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Monday, December 31, 2001

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World

Al Qaeda examined materials to make nukes

Reuters

**London, December 29:** Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network was investigating the use of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons against the West and had conducted experiments on animals, a British newspaper reported on Saturday. *The Times* said this had emerged from detailed examination of documents it discovered in abandoned al Qaeda houses in the Afghan capital Kabul after it fell to Northern Alliance forces on November 13.

The documents, which had been translated, proved al Qaeda was studying how to produce botulin poison in batches strong enough to kill 2,000 people, the paper said. The hundreds of pages of photocopied, handwritten and printed matter were in a mixture of Arabic, Urdu, Persian, Mandarin, Russian and English.

Samples were photographed and sent to British-based professional translators with scientific qualifications, and to experts in the field of weapons of mass destruction. The newspaper said they confirmed al Qaeda cells were examining materials to make a low-grade, "dirty" nuclear device.

The organisation would not have been able to make a large-scale missile or nuclear device from the documents found, but it was ready to use such weapons if it could get them, *The Times* said.

One section described how chemical weapons were tested on rabbits. The animals died when subjected to cyanide and sodium. The documents also showed al Qaeda was training units to assassinate Middle Eastern leaders sympathetic to the West. The newspaper said documents discovered by British and US agents in the Afghan cities of Kandahar and Jalalabad suggested that 40 Britons were given training at al Qaeda camps. The United States is hunting for bin Laden, its prime suspect for the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

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