

TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS STRUGGLE TO ATTRACT WORLD MEDIA ATTENTION

As Western governments tend to focus more and more of the risks associated with the “Islamic State“ (IS) terrorist group, several organizations linked to more traditional Al-Qaeda networks reiterated threats in recent weeks against the international transportation system.

On Monday October 27, sympathizers of the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) re-launched an old call to carry out bomb attacks against commercial flights in Western countries. More specifically, the authors of the message republished on the Islamist website Tawhid.ws (Unicity of God) the 16th edition of the “Sada Al-Malahem” (“Echo of the epics”) magazine, which was first released in February 2011. To recall, the terrorist organization had then described how to target planes with the use of undetectable low-cost parcel-bombs developed by its own explosive experts in Yemen.

It is worth mentioning that similar threats led the U.S. authorities to impose stricter airport security measures in July 2014, fearing that terrorists could use false smartphones, laptops or tablets batteries to commit attacks. Although it is not clear that Al-Qaeda-linked terrorists effectively have such devices, the threat has therefore already achieve one of its stated objectives, namely to impose costly security spending to Western countries.

Meanwhile, the newly-created South Asian branch of Al-Qaeda – Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) – published the first issue of its online English-language magazine “Resurgence”. Posted under the authority of Al-Qaeda’s propaganda tool As-Sahab (“The Cloud”) on the Islamist online forum Shamikh1.info, the magazine is calling, amongst other things, to carry out attacks on the strategic international sea lanes. Specifically, the group is urging terrorists to “make Jihad on the seas one of their priorities”, in order to stop oil shipments towards the U.S.

In this aim, AQIS’ propagandist Hamza Khalid is pointing out that the Muslim world “sits astride some of the most strategic sea passages of the world.” Hence, he has identified a series of “Achilles heel of the Western economies”, including the Strait of

Hormuz, the Malacca Strait, Gibraltar, the Bosphorus, the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aden. According to the article, a single RPG attack or the hijacking of a supertanker passing through one of these “chokepoints” would have “phenomenal” consequences as part of the efforts to cut the West “energy umbilical cord”.

Moreover, he said that the attack carried out against the Karachi naval dockyard in September was part of a larger plan consisting of seizing warships with the assistance of commissioned officers of the Pakistan Navy. According to this terrorist diatribe, the ultimate target was gaining tools to conduct operations in the Indian Ocean against the American and Indian navies.

Both in the case of AQAP and AQIS, one could reasonably have serious doubts about their real operational capabilities to carry out his threats against Western countries. In recent years, while the IS has proven its ability to inspire deadly attacks in the West, terrorist organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda have mainly been fighting to enshrine strongholds in their home countries. In this context, the new threats can be considered as a strategy to regain the international attention; in order to rebuild legitimacy amongst jihadist circles, in the wake of IS success to recruit a huge number of fighters from around the world.

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