

THE THREAT COMING FROM AFGHANISTAN IS SERIOUS

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The ‘false alarm’ of the Printemps department store in Paris should not be allowed to act as the trees that conceal the forest. The investigation will tell us, no doubt rather quickly, whether the positioning of five sticks of dynamite without a detonator or ignition system was due to an ‘isolated’ more or less deranged person or to one of the small but violent cells that arise in the ultra-Left. However, there is an absolute consensus both in the security services and among independent experts: this threat of attack has nothing to do with some kind of Jihadist network. In the very hour that followed the discovery of these explosives, we at ESISC already pointed out the absurdity of the ‘Islamist trail.’

But this does not mean that there is no danger whatsoever in France today. First of all, it is clear from the facts themselves, the handling of explosives – dynamite which the investigators describe as ‘old’ and thus perhaps relatively unstable – that what we have here was not only illegal but also dangerous. In addition, it has to be understood that whoever ‘is playing’ with bombs and uses them to threaten people can, one day or another, be tempted to advance from word to deed.

But more fundamentally, **the threats emanating from the Islamist sphere and linked to Afghanistan are very real.** On 20 January, Barack Obama will become the President of the United States. **He has made Afghanistan his priority in the anti-terrorist struggle and plans to make a special effort there. Some European countries, including France, approve of this choice and will participate in the reinforcements** by various measures including deployment of some additional troops there.

Therefore, for the Islamists a ‘window of opportunity’ has opened which will last until well after 20 January. If they want to discourage Europe and to cause it to withdraw from Afghan soil, **they should strike now or in the months ahead, not when the reinforcement and the new policy that will accompany it have borne their first fruit, the way the surge did in Iraq.** In the weeks and months to come, **European interests will be especially under threat.**

And those of France will be all the more in jeopardy: indeed, the French Army, which, alongside the British Army is one of those which best command the mechanisms of counter-insurgency, has been doing a good job in Afghanistan. The combination of military and civilian actions is beginning to produce results in the provinces where the French troops have been deployed. This is one additional reason for striking against France. **On the**

ground, the French soldiers, together with those working with them and the staff of NGOs, are right up there on the front lines. But the neo-Taliban groups also understand what an immense impact an attack within France would have and they will do everything possible to deliver a strike on French soil and, above all, in Paris.

They can count on the Islamic movement coming from Europe to help them in this. **It is relevant to state that the delivery networks of the Mujahideen that focused these past few years on Iraq have for several months now been focusing their efforts back on Afghanistan.** Some recent arrests in Belgium and in France provide evidence of this.

Just like Barack Obama and the European leaders, the Jihadists have understood perfectly well that this is where the next strategic level battle will take place between Salafism, that 'green fascism,' and the international community.

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