, local Arab leaders are often placed in a situation where they need to convincingly answer the question, 'Why is my life so much worse than the life of the ordinary Westerner?' Local officials, militant Islamists, Baathists cannot claim, as their Soviet counterparts did, 'Our life is good, and Western life is bad'. An Arab audience rejects the diametric principle of 'good' versus 'bad'. Instead Arab leaders answer, 'Your life is bad precisely because the life of Westerners is so good'. An essential element of U.S. broadcasts and policy in general, then, must provide an aggressive refutation of this claim.

In attempting to link the 'good' and the 'positive' with the United States in the heart and mind of the 'Arab Street', policy makers must again adapt their strategy to suit the current situation. Accurate, fact-based news and information allowed ordinary Soviet citizens to see through the rhetoric of 'the good Communist life' peddled by Soviet governments. However, regardless of the success of this approach during the Cold War, the Western norm of balanced news media damages Western credibility among Arab audiences. According to the 'Arab Street', when Americans address their deficiencies openly, or criticize their President, politicians or army commanders, it is perceived as weakness. In the eyes of the Arab audience this makes the U.S. look miserable. To cite one example, during the Iraq war,

the U.S. Congress sponsored Radio Free Iraq (RFI). RFI broadcasted Democratic criticism of President Bush, but by doing so inadvertently supported anti-American claims being made by al-Jazeera. To win the war of ideas against militant Islamists and Baathists the United States should ensure that the presentation of American images, ideas and values should be strong and 'one-dimensional'. Hence, it is imperative that the United States abandon its peace-time principle of 'balanced information' until peace comes to the region.

### ***Conclusion***

To win the War on Terror, the United States and its allies must win the battle over the hearts and minds of the 'Arab Street'. No longer can the West rely on Cold War methodologies and preconceived notions of an opponent by simply provides an alternative vision of the future. Policy makers must understand that the message on the 'Arab Street' is that the lifestyle of the West is the reason why ordinary Muslims suffer. This argument must be countered using wartime methods and the active promotion of a unified image of a beneficent America. Consideration must be paid to the manner in which an Arab audience receives and filters its information. Most importantly, the proper audience must be identified and aggressively targeted if the United States is to be successful.

### ***Notes:***

1. Changing Minds Winning Peace -a new strategic direction for U.S. public diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim world, Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, Submitted to the Committee on Appropriations U.S. House of Representatives, October 1, 2003, page 15.
2. Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) Statement on "Changing Minds, Winning Peace," A Report Released by The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy on October 8, 2003, <http://www.bbg.gov>

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