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DATE: 04-14-2006
CLASSIFIED BY 60309 AUC TAM/MLT/CLS
#1006600 1.4 (C)
DECLASSIFY ON: 04-14-2031

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: IMMEDIATE Date: 4/13/2001

To: All Field Offices Attn: SAC

From: Counterterrorism
Usama Bin Laden Unit/SIOC Cat A

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Case ID #: ~~(S)~~(U) 199N-NY-257503 (Pending)

Title: ~~(S)~~(U) USAMA BIN LADEN
IT-UBL/AL-QAEDA
OO:NY

Synopsis: ~~(S/NF)~~(U) To advise all SACs of continued aggressive and pro-active efforts to counter Usama Bin Laden (UBL) related threats, as evidenced by recent pre-operational planning of key UBL lieutenant and mujahideen facilitator, Zain Al-Abideen, also known as Abu Zubaida.

~~(S)~~ Derived From : Multiple Sources
See Classification Authority Reference Section.
Declassify On: X1

(U) Classification Authority Reference: ~~(S/NF)~~(U) CIR 316/00794-01

Details: ~~(S/NF)~~(U) The Intelligence Community, in a coordinated Community Advisory, estimates that there is a heightened threat of terrorist attacks against U.S. facilities, personnel, and other interests in coming weeks by Sunni extremists associated with Usama Bin Laden. Reporting strongly suggests an increased

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To: All Field Offices From: Counterterrorism.
Re: 199N-NY-257503, 4/13/2001

level of planning and activity may be underway which may presage one or more attacks. Indications of terrorist planning and logistical preparation in recent weeks seem to focus on Saudi Arabia and Israel as possible target locations. U.S. interests in Saudi Arabia, particularly U.S. military interests, remain UBL's preferred target. Al-Qaeda associated personnel also are reported to be stepping up efforts to conduct possible attacks in Israel. The reporting available on Al-Qaeda operations possibly being planned for Israel contains no information on specific targets. The current reporting suggesting the increased level of threat warning is a compilation of [REDACTED]

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(U) ~~(S/NF)~~ The Al-Qaeda organization and associated extremists are known to be searching worldwide for security vulnerabilities which might enable a successful attack against U.S. facilities or personnel. Lack of reporting is not indicative of reduced risk as, in addition to the areas discussed above, Sunni extremists are known to have associates located in many areas worldwide. As demonstrated by the attack on the USS Cole, they are capable of long term surveillance and planning in a target area that enables them to recognize and exploit vulnerabilities, including those that have a limited window of opportunity. Historically, attack planning and execution have taken at least several months.

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(U) ~~(S/NF)~~ Notably, reporting has indicated that Al-Qaeda operatives, including Abu Zubaida, have been involved in operational planning in several different geographic locations. Reports have noted the continued movement of personnel and material between Afghanistan and the Arabian peninsula, as well as between Afghanistan and Europe. Additionally, reporting implied that support activities must be completed in the next few weeks, but did not address specific dates.

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~~(S/NF)~~ Multiple sources indicate that UBL's organization may be in the advanced planning stages of a terrorist attack against U.S. interests in Saudi Arabia. The reporting involves movement of terrorists from Afghanistan following training there. Furthermore, explosives and arms are being smuggled into Saudi Arabia for use against U.S. and Western targets. However, the Intelligence Community has been unable to narrow the list of potential targets. It should be noted that although UBL's stated preference for military targets, other targets could include U.S. diplomatic facilities. Other possible targets could include commercial establishments and/or businesses which would be prominently be identified as American.

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To: All Field Offices From: Counterterrorism
Re: 199N-NY-257503, 4/13/2001

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~~(S/NF)~~ Several Islamic jihadists have had a heightened interest in targeting Israel since the renewal of the Palestinian Intifada in September 2000. In late March 2001, a Gulf Arab extremist in Afghanistan and a colleague in Saudi Arabia made plans to expedite work on a suspicious, probably terrorist-related activity, which might take place in Israel. The Afghanistan-based associate stressed the need for haste, as travel was planned at the end of the month.

(U) ~~(S/NF)~~ Also in early March, Abu Zubaida engaged in apparent operational preparation with colleagues in Europe and Saudi Arabia. In particular, he planned and facilitated the production of photographs of operatives to be used in high quality European passports. The current status of preparation indicates at least several more days, and possibly weeks, are necessary before arrangements for the passports will be completed. Yet more time would be needed after receipt of the passports to complete attack preparations. The use of European passports suggests an attempt to infiltrate personnel into areas where the holders of non-European passports likely would face greater scrutiny. One limiting factor which seems to be evident is funding. Intelligence suggests that preparation is slowed by the lack of available funding to support the operation(s).

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To: All Field Offices From: Counterterrorism
Re: 199N-NY-257503, 4/13/2001

LEAD(s):

Set Lead 1:

(U)

ALL RECEIVING OFFICES

~~(S/OC)~~ Information contained in this communication should be treated as strictly ORIGINATOR CONTROLLED. There should be no dissemination outside of the FBI. It is provided for the information of receiving offices as background only.

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~~(S)~~ Offices are requested to task all resources to include electronic databases and human sources for any information pertaining to the current operational activities relating to Sunni extremism. Recipients are again reminded that the information in this communication should not be used or referred to during discussions with sources/assets.

(U) Any information uncovered through investigations should be provided to FBIHQ, UBLU, immediately via telephone and/or e-mail.

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4