

Security & Terrorism

Suicide Bombing Operations



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During the last three years, the world has witnessed a notable upsurge in the number of suicide attacks, as well as in the geographical spread of this tactic. As the suicide bombers become more sophisticated and inventive in their tactics, the number of victims of suicide bombing attacks around the world has also increased significantly.

Counter measures designed to combat suicide bombing have proven largely ineffective. This is now an acknowledged reality, and despite all national and international efforts, success in the field of preventive and preemptive measures has been limited.

The research team at the Department of Security and Terrorism Studies at the GRC, which has produced this study, felt the need to analyze the suicide bombing phenomenon. As part of a Middle East-based think-tank, the researcher at the GRC is living and working within a regional environment that has become familiar with the terrible consequences of suicide operations. With this modest contribution, the researchers at the S&T department hope to add some knowledge that will help in understanding the suicide bombing phenomenon, and contribute to efforts of combating the same.

Dr. Mustafa Alani

Senior Advisor

Director, Security and Terrorism Department
Gulf Research Center

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Suicide Bombing Operations

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Editor-in-Chief: Abdulaziz Sager
Editor: Nicole Stracke
Assistant Editor: Radhika Menon
Senior Creative Designer: Susan Nteife

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Gulf Research Center
P.O. Box 80758
187 Oud Metha Tower, 11th Floor
303 Sheikh Rashid Road
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Tel.: +971 4 324 7770
Fax: +971 4 324 7771

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The Invention of Suicide Bombing as “Strategic Instrument”*

Mustafa Alani

Never before in human history have a few committed ordinary individuals, employing cheap and primitive techniques, and willing to sacrifice themselves, been able to change or disturb the balance of power, generate horror, and intimidate and threaten both governments and societies as suicide bombers

“Die to kill” is an old concept, but suicide bombing is a fairly new invention – or a modern innovation – in the art of warfare

are doing today. The threat of suicide bombing today has developed to become a rapidly growing global challenge. Suicide bombing tactics are employed today as a prime technique by many insurgent groups, operating in different parts of the world, and fighting for entirely different reasons and diverse objectives. Suicide bombing never was, nor is an Islamic phenomenon, or a tactic exclusively related to the Islamic concept of Jihad, as there are many insurgent groups belonging to other religions, as well as to secular groups who have been using suicide bombing as part of their military strategy.

“Die to kill” is an old concept, but suicide bombing is a fairly new invention – or a modern innovation – in the art of warfare. Some researchers try to claim that suicide terrorism is an ancient tactic, simply by listing historical examples from Samson’s suicidal destruction of a Philistine temple, the activities of the legendary ‘Assassins’ during the Crusades, to the act of the Japanese kamikaze pilots during World War II. Many of these writers wrongly associate the act of battlefield suicide or suicide mission with the modern concept of suicide bombing.

Indeed, in just two decades suicide bombing has developed into a major instrument of asymmetric warfare. Suicide bombing tactics are effectively employed in conducting attacks on land, sea, and air, and they are used as part of

terrorist campaigns, guerilla warfare, urban warfare, and in battlefield confrontations. Besides, suicide bombing is also used as an instrument of attack on individuals or groups, and is considered suitable for conducting effective attacks on soft or hard targets, civilian and military alike. Apart from its ability to inflict physical damage resulting in mass destruction and death, suicide bombing has even greater psychological impact as an effective instrument to create mass terror and mass disruption.

The modern concept of suicide bombing centers around the tactic of using non-military instruments (human body, civilian vehicles, civilian planes, boats and even animals) to serve as “moving and thinking bombs” deliberately employed in a surprise attack, on usually pre-selected targets.

The suicide attacks on the US mainland on September 11, 2001 were the most devastating attack on record. The 9/11 destructive attack involved no explosives or bombs, and even the hijacking of the four planes was done without using any kind of weapon. It was a notable example of evil investment in human imagination, innovation and human adaptability. The damage inflicted on the targeted structures (World Trade Center and the Pentagon) was achieved by a combination of three factors: accuracy in hitting the target, impact generated by the speed of the plane, the explosion and fire generated by the ignition of a big amount of aviation fuel.

Apart from the many thousands of innocent victims of 9/11, further available evidence indicates the evilness of the suicide bombing tactic. The Iraqi experience is before us as the most horrifying one. From the intensity and frequency of suicide attacks that have taken place in Iraq since mid 2003, we can assume that nearly half of the 300,000 or more Iraqis who have lost their lives could have fallen victims to suicide bombing attacks. In April 2006, Dr Aymen al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda’s second-in-command declared that the Iraqi branch

* This article is based on a forthcoming study.

of his organization (al-Qaeda in the Mesopotamia) alone has carried out 800 suicide bombing operations inside Iraq. This figure covers the period of 28 months only (October 2003-April 2006), and represents the activities of one group operating in Iraq. No reliable statistics are available to indicate the number of suicide attacks carried out by, at least, four other major Iraqi insurgent groups which heavily employ the suicide bombing

The 9/11 destructive attack involved no explosives or bombs, and even the hijacking of the four planes was done without using any kind of weapon

tactic as part of their operational strategy in Iraq. At the same time, an Iraqi Interior Ministry spokesman stated that 500 suicide bombing attacks occurred in Iraq, which is considered a gross underestimation. At the end of 2006, the Iraqi minister of interior stated that 12,000 Iraqi policemen have been killed since April 2003, and it is estimated that nearly half of them were killed by suicide bombing attacks.

By producing this publication we are hoping to contribute in the global effort to deal with the threat of suicide bombing. We believe that no successful or effective counter strategy can be developed without first understanding the enemy's strategy and tactics. This brief study is based on analyzing the record of suicide bombing that took place in different parts of the world during the last decades. Most, if not all, of the content of this study is based on information related to actual cases of suicide bombing and lessons we have learned from examining these cases.

I Some Features of the Suicide Bombing Technique

In many cases, the suicide bombing technique has proved to be smarter than the high-tech Smart Bomb. This probably could be attributed to two unique characteristics of suicide bombing technique as "moving & thinking bomb":

1. Moving Bomb Scenarios

- The attacker drives himself by car or motorcycle, or uses a taxi to reach the target area, but rarely uses the public transportation system.

- The attacker is transported by his "handler" or by a colleague to, or near the site of the planned attack.
- Vehicle-borne bomb travels to the target's location either alone or is escorted by another car to provide protection, guidance, and encouragement to the attacker.

2. Thinking Bomb Scenarios

In most cases, after the operational command of the terrorist group has decided on the target and manner of the attack, the "attacker" is in charge of deciding on a number of important factors contributing to the effectiveness of the attack, including:

- The final selection of the target among a number of pre-selected list of potential targets A, B, C. So the attacker will approach the first priority target. If for any reason the target cannot be attacked successfully (because of high protection or fortification, or other unforeseen reasons) he moves to the second or third priority target.
- The precise timing of the attack (lie in wait rule) or choosing the suitable timing.
- Positioning him/her-self within the target area.
- Postponement of the attack in certain cases or under certain circumstances.

The seriousness of the suicide bomber threat comes from the fact that it is a "human driven bomb" which makes the suicide bomber able to reach and attack targets and places no other tactics can reach easily.

II Suicide Bombing and Attack Technique

Suicide bombing serves as an instrument both for "selective" killing as well as "mass and indiscriminate" killing.

1. Suicide Bombing as a Selective Killing Tactic

During the last 20 years, suicide bombing has emerged as a major technique in "targeted killing" missions which are mostly employed in VIP assassinations. This sort of operation is considered a highly complicated operation, as in most cases, the "targeted person" lives, works, and moves under elaborate security and physical protection. The level of personal protection usually depends on the value and position of the target. Indeed, suicide bombing seems to be employed widely as a means of VIP assassination as the "attacker" will

be able to monitor the “targeted person” and decide on the best timing and the suitable approach of the attack. In some of these cases the planning of the attack, especially vis-à-vis a ‘high value person’, requires the gathering of detailed intelligence about the security environment surrounding the ‘target’ and his ‘behavior profile’ which enable the planners to plan and prepare for the operation. In most cases the attacker needs to depend on the backing of other members of the insurgent group to enable him to penetrate the security and protection circle around the VIP and secure direct access to the ‘target’, as such an operation of “targeted killing” requires for success a “close encounter attack”. The insurgent group will be involved in providing the attacker with his requirements such as fake identity documents and uniforms. It will also decide on the suitable means of the attack (person borne or vehicle borne bomb). Some of these operations could result in high number of casualties of people associated with the

We believe that no successful or effective counter strategy can be developed without first understanding the enemy’s strategy and tactics

‘target’ such as the bodyguards and other officials, or even innocent bystanders. Nevertheless, and from the terrorist point of view, the ‘success’ of the operation will be ultimately judged by the fact whether or not the targeted person has been eliminated.

2. Suicide Bombing as a Mass, Indiscriminate Killing Tactic

The primary aim of all suicide bombing operations is to inflict human loss and not the physical destruction of a structure – (military equipment, building, transportations means etc.) which is always considered a secondary aim. Hence most bombs used in suicide bombing need to be designed to achieve this purpose and planning for this tactic focuses on the fulfillment of the “maximum human casualty” objective. The bombs used in suicide bombing operations usually contain, besides the maximum possible amount of explosives, as much as possible of metal shrapnel which acts as the main projector to inflict maximum injuries and death among the targeted people. For some terrorist groups suicide bombing has become the main tactic to achieve the objective of mass and indiscriminate killing. Indeed, while the person-borne bomb usually contains maximum amount

of small metal shrapnel which can be fitted within the belt, vest, or the bag, the vehicle-borne bomb usually contains gas cylinders and pieces of scrub metal to maximize the impact.


In many cases, terrorist groups strongly link the rate of human casualties produced by each attack to the political and

In many cases, the suicide bombing technique has proved to be smarter than the high-tech Smart Bomb

psychological impact of the operation. The rule for them is that: the higher number of human casualties inflicted in the attack, the better and higher the rate of gain and the impact generated for the group and its interests.

Thus to achieve the objective of mass killing, terrorist groups have developed a number of techniques. One is the adoption of the technique of “simultaneous or short intervals, dual or multiple attacks” that are executed in one location, on a targeted group of people. This technique of “combination attack” is widely used by different terrorist groups especially in the Middle East.

However, the most serious and bloodiest technique of all is what is called the dual or multiple “trap attack” which aims at achieving the highest rate of human casualties. This evil technique is based on the idea of simultaneous/short interval successive attacks linked to each other and targeting the same premises. The timing and the precise location of the attacks is related to the ability of the operation planners to study the site of the intended attack and anticipate and then try to manipulate the crowd (victims) reaction and behavior in the crisis situation after the first attack. “Trap Combination Attack” basically consists of two explosive devices to be detonated. The first, usually, detonates at the “dead end” of a hall, or near one exit of the hall or in a confined place. The first attack creates panic among the people who seek escape by moving away from the site of the explosion; natural instinct will drive people toward the exits of the hall or outside the building. The planners of the attack calculate the logical behavior of the crowd and position the second suicide bombing attack at the point where most of the terrified crowd is likely to move through or gather, mainly the corridors leading out from the site of the first attack or the courtyard outside the premises.



“Trap attacks”, dual or multiple, are usually executed by similar or by combination means. Below we try to explain how suicide bombing technique is used in this sort of attack and when at least one attack is a suicide attack. Such techniques come in the following sequence:

- Two person-borne bombs: The first attacker will detonate his bomb at the ‘dead end’, followed shortly by second attacker who will take position as a ‘trap’.
- Two person-borne bombs, two suicide bombers, with “single control”: The first attacker moves to the ‘dead end,’ his bomb is usually detonated remotely by the second attacker who detonates himself afterwards as a ‘trap’. (Both are suicide attacks).
- A vehicle-borne suicide attack followed by person-borne suicide attack - or the reverse order. (Both suicide attacks)
- A vehicle or person-borne suicide attack followed by second attack by controlled explosive device detonated by wire, timer, or remote control - or the reverse order (one suicide attack).

3. The Various Techniques of Multiple Suicide Attacks

Suicide bombing tactics have been carried out as single or multiple attacks. We can identify the many ways in which double or multiple suicide attacks have been employed:

- 1) At the same time, within the same targeted location (one target – multiple attacks – at same time).
- 2) At the same time, at different locations, attacking targets of the same nature (number of targets of same nature – different locations – at the same time).
- 3) At the same time, but at different locations, targets of different nature which could be a few, or hundreds or even thousands of kilometers apart, in different parts of the city, in different cities, or even different countries (same time – different locations – targets of different nature).
- 4) Frequent and repeated attack at the same “high value” target, at different periods of time (one target – frequent attacks).

III Technique of Vehicle-Borne Bombing

Forms of Vehicle-Borne Bomb:

Technique of dual or multiple suicide car attack

- **Short interval attack at the same point:**
The first attack mostly is intended to open the way for

the main and second attack destroying checkpoints, gates, walls or fences, barriers or fortifications such as concrete blocks, bollards, in or around the target area. It uses the combination of the power generated by the high speed of the vehicle which usually accelerates just before approaching the target and the devastating power of the explosion that follows immediately. The first attack usually targets the external part of the premises and aims at opening access to the building. The second attack follows shortly and capitalizes on the impact of the first and the open access secured, targeting the internal part of the premises. This technique is used widely in attacks targeting fortified and protected premises.

- **Simultaneous attacks on different points at the same site:**
The first and second attacks could be almost simultaneous, targeting different parts of the premises. This technique usually is used to attack large premises or structure, and to generate a psychological impact by demonstrating the insurgent capability to conduct multiple suicide attacks.

IV Explosive Devices

Although assembling or manufacturing a bomb to be used in a suicide attack requires no more than a basic knowledge, the majority of the organized terrorist or insurgent groups who employ the suicide bombing tactic utilize the skill of a specialized bomb maker, who has the expertise to assemble relatively reliable bombs that will be stable and safe in transportation, and will detonate at the precise moment. This is also to avoid detonation failure or premature detonation. Most of the bombs used in suicide operations consist of four, mostly readily available, components:

1. Bomb's Container or Transporter

- **Person-borne bombs:**
Usually the bomb is carried in belt, vest, specially tailored clothes, backpack, suitcase, carrybag, or box.
- **Vehicle-borne bomb:** Usually the bomb is carried in a motorbike, car, van, truck, tanker.
- **Vessel-borne bomb:** Usually the bomb is fitted in a high speed boat, rubber dingy, or sailing boat.
- **Aircraft-borne bomb:**
Glider or powered plane.

Person-Borne Bomb

Explosives capacity: 3-7+ kg

Radius of lethal and moderate impact: 10- 30+ meters

Minimum evacuation distance from the bomb: 60+ meters

Person-borne bombs will have an impact radius of approximately 10-30 meters; Fatality/injuries depend on:

- the amount and quality of the explosives
- amount of shrapnel attached
- position of the attacker(s)
- nature and structure of the surrounding environment whether it is open or semi-open place, as well as the size, shape and layout of the hall or the confined place)

Vehicle-Borne Bomb

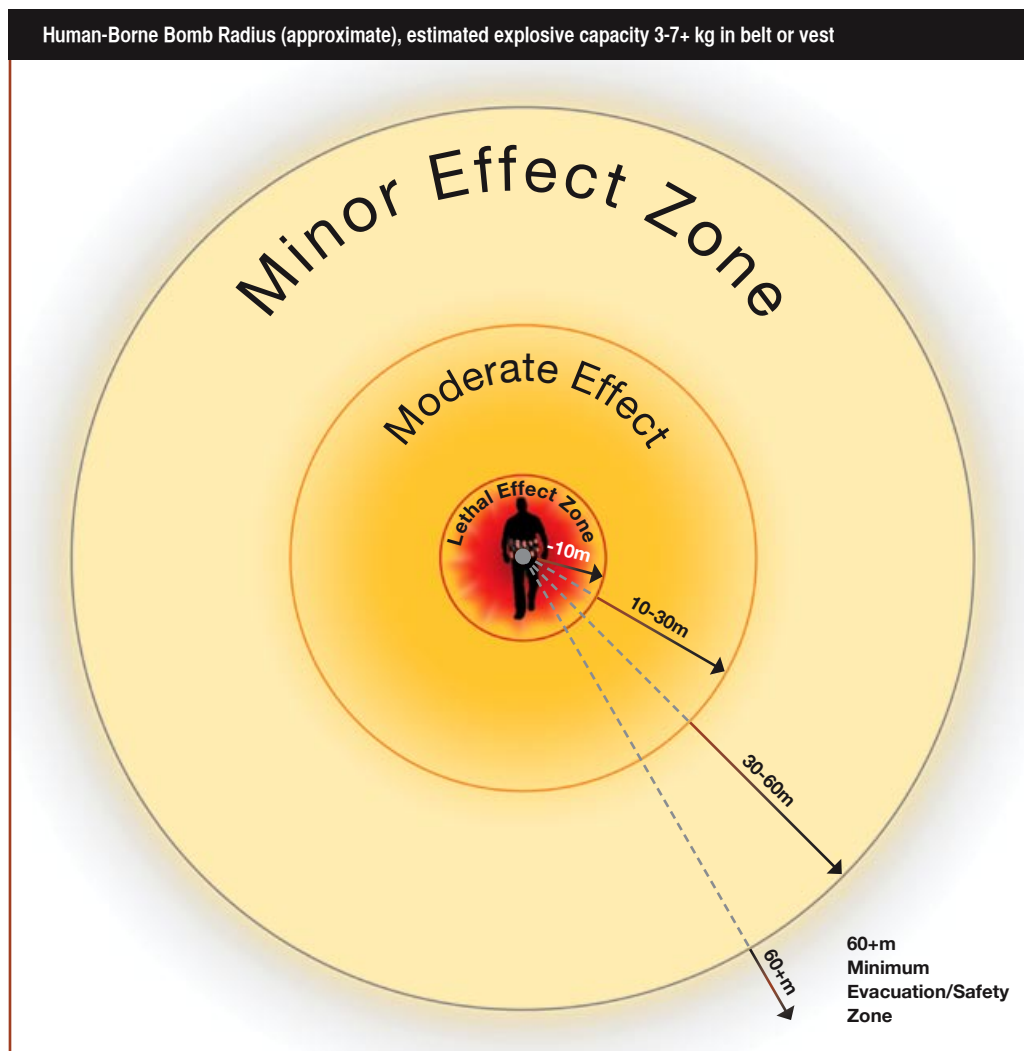
The destructive power of the bomb depends mainly on the amount and the type of explosive, as well as the structure of the target and the nature of the environment surrounding the area of the attacked target. The estimated amount of explosives normally carried by each kind of vehicle is listed below. There is no standard way to provide an accurate measurements as the actual impact of each explosion depend on a number of factors (all figures listed are approximate weight and measurements). Therefore, this information is only a general guideline aimed at helping in evacuation and safety measures:

- Motorbike:
 - Explosives capacity: 10-20 kg
 - Radius of lethal impact: 30- 50+ meters
 - Minimum evacuation distance from the bomb: 100+ meters
- Salon Car (different sizes):
 - Explosives capacity: 200-400 kg
 - Radius of lethal impact: 80+ meters

Minimum evacuation distance from the bomb: 600+ meters

- Small Van:
 - Explosives capacity 1500-2000 kg
 - Radius of lethal impact: 100+ meters
 - Minimum evacuation distance from the bomb: 900+ meters
- Large Van:
 - Explosives capacity: 4500-5000 kg
 - Radius of lethal impact: 250+ meters
 - Minimum evacuation distance from the bomb: 1300+ meters
- Small Truck or Tanker:
 - Explosives capacity: 14000+ kg
 - Radius of lethal impact: 400+ meters
 - Minimum evacuation distance from the bomb: 1500+ meters

Human-Borne Bomb Radius (approximate), estimated explosive capacity 3-7+ kg in belt or vest



- Truck:
 - Explosives capacity: 25000+ kg
 - Radius of lethal impact: 600+ meters
 - Minimum evacuation distance from the bomb: 2000+ meters

2. Explosives Material

This could come in different forms such as home-made explosives, high grade military explosives or the components of military ordnance. It could also come from a variety of other sources including industrial or commercial explosives and agricultural fertilizers.

3. Shrapnel

This is the part responsible for causing maximum human

casualties, in particular in the attacks by person-borne bomb and usually consists of small metal objects like nails, screws, bolts, wire, and steel balls.

4. Switch and Trigger

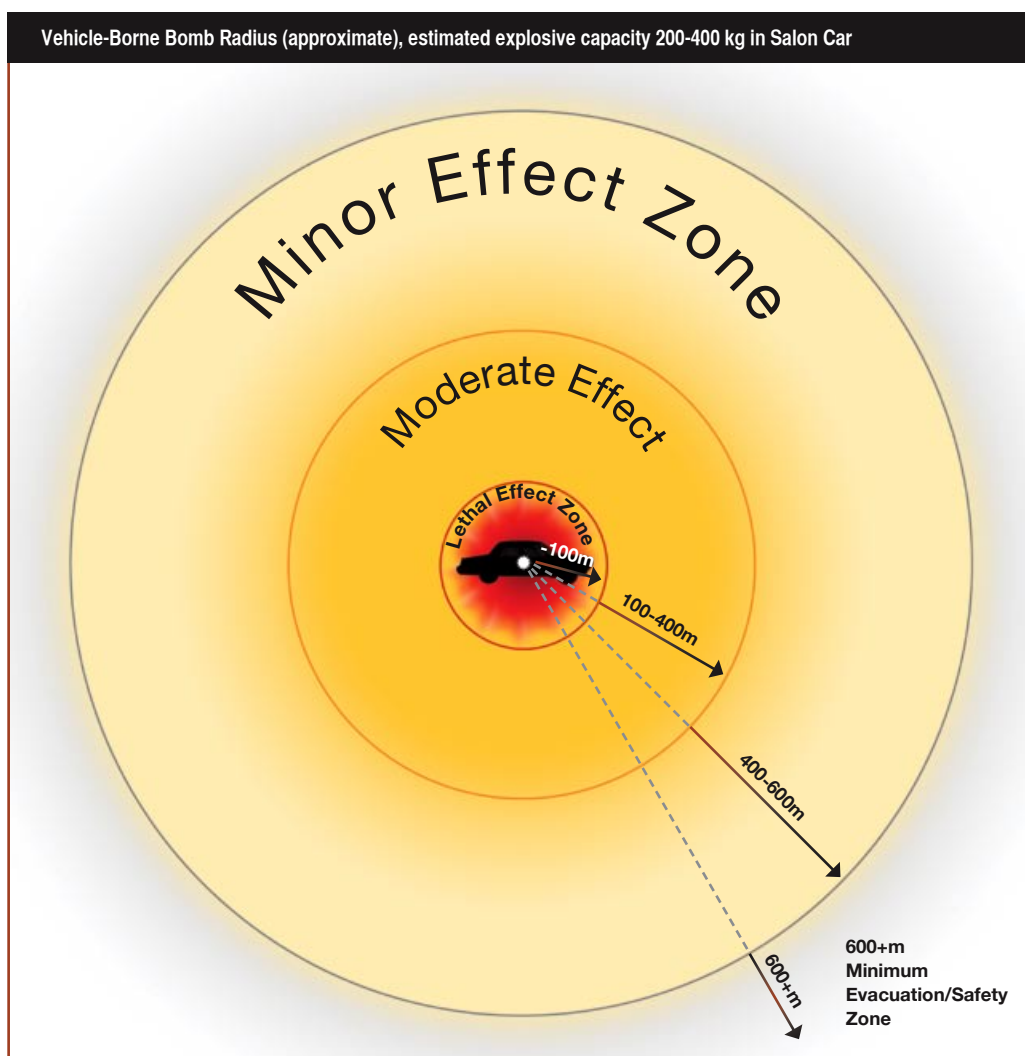
This comes in two main forms: mechanical (non-electronic) mainly constructed in hammer mechanism, or electronic, which is powered by electronic source, usually a small powerful battery cell.

This brief study reveals some of the complexities associated with the task of dealing with the suicide bombing tactic and the formidable challenge faced by the security forces around the world. To be effective, suicide bombing counter strategies need to tackle the different levels of the terrorist group's suicide bombing strategy or tactics. This could start with monitoring

and disrupting terrorist groups' recruitment of suicide bombers, countering those groups' operational techniques of which some are already listed in this brief paper, provide effective protection from the threat of suicide bombing, and enhance security capability to monitor terrorists' access to explosives and basic bomb materials, specifically used in suicide bombing, and other counter measures.

The forthcoming GRC study on the subject of suicide bombing will attempt to deal with most of its aspects, in the hope of contributing to the effort of countering the menace of terrorism.

Mustafa Alani
 Senior Advisor
 Director, Security and Terrorism
 Department
 Gulf Research Center



Iraq: Suicide Bombing as Tactical Means of Asymmetric Warfare*

Nicole Stracke

Iraqi insurgent groups emerged shortly after the US invasion and occupation of Iraq in April 2003, and since then their number has multiplied, their bases have increased and they have extended their operations throughout the country.

The main strategic objective of the Iraqi insurgent movement is to liberate Iraq from foreign occupation. Out of this emerge two other objectives: to force US troops to withdraw from Iraq, and to undermine the post-invasion political arrangements putting pressure on the Iraqi government to resign. Both steps lead to their declared final objective: “the liberation of Iraq from US and its agents.”

To achieve their main strategic objectives Iraqi insurgents adopted political and military tactics. Given that Iraqi insurgents lack the means of sophisticated warfare, these groups use simpler urban warfare tactics to conduct their operations, like sniper activities, kidnapping, ambush, mortars and rocket strikes, improvised explosives, decoy check points, and other tactics. However, one of the most frequently and widely employed tactics by the Iraqi insurgency groups are suicide bombing operations.

Among the groups that are responsible for the majority of the suicide attacks in Iraq are Al-Qaeda group in Iraq (al-Qaeda Organization in Mesopotamia), the Army of Ansar al Sunnah (Sunnah Partisans) and the Islamic Army of Iraq. But by no means was suicide bombing employed by these groups alone, as from time to time suicide bombing operations were also claimed by less known groups.

Given the high number of suicide bombings in Iraq the article examines the methodology and technique of the different

operations. This study is based on analyzing over 550 cases of confirmed suicide bombing operations that took place between March 2003 and December 2006.¹


From our research, we were able to draw several conclusions related to the suicide bombing tactics in Iraq:

- Suicide bombings are high priority within the military structure of a number of organized insurgent groups operating in Iraq.
- Suicide attacks in Iraq appear to be a successful technique as the insurgent groups utilizing this method have developed a flexible approach and responsive, adaptable tactics in their operational planning.
- Suicide attacks on US targets in Iraq (military and civilian) are relatively low in comparison to the number of overall suicide attacks which have occurred in the country since the US invasion.
- The frequency and intensity of suicide attacks are closely related to the political, security and military developments inside Iraq as well as to the changes in US policy toward the Iraqi situation.
- For certain insurgent groups, suicide attacks are a major tool used to initiate and escalate a sectarian civil war in Iraq.
- During the period from March 2003 to February 2007, suicide bombing attacks on soft targets increased, causing mass casualties leading to the conclusion that the overall level violence in Iraq was rising.

The first part of the article will define political objectives and highlight the target policy of suicide bombing operations on US and Iraqi targets. The second and third parts of the article will include an operational analysis stressing the specific techniques used by suicide bombers. The fourth part will

* This article is based on a forthcoming study.

¹ The author would like to thank Noora Mohammed for her research assistance. Both Arabic and English resources, including the archives of Al Sharq Al Awsat, Al Hayat, MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base and news agencies, were used for the study. While comparing the Arabic and the English sources it became evident that sources greatly differ in their description of the suicide attacks, especially on the timing (days) and casualties.



examine why suicide bombing operations are increasingly employed.

The article is based on forthcoming study on suicide bombing operations which will look in depth at each of these aspects and include further sections on the recruitment of suicide bombers as well as measures to counter suicide bombing.

I Political Objectives

Suicide bombing operations started shortly after the US invasion of Iraq. Initially, the insurgency targeted mainly US forces and administration authorities, Coalition forces, and diplomatic institutions such as embassies and international organizations. By the end of 2003 and at the beginning of 2004 during the pre-Constitution period, suicide bombers intensified their operations and strategically hit Iraqi targets, mainly government buildings, members of the Interim Iraqi government and the Iraqi police. In spring 2004, suicide operations started against Shiite sectarian institutions such as mosques and shrines.

During the three years of occupation the suicide bombing operations have focused mainly on seven different targets:

Foreign targets such as:

- US military and administrative structure
- Coalition forces (Italy, Spain, British, Poland)
- International organizations and foreign diplomatic institutions (UN, ICRC, and embassies)

Iraqi targets such as:

- Iraqi government officials and ministries
- Iraqi security forces (police and army)
- Political parties and groups (leadership, party offices)
- Sectarian and religious targets (leadership, mosques)

1. US Military, Coalition Forces and International Organizations

The policy of suicide operations targeting the US military, Coalition forces, international and diplomatic institutions in post-invasion Iraq has been designed to achieve a number of objectives at specific times.

Suicide bombings against the US intended to inflict high casualties among the occupation forces, and undermine their morale. Suicide attacks on American targets and coalition forces started immediately after the US invasion in March 2003 and fit into the declared strategic objectives of insurgent groups in Iraq, to liberate the country from foreign occupation or force a withdrawal of the US troops. At the same time, attacks on US targets intend to weaken the pro-US, post-invasion Iraqi government and prevent its legitimization. The employment of this tactic by different Iraqi insurgent groups also aimed at achieving another objective namely, the isolation of US forces from the Iraqi people, as frequent suicide attacks on American soldiers has limited their freedom of movement and restricted contact with the ordinary Iraqis.

2. Iraqi Government, Political Leadership and Security Forces

The attack on the Iraqi government and political leadership aimed at destabilizing the post-invasion government and hinder the ongoing political development in Iraq. Tailored suicide attacks on specific politicians such as the head of a party, ministers or members of the parliament aimed to intimidate the politicians and force them to resign from their posts, as well as isolating them from the ordinary Iraqi people. Indeed the threat of suicide bombings has forced the leadership to live and work in the relative safety of the Green Zone isolated from its citizens.

In many cases, the time and place of suicide attacks on Iraqi government and security forces is linked to the political developments in Iraq. Suicide bombings on government targets became more frequent and intense in March 2004 before and during the signature of the Iraqi interim constitution, during the elections for a Transitional National Assembly on January 30, 2005, and during the referendum on the final constitution in October 2005. For example, on the day of the election of the Transitional National Assembly, Al-Qaeda and other insurgent groups in Iraq coordinated up to 12 different suicide attacks targeting polling stations throughout Baghdad. By attacking polling stations, Al-Qaeda and other insurgent groups not only expressed disagreement with the entire political progress in Iraq but, at the same time, sought to prevent Iraqis from going to the polling stations.

Frequent suicide bombings on the Iraqi security forces started

early in 2003 and continued heavily in the following years. Attacks on the police were conducted for two reasons. First, since the disbandment of the Iraqi Army, the police was the main force responsible for security and protecting the new government. In attacking the police forces the insurgents were able to undermine the stability of the Iraqi government. Not only was the Iraqi government left without protection, it also was unable to ensure “law and order” on the streets in Iraq, leaving the Iraqi citizens in doubt as to whether or not the Iraqi leadership was capable of effectively controlling and governing the country. From 2003 onwards, suicide bombing operations increasingly targeted police infrastructure. The insurgency intended to systematically hinder the emergence of an effective police force. Instead of relying on the Iraqi police, the governing political parties sought protection from parties’ militias which deepened the security crisis and undermined the credibility of the government as a national government. In 2004 and 2005, it became evident that police forces were widely infiltrated by the different Shia militias prompting insurgency groups to increasingly launch suicide attacks on the police as a means to fight these militias and weaken the Iraqi political leadership.

3. Sectarian and Religious Targets

Suicide attacks on sectarian institutions started in 2003, increased in 2004 and reached a peak during 2005 and 2006. Suicide attacks on Shia targets were intended to punish the Shia leadership and community for their presumed cooperation and alliance with the “occupying powers.” Further suicide attacks which mostly resulted in high rate of human casualties aimed at initiating an internal Iraqi conflict along sectarian-religious lines. Such attacks aim also at disrupting national unity, undermining the national reconciliation efforts, and preventing the establishment of a common Iraqi national identity. Therefore, attacks on sectarian institutions seem to be an effort to prepare the ground for a possible development of a sectarian civil war leading to division of the state into three entities or states – Kurdish, Arab Sunni and Shia.

II Military Tactics

The military and operational tactics in suicide bombing attacks employed by the Iraqi insurgent groups closely related to the fulfillment of their political objectives and were designed to achieve the strategic objectives of these groups. Suicide

bombing as a major tactic used in the Iraqi theater of operation is distinguished by a number of characteristics: The unusually high rate of attacks, which can be considered as the highest recorded in any conflict, the geographical spread of such operations which encompass the entire country, the wide variety and diversity of targets and the multiplicity of attacks; and finally, the large number of groups involved. In the second part, we attempt to identify the main features associated with the suicide bombing activities in the Iraqi conflict.

1. Operations against US Targets, and Coalition Forces

The main targets of suicide operations against US and the Coalition forces fall into five main categories:

- Military bases, military headquarters
- The Green Zone (The high security zone)
- Facilities used by security contractors
- Checkpoints
- Patrols

Given the overall number of suicide operations from 2003 to 2006 in Iraq, suicide attacks against US and coalition targets are comparatively low. The insurgency groups would rather target US and Coalition forces from a distance using sniper brigades and improvised explosives devices. This is for several reasons: for the insurgent groups, the US and Coalition authorities and forces are ‘politically high value’ targets, but at the same time such targets are classified as ‘hard’ targets which require extra effort to deal with. These targets are highly protected making it generally difficult for insurgent groups to approach the targets, gather information, plan and finally conduct a successful suicide operation. Second, the US forces have significantly reduced the presence of US patrols in the streets and replaced them with Iraqi personnel making it more likely that insurgent attacks would hit the local Iraqi forces rather than US soldiers. Third, to counter suicide attacks, the US forces have implemented the policy of shooting without warning when suspected individual or vehicles approach the troops thus lowering the chance of suicide bombers actually reaching their target.

Due to the high protection, any successful suicide attacks on US and Coalition targets such as army bases, headquarters, and checkpoints are of enormous value for insurgent groups. Successful attacks on such hard targets underline the

insurgents' perception of the weakness and vulnerability of the US and its partners; it improves and boosts the image of insurgent groups among the militants and the public and, at the same time, serves as an important tool to attract new recruits for the insurgency. Accordingly, attacks on US army bases, checkpoints, and convoys remain high on the target list of the insurgents.

Due to the high security zones around hard targets, suicide bombers have only limited options available in how they approach these targets. In most attacks, an individual or a vehicle would approach or drive to the checkpoints or patrols, or crash into convoys or bases before detonating explosives. In the attack on the headquarters of the US-led coalition in May 2004, the suicide bombers used a large truck which enabled the attacker to carry a bigger amount of explosives (250-500kg) and demolish the walls of the compound before detonating the bomb to increase the number of casualties.

Many suicide operations target the area close to the Green Zone in which government buildings are located. Using trucks, minivans, cars, or sometimes just on foot, the suicide bombers attempt to enter the Green Zone or detonate explosives at the main entrance. Many attacks on the Green Zone are multiple-coordinated operations ensuring a higher success rate, including higher casualties. In some cases, suicide bombers were actually able to enter the highly guarded parts of the Green Zone as in October 2004 when two suicide bombers detonated their backpacks in two cafés inside the zone.

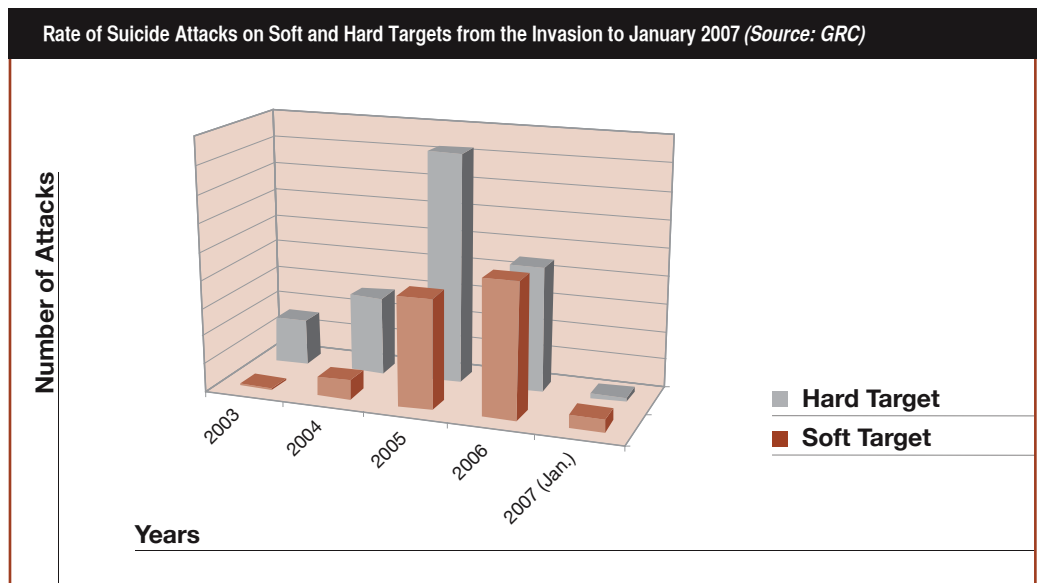
Suicide bombing operations are often carried out when other tactics are likely to fail as during one case in December 2004. Here, insurgents were able to infiltrate US forces' military base and conduct an attack from within the base. An example: a suicide bomber detonated his explosives during lunchtime in a restaurant within the US military base in the city of Mosul. It was found out later that the suicide bomber was working for a period of two months in the military base's

restaurant. This implies two possibilities: first, the insurgents had recruited the attacker, then enabled him to obtain a job inside the US military base and was able to help him bypass all security vetting required for such employment with the intention of using him in a suicide operation once he is employed. Another possibility is that the insurgency group had somebody linked to them inside the military base who recruits potential candidates for suicide missions. In any case, to conduct an operation the attacker depends on a network and he would not have been able to conduct this operation by his own. The success of the operation demonstrated that the US lacked the means to detect the infiltration and prevent the bomber.

Successful attacks within army bases and the Green Zone which are regarded as "safe zones" have an enormous psychological impact on the US personnel and other coalition forces. Attacks in safe or secure zones prove that security measures are lax or not effective against the determination of the insurgent groups. In fact, they imply that there is not a place in Iraq where US personnel can be safe from the insurgents. The recurrence of such incidents are leading to a high level of anxiety among US soldiers serving in Iraq and adding a further stress factor that undermines the morale of the forces.

2. Linking US Policy and Suicide Bombings Operations

The activities of Iraqi insurgent groups have always been related to the internal and external political environment,



as the aim of the violence employed by these groups is to influence political developments and impact public opinion. One of the visible patterns was the increasing number of suicide operations before and during American VIP visits to Iraq. For example, when former US defense minister Donald Rumsfeld visited Iraq in April 2005, there were coordinated multiple suicide attacks on an official convoy in front of the interior ministry. In its statement, the responsible insurgency group linked its attack directly to the visit of the former US defense minister.

During and after the last US Congress elections in November 2006, there has been a rise in suicide operations throughout Iraq increasingly targeting the police as well as soft targets such as weddings, markets, funerals and cafes causing hundreds of casualties within a week.

Since the announcement of the new Bush strategy in Iraq in January 2007 and the decision of the US administration to employ 30,000 additional US troops in the country, the suicide bombings on soft targets have increased dramatically as demonstrated during a suicide truck bomb explosion next to a market in Baghdad on February 2, 2007 that left over 120 people dead.

With those attacks the Iraqi insurgency demonstrated that the Iraqi government, the police and the US are unable to protect themselves or the Iraqi people. At the same time, the attacks intended to project the image to the American people

that the US under the current deteriorating circumstances has increasing difficulties to control the situation in Iraq. The insurgent groups also wanted to demonstrate that the presence of the US forces in Iraq is the cause for the present instability. Insurgents wanted to convey that the US is part of the problem, and not of the solution. Their demand was that rather than increasing the number of troops and continuing the occupation in Iraq, the US government would do better to withdraw its army soon as possible.

3. Operations against Iraqi Targets

Targets for suicide attacks can be divided into two categories: government, and non-government targets.

Government Targets

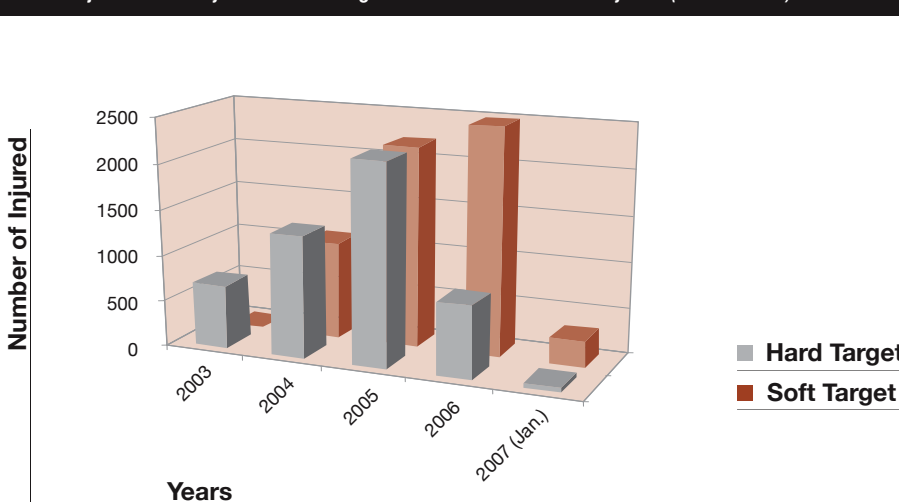
Iraqi government targets are mainly classified as hard targets and include the following:

- Iraqi government officials and politicians
- Government offices
- Iraqi police and security forces

Attacks targeting Iraqi government officials and politicians, as well as government's buildings will be analyzed in the third part of this study. In this part, we will focus on the employment of the suicide bombing tactic against the Iraqi police by insurgents, as this tactic is widely used and constitutes a high percentage of the overall number of suicide bombing operations that have taken place since the start of the insurgent activities.

Suicide attacks on Iraqi police materialized in a number of forms, designed practically to target and hit every level of police activity. It was noticeable that these attacks were characterized by two factors: the first is consistency and the repeatability, and the second is the wide geographical spread of these attacks. Indeed attacks on police targets by suicide bombers have become highly

Rate of Injured caused by Suicide Bombings from the Invasion to January 2007 (Source: GRC)



frequent and cover almost every part of the country. The main targets in this category are:

- Police recruitment centers
- Police patrols and checkpoints
- Police stations
- Police headquarters, and command and control centers
- Senior police officers (assassination)

These targets were attacked by two main types of suicide bombers – Individual suicide bombers, and suicide car bombers.

Depending on the protection level of the target, the suicide bomber would use cars or trucks and crash into checkpoints, police stations, and police headquarters or set off explosions close to the entrance. In other cases, suicide bombers would walk into the police station or the checkpoints and detonate their belts or vests either at the entrance while being checked, or inside the station.

Many of the suicide attack operations were conducted by vehicles that would drive into the line-up of recruits outside or inside recruitment offices. Or an individual or group of suicide bombers would walk among the gathering recruits and detonate an explosive belt or vest. In most cases, and because of the large number of people gathering in these offices at specific times, the casualties of such attacks were very high reaching on average about 30 dead and 80 injured.

While attacks on the police can generally be described as attacking “hard targets,” the Iraqi insurgency since 2005 has modified the tactics choosing to strike against the police in a naturally “soft target environment” such as in public transport like buses carrying officers, in restaurants where police officers regularly have lunch or breakfast, at banks where police officers receive their monthly salary or at funerals where police officers

are mourning the death of a colleague killed by insurgents days before. Attacks on banks, restaurants and funerals became more frequent during 2005 and 2006 indicating the readiness of the insurgents to cause civilian mass casualties with the intention of increasing the violence level. In particular the Al Qaeda group in Iraq claimed responsibility for attacks conducted in such soft target environments.

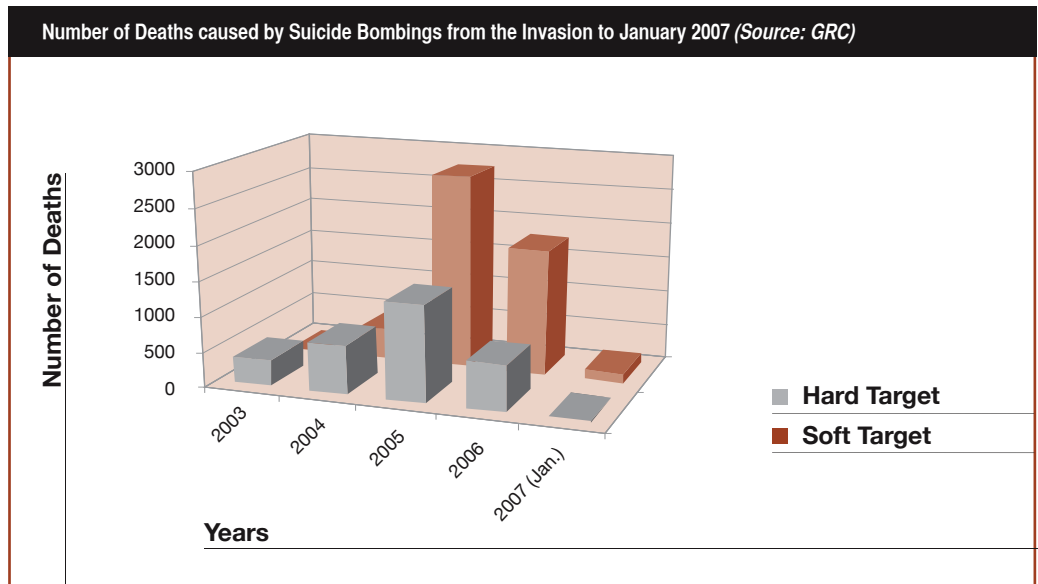
Non-government Targets

Operations against Sectarian Institutions:

Sectarian institutions are mainly classified as soft targets and include the following:

- Shiite mosques/hussenya
- Holy shrines
- Religious festivals
- Pilgrim routes
- Markets, in Shiite areas
- Labor gathering points
- Means of transportations (as buses, bus stations, etc.)

Some of the suicide bombings on sectarian institutions follow a logical pattern that enables analysts to predict the timing and location of those attacks. Between 2003 and 2006, the rate of suicide attacks against religious targets greatly increased, especially during the first days of Ramadan, Eid, and during the Shia holy commemoration such as the festival of Ashura.



The geographical location of the attacks varies. While mosques all over the country have been subject of attacks throughout the year, it is during pilgrimage time, Ramadan, Eid and Ashura that other targets like pilgrim routes and places to and around the holy shrines in Karbala, Najaf, Kahdumia, and Samarra are attacked as well as the nearby security checkpoints. The circle of violence against the Shias started early in March 2, 2004, which was the first day of Ashura festival that commemorates the martyrdom of Husayn Ibn Ali in Karbala. About 106 people were killed and 233 injured in the violence on that day. Since then, suicide operations on sectarian institutions have become more common especially targeting open markets in Shia areas and mosques contributing to the increasing overall death toll caused by suicide attacks on soft targets.

Mosques are usually hit during daily prayer time and in particular on Fridays, the holiest day in the Muslim week. Suicide attacks on mosques seem to follow four patterns. In the first case, the suicide bomber car waits outside for the worshippers to finish their prayers and detonates the explosives as the people start to leave. In most cases, the suicide bombers use emergency vehicles such as ambulances to carry a higher amount of explosives to ensure higher casualties. In one case, the suicide bomber

During and after the last US Congress elections in November 2006, there has been a rise in suicide operations throughout Iraq increasingly targeting the police as well as soft targets such as weddings, markets, funerals and cafes causing hundreds of casualties within a week

detonated his car next to a fuel tanker parked outside the mosque. In the second case, the suicide bomber crashes his car into the mosque entrance. And in a third case, the suicide bomber detonates his explosive inside the mosque as the worshippers are praying.

While most of the above mentioned suicide operations belong to “standard operations” and don’t require specific planning and long preparation there are various case studies that demonstrate the ability of insurgency groups to gather intelligence, coordinate attacks and apply highly sophisticated tactics.

III Specific Tactics of Suicide Bombing Operations

1. Infiltration - The Enemy from Within

There is evidence about cases where insurgency groups have been able to recruit suicide bombers from within the police force. For example, on June 11, 2005, a former Iraqi police commander detonated his explosives in a failed bid to assassinate the leader of the anti-insurgent “Wolf Brigade”. As it turned out later, the bomber had served earlier as commander in the same Police brigade.


We found other cases in which the suicide bomber had detailed and inside information about the target indicating that there had been considerable planning and preparation for the

Mosques are usually hit during daily prayer time and in particular on Fridays, the holiest day in the Muslim week

operation which also seemed to be supported by a person who provided the insurgents with information from within.

A first example is of an attack on a police compound in Tikrit on February 24, 2005 where the suicide bomber dressed as a police officer with fake identification detonated his car inside the gates of the main police compound, at the time of morning shift. Another similar case occurred on January 9, 2006 when two suicide bombers detonated their explosives during the national police day celebration at the Interior Ministry compound in Baghdad. This celebration was attended by high ranking officials such as the US Ambassador, Iraqi Interior Minister, and Defense Minister. Both suicide bombers disguised themselves as senior police officers. Both bombers obtained security passes that allowed them to pass the strict security checking procedures employed by the ministry and passed a number of checkpoints that would have allowed them access to the Interior Ministry building.

A third example is of an attack on December 6, 2006 when two suicide bombers detonated their explosive belts at the Baghdad Police Academy in a coordinated attack. The first bomber detonated his explosives near a group of students outside a classroom. The second detonated his device near a bunker where students and police fled for safety. In this case



the bomber had detailed knowledge about the design of the building and was able to calculate how the students would react and where they would seek refuge.

Apart from such operations where suicide bombers must have had detailed information about the target and the surrounding environment, the operations also vary in their tactics and have become more sophisticated and efficient with time.

2. Assassination

Suicide bombing operations are extensively used as a tactic to achieve the objective of assassination of VIPs. Such operations mainly target officials' convoys, offices, and homes of the officials.

- Assassination attempts on convoys seem to employ two methods. In the first scenario, the suicide bomber is waiting with his car packed with explosives outside the government offices until the VIP convoy arrives or leaves and then detonates his explosives. In other cases, an individual suicide bomber waits for the targeted person to emerge from his office or home and detonates his explosive belt. The waiting-car tactic was used on May 17, 2004 during the successful assassination of Ezzadin Salim, the president of the Transitional Council, when a suicide bomber waited for his convoy near the entrance to headquarters of the Coalition forces that is located close to the checkpoint leading to the Green Zone. This tactic requires less preparation as the bomber does not have to know the route of the convoy, but only needs to be informed about the departure or arrival time of the convoy.

In the second scenario, the suicide bomber trails the convoy, ramming into it at a certain moment, most likely when the VIP's car slows down near checkpoints or crossroads. Such a case occurred in June 2005 when a suicide car rammed the convoy of the security chief of Halabja. This tactic requires more preparation than the first as the bomber needs to know the movement of the target and the convoy's route.

- Another tactic used is the assassination of VIPs in their government offices. Such a case occurred on March 20, 2005. That day, an individual suicide bomber entered the Mosul police headquarters building using fake identification

papers and detonated his explosives in the office of the head of the city's anti-corruption department, Walid Kashmoula who was also a close relative of the Mosul governor. Hence the assassination of Kashmoula was also a direct warning to the local government.

- In many cases the suicide bomber detonates the cars outside the home of the targeted person or when the targeted VIP is leaving or entering the convoy at his doorstep, as happened on June 22, 2005 when a suicide car detonated near a convoy outside the home of the Deputy Interior Minister, Major General Hussein Kamal.

In other cases, suicide bombers drive their cars directly into the VIP's house/homes and detonate their bombs, such as during an attack on January 30, 2005 when a suicide bomber drove his car into the house of the Iraqi Justice Minister. However, the success rate of VIP assassinations in their houses is rather low. VIP homes are highly protected and in many cases the attackers are able to kill some of the guards and damage the building, but are unable to reach the targeted person. For that reason we can assume that the objective of the attacker is not always to kill the VIP but probably to send a clear warning and undermine the sense of security of the person and his family.

To increase the success rate and enhance the psychological impact of assassination tactics, the insurgency groups now organize multiple attacks on VIP targets. On May 23, 2005 two suicide car bombs exploded near the home of Hassan Baktash, a community leader in the city of Tall Afar, a Shiite with close ties to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The explosion occurred during a tribal gathering at the home of Baktash during a party held to celebrate his survival of a previous assassination attempt. The two bombs exploded within minutes of each other. The first attacker drove directly into Baktash's home.

- Assassinations at mosques are not only directed against government officials but also against religious leadership and politicians. Suicide assassinations at mosques are not frequent. However, one important example is the assassination of Baqir al-Hakim on August 29, 2003 when a suicide bomber detonated an ambulance packed with explosives close to the exit of Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, killing 126 people and injuring 300. The time and target

of the bombing was carefully calculated. The planners behind this attack did not only know that al-Hakim was in the mosque at that time, they were also aware of which of the mosque's many exits he was likely to use. They also calculated that an attack during the Friday prayers would cause the highest number of casualties. The insurgents calculated that such mass killing would have a higher psychological impact on the Iraqis, and would most likely result in sectarian riots, increase the violence that is threatening the overall stability in Iraq, and destabilize the current government.

3. Ambush Tactics

Suicide ambush tactics are mainly used by suicide bombers in order to target police forces. Ambush tactics promise a high success rate for attackers. Usually the police are lured to a certain location, a place which offers no protection, and are caught by surprise by the suicide bomb attack.

Two cases can serve as a general example of how suicide bombers are conducting such suicide ambush operations. The operations are divided in two stages. The first stage represents the preparation phase. Here the suicide bomber with support from his colleagues or without any help, stages a fake or decoy incident (small explosion, car accident, medical emergency, car fire etc.) to attract the police attention. Phase two is the actual suicide attack operation which takes place as soon as the police arrive at the site of the faked incident. An example

Due to the high security zones around hard targets, suicide bombers have only limited options available in how they approach these targets

of such a tactic was an attack that occurred on April 29, 2005 when a roadside bomb detonated in Mada'en in the south of Iraq. The suicide bomber waited until the police arrived at the scene of the explosion to investigate, then the attacker drove his car into the crowd of policemen. A similar case followed on July 17, 2005 when a suicide bomber first dropped two dead bodies in the middle of the road, then waited for the police to arrive and investigate. At the right moment, after the arrival of the policemen, the suicide bomber attacked the gathering of policemen and detonated his explosive-packed vehicle killing the policemen.

IV Suicide Bombing Operations: Practical, Specialized and Flexible

Over the last three years, the Iraqi insurgency has increasingly adopted suicide operation tactics implying that from the point of view of the insurgents these tactics have been effective. Four key elements are crucial to suicide operations: Practicability, Psychology, Specialization and Flexibility.

1. Practicability

Cost- Benefit Analyses

Suicide operations are not costly. Any operation is based on intelligence gathering, the training and preparations of the suicide bomber, and the conduct of the operation itself. But the explosives used during such operations are cheap and easy to obtain, and the operation itself is not a high risk mission as the suicide bomber is unlikely to survive the detonation. In some cases, where the planners are not certain whether or not the suicide bomber would carry through his operation and detonate himself, the bomber is accompanied by a second person who carries a remote to detonate the explosives.

Availability of Volunteers

Suicide bombers are easily available in Iraq. It is believed that there is a waiting list for recruits who are willing to take part in the holy jihad and ready to die during an istishad by volunteering for a suicide mission. The unusually high rate of suicide bombings in Iraq since the invasion and occupation of the country indicate the unusually high rate of volunteers enlisted for such acts.

2. Psychological Impact

Suicide bombings have an enormous psychological impact on the Iraqi public, government, and the coalition forces and administration. Suicide bombing can occur almost anywhere, in public and private places, in streets, banks, at weddings, funerals, festivals, in open markets, shopping malls, and on transport vehicles. Indeed, the list of targets that were attacked over the past three years show that suicide operation planners in Iraq do not have any moral or political limitations or restrictions. For example, suicide attacks on funerals prove the calculated logic behind such operations. The insurgents would kill police officers or politicians, and then find out the time and the location of the funeral and

send a suicide bomber to attack the mourning colleagues, relatives and friends.

The fact that suicide bombings can occur almost anytime and anywhere makes it difficult for security forces to implement effective counter-measures to prevent the bombers.

However, some suicide bombing operations have been successfully prevented at a certain time or location such as in February 2005 during the religious festival of Ashura. At this time, the government imposed a strict ban on all vehicular movement and declared curfews in certain parts of the city. The initiative proved to be successful temporarily, but could not prevent the escalation of violence after the ban and the curfew were lifted. In some cases, security forces insist on body searches close to the checkpoints.

3. Specialization

Setting up of Specialized Command

As for specialization, the significance of the suicide bombing tactic within the overall strategy of the insurgent groups operating in Iraq is reflected in the fact that some of the groups operating in Iraq have established a special command solely to direct and conduct suicide operations. The Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda, which is responsible for the majority of suicide attacks in Iraq, announced in June 2005 the establishment of the Al-Bara' bin Malek as a specialized unit responsible for the conduct of suicide bombing operations. Such specialized command has the duty to deal exclusively with the issue of recruitment, planning, operational and psychological training, which is considered a precondition for any successful suicide bomber mission.

4. Flexibility

Flexibility in Planning and Conduct of the Operations

Suicide bombers are “interacting bombs.” They are able to calculate the exact timing of their attack and understand the geography of the target area and react according to the unforeseen changes in the circumstances. In that respect, suicide operations can be responsive and tailored to the actual ‘target’s environment’. At the same time, suicide bombers are carrying out successful operations where other tactics are likely to fail. Infiltrating the police or the army and organizing attacks from within is a unique

technique and only successful because of the use of suicide bombers.

Operations can also cover selected targets as demonstrated in VIP assassinations or they can cause high number of deaths as seen during the various attacks on open markets, weddings or mosques. Special techniques, including single, double and multiple bombings, are designed to inflict mass casualties and are aimed at as many different targets as possible:

In one incident of a single bombing, a suicide bomber boarded a minibus carrying policemen, students and workers heading to police academy and detonated his device as the bus passed a police patrol outside the oil ministry.

A double bombing was conducted on July 2, 2005 when a suicide bomber detonated his explosive belt among a crowd

The fact that al-Qaeda was able within 24 hours to massively retaliate and successfully conduct these operations with short term preparation proved the strength and capability of the group and underlined its high efficiency

of civilians and policemen who had gathered at the scene of another suicide bombing, perpetrated 10 minutes earlier at a police checkpoint in Hillah. While the first suicide bomber attacked the police at the checkpoint and inflicted casualties, drawing more policemen and people driven by curiosity to the scene of the attack, the second bomber who was waiting to move, detonated his bomb among the gathering crowd at the same spot inflicting more casualties among policemen and civilians.

There are several cases of multiple bombings inflicting mass casualties. Suicide bombers hit targets of same or similar nature with multiple suicide bombings on the same day at different geographic locations throughout the country. These operations are usually carried out at the beginning of religious occasions like Ramadan, Eid. Sometimes, they are carried out on occasions of political relevance such as at polling stations during election days. One example is when on the day of the election of the Transitional National Assembly, al-Qaeda and other insurgent groups in Iraq coordinated up to 12 different suicide attacks targeting polling stations throughout

Baghdad. Another example offers a multiple bombing in Basra on April 21, 2004, when five suicide bomb cars carried out attacks, three targeting the police station and two, the police academy. British officials blamed “insurgents who are trying to disrupt the [June 30] handover of sovereignty to the Iraqi people.”

The ‘Practicability, Specialization and Flexibility’ of suicide operations increases the instant retaliation capacity of insurgents, thus making suicide attacks one of the strongest tactics used by the insurgency groups to readdress the balance and level the score.

Retaliation

Retaliation is directly linked to counter terrorism operations conducted by the US or Iraqi forces against the insurgency groups. The retaliation follows generally within a very short time, between 12 and 36 hours after the counter terrorism operation, and is usually directed against soft and hard targets alike.

One example of using suicide bombing as a means of retaliation is an incident associated with the Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda that happened on September 14, 2005. That day, al-Qaeda conducted seven coordinated suicide bombing attacks on targets in Baghdad as retaliation against the US-Iraqi operations against al-Qaeda cells in Tall Afar. A day before (on September 13, 2005) US and Iraqi forces allegedly killed 150 “suspected terrorists” and arrested around 450. It was claimed that many Arabs volunteers and high level commanders were among the casualties. The retaliatory attacks were conducted on soft targets in mainly Shiite areas such as open markets, labor gathering points, as well as on hard targets such as the police checkpoint outside the Interior Ministry, and police patrols.

One objective of this tactic of instant and massive retaliation is to make any counter insurgency operation conducted by the US or Iraqi forces unpopular as ordinary civilians could end up paying a high price when the insurgents retaliate. The fact that al-Qaeda was able within 24 hours to massively retaliate and successfully conduct these operations with short term preparation proved the strength and capability of the group and underlined its high efficiency. Evidently, the al-Qaeda group in Iraq is not only able to get recruits, willing and trained, to conduct suicide attacks but it also has adequate

planners and organizers available to coordinate and execute these operations.

Conclusion

The information collected during the analysis of the suicide operations in Iraq between the years 2003 and 2006 gives some indication about the general trend of suicide operations in the country. During 2003 and until 2006, the operations have been increasingly directed against civilian and sectarian institutions causing high casualties and inciting sectarian conflict. The growing number of insurgents is accompanied by an increase in suicide bombing operations that, over the last two years, have become more sophisticated and coordinated. That is reflected in the different tactics used, like in the application of multiple attacks that have an overall higher success rate and cause higher casualties and deeper psychological and political impact.

The fact that insurgency groups such as al-Qaeda have set up a specialized command dealing specially with suicide bombing

The main strategic objective of the Iraqi insurgent movement is to liberate Iraq from foreign occupation. Out of this emerge two other objectives: to force US troops to withdraw from Iraq, and to undermine the post-invasion political arrangements putting pressure on the Iraqi government to resign

is resulting in a higher success rate in general recruitment and the preparation of the suicide bombers.

Another trend is the focus on recruiting women as suicide bombers. The participation of female suicide bombers in Iraq is low. To attract women for suicide missions, various fatwas have been publicized by some religious scholars asking and supporting women to be part of the global jihad and saying that a woman has the duty to raise her children as a mujahid or martyr, or even be involved in suicide missions to serve the interest of the Islamic nation the “umma”.

Nicole Stracke

Researcher in the Security and Terrorism Department at the Gulf Research Center



Suicide Bombings: The Case in Chechnya

Faryal Leghari

The focus of this paper will be on the suicide bombings in Chechnya. It is important to look at the emergence of this phenomenon in Chechnya in its proper perspective. The case of Chechnya is that of a nationalist struggle that acquired religious overtones in the course of the two major conflicts that ensued after the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991. Multiple causes including historical, structural and strategic factors contributed to the build up of an implosive crisis after the break up of the Soviet Union. The Chechen people, known for their exemplary courage and warrior spirit, fiercely guarded their independence and resisted all attempts at subjugation. Islam is not only an integral element of their distinct Caucasian identity but also unified them. They overcame their internal divisions and blood feuds to stand united against Russian intervention with its accompanying 'systematic policy of destruction.'¹ 'Islam became a tool in intra Chechen struggles rather than the legitimating ideology of Chechen secessionism. Indeed Islamic universalism... was anti ethical to the Chechen state-building endeavors.'²

The struggle for independence from Russia soon transformed into a serious ideological struggle. The alleged brutalities and human rights violations that have been part of a systematic attempt by Russia to suppress the centuries-old Chechen fight for freedom resulted in an implosion within the republic. The Chechens are a people with a fiercely independent ethnic tribal background. Vengeance is part of their creed, and to date they have not been able to forget or forgive Russia for Stalin's genocidal deportations in 1944. A distinctive feature of the Chechen society is that even warring tribal factions put their differences aside and join hands to fight foreign invaders. For the majority of the Chechens, Russia embodies the autocratic and oppressive invader who has for centuries suppressed a people, their culture and freedom to practice their religion.

Alienated by a lack of moral or material support in their struggle against a far superior Russia, the Chechens tried to turn to the Muslim world for political, moral and financial aid. Inadvertently, the international community's reluctance to pressure Russia to change its policies in Chechnya and mediate a negotiated settlement created a vacuum that was to be filled by some outside extremist organizations. The Russians were quick to link the Chechen struggle for independence with al-Qaeda and similar organizations with alleged terrorist links that advocated the creation of a broader Islamic state in Northern Caucasus. The presence of Arab or Islamic Mujahideen like Khattab and Abu al Walid among others lends some credence to that claim. However, these men and other jihadists believe in the Islamic concept of universal jihad. Any financial aid given unofficially at the state level to the separatist Chechen governments of Dzhokhar Dudayev or Aslan Maskhadov (the latter's government was recognized by Moscow) cannot, be said to have aided suicide terrorist activities in Chechnya. There is simply no evidence to link the two as the propaganda campaign launched by Moscow suggests.

When we analyze why the Chechen insurgents adopted suicide bombings as a strategy to fight the Russian federation, we can identify or pinpoint one outstanding element. This is the extent of the despondency, which led an entire people to take up arms and support a militant struggle at considerable cost. It also bears the hallmark of a society driven over the edge of a precipice, where even women are actively engaged in the struggle against a state. Several theories propounded in the media and propagated by the Russian government have attributed this phenomena and the recruitment of female bombers as part of the "brain washing" in radical camps set up by the Chechen resistance which are funded by Arab foreign mujahideen. However this does not suffice as an explanation for the motivation of suicide bombers. For that, one has to delve deeper to understand the depths of despondency that incites them.

¹ Muhammad Iqbal Khan, *The Muslims of Chechnya: Struggle for Independence* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, Joseph A. Ball Ltd, 1995), p.6.

² Richard Sakwa, 'Chechnya: A Just War Fought Unjustly?' in *Contextualizing Secession: Normative Studies in Comparative Perspective*, eds. Bruno Coppieters & Richard Sakwa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 176.

Chechnya's protracted guerrilla war attracted militants from the Middle East with possible links to al-Qaeda. Though the exact nature and extent of the relationship between some groups, mainly Basaev-led Chechen resistance and other international Islamic militants network remains unverified, it has been used by Russia to portray all Chechen resistance groups as 'terrorists' with links to international Islamic *Jihadist* groups and justify the war and brutalities as part of the war on terror undertaken by the United States after September 11, 2001. While acknowledging that links between al-Qaeda and the Chechen conflict do exist, it is important to understand that 'they are not as central as the Kremlin propaganda maintains.'³ The appearance of the Islamist forces and their increased influence among Chechen insurgents could be directly attributed to the Russian military intervention of 1994-96 that drew international Islamists to fight in Chechnya and create a base, recruiting and training volunteers and providing financial help. 'At the time they did not play a leading role in fighting but the aim was in radicalizing much of the Chechen armed resistance and turning it into an Islamist and extremist direction.'⁴

An increasing number of operations now undertaken by some of the more radical of the Chechen insurgents have strengthened the perception that they are terrorists. The point is that women or young men recruited to undertake these suicide missions independently have not just been brainwashed; they are resorting to these desperate acts in the absence of another way of fighting back.⁵

Whether it is Palestine or Chechnya, when an oppressed people are subjected to inhuman treatment over a long period of time there is a psychological shift in perceptions. The desire to take vengeance in any way is so deep that they are ready to commit even their lives in the process. This becomes a divine mission in the light of *jihad* and *Istishad* (martyrdom). Numerous incidents of terrorist acts continue to the present day, however some of the more horrendous ones like the Moscow Theater and the Beslan school siege remain imprinted in the memory and also raise serious questions as to the way the Russian government dealt with and callously mishandled the incidents.

Moscow's policies have resulted in violence, corruption, criminality and terrorism in the north Caucasus. The general consensus among analysts and observers is that the Russian military engaged in a grave breach of a number of international commitments. The Russian government's total disregard for human rights in Chechnya is exemplified in President Putin often denying any responsibility for deaths of innocent civilians in Grozny, shifting the blame on rival Chechen gangs and as part of the course of war itself.⁶

Islam continues to exert a strong influence and has increasingly assumed a far greater significance than its initial role as an ideology and integral part of the national identity. Multiple causes contributed to the radicalization and adoption of extreme actions during the intra war period and later. The radicalization of Islam in Chechnya was exacerbated by the policies adopted by the Russian government in dealing with the issue of Chechen secessionism. The repercussions of these policies instead of curbing the resistance only succeeded in triggering the extremist hard-line factions within. Moscow's effort to include Chechnya as an essential part of the global war on terror was only meant to justify its own policies and not bring about a political solution.

It is important to understand the presence of Arab mujahideen among the Chechen resistance as part of transnational jihadist movement. Any conflict involving Muslims whether it was in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, Palestine, Kashmir, Somalia or Chechnya included such men who took part in jihad according to the Islamic tradition whereby in case Muslims were attacked it became obligatory for other Muslims to defend them against that attack.⁷

The Chechen insurgents were highly successful in drawing attention to their cause which was a closed case for the world community, and one that Russia had brutally suppressed and ostracized by linking it to al-Qaeda. The most effective strategy to draw public attention and deliver their message to Russia and the world at large was the use of suicide bombers. The Chechen war was thus taken to the heart of Russia itself, to the capital city of Moscow. It had a major impact on the Russian public; a conflict from the backwaters of the


3 Anatol Lieven, 'Al Qaeda at the Fringe of a Bloody National Struggle,' (Carnegie; originally published in *The Guardian*, October 26, 2002).

4 Anatol Lieven, 'Anatol Lieven on Muslims' Reaction to Recent Terrorism,' in *The Religious Report*, Radio National, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, September 8, 2004.

5 Robert Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), p. 310.

6 Michael McFaul, *Ulterior Motives in Chechnya*, Hoover Institution, December 13, 1999. <http://www.hoover.org/pubaffairs/dailyreport/archive/2865971.html>

7 http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam_defence-1_table.htm



Caucasian highlands that was exacting a heavy toll in terms of soldiers' lives and military expenses was now in people's daily lives. The highly effective instrument of suicide bombings in the war with Russia was able to influence and shape public opinion both in the Caucasian states as well as among the Russian public. Appointing administrations and holding of elections and referendums by Russia are steps that have long been rejected by the Chechens. The killings of Aslan Maskhadov (March 2005) and Shamil Basaev (July 2006) in special operations conducted by the Russian Secret Security Service or the FSB though contributing to a reduction in the scale of the struggle, are not expected to end it.

A study of the suicide bombing incidents in Chechnya during 2000-2006 enables us to draw certain conclusions regarding the primary motivation for the adoption of suicide attacks as well as the methodology used in implementation of these tactics. It also enables us to pinpoint elements that may only be particular to the Chechen case. Attempted suicide attacks and missions that involved persons who had prepared to blow themselves up in suicide attacks in case of being apprehended or the mission being sabotaged or aborted due to any reason will also be considered.

When we look at the motivation behind suicide operations in Chechnya, we can assume that there are three major reasons:

- **Nationalist:** These causes are used to recruit suicide bombers as part of the need to defend the national identity and to salvage the loss of the national dignity at the hands of an occupying force. In case of Chechnya's nationalist struggle, historical grievances against Russia and humiliations suffered at the hands of the Russian occupying forces are the major motives.
- **Religious:** In the Chechen case the religious motivation for recruitment of suicide bombers was a later phenomenon. Often the strong belief in the duty of Jihad and *Istishad* (martyrdom) and the promise of paradise was used as an inducement in cases where there was a strong personal motivation to undertake suicide operations. In cases such as Chechnya this assumes a more potent force as it serves to address a vacuum and provide hope and an alternative to a desperate situation.

- **Personal:** These cover acts undertaken to avenge the loss of loved ones or acts of a retributory nature. In the Chechen case often personal reasons were used by certain group(s) for their own political purpose.

In the Chechen case we find that all three reasons have intermingled to produce conditions conducive for recruiting suicide bombers. An insight into the psyche and motivation of the suicide bombers came to light at the time of the Moscow theater siege crisis in 2002. It seemed that those particular Chechen hostage takers had come to the mission prepared for possible death. In fact, it seemed illogical on the part of the Chechens to even suppose they could walk away alive after the initial take over of the theater. Denying reports of any links to the al-Qaeda network, the organizers of the raid disclosed that they were members of a group called 'Suicide fighters from Chechnya.' They stated that their specific aim was to put an end to the war going on in Chechnya and they had chosen to die for their cause. "Each one of us is willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of God and the independence of Chechnya."⁸ It is widely believed that this incident was the turning point for the Chechen insurgents as it gave them fresh impetus to engage in further suicidal acts. This was in part due to its success in drawing world attention to their cause which had been long ignored. Retired Lt. General Aleksander Lebed, who was also a candidate for the Russian Presidency in 1996 and was later appointed the President's National Security Advisor, while criticizing Russian policies towards Chechnya had stated that "there is no more important question in Russia than that of Chechnya. It is an open bleeding wound."⁹ Lebed had played a crucial role in the Khasa-Vyurt Peace Agreement between Moscow and the Chechen insurgency led by Maskhadov in 1996.⁹

I Special Characteristics of Suicide Bombings in the Chechen Struggle

1. Women as Suicide Bombers

The most striking element of suicide attacks in Chechnya is the number of women who took part in these operations. Nearly half of the total number of Chechen suicide terrorist incidents involved females. This is among the highest number

⁸ *BBC News*, October 25, 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2360735.stm>

⁹ Press Conference given by Aleksander Lebed in August 1996 in discussion list about Chechnya, in *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* by John B. Dunlop (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.ix. Lebed was also appointed Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation by President Yeltsin

of female suicide operations related to a specific cause or struggle.

The case of Khava Barayev, the first Chechen female who died in a suicide mission killing 27 Russian soldiers, was used to galvanize and taunt men who were not fighting the Russians. Incidentally Khava Barayev's was also the first suicide bombing incident to take place in Chechnya. Only 19, she detonated a lorry full of explosives while driving past a Russian security check point in Alkhan-Yurt. Her words posted on a Chechen website said, "I know what I am doing, paradise has a price and I hope this will be the price for paradise."

The Chechen female insurgents who were popularly dubbed as the 'Black Widows' of Chechnya by the media have been involved in a series of operations that include hijackings, hostage taking and suicide bombings.¹⁰ The word 'black' in the 'black widows' was attributed to the all-black attire they donned during the majority of the operations as well as to the fact that most of them were widows of Chechen fighters or others who were killed by the Russians. The large number of these female bombers who undertook suicide missions did so citing their reason as exacting vengeance for the deaths of their dear ones at the hands of the Russians. An entity by

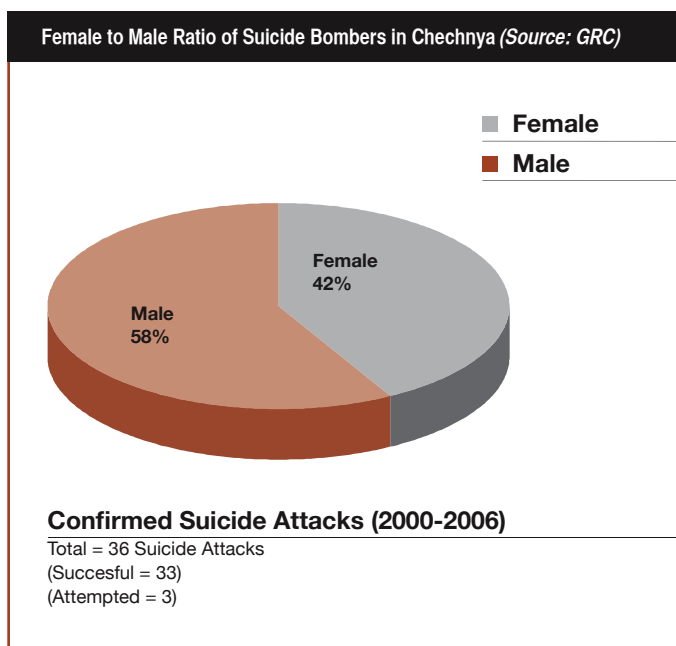
the name of the 'Black Widows Brigade' was formed in 1999; it has claimed responsibility for some major suicide attacks. One of the principal recruiters of potential female suicide bombers was a woman by the name of 'Black Fatima' for whom a nationwide alert was issued in 2004 by the Russian security services.

A quick look at the graph shows that the percentage of female suicide bombers for the total suicide terrorist acts perpetrated during the period of this study, from 2000 to the end of 2006, is a staggering 42 percent. The successful suicide attacks in Russia that were linked to the Chechen conflict shows that nearly half or 42 percent of the attacks were primarily conducted by females. The other 58 percent of successful suicide attacks that were perpetrated by men were at times mixed operations that had both male and female operatives taking part in the operations.

The Dubrovka theater hostage crisis where the hostage takers were on a suicide attack mission shows that 19 of the 41 Chechen hostage takers were female, armed with explosive laden *shahidka* belts and Kalashnikovs, veiled and attired completely in black. Similarly, five female suicide bombers participated in another major terrorist incident (possible suicide mission) that resulted in 331 casualties and 727 injured in a school siege in Beslan, North Ossetia in September 2004.

Other major suicide operations including the downing of two Sibir planes on August 24, 2004 killing a total of 95 people was conducted by two women Amanat Nagayeva and Satsita Dzhbirkhanova.¹¹ The subway bombing in Moscow on August 31, 2004 also was carried out by Rosa Nagayeva, Amanat's sister, which resulted in 10 fatalities. The Nagayeva sisters are believed to have carried out the operations to avenge the disappearance and killing of their brother at the hands of the Russian forces in Chechnya.¹² The coordinated detonations set off by Zulikhan Elikhadzhiev and Maryam Sharipova, two female bombers at a rock music festival at the Tushino airfield north of Moscow resulted in 14-16 fatalities and left more than 60 injured.¹³

Besides staging several highly successful suicide operations,




¹⁰ Refer to a special report in *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/chechnya/Story/0,2763,1466100,00.html>

¹¹ *The Guardian*, April 22, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/chechnya/Story/0,,1466100.html>

¹² *New York Times*, August 31, 2004, <http://www.tkb.org/GroupRegionModule.jsp?countryid=1&pagemode=group®ionid=4>

¹³ Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/10/CA5B6A99-8284-40B3-AB0E-2C2739BF966B.html#15>



the 'Black Widows phenomenon' was a skilful publicity move for that faction of the Chechen resistance that believed in paying Moscow back in a way that also highlighted the plight of the Chechen people and brought a suppressed and ignored conflict to world attention. These women, on an average, were in their twenties and thirties. Regarding their marital status, some of the profiles indicate that some, and not all, were widows; there were also cases of single and divorced women. According to one study, around 60 percent of the 15 or 20 confirmed female suicide bombers had lost their husbands while others had lost close family members. However, the Russian charge that these women were first raped by Chechen fighters to reduce their self esteem and encourage suicide was hard to prove. In fact, there are contrary allegations that are supported by different human rights watch groups that rape at the hands of the Russians forces was a common place factor.¹⁴

Kremlin officials have linked the rise in female bombers to international terrorism. The dominant opinion in Russian circles, a claim that is not supported by evidence, is that these women were exploited by the terrorist groups in Chechnya that were linked to international terrorist organizations. A news report on CNN had stated that "the techniques, the financing, the outside control definitely comes from abroad."¹⁵ The Chechens, on the other hand, maintain that the females behind the suicidal attacks are the close relatives of men killed or brutalized by Russian soldiers.

2. The Justification

Chechen Perspective

The Chechen insurgents embraced the highly effective tactic of suicide bombing in their struggle against Russia in their fight against an opponent who had no qualms in using extreme measures outside the battlefield as well to systematically break the will of a whole nation. Alleged cases of human rights violations that included routine rape and torture, cases of people being picked up and tortured, and disappearances were allegedly a norm in Chechnya. The heavy-handed Russian policies, however, backfired as it strengthened the Chechens' resolve to fight the Russians at any cost. Amnesty International

in its reports on human rights abuses in Chechnya has noted that Russian security services are responsible for extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture and rape. The great majority of abuses is carried out with impunity and is now being extended in neighboring Ingushetia as well. It states that an increasing number of women are subjected to abuse by Russian security forces especially after the Moscow Theater siege in October 2002 where almost half the hostage takers were female.¹⁶

Russian Perspective

The Russians like to believe and propagate that suicide bombing was an imported technique and was provided for via a vis recruiting and training of suicide bombers by the Arab mujahideen who had infiltrated and established base with the Chechen insurgents. In its efforts to preserve its image and justify its policies, Moscow could not afford to retreat on Chechnya. The perceived threat of an Islamic state or imamate in the Caucasus was exaggerated and played up by the Russians. Post-September 11, the Russian government became much more active in trying to assert the link between the Chechen nationalist struggle and al-Qaeda organization. Some of the prominent Arab jihadist leaders who are believed to have set up militant training camps in Chechnya and Dagestan and are accused of provided suicide training, including recruiting, were Samir bin Salih bin Abdullah al Swailem (known as Khattab) a Saudi national, Yusuf Amerat (kown as Abu Hafis) a Jordanian national, and Abu Al Walid, probably a Saudi national.¹⁷ The use of suicide bombing as a general tactic is nevertheless seen by Moscow as proof that Arab radicals hold sway in Chechnya. Such a theory enables the Russians government to fit the conflict in Chechnya into the wider US-led global war on terror.

On the issue of the Arab link to Chechnya, there are subtle underlying contradictions that appear in the US State Department's annual report, Patterns of Global Terrorism. In its report on Global Terrorism for 2001 it was noted that the terrorist acts perpetrated in Russia in 2001 were mainly part of 'the ongoing insurgency and instability in Chechnya.' However it notes that 'one rebel faction which consists of both Chechen and foreign, mainly Arab mujahideen fighters,

14 Dr. Moore from Nottingham Trent University quoted in "Bombers' Justification: Russians are killing our children, so we are here to kill yours," by Jonathan Steele, *The Guardian*, September 6, 2004.

15 Alexander Mochevsky, a Kremlin official quoted in a CNN Report, "Russia's 'black widows' wreak terror," CNN. com, September 2, 2004. <http://cnn.worldnews.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt7&title=CNN.com++>

16 *BBC News*, June 23, 2004, <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3831913>

17 Paul Tumelty, "The Rise and Fall of Foreign Fighters in Chechnya," *Terrorism Monitor* 4, no. 2 (January 26, 2006), <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369881&printthis=1>

is connected to international Islamic terrorists and has used terrorist methods.’ In February 2003, the US Secretary of State Colin Powell designated three Chechen groups as terrorist organizations, namely, the Islamic International Brigade, the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment and the Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs. The same report issued in 2006 has categorically stated that the terrorist activity in Russia was ‘home grown and linked to the Chechen separatist movement,’ it also mentions that there ‘was evidence of a foreign terrorist presence in Chechnya and of financial and ideological ties with the Chechen groups.’¹⁸

It seems likely that it was not possible to verify the link Russia was desperately trying to prove. Typically Russian officials have been found to exaggerate the Arab link in the terrorist incidents in Russia. For example Russian security services claimed that 10 rebels out of the 32 that took part in the Beslan siege were from Arab countries but have not provided evidence to back up the claim.¹⁹

A neutral opinion would acknowledge that foreign Islamist fighters have played a role in the Chechen conflict. Besides the tactic of using suicide bombers may also have been taken up due to the rapid rise in terms of its effectiveness in operations internationally. Whereas the *jihadists* fought in Chechnya as part of their belief in international jihad, suicide bombing was adopted as a strategic tactic for its effectiveness in terms of addressing the imbalance in the conflict as well as for bringing the issue to light. Many political and military analysts have suggested the concept of ‘asymmetric warfare’ and the leveling in power balance by use of suicide bombing tactics to explain the rise of suicide bombings.

3. Geography of the Operation

The strategic shift in the Chechen insurgency was based on a plan that was looking at stretching the conflict to the heart of Russia, to Moscow. As for the Caucasus region there is widespread empathy with the Chechen cause across the Northern Caucasus. The Chechen insurgents successfully mobilized support and resources to wage an effective guerrilla war across the Caucasus. Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kalbardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, Georgia are all affected by the

ongoing war between Chechnya and Russia. These states have also seen several incidents of terrorism, some involving effective suicide bombings, taking place over time as well as hostage crises and other missions.

Besides several cases of suicide bombings within Chechnya targeting security checkpoints, government buildings, military hospitals, the Chechen insurgents had widened their net to propagate their message across the rest of the region. For example, the suicide attack in June 2002 on a bus carrying Russian personnel in Mozdok, North Ossetia, and the suicide truck bomb attack at a military hospital in Mozdok in August 2002 that killed at least 50 people. A suicide bomb attack on a train in Stavropol in Southern Russia in December 2003 killed at least 44 people and left some 170 injured. An assassination attempt on the Ingush President Zyazikov that involved a suicide car attack in April 2004 failed but caused severe damage to surrounding infrastructure and injuries to several persons. In May 2006, the Ingush Deputy Interior Minister Dzhabrail Kostoyev was killed in a suicide car bomb attack in Ingushetia. A school in Beslan, North Ossetia in September 2004 was the scene of a siege by armed Chechen insurgents that included at least five female suicide bombers.

By taking the war to Moscow the insurgents proved that the conflict in Chechnya could not be suppressed for long by either the periodic statements issued by the Kremlin that all was well in Chechnya, or the systematic brutalities afflicted by the Russian military on the people. The airline hijackings and subsequent detonations by suicide bombers, the suicide bombing incidents on the subway in Moscow, siege and bombings of public places like the 2002 theater crisis and the explosions at a rock concert are all examples of successful operations that were undertaken by the Chechen insurgents.

4. Specialized Suicide Battalions

In July 2000, one of the main Chechen insurgent leader Shamil Basaev revealed the creation of “two suicide battalions” as part of the “Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade” in Chechnya. He claimed that the two suicide battalions consisted of 500 people with an additional battalion of 300 being formed. The main purpose of these troops would be to

¹⁸ US State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2006*, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/31940.pdf>

¹⁹ Op. cit., *The Guardian*, September 6, 2004.

carry out “powerful pinpoint strikes” against Russian bases outside Chechnya and to “destroy the most odious figures” in the Russian military.²⁰ Furthermore, it was reported that Basaev first began formations of suicide fighter battalions or *shahids* (martyrs) in September 1999. These fighters were reported to have undergone special combat training under the *bayat* or oath of allegiance where the person pledges to fight for God.²¹ The same message was reiterated by the Chechen spokesman Movladi Udugov who reconfirmed Basaev’s announcement of the integration of the specialized suicide battalions within the Chechen resistance force that was fighting the Russian occupation in Chechnya.²²

5. Objectives

The significant development that ensued after the second Chechen war was the shift in strategic warring tactics that now included suicide bombings. The use of terror tactics, specifically suicide bombings, resulted in the creation of widespread anger against the Chechens across Russia and brought the conflict to world attention. Besides criticism of the terror tactics, the international community had also to wake up to the alleged inhuman brutalities waged against the Chechen people, consolidating their resolve to fight Russian oppression and regain their freedom at any cost. Desperation and vengeance to redress the loss of loved ones’ lives as well

as paying the Russians back for the alleged torture they meted out to many incited this trend. The trend grew in strength as the Chechen command realized the impact and the underlying effectiveness of the tactic.

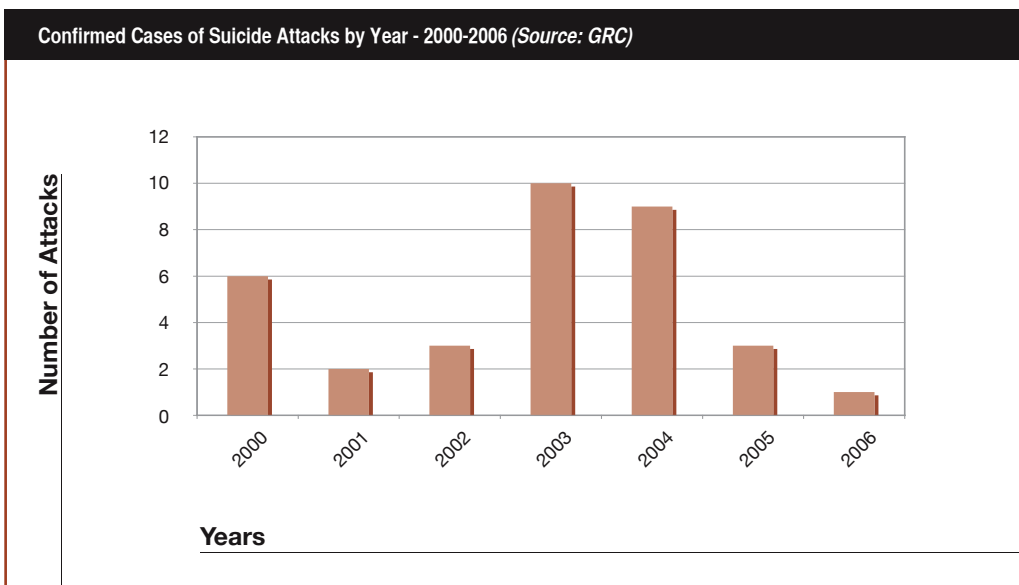
6. Timings

The timings of the suicide attack are important as they coincide with particular political developments/events/major military confrontations etc. The adoption of suicide bombings as an effective instrument in the war with Russia coincided with the political developments in Russia and Chechnya. For example during President Yeltsin’s time when the first Chechen conflict took place in 1994-1996 there were no suicide attacks. The ensuing years of instability and the second Chechen conflict in 1999 saw a rapid radicalization and a strategic shift in tactics on the part of insurgents. If we look at the graphs from 1999 to 2000 we can see that the largest number of incidents involving suicide bombings took place in 2003 and 2004.

There is a strong possibility that this was directly related to the holding of the Presidential elections in Russia (2000 and later in 2004) and other staged elections and referendums in Chechnya. It was also a hard hitting refutation of the Russian leadership’s inaccurate statements that the Chechen issue was now resolved and there was normalcy in the republic.

The separatist movement was never acknowledged by Russia and the international community as a nationalist struggle movement but was said to be controlled and “hijacked” by bandits and criminal groups who were linked to international terrorists and whose chief goal was to create an Islamic state (*imamate*) in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Let us now assess how political developments may have shaped the insurgency



20 Shamil Basaev was killed in July 2006 in a special operation by the Russian Secret Security Service, the FSB. *BBC News*, July 4, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/818697.stm>

21 Ibid.

22 *BBC News*, September 20, 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/452481.stm>

in Chechnya and how it impacted the shift in strategy on the part of the insurgents who adopted suicide bombings as an essential tactic in their struggle against Russia.

In August 1999, President Yeltsin replaced Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin with Vladimir Putin, who was later appointed acting president by Yeltsin. Putin was, at that time, the director of the Russian secret security service or the FSB. Having endeared himself to President Yeltsin, Putin began implementing a hard-line towards Chechnya which was widely welcomed by the Russian public who were outraged by a series of alleged Chechen insurgent-led apartment bombings in Moscow and elsewhere in Russia. The insurgents however have denied responsibility for these bombings and accused Moscow of staging them to justify another war in Chechnya. Putin was riding a wave of immense public support for the second war in Chechnya that was waged on the pretext of the apartment bombings as well as the Chechen incursions in Dagestan in September 1999. He was elected president with an overwhelming majority in March 2000. The second war saw the Russian army being given a free hand to crush the resistance and to avenge the humiliations the military had faced during the first Chechen war that had led to Moscow ultimately conceding defeat and acknowledging the elected Chechen government under Aslan Maskhadov. The reprisals the Chechens faced as a people for the humiliations faced by the Russian military are well known and documented by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other such major human rights organizations.

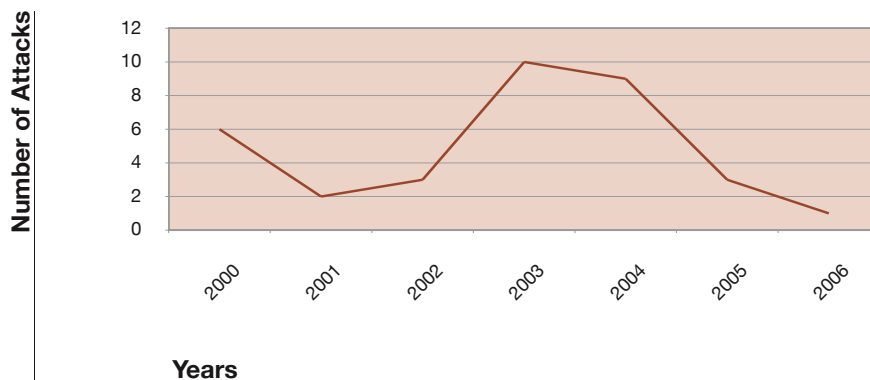
The Chechen insurgency and society were radicalized in two ways: firstly, by adopting a stronger religious outlook, and secondly, as a natural human reaction that became part of their nationalist struggle. This was a reaction to Moscow's policies that were reflected in severe actions and reprisals by the Russian security forces in Chechnya. It should be noted that the first suicide bombing took place in June 2000. After Russia declared direct rule from Moscow in May 2000, it appointed Akhmat Kadyrov as

head of its administration in Chechnya. Some major suicide attacks in 2002 that took place as a result of the political happenings in the republic as well as the situation vis-a-vis the Russian military's actions were the attempted Moscow theater siege in October 2002 and the December 2002 suicide attack on a government headquarters in Grozny, Chechnya where more than 50 people were killed.

A referendum vote held in Chechnya in March 2003 was widely rejected by the Chechens as it was heavily rigged by Russia. A series of suicide attacks followed the same year with the first large scale suicide attack on a government building in northern Chechnya in May 2003 resulting in over 50 deaths. Another suicide assassination attempt two days later killed more than 16 people; however Kadyrov escaped and was later elected president of Chechnya in October 2003. The same year in December another major suicide attack on a passenger train in southern Russia killed more than 40 people.

The elections held in 2003-04 saw President Putin gain almost total control over parliament. Similarly in 2004 large scale suicide attacks were carried out and the theater of the attacks was now expanded to include Moscow, besides other regions in the country. The airline attacks, subway and train attacks as well as the Beslan siege were the major suicide attacks occurring in that year. The same year saw the start of President Putin's second term, and his strengthened resolve to curb the Chechen insurgents who he addressed as 'terrorists and bandits' was displayed in more severe reprisals on the Chechen civilians. These were meant to act as a deterrent.

Confirmed Cases of Suicide Attacks by Year - 2000-2006 (Source: GRC)



After Maskhadov's death, his successor Abdul Khalim Saydullayev declared an end to the peace talks with Moscow and decreed organization of Caucasus Front in order to widen the conflict with Russia in May 2005. Regional Parliamentary elections held in November 2005 by Moscow as part of normalization were widely rejected by the Chechen insurgents. In March 2006, Ramzan Kadyrov became Prime Minister after Sergey Abramov resigned. Kadyrov's security forces though officially designated as the anti-terrorism squad are commonly referred to as *Kadyrovtsy* or 'Kadyrov's men.' The same year in June Chechen insurgent leader Saydullayev was killed by Kadyrov's forces. Shamil Basaev was killed a month later in Ingushetia in a special Russian security service operation.

The steady decline in suicide bombing operations after 2004 could be due to some major figures in the Chechen insurgency being eliminated or the fact that the Russian security forces became more alert to the threat and took steps at improving preventive measures as well as tightening security across Moscow and Chechnya. The fact that the Moscow backed administration in Chechnya led by Ramzan Kadyrov has managed to tilt the situation in their favor has also contributed to the current situation. The Chechen government under Kadyrov is feared among the local populace who face severe

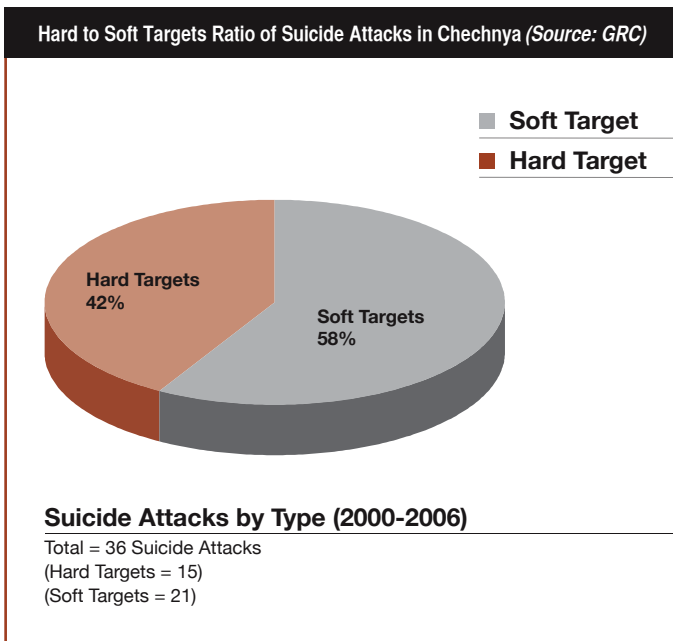
reprisals at their hands for aiding or siding with the Chechen insurgents.

7. Target Type and Explosives Used

In the Chechen case, the number of hard targets that are specifically government/military ones are equal in comparison to soft or civilian targets, with the soft target types having a slight edge over the hard target types, the ratio approximately being 58-42 percent. The types of targets that the suicide bombers were aiming at attacking fall into two major categories: hard and soft targets. Hard targets include military and government targets, politicians, military and security personnel as well as housing compounds of security forces. In May 2004, pro-Russian Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov was assassinated by a suicide bomber at the Victory Day parade celebrations in Grozny.²³ Similarly as mentioned earlier, Dzhabrail Kostoyev, the Ingush deputy Interior Minister, was killed in a suicide car attack in May 2006.²⁴ Security checkpoints had become major targets for the suicide bombers in Chechnya.

The second category of soft targets include transportation networks, infrastructure and communications that are specifically for civilian purposes. The incidence of a large number of soft targets in the Chechen case could be due to the easier access to the target that the bombers get as well as the impact of mass killings that could result as a consequence of say a suicide attack on a train, a bus or a social event with a large gathering of people. At times though the intended attack of suicide bombers was a hard target, the attack due to some reason reversed to being a soft target suicide attack. For example, in December 2003 when a female suicide bomber blew herself up near a hotel in the Red Square in Moscow, killing six people and wounding 13, it is believed that the suspected target of the bomber was the Duma building a few meters away.

The suicide bombings were often carried out by individuals wearing explosive belts or vests that may either use TNT or employ home made bombs using ammonium nitrate. Often trains and subway cars were targeted by the bombers thus causing high level of casualties among civilians and creating



²³ BBC News, May 10, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3699823.stm>

²⁴ The Guardian, May 22, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1780060,00.html>

massive disruptions and spreading large-scale terror and hysteria as well as being extremely damaging for the Russian government. It has been reported that the subway blast in Moscow that resulted in 10 deaths and 51 injured cases perpetrated by Roza Nagayeva used approximately 1 kilogram or 2.2 pounds of TNT. Vehicles including trucks as well as salon cars were used extensively in many Chechen suicide attacks. The vehicles were usually packed with explosives (TNT) and driven at high speed into security check points as well as targeted government buildings, military residential compounds or even military hospitals. It was an effective means of causing large scale casualties and extensive damage to the infrastructure

A major reason for the ease with which the suicide attacks are carried out in Russia could also be due to readily available explosives. A commentary published in IZVESTIA newspaper in December 2003 notes that the license for production of explosive materials in Russia costs roughly 1,300 roubles (\$44). According to this report, over 500 firms had received such licenses over a time period of 18 months. As such there were no rules to prevent the illegal use of explosives in Russia. The number of people involved in over 1000 such organizations that work with explosives was around 55,000 while 35,000 tons of explosives are transported on Russian roads every year. The price of a kilogram of TNT cost a mere 1000 roubles or \$34 on the black market. Furthermore, the same study also warned of the Russian state losing control of the production of explosives.²⁵

Procuring explosives in Russia becomes easy due to a number of factors including the scale of production and low prices besides the extensive and loose organizational structure in the industry. Despite the ready availability of explosives that were being used in suicide bombings, there were cases of home made bombs being used for individual suicide bombings as well as those that involved vehicle-led attacks. Traces of ammonium nitrate, a chemical compound, were discovered in several instances involving suicide attacks. One way ammonium nitrate is believed to be used in home made explosives is when it is mixed with a fuel such as diesel oil or kerosene. It is readily available as a fertilizer and can be easily procured. Home made bombs usually integrate this chemical which can cause extensive damage if properly used.

II Major Terrorist Organizations in Russia that Employ Suicide Bombings

This section shall briefly look at the organizations that are linked to the Chechen insurgency and have undertaken suicide bombing operations across Russia. We shall also list the groups or organizations which despite having originated in other republics in the Caucasus are linked to the Chechen resistance. Several operations that have taken place across the region involved some joint efforts in planning and carrying out such operations. Some of the terrorist organizations in Russia that are identified in the IISS Military Balance, 2006 are:

- *Black Widows or 'Chyornyye Vdov'*:
Established in 1999 with an active strength of 30+ operates from Chechnya/Dagestan and mostly consists of female suicide bombers fighting for Chechen independence and to avenge the deaths of relatives in the Chechen conflict.
- *Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade (IIPB)*:
Established in 1998, it has a current established strength of 400. The chief area of its operations extends from Chechnya, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to Turkey. The aim of the organization is to bring about the withdrawal of the Russian forces from Chechnya. Its members also took part in the October 2002 Dubrovka theater attack in Moscow.
- *Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs (RSRSBCM)*:
Established in 2002, it has a strength of about 50. Its current status is active and it operates from Chechnya. The demand is for the withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechnya.
- *Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR)*:
Established in 1996, it has a strength of 100. Its current status is active, and it operates from Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. The main aim is to influence and bring about the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya and create a fully independent Chechen state. Some of the members participated in the October 2002 Dubrovka theater attack in Moscow.

²⁵ BBC News, December 6, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/europe/3296219>

- *Jama'at of Dagestan 'Shariat'/Shariat Jama'at/Dzhenet:*
Established in 2004, it actively operates from Dagestan. They are mainly separatists seeking independence for Dagestan.
- *Jamaat Yarmuk:*
Established in 2004, its current status is active and it operates in North Caucasus. The group's demand is for an autonomous north Caucasian region, and it is responsible for the Nalchik bombings in 2005.
- *Amanat Jama'at:*
Chief area of operation is in Chechnya and is primarily a Wahhabi Chechen separatist group.
- *Chechen Rebels:*
It has an established strength of 2000-3000 and actively operates from Chechnya/Dagestan and aims to declare an independent state; there are also some demands for an Islamist state.²⁶

The Islamic International Brigade (IIPB), the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR) and the Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs (RSRSBCM) have in particular been designated as terrorist outfits by the US State Department. The RSRBCM was actively involved in the August 31, 2004 subway bombing as well as in the attempted assassination attempt on the Ingush president in April 2004. The airline hijackings and detonations on August 24, 2004 were also partly claimed by this group. Similarly the IIPB was also involved with another group in the August 2004 airline bombings as well as the subway blast in August 2004. Two major suicide bombing incidents that were claimed by the Black Widows were the train suicide bombing in Southern Russia in December 2003, resulting in 44 casualties as well as the suicide bombing that killed six in Moscow on December 9, 2003. Other groups like the (SPIR) and the Chechen Rebels have also been involved in major operations that may have assumed the status of suicide bombing incidents if they had gone through. For example, the school siege in Beslan and the Moscow Theater siege where many insurgents went in preparation to die as suicide bombers. Out of a total of 36 confirmed suicide bombing attacks examined by this study, the responsibility

for 24 such attacks has not been claimed by any group. That the Chechen insurgency no longer enjoys popular support and is near exhaustion is a claim refuted by the mere survival of the Chechen insurgent movement. Despite the scaling down of the resistance and the war weariness, the Chechen people see the Russians as the ultimate oppressors. The Moscow-backed Kadyrov administration has managed to consolidate some control by heavy-handed tactics on the local population but it is not expected to sustain itself for long without enjoying popular support. In the past, there have been instances of assassinations of pro-Russian government figures that are also declared enemies of the insurgents. A report on October 12, 2006 that quoted Colonel General Yevgeny Barayev, the Commander of the Group of Federal Forces in North Caucasus, stated that the number of attacks and "acts of terrorism" by the Chechen insurgents was on the rise attributing that to them having received large sums of money.²⁷

Despite the seemingly quiet front in Chechnya at present some faint rumblings could portend some major upheavals that could erupt in a full scale reinvigorated insurgency in the near future. Further suicide attacks far from being a distant possibility is a very real threat Russia needs to face up to. This tactic proved a highly effective stratagem for the Chechen insurgents, and it can only be expected that they will use it again. Like in all guerrilla wars, the smaller party engaged in conflict with a larger and more powerful adversary or the state has at crucial times retreated only to attack the enemy's weakest point again. In the case of Chechnya, it is only natural to expect this, for the insurgency reflects the people's struggle for a nationalist cause. Suicide attacks are expected to be continued as an integral part of their strategy against Russia because of the deep sense of injustice felt by the Chechen people for the harsh and oppressive Russian security policies. Keeping in mind the mindset and background of the Chechen people, this is something they will not take lying down. It is naturally expected to result in the creation and consolidation of a situation that could prove highly conducive for the continued enactment of tactics such as suicide bombings.

Faryal Leghari

Researcher in the Security and Terrorism Department
at the Gulf Research Center

²⁶ *The Military Balance* (IISS: London, 2006), Selected Non-State Armed Groups, Table 57, p. 420.

²⁷ "Russia: Ministry admits Chechen resistance still poses serious threat," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), November 8, 2006, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/SODA-6VD3VT?OpenDocument...>

Suicide Bombings: The Case of Sri Lanka

Sugeeswara Senadhira

A single Tamil suicide bomber rammed his explosive laden truck into a convoy of vehicles carrying 340 ratings of Sri Lanka Navy at Habarana in central Sri Lanka on October 16, 2006 killing 98 naval ratings instantaneously. The victims were unarmed sailors who were travelling home on holiday and those who were returning for duty.

A spokesman for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), claiming responsibility for the suicide attack justified the attack stating that unarmed sailors were a “legitimate target” and the convoy transit point where the attack took place was “military installation.”

This incident is only one example to show that of the known forms of political violence, suicide killing is the most bizarre and effective. Assassination, as such, has limited objectives – ‘of destroying an enemy, frustrating a government, or, simply, eliminating a rival’. Unlike in a military operation, death of the perpetrator is certain in a suicide attack. The attacker is clearly aware of his/her impending death, but nevertheless proceeds with perpetuating the act. The fact that the attacker dies in the attack eliminates the need for the attacker to have a plan to escape and avoid capture after he has completed the attack. The regular targeting of civilians, however, often calls into question the moral legitimacy, and often erodes the broader credibility, of the bomber’s cause.

The bombers themselves are predominantly male. Female bombers make up a minority of such attackers, and are more common among the Tamil Tigers, Chechen rebels, Palestinian militants and the Kurdish Workers Party. But even among these groups, suicide operatives are still overwhelmingly male. They are often from middle class backgrounds in countries with little political freedom.

The ritualistic communion of the extremist groups to which

they belong (“lone wolf” suicide bombers are rare), in addition to their strongly-held beliefs, helps motivate their decision to commit suicide; for the religious, e.g. Hamas the rewards of an afterlife may provide additional impetus. Coercion and deception are occasionally factors. Often the bomber is portrayed as irrational and motivated by blind hatred. Those who support the bomber’s cause will often hold him up as a hero; for example, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, who are mainly Hindus and Marxists, publish celebratory books containing the photos of those they regard as heroic freedom fighters.¹

The doctrine of asymmetric warfare views suicide attacks as a result of an imbalance of power, in which groups with little significant power resort to suicide bombing as a convenient tactic to demoralize the targeted civilians or the government leadership of their enemies. Suicide bombing may also take place as a perceived response to actions or policies of a group with greater power.

Groups which have significant power have no need to resort to suicide bombing to achieve their aims; consequently, suicide bombing is overwhelmingly used by guerrilla, and other irregular fighting forces. Among many such groups, there are religious overtones to martyrdom: attackers and their supporters may believe that their sacrifice will be rewarded in an afterlife. Suicide attackers often believe that their actions are in accordance with moral or social standards because they are aimed at fighting forces and conditions that they perceive as unjust.

Institutionalized indoctrination and rigorous physical training prepare a human bomb to undertake an operation. The LTTE has mastered this method of taking young recruits making them into suicide bombers by intense social conditioning and effective use of psychological tactics. The number of suicide missions carried out by the LTTE in the last two decades is more than 270.

¹ Suicide Attack, Wikipedia, *The Free Encyclopedia*, 2005.



Four years ago, the late Susan Sontag was excoriated for arguing, in a brief *New Yorker* piece, that the attacks which brought down the World Trade Center were inspired not by hatred of “civilization” or “the free world” but rather by opposition to “specific American alliances and actions.” Today that argument--seen by hawks in those dark post-September 11 days as treasonously empathetic – has become commonplace in the latest political science work on terrorism.²

The hallmark of LTTE suicide attacks is their use “as an article of faith” and not as a mere tactic. The ‘Black Tigers’ specialize in this genre of killing. Tamil Tigers have proved to the world that the weapon of suicide bomber is not an exclusive domain of religious fundamentalism. A detailed database of all suicide attacks recorded since the contemporary practice was born during the Lebanese civil war in the early 1980s reveals a total of 315 incidents through 2003, involving 462 suicide attackers. Of the 384 attackers who committed their deeds in such danger zones as Sri Lanka (where the decidedly non-fundamentalist, quasi-Marxist Tamil Tigers have used suicide attacks since 1987 in their fight for a Tamil homeland), Israel, Chechnya, Iraq, and New York, only 43 percent came from religiously affiliated groups. The balance, 57 percent, came from secular groups. Strikingly, during the Lebanese civil war, some 70 percent of suicide attackers were Christians (though members of secular groups).³

The LTTE identified the jungle hideout training center of suicide cadres with the popular sobriquet ‘Black Tigers’ as the “Red Garden.” In 1991, LTTE supreme Velupillai Prabhakaran made a speech establishing the Red Garden, saying, “This is going to be the University of the Tamils.” Nobody understood the exact meaning at that time. LTTE media specialist S Manoranjan, in a candid interview with the Indian monthly magazine *Frontline* described the strategy: “The LTTE collect children from refugee camps where they have lost their parents. They have been brought up in this Red Garden. And after two or three years they are separated ... and taken to a hidden place in the jungle. That particular place is named as “Puti de Pumi,” a sacred land. This is the place where these human bombs are being produced. They [the children] are not exposed to

the war. They only know about their leader. They have a last supper with the leader. They ... feel that they are dying for the leader. That’s all. They don’t have any idea of fighting for separate state or the commitment towards the cause of the Tamils. Nothing. They are just robots.⁴

By introducing suicide killings to the South Asian region and carrying out several successful missions in Sri Lanka, and one in neighbouring India, the LTTE has been able to instill fear in the minds of the people. The LTTE’s suicide attacks, like those of any terrorist group, are marked by the surprise element.

Eighteen-year-old Tamil boy Vasantharaja is almost indistinguishable from any of his high-school friends. But Vasantha is different. Vasantha will soon be dead. In six months’ time, the boy will leave his home province of Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka and travel out, perhaps to Colombo. There, he will strap a belt filled with explosives across his slight body and walk steadily toward a congested traffic light or a public meeting somewhere in the city. When he reaches his destination, Vasantha will press a button attached to his belt and instantly detonate an explosion that will kill him and possibly dozens of those around him. In that instant, Vasantha will join the pantheon of martyrs of the LTTE. Ask Vasantha why he is prepared to contemplate such a drastic action and the boy replies simply: “This is the most supreme sacrifice I can make. The only way we can get our Eelam [homeland] is through arms. That is the only way anybody will listen to us. Even if we die.”⁵

Prabhakaran, who personally selects recruits to the Black Tigers and the Birds of Freedom – the women’s suicide wing – normally chooses young people aged between 14 and 16, and about three females for every two males. Women and young boys are often preferred to men for the simple reason that they’re not subject to the same kinds of movement restrictions and body searches. Moreover, the layers of a woman’s clothing can more easily disguise the bulky suicide belt, which is more conspicuous under a man’s shirt and trousers.

In Tiger folklore, a human bomb volunteer is held in high esteem. He or she is extended the ‘privilege’ of having the ‘last supper’ with LTTE chief Prabhakaran before setting out on the mission.⁶

2 Christopher Shea, *Boston Globe*, July 3, 2005.

3 Robert A. Page, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Boston: 2003).

4 “Sri Lanka: Living With Terror,” *Frontline*, May 2002.

5 Charulata Joshi, “Sri Lanka: Suicide Bombers,” *Far Eastern Economic Times*, June 1, 2000.

6 M. R. Narayanswamy, *An Elusive Mind: Velupillai Prabhakaran* (New Delhi: 2003).

The Tamil Tigers were quick to realize the value of publicity. However, they have not always owned up the violence that they had unleashed, because the LTTE code reportedly prohibits admitting to political killings.

The LTTE has used more female suicide bombers than male cadres for assassination of individuals – include political and military leaders. The significant deployment of female suicide bombers in the Sri Lankan armed conflict has raised several important, timely and difficult questions for the feminist inquiry. The complex location the bomber inhabits provides a rich analytical site for the overlay of militarism, patriarchy, gender and censorship. An interview with a potential female suicide bomber conducted in June 2000 foreground these issues and draw from multiple sites of representation and speech about her, to ask questions about the paradoxes she inhabits, the role of censorship, literary and visual culture in defining her subjectivity, and the performativities of a gendered security regime now in place in Sri Lanka.⁷

The Tigers carried out the first suicide operation on July 5, 1987, with the objective of preventing Sri Lankan troops from advancing to Jaffna town, the political and cultural capital of Tamils. In this daring attack, a truck laden with explosives was used. Vasanthan alias Captain Millar crashed the truck into a makeshift army camp in Nelliaddy. Forty government troops were killed in the attack. The first high profile suicide bomb attack killing by the LTTE was that of the Sri Lankan Defence Minister, Ranjan Wijeratne, in Colombo by a car-borne attacker, on March 2, 1991; 19 others, too, were killed in the explosion. A LTTE woman suicide bomber, Dhanu, assassinated former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was all set to become Prime Minister once again, at an election rally in Sriperambadur, southern India, on May 21, 1991. Several months later, the Chief of the Sri Lankan Navy, Clancy Fernando, fell to a suicide bomb attack, in Colombo, on November 16, 1992. Another top armed forces officer to have been eliminated by a Tiger human bomb was a Brigadier in the army, Ananda Hamangoda, who was posthumously promoted to the rank of a Major General.

The top-most Sri Lankan political leader to have been assassinated in a suicide bomb attack, was Ranasinghe Premadasa, President of the country at the time of his death. Premadasa fell to his bicycle-riding suicide assassin at a May Day rally in Colombo, in 1993.

The LTTE used suicide bombers to assassinate Tamil opponents who they described as traitors to the Tamil cause. On July 29, 1999 a suicide bomber killed Member of Parliament Neelan Thiruchelvam, a moderate Tamil leader of Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), in Colombo. On June 7, 2000 a male LTTE suicide bomber assassinated C. V. Goonaratne, Minister for Industrial Development, in the northern suburbs of Colombo. The Minister's wife succumbed to her injuries the next day. Goonaratne was leading a rally to commemorate fallen Sri Lankan security forces personnel fighting the LTTE in the Jaffna peninsula. The rally itself was organized as part of events meant to mark the first annual War Heroes Day. More than 20 people were killed and at least 50 others were injured in the explosion.

All the suicide attacks, however, did not achieve the objective. Most prominent survivors of the LTTE's human bomb attacks are Chandrika Kumaratunga, President of Sri Lanka, (December 18, 1999), Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Defence Secretary (November 30, 2006) and Lt Gen. Sarath Fonseka, Commander of the Sri Lanka Army (April 25, 2006).

The effect of a suicide attack can be devastating, creating panic and terror among ordinary citizens, who – more often than not – are also the bombers' main victims. But such attacks also send out a signal to decision-makers and the government: A successful terrorist attack confirms the inefficacy of the administration, demoralizes law enforcers and boosts morale among the Tigers and their followers.

In carrying out these desperate acts, the suicide bombers are more than just a particularly effective weapon in the Tigers' arsenal. They become a powerful symbol of control – the ultimate weapon with which to hold society to ransom. Their willingness to assume this role is born of a sense of frustration at the lot of the minority Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Even after nearly three decades of protracted violent conflict, Sri Lanka appears no closer to resolving the Tamil question. And, in a vicious circle, this continuing failure to end the conflict is fuelling the Tigers' use of the ultimate weapon, the suicide bomber.

Sugeeswara Senadhira

Consultant Director in the Government Information Department

Former Associate Director in the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies in Colombo, Sri Lanka

⁷ Niloufer De Mel, *Militarizing Sri Lanka: Popular Culture and Memory in the Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: 2005).



Suicide Terrorism: The Case of Afghanistan

Hekmat Karzai

Suicide terrorism, just as terrorism, is a complex and difficult issue to define. A leading authority on the subject, Mia Bloom, notes that the terrorist executes the action in order to achieve a political goal and with the complete awareness that he is going to his death.¹ Other standard definitions focus more on the goals of the act by stating that the suicide attacker's intention is to harm as many people as possible with the objective of effecting some type of political change.

The act of suicide for a particular objective has been around for centuries – from the Bible's Samson to the Japanese Kamikaze pilots of World War II. However, the recent trend of attacks started to appear in the early 1980s by groups such as the Hizbollah and Al Dawa; with the phenomenon being made international starting with the bombing of the US embassy in Beirut in April 1983, which killed 63 people. The largest explosion took place in October 1983 when a truck bomb killed 241 US servicemen. Through suicide attacks, terrorist organizations can effectively offset the technological progress and conventional military dominance of a target nation. Hizbollah's unceasing suicide campaign that took place between 1983 and 1985 against Israeli troops in southern Lebanon was perhaps an outstanding 'success', for, unable to cope with this assault, Israel retreated almost entirely from Lebanon.²

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is another case in point. The Tamil ethnic group, struggling to achieve independence and sovereignty in Sri Lanka, has been active since the 1970s. The LTTE aspires to represent the Tamil minority and is considered one of the most ruthless organizations in history, especially, since the members have even killed and oppressed their own ethnic group. In their struggle for a cause many organizations come across limitations and difficulties and thus choose suicide as a

strategic tool. "In the case of LTTE, on the other hand, it was evident that the use of suicide attackers was not a radical shift in the organization's central strategy and it was perceived first and foremost as a highly useful tactic

After the Coalition Forces came to Afghanistan, the trend of suicide attacks started to emerge very slowly with one attack carried out in 2002, two in 2003, and six in 2004. However, from this point on, the pace of attacks changed. In 2006, there were 118 suicide attacks, with the latest ones targeting political and religious figures

in situations where other methods seemed less effective."³ LTTE, having become a highly effective and efficient guerrilla organization over the years, learned by studying the success of Hizbollah, but at the same time, altered the technique to suit its particular requirements. Vellupillai Prabhakaran, the charismatic leader of the LTTE, "saw the potential benefits of this method (suicide attack) specifically in carrying out targeted assassination attacks in situations where it was difficult or impossible to attack a certain public figure or group of people using other methods."⁴ Thus, the assassination of a particular entity became the objective and not the act of suicide. In their pursuit, LTTE has been responsible for the killing of many political leaders including the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa.

Another unique aspect about the LTTE is that they were one of the first groups to use women as suicide attackers, and, till date, 30 to 40 percent of their attacks have been carried out by women. Just as the tactic of suicide terrorism has brought attention to the cause of LTTE, the organization has

1 Mia M. Bloom, *Dying To Kill: The Global Phenomenon of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

2 Daniel Pipes, "The Scourge of Suicide Terrorism," *National Interest*, 1986. Accessed on: <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/175>

3 Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2005), p. 72.

4 Mia M. Bloom, "Tamil Attitudes toward Terrorism," *Tamil Eelam*, November 5, 2004. Accessed on: <http://www.tamilcanadian.com/pageview.php?ID=1687&SID=52>

also contributed to the tactic by perfecting it on land, air and sea through their Black Tigers unit.

Because of the apparent effectiveness of the tactic, Al-Qaeda joined the bandwagon in the mid 1990s and conducted, coordinated and synchronized attacks using multiple bombers. Their actions were witnessed in the 1998 embassy bombings in East Africa and on a bigger scale during September 11. The greatest impact of Al-Qaeda has been to inspire other groups to adopt their modus operandi. Besides the massive proliferation of the global Jihadi ideology to groups with otherwise local grievances, Al-Qaeda's tactical influence has also manifested itself in the global escalation in suicide bombings; in fact out of more than 700 suicide attacks carried out in history, over 70 percent have taken place since 9/11.⁵

I The Afghanistan Case

Conflict has been a constant factor during the last three decades of Afghan history, although there was no record of a suicide attack until September 9, 2001 when two Al-Qaeda members assassinated Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, the leader of the Northern Alliance.

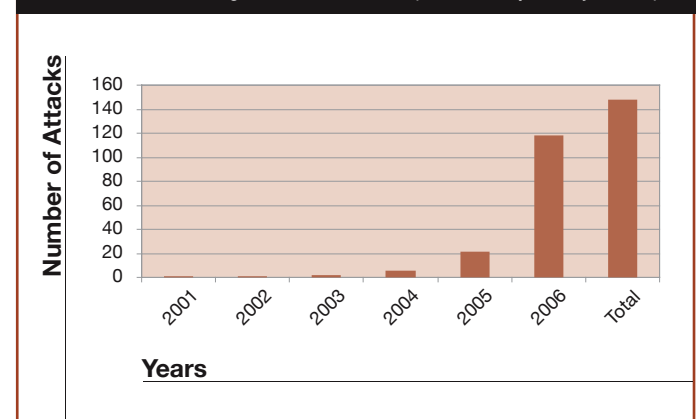
After the Coalition Forces came to Afghanistan, the trend of suicide attacks started to emerge very slowly with one attack carried out in 2002, two in 2003, and six in 2004.⁶ However, from this point on, the pace of attacks changed. Learning from the effectiveness of the insurgents in Iraq and other places, the groups carried out 21 attacks in 2005, with the southern city of Kandahar and the capital Kabul as their primary targets. In 2006, there were 118 suicide attacks, with the latest ones targeting political and religious figures including former President and current Senate leader, Professor Sibghatullah Mujaddedi and the late Governor of Paktia, Hakim Taniwal.

As noted earlier, there are no records of suicide attacks taking place in Afghanistan prior to September 9, 2001. It is also true that Afghan Mujahideen (freedom fighters) had no history of employing this tactic against the Russians, and neither was it used by the Taliban or Northern Alliance when they fought against each other. Thus the crucial question arises: why did the Taliban and Al-Qaeda shift towards this tactic?

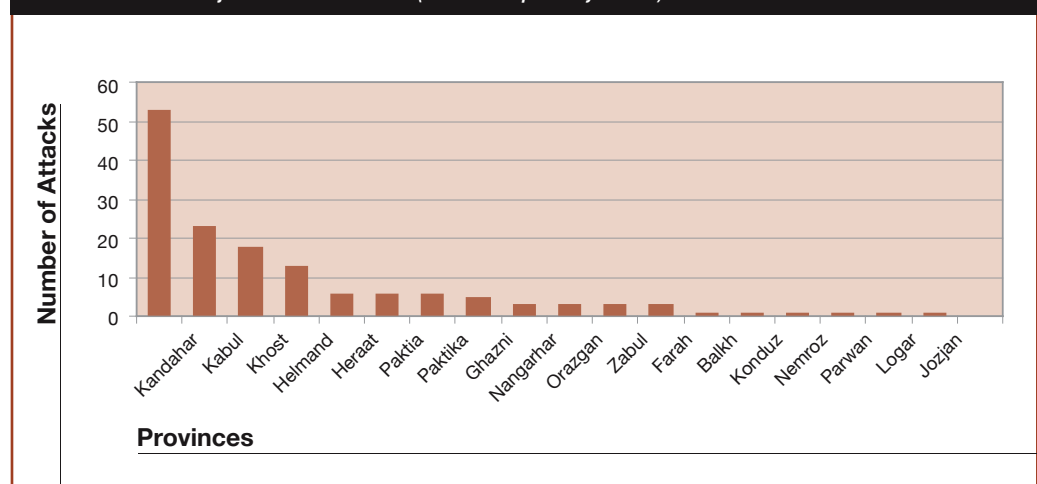
There are several specific reasons why Taliban and the foreign elements decided that suicide terrorism constituted suitable tactics for Afghanistan:

First, Taliban and Al-Qaeda have concluded that suicide bombing is more effective than other tactics in killing Afghan and Coalition Forces. This is a direct result of the success

Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan - 2001-2006 (Source: Prepared by Author)



Number of Attacks by Provinces - 2001-2006 (Source: Prepared by Author)



⁵ CAPS Violent Actors Project.

⁶ Ibid.

they witnessed of groups such as Hamas in the Palestine, Hizbollah in Lebanon, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka as well as groups operating in Iraq. Suicide attacks allow insurgents to achieve maximum impact with minimal resources. Statistics confirm that when the insurgents fight US and Coalition Forces directly in Afghanistan, there is only a five percent probability of inflicting casualties. However, when the insurgents employ suicide attacks, the chances of killing people increases manifold.

Secondly, Taliban and Al-Qaeda believe that devastating suicide attacks have instilled fear in the people's hearts leading them to believe that the government cannot protect them, and as a result, undermining and destabilizing the authority of local government institutions. Consequently, the gap between the government and the population is slowly expanding.

Third, Taliban and Al-Qaeda have successfully tapped into the expertise of the broader jihadi community. Militants have imparted knowledge on suicide tactics to Afghan groups through the Internet and face-to-face visits, and with Al-Qaeda's assistance and recruitment from madrassas in Pakistan, they have supplied a steady stream of suicide bombers.

Fourth, suicide attacks are extremely effective as an assassination tactic particularly when the target is well guarded. In 2006, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda started to use

suicide attackers as assassins targeting important personalities including the late Governor of Paktia, Hakim Taniwal, former governor of Helmand, Mohammed Daoud, and Pacha Khan Zadran, a member of the Afghan Parliament.

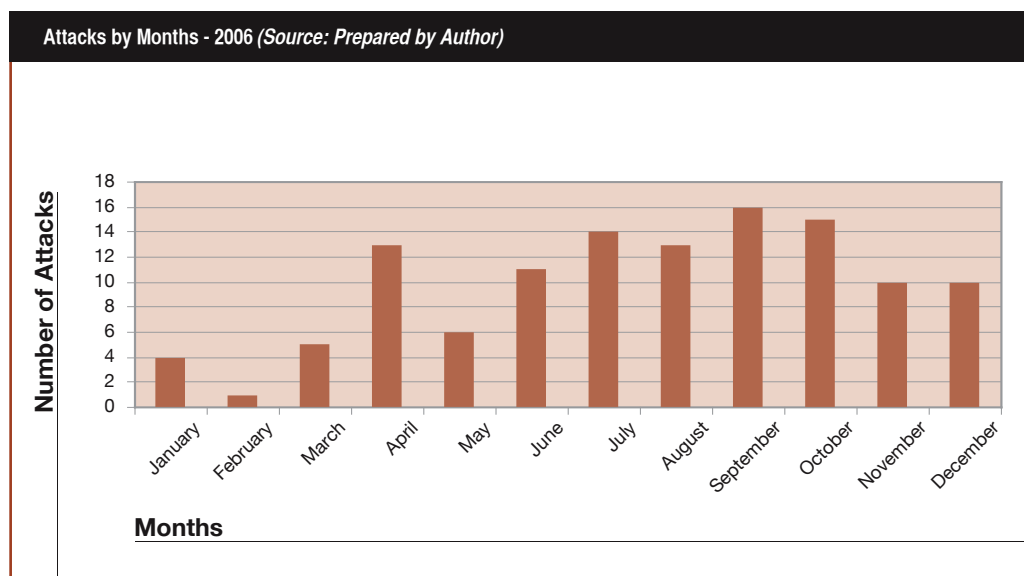
Most importantly, suicide attacks have given renewed visibility to the Taliban and their allies that the guerrilla attacks had failed to provide. Given the high casualty they cause and high profile nature, every suicide attack conducted is reported in the regional and international media providing augmented exposure to the cause.

II The Origin of the Attackers

At the outset, there was once a major debate on the identity of the attackers. Afghans especially were under the assumption that a majority of the suicide bombers were foreigners and that the tactic was an "imported product." However, data indicates that there are two groups of individuals that are involved in the attacks:

The first group of attackers who are indeed responsible for significant numbers of attacks consists of men of foreign origin who are influenced by the global ideological Jihad against the West, especially the United States. They see Afghanistan as the second front of that Jihad, (the first being Iraq) which provides them an opportunity to face the enemy in battle. These individuals are highly inspired by the various radical

clerics and by the Taliban who constantly preach around the world through thousands of Jihadist websites promulgating that "Afghanistan has been occupied by the crusaders and it is a personal obligation of the Muslims to fight against them."⁷ Encouraged and motivated, they come to Afghanistan with the ultimate goal of attaining the esteemed status of martyrdom and setting an example for the rest of the Muslim Ummah. Many of these people are from countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Chechnya.



7 Quoting Mullah Dadullah in his interview with Al Jazeera on February 14, 2006.

The second group carrying out suicide attacks comprises Afghans and is a relatively small one.⁸ While Afghans believe that 'it is not culturally acceptable or a characteristic tactic of the

■ Suicide attacks are extremely effective as an assassination tactic particularly when the target is well guarded

Afghan people,' they ignore the fact that Afghan culture is not as isolated as it may have been in the past. At one point, one quarter of Afghanistan's 25 million population became refugees and a segment of that population attended madrassas in Pakistan where they were radicalized and immersed in extremist ideologies. Even today, the training and indoctrination continues and there is no shortage of recruits from these madrassas.

Additionally, the relatively easy to access DVDs, VCDs and other forms of technology allows ideas to spread rapidly.⁹ Underlying all of this is the exposure of Afghans to Al-Qaeda, which has spread its extremist global ideology to various groups. During their reign, from June of 1996 through November of 2001, Al-Qaeda and Taliban established a very close 'marriage of convenience' where Al-Qaeda supported and trained many Taliban cadres. Following the post 9/11 transformation of the Taliban from a conventional military force into an insurgent one, this training and indoctrination are starting to reap benefits.

III Recommendations

Afghanistan is not the first nation to face the threat of suicide attacks and will most likely not be the last. While addressing the threat may be difficult for any state, it is not impossible, especially, if operational and strategic measures are applied.

1. Operational Measures

■ Most importantly, the Afghan government must enhance the capacity of its intelligence in order to disrupt the network that organizes and supports such activities. Intelligence is the initial link in the chain of thwarting any

terror attack, and it is of utmost importance in thwarting suicide attacks before they are put into practice. As many researchers have noted, suicide attackers hardly ever work alone. There is always an underground infrastructure that provides the essential financial and material resources and arranges everything else, including target identification and time and date of the attack. Thus, 'the crucial requirement in this struggle is intelligence, intelligence, intelligence.'¹⁰

- Police training should be enhanced to better deal with tactics and strategies relating to suicide attacks. Currently, the Afghan National Police is provided a couple of weeks of general training, and no specific training is provided on threat assessment or analysis. The police should be taught two sets of skills: (a) engaging the local community in a friendly and professional manner which can lead to healthy information exchange between the civilians and the police in those areas, thus enhancing the potential effectiveness of the police; and (b) advanced training in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency techniques so that the police are better able to deal with the violent groups. Police should also be provided with the necessary resources to handle the threat efficiently.
- The military, both the Coalition Forces and the Afghans, need to stop using a heavy-handed approach, and, in particular, avoid the killing of innocent civilians. Instead they must work with the communities and engage in trust-building. On countless occasions, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda have exploited the behavior of the Coalition Forces to widen their pool of recruitment for suicide attacks. Similarly, force used in operations should be controlled because if one innocent civilian is killed, it takes away the goodwill of an entire family, community and a tribe.
- The Afghan military has to familiarize itself with the Taliban's modus operandi and analyze their pattern of attacks. From the analysis of the data, it is evident that the two main targets of suicide attacks are the southern city of Kandahar and the capital Kabul. The security for both of the 'hot spots' must be increased accordingly with due diligence. Only by understanding the environment and protecting

8 This assessment recognizes that many of the bombers may originate from training camps in Pakistan. However, the fact that they may come over the border does not necessarily make them Pakistani. An Afghan war orphan educated and trained in a madrassa in Pakistan, and who may have lived there for 15 years, and now returns as a suicide bomber, is still an Afghan irrespective of whether he still has any relatives or roots in Afghanistan.

9 During the course of this research, the author has found many DVDs and VCDs that depict suicide operations, will of martyrs, and ideological sermons. The objective of most of them is straightforward – inspire and motivate the particular segment of the population that is disillusioned with the Coalition Forces and the Afghan government to jihad.

10 Interview with Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, Head of the International Centre for the Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore, April 21, 2006.



it will the military be able to anticipate future attacks.

- The Afghan Coalition Forces must improve Human Intelligence (HUMINT) in areas, whether in Afghanistan or in Pakistan, where the Taliban and Al-Qaeda recruit. There are several madrassas within Waziristan, located in North Western Frontier of Pakistan, that have been known for spreading a radical ideology of hate and instigating jihad in Afghanistan. Having accurate information about them and monitoring their activities regularly can lead to further success in countering them.
- The Coalition Forces and the Afghan security sector must share all operational intelligence or information which they collect on specific threats with their partners in regional cooperation. Only with support and cooperation of the regional partners can there be greater prospects of success in preventing attacks that could easily be planned from outside the country.

2. Strategic Measures

- The Afghan Ulama (religious authorities) must continue to oppose suicide bombing and issue fatwas (religious decrees) to that effect. They should clearly explain that suicide bombing does not lead to an eternal life in paradise, nor does it confer the permission to see the face of Allah, or the loving kindness of 72 houris (beautiful maidens) who will serve the suicide bomber in heaven. The Ulama should not allow fatwas to be manipulated by the extremists either in Afghanistan or in the Muslim world.
- The moderate religious leadership throughout Afghanistan should be empowered and given opportunities to spread their message of peace and tolerance. Importantly, counter-ideological measures should be used; for example, religious clerics can be engaged to initiate dialogue, first with the population, and then with militants as well as their sympathizers, in order to ideologically dispel notions of suicide being compatible with Islamic jurisprudence.
- The international community must continue to be engaged in Afghanistan until it has developed its institutions that deal with matters of state security. Without continued assistance from the larger international community, Afghanistan's fragile security institutions will crumble,

repeating the history of the early nineties when the country became a hub of international terrorism and poppy cultivation. Most crucially, it is vital that the capacity of the state security agencies is enhanced, not only to make the state increasingly sovereign but also to make it appear sovereign and independent in the eyes of its own citizens.

- Afghanistan's relationship with its neighbors is crucial to its long-term stability and the country must engage its neighbors in strong ties, whether in commerce and trade or in transfer of knowledge. Due to its landlocked status, Afghanistan must explore developing its relations beyond the basic diplomatic ties with its neighbors. The two most important neighbors are clearly Pakistan and Iran, and their support and assistance is crucial in curbing the flow of terrorists from the Middle East and Pakistan.
- It is imperative that strong but informal ties be forged with village communities that live along the Afghan-Pakistan border as some of them have been known to provide a safe haven for the Taliban and Al-Qaeda operatives. The government must have an overall plan to deal with these communities and provide them with basic services like education and health care. The majority of the population resent the Taliban and does not wish to go back to the draconian rule that was enforced on them when the Taliban were in power. The plan should therefore include goals such as improving, first and foremost, the living standard of the average villager. Concepts such as 'winning hearts and minds' must be explored.

Conclusion

Looking at the experience of some states such as the US, UK and others, it does not really matter how strong or capable the government or security sector is, as no government has been able to fully immunize itself from suicide attacks carried out by a group or an insurgency. Afghanistan is likely to mirror this pattern. However, by drawing from best practices while incorporating issues of cultural and religious sensitivity, a rational middle way may be achieved.

Hekmat Karzai

Director at the The Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies,
Kabul, Afghanistan

A New Paradigm of Suicide Attacks: The Palestinian Case

Munther S. Dajani

I Definition

There is a consensus now about the definition of suicide bombings among most experts that “suicide bombing is the readiness to sacrifice one’s life in the process of destroying or attempting to destroy a target to advance a political goal or objective.”

There are at least two religious groups in Palestine, namely the *Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)* and the *Islamic Jihad*, that have proved their capability in using suicide bombings as a tactic against Israeli occupation. The targets could be static or mobile. Experts have identified at least two different types of targets for suicide bombing operations: the first is a battlefield target while the second is off the battlefield.

The targets are very diversified and apparently randomly picked with no systematic or logical explanation to how they were chosen. The location of the attack, the kind of target and the geographic depth utilized do not follow any explainable logic except that they were randomly chosen and were either specific infrastructure or a gathering of people. The targets ranged from passing military vehicles to random bus stops where soldiers gather to catch a ride. They could also be just any place ranging from civilian buses on a route or restaurants in any location in the country.

Lately, political analysts have begun to acknowledge that suicide bombings are a real threat to start with.

Secondly, they believe that it is here to stay as long as injustice is widespread in the developing world.

Thirdly, it is now recognized that suicide attacks are not exclusive to developing countries such as Israel, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Kuwait as it was understood previously but can also be carried out not only in areas of conflict but in

any part of the world including long-standing, stable and developed countries such as the United States and those of the European Union.

Lately, political analysts have begun to acknowledge that suicide bombings are a real threat to start with. Secondly, they believe that it is here to stay as long as injustice is widespread in the developing world

One cannot but conclude that suicide bombings have stopped being a phenomenon that occurs solely in areas with protracted conflicts and where politicians largely thought that maintaining the status quo is a comfortable stay of execution on one hand. The leaders took advantage of the chaotic situation and implemented their hidden agendas by claiming, on the one hand, that there is no partner to negotiate with, and secondly, that the conditions for negotiations were not ripe. As if negotiations are carried on only among accepted partners and in congenial environments. The obvious objective is to play for time and implement as much as possible, hidden agendas. In other words, these decision-makers and politicians seek to buy time and move such hidden agendas from the planning stage, as ideas and concepts on paper, to make it reality on the ground. This proves to be a useful tactic in any negotiations where previously non-existent factors that are implanted in the interim, all of a sudden become trump cards to negotiate with. Such is the case with regard to the establishment of temporary Israeli settlements as different governments went on establishing the so-called illegal settlements as if there is a difference between legal and illegal settlements on occupied territory.

II Tactics

The tactic in this case was to establish settlements in such large numbers in order to show the world that something

was being given up during a negotiated settlement, while the reality was that they were giving up nothing since these settlements had not even existed a few weeks earlier. Instead of negotiating issues of substance such as evacuating real existing settlements, they use Salami tactics by giving up newly identified and temporary settlements that have no value at any level nor had existed few months earlier. This is one way to avoid taking any action of substance. The same logic is used in the establishment of a high number of road blocks (435 at one stage) such that to remove a few of them would seem to be a big sacrifice in terms of security. On the other hand, they are imposing new de facto realities that are irreversible.

III Response

To counter such Israeli tactics, Hamas and Jihad factions made it a point to let the Israeli decision-makers know that the continuous suicide attacks are in retaliation to the refusal of the so-called new facts on the ground. The message is clear: Israeli policy of creating new facts on the ground is not acceptable. Israeli occupation has to end on the territories occupied in 1967 and for the Israeli governments not to shoulder their responsibilities as an occupying force is not acceptable. In other words, the clear message is that ignoring the other party and negotiating initiatives proposed for achieving peace can be costly whether in human lives lost or in actual real costs.

The tactics used by Israeli leaders included claiming at one time that there is no partner to talk to or that the current political environment is inappropriate. The Palestinian factions wanted to make sure that the Israeli decision-makers understand that this can be counter-productive and also costly in terms of achieving the long-sought blanket of public security.

This has proved to be counter-productive on the Israeli national level since none of the declared objectives have been achieved, whether the objectives were long-term or short-term.

Different Israeli government tactics have failed to achieve any of their objectives whether it is stopping the continuous suicide bombing attacks, or stopping the Al Qassam rockets from falling on the Israeli towns or even locating kidnapped Israeli soldiers.

IV New Paradigm to Cope with

The incident that took place in late November 2006 is a very important turning point in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict so much so that we have to pause and reevaluate the transformation in the understanding of the conflict. What I am referring to is a news item that a 64-year-old grandmother blew herself up near an Israeli army unit that was sweeping an area next to Jebalya refugee camp north of Gaza City. This phenomenal change in attitude is extremely important for several reasons. One is that the role older people played in Palestinian society has drastically changed. In the past, it was taken for granted that they played a pacifying role and that role was largely accepted. To elaborate, in the past older people tried to convince the younger generation that there are other productive ways of achieving objectives than committing suicide (death).

An old woman told me repeatedly a few years ago that there are different methods that can help in achieving one's objectives but it is not by killing oneself and especially not by committing suicide attacks. This was to a large extent the dominant paradigm that was taken for granted as an acceptable role for the older generation even in a revolutionary society fighting occupation and was mainly accepted. The older generation



was a pacifying, neutralizing factor in dissuading the youth from such actions.

The drastic change that I would caution the leaders to take into consideration now is that this segment in Palestinian society could become an encouraging catalyst in carrying out of more attacks. Not only that, they could become the model to be imitated and followed.

As a consequence, people such as peace activists who care and believe in the ultimate achievement of a comprehensive peace and were able to make the transition from “us or them” to “us and them” could become outcasts in their own societies since the older generation has become a new leading force with a new role to play. Programs preaching education for peace building, and organizing workshops on peace education to hopefully establish bridges of confidence building measures was based on the premise that the older generation encouraged such activities and disseminated negative signals against suicide attacks that, on the whole, decreased as a result.

As a result of this new development, the mission of peace activists has not only become very difficult but even unacceptable as a section with special status in Palestinian society (the older people who are traditionally are well respected) has taken the initiative in setting a new example to be imitated or followed. This is helped to a great extent by the stubbornness and inflexibility of Israeli politicians who keep initiating Draconian policies and methods against the Palestinian civilian population and hide their heads in the sand claiming that the Palestinian people do not exist.

The irony is that previous Israeli leadership has tried those exact set of policies and extreme measures and they failed. Just to remind the reader of few incidents of the past: the late Israeli PM Golda Meir declaring there is no such thing as Palestinians, and the late PM Rabin issuing orders to break the bones of Palestinian children during the first intifada (Uprising).

Prof. Munther S. Dajani

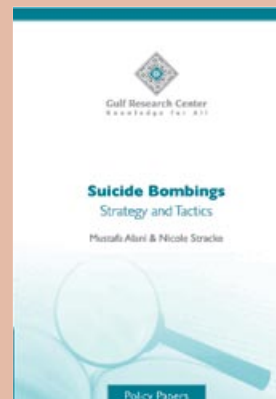
Dean of the Faculty of Arts

Director of Dr. Issam Sartawi Center for the Advancement of Peace and Democracy in Al Quds University, Jerusalem

Forthcoming Publication

Suicide Bombings: Strategy and Tactics

By Mustafa Alani & Nicole Stracke



During the past three years the world witnessed a notable upsurge in the number of suicide attacks, as well as in the geographical spread of this tactic.

While statistics indicate a notable reduction in the number of suicide operations carried out in

Russia - Chechnya , the Palestinian occupied land and inside Israel, Kurdish region of Turkey, and Sri Lanka, same statistics pointed out to a huge increase in the number of attacks in a newly emerged, or recently revived battlefields, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan – Pakistan. Further, suicide bombing has been, and for the first time, employed as tactics used by terrorist groups operating in European countries as the multiple suicide attacks in London and the apartment explosion in Madrid’s suburb, as well as the multiple attack in Istanbul. Indeed, in a few ‘battlefield’ or ‘Jihady fields’ suicide bombing developed to be one of the main, if not the main method of attack utilized by insurgent or terrorist groups. This certainly the case in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This study is based on analyzing over 600 cases of confirmed suicide bombing operations worldwide. The analysis defines the suicide bombing target policy, and looks at the specific operational tactics and outlines the reasons underlying the increasing employment of suicide bombing operations by terrorist and insurgent groups. The study will also look at the recruitment techniques of suicide bombers as well as measures to counter suicide bombing.

Annual Conference: Gulf Yearbook 2006-2007

The Gulf in 2007 is likely to witness a period of robust economic growth, continuation of political innovations, rising regional instability due to events in Iran and Iraq, and unchallenged presence of the United States as the security guarantor, according to experts at the Dubai-based Gulf Research Center (GRC).

The forecasts were made during the GRC's fourth annual conference on January 11 while releasing the findings of the "Gulf Yearbook 2006-2007". The event was attended by a number of officials, intellectuals and business executives from both the Gulf region and outside.

The Gulf Yearbook – the GRC's premier publication – is an annual compendium of analyses on events in the Gulf region during the previous year, with forecasts for the next. The essays by scholars delve into political, diplomatic, economic, security and energy issues related to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, as well as Iran, Iraq and Yemen. The "Gulf Yearbook" will be published in Arabic and English and will be available in print and digital formats by the end of March.

"The complication of the Iranian nuclear file in light of the faltering diplomatic efforts and the sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council may lead to a military confrontation"

In his opening remarks, the GRC Chairman, Abdulaziz Sager, highlighted important issues that transpired during the last year. "The conference is being held at a time when the Gulf region is passing through a dangerous phase, especially in light of the tragic situation in Iraq, which is akin to a civil war, and holds the potential to disintegrate. There is also the complication of the Iranian nuclear file in light of the faltering diplomatic efforts and the sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council, which may even lead to a military confrontation," he said.

The Gulf Yearbook, GRC Chairman Abdulaziz Sager added, "discerns and analyzes the new developments in the region, but avoids preconceived judgments in interpreting them."

I Security and Defense

In his presentation, Dr. Mustafa Alani, Director of Security and Terrorism Program, said 2006 witnessed a general decline in terrorist activities in the GCC countries largely due to the Saudi preemptive anti-terror efforts against Al-Qaeda cells, but an upsurge in Iraq casualties – a record high of about 3,000 every month, with the number of wounded almost three times that figure. "On an average, there were about 40 kidnapping incidents daily, and the total number detained on security grounds reached about 30,000," he said.

In the defense arena, the academic pointed out that there was considerable increase in defense spending and procurement of weapons: "The GCC countries signed 13 deals worth \$35 billion, most of them with Western countries."

Failure to stabilize the situation in Iraq will have catastrophic consequences for the Gulf region and beyond. On the other hand, the lack of resolve in tackling the Iranian nuclear program would perpetuate the crisis, lead to a possible arms race and invite more foreign interventions in the Gulf," Dr Alani said, adding: "It is certain that 2007 will inherit most of the security problems that engulfed the Gulf region last year."

II Political Developments

Elaborating the findings of the Yearbook, Prof. Hasanain Tawfiq of the Zayed University and an Editorial Board Member at the GRC said that the most important step in the political changes being attempted in the GCC countries during 2006 was the Saudi move to establish a legal framework for political succession. It "demonstrated the unity and stability of the

royal family, and prevents the possibility of future divisions within the ruling elite.”

The role played by the National Assembly in the succession row in Kuwait was highlighted as a demonstration of proactive role that the parliaments are beginning to play in the region.

“Failure to stabilize the situation in Iraq will have catastrophic consequences for the Gulf region and beyond. On the other hand, the lack of resolve in tackling the Iranian nuclear program would perpetuate the crisis, lead to a possible arms race and invite more foreign interventions in the Gulf”

“The same was the case with opposition groups and their relationship with the ruling elites,” he said. The strained relationship between the government and opposition MPs in Kuwait over issues relating to electoral constituencies, corruption charges and other policies in the fields of education, press freedom, settlement of bad debts, and external relations were also cited as examples.

In Bahrain too, the opposition and the government witnessed differences regarding naturalization of expatriates, mechanism and guarantees of fair elections, and “Al-Bandar Report”. “But the elections and the results thereafter proved that the government had shown great flexibility,” Prof. Tawfiq said.

Referring to the UAE’s experiment with elections to the Federal National Council and the forthcoming municipal polls in Qatar, the academic said that they set the stage for progress in the region’s attempts at political innovations and improvements in issues relating to election campaigns, results, transparency, and role of women.

III International Relations

Dr. Christian Koch, Director of International Studies, GRC, said 2006 witnessed a steady deterioration in regional stability: “Despite efforts by the United States to undertake a more realistic assessment of the Iraq situation, Washington did not have any solution that could quell the violence.”

Further, Iran’s sense of confidence and its willingness to take tough positions “raises fears that the Arab Gulf

States could find themselves in a situation that is not of their own making,” he added.

Though ties with both Asia and Europe were expanding, 2006 also underlined that in terms of Gulf security, no other international actor would replace the US in the short or medium term. “While Europe and Asia have expressed their concerns about the regional security environment, neither side is ready to invest in the hard security mechanisms that the Gulf requires.”

IV Economy

In his overview of the GCC economies in 2006, Dr. Eckart Woertz, Program Manager, Economics, said that “the long-term outlook of oil price remains positive, although there might be some soft spots over the next two years due to an economic slowdown in the US and China, and some incremental oil production coming on the market from non-OPEC countries like Brazil. A part of the oil price surge of recent years can be attributed to a decline in spare capacity, but the current OPEC production cuts ironically might lead to lower prices should the market perceive them as a recovery of such spare capacity.”

On the international level, Dr. Woertz stressed the increased importance of the GCC countries in financing the US current account deficit. With the GCC current account surpluses now larger than even China’s, petrodollar recycling and the investment options of GCC countries are naturally followed

GRC Chairman Abdulaziz Sager



closely by the international banking circuit. "As the US deficit continues to mount, the dollar is likely to slide further and the GCC countries need to worry about currency diversification and modification of their currency peg to the dollar," he said.

On the negative side, the problem of rising inflation in smaller Gulf States and the necessity for statistical reform and more accurate data was stressed. In light of the stock market corrections in 2006, Dr. Woertz pointed to the need for improved corporate governance, transparency and broader capital market development. The further development of a GCC bond market and the unification of the local capital markets were crucial, he said, and discussed dangers of overheating and duplication of similar investment and real estate projects. "The

"Despite efforts by the United States to undertake a more realistic assessment of the Iraq situation, Washington did not have any solution that could quell the violence"

Geopolitical tension caused by the Iranian nuclear stand-off could hurt investment sentiment," he warned.

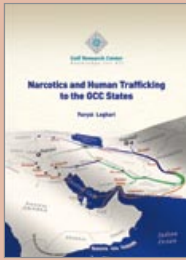
V Environment

On the state of the environment and natural resources, Dr. Mohamed Raouf, Senior Researcher, Environment Program, said that "the GCC countries are very poor in terms of arable lands and water resources, and contribute about 2.4 percent of world CO2 emissions though they have just 0.5 percent of the world's population."

Among the main environmental challenges, he listed the fallout of an accident in or military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, as well as the building and demolition debris associated with the construction boom in the region.

"One would like see a culture of sustainable development developing, where environment and natural resources get maximum attention in every decision and at all levels. This can only be achieved by a policy mix which addresses different environmental issues, assigns a more active role for civil society organizations in decision-making and implementing plans, and encourage public-private partnerships," Dr Raouf added.

The advertisement features the logo of the Gulf Research Center (GRC) at the top center, with the Arabic text "مركز الخليج للأبحاث" and "المعرفة للجميع" below it. The main heading is "Journals and Newsletters Published by GRC". On the left, a list of publications includes "GRC Economics Research Bulletin", "Gulf-Asia Research Bulletin", and "Gulf Monitor". On the right, it lists "The GRC Environment Research Bulletin", "SGCC-EU Research Bulletin", and "GRC Newsletter". The central part of the advertisement displays several overlapping covers of these journals and newsletters, including "Gulf Monitor", "Gulf Research Center", "GCC-EU", and "Gulf Research Center Newsletter". A vertical "Advertisement" label is positioned on the right side of the image.



Narcotics and Human Trafficking to the GCC States

By Faryal Leghari

The geo-strategic location of the GCC States at the crossroads of Asia, Europe and Africa, though advantageous in many ways, exposes them to several disadvantages as well. These states are particularly vulnerable to organized crime syndicates that monopolize narcotics and human trafficking operations, the second and third largest organized crime activities after arms smuggling. The Gulf States are being used as the main transit zone for Afghan narcotics being smuggled to the West and are facing an increasing domestic drug abuse problem. In addition to this, the GCC region is exposed to the growing threat of human trafficking which affects an estimated 700,000-2,000,000 people per year as they are trafficked across state boundaries.

There is a misconception that human trafficking is restricted to helpless women and children, but even men are subjected to it. Akin to modern day slavery, human trafficking also includes forced labor and sexual exploitation. Existing counter-trafficking measures, both regional and global, have several shortcomings. In view of the serious security threats posed by narcotics and human trafficking, the GCC states have taken significant measures which are expected to act as an effective deterrent. This study reviews both human and narcotics trafficking in the GCC, and assesses the measures taken at the state and regional levels. It is imperative for the leadership in these states to grasp the extent of this crisis and plan for the negative fallout they are likely to face. The GCC States need to chalk out a strategy at the regional level to address the resulting security implications.

Language: English



Defense and Regional Security in the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States, 1973-2004 (An Annotated Bibliography)

By J. E. Peterson

This is the most extensive annotated bibliography on the subject of Gulf security available. More than 2200 entries cover such subjects as oil security; the Iran-Iraq War; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and subsequent Kuwait War; post-1991 policy towards Iraq and the Iraq War; and the involvement of the United States, Soviet Union/Russia, Europe, and China in the Gulf, including their bilateral relations with the Gulf states. Regional disputes and bilateral relations between littoral states are examined, as well as regional responses to security issues. The final section comprises coverage of internal aspects of Gulf security, including resurgent

Islamists, Gulf military capabilities and arms transfers, and sections on each of the Gulf states. The text is accompanied by a comprehensive index of personal names and institutions.

Language: English



United States and the Regional and International Dimensions of Iraq's Security

By Ibrahim Khaleel Al-Allaf

After the invasion, US occupation forces were faced with two major problems. First, they had no clear-cut strategy for controlling the post-war situation in Iraq. This was especially the case in the wake of the disbandment of the former Iraqi Army and security forces and the opening of unmonitored borders with neighbouring countries. This led to widespread chaos in the political and security arenas. The second problem was the outbreak of insurgency which took different forms, including both armed and civil resistance to US occupation. Elements of Arab nationalist, Islamic militants and nationalistic Iraqis joined the various insurgency groups, and made it quite difficult for the US to carry out its aims. Having failed to crush the

insurgency, the US made attempts to regionalize and internationalize the security of Iraq by various ways and means. These efforts culminated in the holding of the Sharm Al-Shaikh conference to prevent neighboring countries, especially Iran, from interfering in Iraq's internal affairs, in addition to enhancing control over Iraq's borders to prevent infiltration by potential foreign combatants.

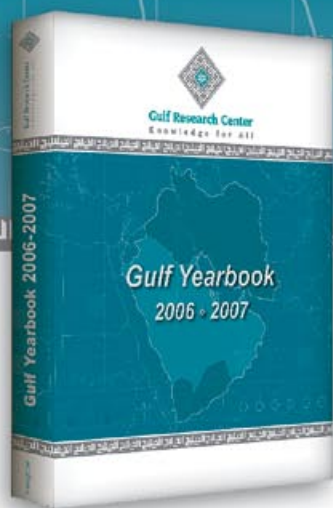
Language: Arabic



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