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Inside al-Qaeda's terror manual

Pick targets to kill thousands, it says. Stadiums, dense populations, Jewish areas and cultural icons are cited.

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By Hamza Hendawi
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan - The instructions are simple but chilling: Attack sites with "high human intensity" - skyscrapers, nuclear plants, football stadiums. Choose targets of "sentimental value," such as the Statue of Liberty, Big Ben and the Eiffel Tower.

That is some of the advice to members of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda fighters on the best ways to kill thousands of people and spread fear in the United States and Europe. It is contained in the 11-volume "Manual of Afghan Jihad," a copy of which was obtained by the Associated Press.

The FBI has "moved heaven and earth" to intensify security for tomorrow's Super Bowl game in New Orleans and this month's Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, director Robert S. Mueller said.

The nation should remain on a "very high state of alert . . . for some time," Mueller said, adding that there could be al-Qaeda operatives hidden in the United States. "Do I know for sure? I believe there are, but I cannot say for sure," he said Thursday.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and other U.S. officials have repeated calls for vigilance in recent days, warning that large terror attacks could still take place. Documents found in Afghanistan have included diagrams of U.S. nuclear power plants, intelligence officials have said.

The two-page chapter on foreign operations was found as the Associated Press conducted an exhaustive translation of the 5,000-page manual, which was produced in Arabic by al-Qaeda before the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the United States.

It was obtained by AP from a former Afghan resistance fighter, who got it from a disaffected al-Qaeda member.

"There must be plans in place for hitting buildings with high human intensity like skyscrapers, ports, airports, nuclear power plants and places where large numbers of people gather like football grounds," the chapter said. It also recommended major public gatherings.

The manual said special units should work in areas with large Jewish communities. "In every country, we should hit their organizations, institutions, clubs and hospitals," it reads. "The targets must be identified, carefully chosen and include their largest gatherings so that any strike should cause thousands of deaths."

"As for Arab nations, operations should expand to include the assassination of influential and effective personalities," the manual states.

Bin Laden, a Saudi exile, opposes Saudi Arabia's rulers for allowing U.S. troops to be based in that country, home of Islam's most sacred places. Egyptian Islamic militants who are now part of al-Qaeda have killed or tried to kill several politicians and intellectuals in Egypt in their campaign to overthrow the government.



A Louisiana National Guardsman walks past the Louisiana Superdome. The Super Bowl, always security conscious, will be as tightly locked down as any of the nation's military installations. (AP)

The chapter, titled "External Pressure," reads like a blueprint for the Sept. 11 attacks, in which four hijacked airliners crashed into the World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania, the plan for that plane believed to have been foiled by passengers and crew.

"The strikes must be strong and have a wide impact on the population of that nation," the essay said. "Four targets must be simultaneously hit in any of those nations so that the government there knows that we are serious."

It did not elaborate on ways to attack the targets, nor did it give any indication that specific operations were in the works.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission last week alerted nuclear power plants that terrorists might be planning an attack. The alert said an al-Qaeda operative said "the attack was already planned." However, an FBI official said Thursday that the information, after being evaluated, was deemed not credible.

"The Manual of Afghan Jihad" was dedicated to bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam, a prominent Palestinian killed during the 1979-89 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Some believe the writing style strongly suggests that it was written by an Egyptian.

Several members of bin Laden's inner circle are known to be Egyptians. The 19 known hijackers on Sept. 11 were believed to have been led by an Egyptian, Mohamed Atta.

In other chapters, the manual offers advice on how to raise money for covert operations through extortion, blackmail, and kidnappings for ransom.

To cover the high cost of maintaining a cell, it advises creating a business to generate a regular income. Members of a cell should not exceed seven and must not know one another. Only the leader of the operation should know them, it says.

Another chapter details the punishment reserved for members found to have betrayed colleagues to authorities or stolen money from the group:

"A senior member who betrays his brothers to the regime where they live should be punished in such a way that he would desire death for the rest of his days. But if a brother is killed as a result of his betrayal, then he must be killed to make an example of him."