

Case 9: Barot and the Financial Buildings

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Dhiren Barot, a dedicated Islamic extremist, was the leader and chief fabricator of a set of materials rather meticulously documenting the characteristics of several American financial buildings. These had been put together before 9/11 and were occasionally updated later. Working out of London, England, the group, linked, it appears, to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) and al-Qaeda, worked unmolested by police or informants until information surfaced in Pakistan in July 2004 that led to their arrests.

The idea, it seems, was to lay the groundwork for hugely destructive terrorist attacks on the buildings probably by driving limousines full of explosives next to them or into their underground parking areas and then setting them off.

Curiously, the Barot group, even though not under surveillance by police or by informants, seems never to have done anything about their dramatic plot except scout the buildings. An actual attack was never remotely imminent—indeed, the execution was never considered. In particular, they seem to have done nothing whatever about amassing requisite agents in the United States, and they do not seem ever to have explored the difficult issue of obtaining large amounts of explosives nor to have considered in detail the likely effect of an explosion. Finally, no one in the group seems to have had any real expertise with explosives, a concern absolutely vital to the successful carrying out of the grand plan. All this, even though, as Tessa Reinhard reports, they had apparently been given orders by KSM to wreak damage in early 2001.

One analyst cited by Reinhard speculates that they temporarily shelved their plans because they were busy basking in the success of 9/11. But if their goal was to damage the American economy and spread terror, a quick sequel to 9/11 would seem to be highly desirable from their point of view. Moreover, the longer they waited, the more likely the police would uncover the plot—which, in fact, is exactly what happened.

In many respects, the plans seem to echo those of the terrorists who tried in 1993 to topple one of the World Trade Center's towers by exploding a truck bomb in its underground parking garage. Although that bomb created considerable damage, it failed in its cosmic mission and killed few people. An evaluation of that experience would seem to have been vital to anyone exploring anything resembling a repetition.

Moreover, the 9/11 experience, in which major financial buildings were indeed demolished, suggests that the economy in a country like the United States is hardly tied to bricks, steel, and mortar. Tall buildings may be the symbol of big business, but they are hardly its essence.

Without such considerations, Barot's impressively detailed plottings scarcely seem more sophisticated than the scrawled or imagined lists of targets drawn up by the JIS, Sears Tower, or Bronx Synagogue amateurs (Cases 15, 19, and 25).

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1. Overview

On August 3, 2004, a group of men led by Dhiren Barot were arrested by British authorities in London, England. The raid came as a result of extensive investigations which began when a computer technician named Mohammed Naeem Noor Khan was arrested in Pakistan. He was found to possess detailed surveillance of important financial buildings in the United States.¹ While the exact relationship between Khan and the cell have not been officially explained, it appears that the investigation of Khan provided the authorities with leads to many members of the group in Britain.² The British police found them in possession of detailed plans, initially developed in the year before 9/11 and later revised and edited, for attacks on important American financial buildings. Additionally, the men had documents describing a plot to explode limousines full of gas cylinders into underground parking garages in the United Kingdom with the intention of causing high levels of casualties and damages.

Of the members of the cell, two were released without charges, two were later rearrested under suspicion of forged identities, and one was charged with firearms possession.² The remaining eight men—Barot, Nadeem Tarmohamed, Quaisar Shaffi, and five others—were each charged with conspiracy to murder and conspiracy to commit public nuisance through radioactive materials, toxic gases, chemicals, or explosives. It became apparent that the reconnaissance packages had been developed after surveillance by Barot and one or two of the other men. Barot was charged with two further counts related to possession of reconnaissance plans for the Prudential Building in New Jersey, New York Stock Exchange, the International Monetary Fund in Washington, the World Bank Headquarters, and the Citigroup building in New York. In addition, Tarmohamed received an extra charge for possession of reconnaissance plans for the Prudential Building and Shaffi for his possession of a terrorist handbook.¹

In October 2006, Barot pled guilty to conspiracy to murder, and in November he was sentenced to life in prison with a forty year minimum serving time—though this minimum was later reduced to thirty years.³ There is speculation that he agreed to plead in Britain for fear of extradition to the United States. Six of the remaining men pled guilty to conspiracy to cause explosions likely to endanger life in April 2007 and received jail sentences ranging from fifteen to twenty-six years in June. Meanwhile Shaffi—the only man who did

¹ Patrick E. Tyler, Don Van Natta Jr., and Richard A. Oppel, Jr., “British Charge 8 with Conspiracy in a Terror Plot,” *New York Times*, August 18, 2004.

² Richard A. Oppel, Jr., “Threats and Responses: Suspects; London Court Is Told of Wide Investigation,” *New York Times*, August 19, 2010.

³ Sean O’Neill, “Did Al-Qaeda Leader Pass on His Plans from inside Prison?” *The Times*, July 3, 2007.

not plead—was found guilty of conspiracy to murder after a trial that also ended in June, and he received a fifteen year sentence.⁴

2. Nature of the adversary

Dhiren Barot was the primary architect of the plots aimed at both the United States and the United Kingdom. He was born in India in 1971, and shortly after his family moved to the United Kingdom. He was raised in the Hindu faith in Kingsbury, London and attended Kingsbury High School. After he left school in 1988 he earned a City and Guilds qualification in tourism and held various jobs.⁵ Barot’s only known long term employment was as an airline ticketing clerk from 1991 to 1995—otherwise his source of financial support is unknown.⁶

In his twenties Barot converted to Islam, and after hearing a speech by a cleric named Abu Hamza he became particularly fascinated with the idea of Islamist jihad. His genuine devotion to the concept of jihad became especially apparent in 1995 when he went on a self-recruited trip “to Pakistan and later to a terrorist training camp in the disputed territory of Kashmir.”⁵ It is believed that on this trip he attended terrorist training camps and underwent explosives training. Evidence of his terrorist training can be seen in Barot’s successful use of anti-surveillance, coded messages and secret meetings during the plotting process.⁷ He also became very personally involved in the conflict over the Indian occupation in Kashmir during his time in the Middle East.

Both details of this participation and his personal beliefs about Islamist jihad can be found in Barot’s book *The Army of Madinah in Kashmir*, written in 1999 under the pseudonym “Esa Al-Hindi.”⁸ This published work provides a detailed outline of the work of the *mujahid*—Islamic fighters—against the Indian military in Kashmir. Barot writes, “This book is not a historical essay...Rather it is a truthful, first hand witnessed exposure about the more recent affairs which have been transpiring in the state over the past decade at the time of writing.”⁹ Apparently Barot was personally involved in the resistance movement within Kashmir, and gained real world experience with terrorist methods through his work there. It was also during this time that he presumably connected with al-Qaeda, because he became involved as an agent for the organization from the late 1990s to 2000.⁶

More than just describing the situation in Kashmir, Barot’s book provides valuable insight into his personal beliefs. It appears an important motive in his terrorist involvement was his perception of the oppression of Muslim countries and the unnecessary encroachment by Western countries. He

⁴ Home Staff, “Al-Qaeda Bomb Plot Commander's Team Follow Him to Prison,” *The Times*, June 16, 2007.

⁵ Adam Fresco, “How Radical Islam Turned a Schoolboy into a Terrorist,” *The Times*, November 7, 2006.

⁶ “Dhiren Barot.” *Wikipedia*. Accessed October 23, 2010.

⁷ NEFA Foundation, *Target: America, The East Coast Buildings Plot*. Report no. 4, October 2007, 15.

⁸ “Al-Hindi” translates into “the Indian”

⁹ Esa Al-Hindi, *The Army of Madinah in Kashmir*. Birmingham: Maktabah Al Ansaar, 1999, 13.

refers to these oppressive nations as the elite Grand Seven, believing the United States to be the largest problem and labeling it “the spear against al-Islam in modern times”¹⁰ It appears that Barot’s hatred for the United States stems from its international policies, starting with its friendliness toward India. Barot perceives the United States as supporting India in its oppression of Kashmir and consequently of Islamic freedom. He translates this contempt into his broader dislike of American foreign relations.

In general, Barot’s book reveals his deep dedication to jihadist ideals. His writing shows he was an intelligent man. The book and the targeting packages he compiled for the financial building plots and the limousine bombings demonstrate that he was a thorough, meticulous planner. At the time of his arrest, no evidence suggests Barot had chosen an exact plan to execute. But he had developed detailed reports for each of the financial buildings he observed, and the extent of information he provided encouraged the possibility of many different potential plots.

Despite the fact that he embraced violent ideals, Barot did not have any criminal background or past convictions. However, authorities appear to have been aware of his existence and involvement in al-Qaeda. United States authorities knew him as “Issa al-Britani, a veteran Al Qaeda operative who was dispatched by September 11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed to case economic and ‘Jewish’ targets in New York City in early 2001.”¹¹ This information was published in a report written by the September 11 commission, before authorities knew Issa al-Britani was actually a man living in London known as Dhiren Barot. However, the report does outline many of Barot’s travels and suggests authorities already knew some of Barot’s terrorist connections and recognized him as a potential threat, even if they only knew him under his alias.

Along with Barot, seven other men were charged and convicted. They included Nadeem Tarmohamed, Qaisar Shaffi, Mohammed Naveed Bhatti, Abdul Aziz Jalil, Omar Abdul Rehman, Junade Feroze, and Zia Ul-Haq. Since Barot is considered the primary actor in this case, information about the other seven men convicted for their involvement is very limited. The British prosecution revealed that two of the men had previous convictions, “one for resisting or obstructing the police in a case unrelated to the current charges, and another for a driving-related offense six years ago.”¹² Based on the extensive amount of information available on Barot it appears he did not hold one of these convictions, and it is very hard to find which of the other two men these convictions belonged to. Information on how the men became recruited to terrorism or associated with each other was not found.

Within the terrorist cell, Barot was clearly the leader, and “British prosecutors revealed that Feroze, Jalil, and Tarmohamed each held the rank of

¹⁰ Al-Hindi, *The Army*, 127

¹¹ Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, “Bin Laden’s Mystery Man,” *Newsweek*, August 17, 2004.

¹² Oppel, “Threats and Responses.”

‘lieutenant,’ while the remaining individuals were more junior.”¹³ Their roles included contributing expertise, accessing specialist libraries, and supplying vehicles, false identities, and travel documents.¹¹ In other words, they provided important support for Barot’s plans and were committed to assisting in carrying them out.

3. Motivation

Barot’s motivation appears to have been his extreme devotion to the Islamic principles of jihad. He believed the United States had historically oppressed Muslim countries, and that they needed to pay for these wrongs.¹⁴ He recognizes many of these ideas may be perceived as radical in his book, but he counters that fear when he writes:

Maybe we harbor a “fundamental” fear of being labeled as innovators and terrorists even in our own communities by our own brethren in faith. Simply because we wish to wrest power from those who are diametrically opposed to this *Deen* (ideology); but terror works and that is why the believers are commanded to enforce it by Allah.¹⁵

Barot appears to have truly embraced the belief that by fighting against nations who had encroached on Muslim lands, he would be serving Allah to the fullest capacity. Throughout his book he quotes sections from the Quran that echo these sentiments. For example, he quotes the Quran 8:60, “Whatever you shall spend in the Cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and you shall not be treated unjustly.”¹⁵ There is little doubt that Barot’s ascribed motivation was a strict adherence to Islam and especially to the principles of jihad.

Because information on the other seven men is scarce, their motivations are not explicitly known. However, speculation regarding the radicalization of Britons overall points to their perception of injustices committed by Western nations against Muslim lands in general as motivation for adopting extreme Muslim beliefs.¹⁶ It is probably safe to assume that the other seven men shared Barot’s motivation of a devotion to jihad.

4. Goals

The goal for creating extensive targeting packages of the five East Coast buildings seems relatively straightforward. Barot planned on using his detailed surveillance to develop the most destructive, successful plots possible. When speaking on the issue, Deputy Attorney General James Comey said that, at a most basic level, the conspiracy developed by Barot and the other men was aimed at killing as many Americans as possible.¹⁷ Along those lines, by observing multiple buildings, Barot hoped to develop terrorist attacks on each of them to be carried out on the same day. He believed in executing large scale attacks in a multiple of different places at the same time for maximum effect,

¹³ NEFA Foundation, *East Coast Buildings*, 3.

¹⁴ Al-Hindi, *The Army*, 127.

¹⁵ Al-Hindi, *The Army*, 107-108.

¹⁶ Home Staff, “The Al-Qaeda Challenge,” *The Times*, November 10, 2006.

¹⁷ NEFA Foundation, *East Coast Buildings*, 4.

similar to the strategy used by the 9/11 terrorists or by those who carried out the 1998 African embassy bombings.¹⁷

Furthermore, Barot chose his targets very purposefully. The Prudential Building in New Jersey, the New York Stock Exchange, the International Monetary Fund Center in Washington, the World Bank Headquarters, and the Citigroup building in New York are all related in their financial importance on both a national and international scale. Since Barot was a trusted member of al-Qaeda¹⁸ his interest in striking the United States economically makes sense. It follows goals ascribed to by the terrorist organization. Osama Bin Laden himself stated al-Qaeda's strategy of "bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy."¹⁹ He believed attacking the United States economically was one of the most effective ways of weakening their international influence. And Barot's choice of financial buildings of course paralleled Khalid Shaikh Mohammed's choice of the economically important World Trade Centers for the 9/11 attacks.¹⁵ In fact, the two men developed their plans around the same time, and appear to have prescribed to many shared goals and strategies.

It is also worth mentioning Barot's goals for the gas limousine project he had developed for execution in Britain. While there is no evidence he explicitly stated his purposes for drawing the plots of the financial buildings, in his gas limousine targeting package Barot concretely lists his goals in the commission of terror. He labels the primary objectives of the gas limo plan as "to benefit Deen" or ideology and to "inflict mass damage and chaos," while noting the "ease of procurement (for materials), relatively safe for handling, internationally applicable (transferrable)."²⁰

Through Barot's own writing, we can infer that his goals in developing terror packages in general reflected the furthering of jihad and punishment of Western nations seen as imposing on Muslim ideals. It is probably safe to assume his goals in the development of the targeting packages were similar to those of the gas limos project.

5. Plans for violence

The plans for violence were actually just abstract targeting packages encouraging further development of a concrete plot for execution. As mentioned, Barot's ultimate idea was to attack multiple financial buildings on the same day in order to cause the greatest impact. However, the exact methods for accomplishing this were never developed, and all we can work from are the very thorough packages Barot created which detail potential plots for each building.

In the Citigroup Center package, Barot provides background information for the Center, and ranks the main offices by what he judges as their

¹⁸ Fresco, "Schoolboy."

¹⁹ NEFA Foundation, *East Coast Buildings*, 15.

²⁰ Dhiren Barot, "Rough Presentation for Gas Limos Project." Released by the Metropolitan Police Service, published on the web by the NEFA Foundation.

importance.²¹ He also provides facts about the building material, height, number of floors, and attaches pictures and diagrams of the building's layout.²² After a general overview, Barot goes on to describe the building's features in greater detail. For example, he breaks down the outside columns, inside columns, loading bay, atrium, and other structural information about the building. He also considers other potentially useful information, from the obvious (security cameras) to the more obscure (bathroom details).²³ Outside of the specific building information provided, Barot observes and records "Vital Statistics" which describe the building's surrounding area, including fire departments, police stations, airports, religious buildings, traffic signals, escape routes and many more. He looks at a total of twenty-six different categories total that he believes to be necessary for developing a successful plan of attack.²⁴

After thirty-five pages of targeting information, Barot concludes with his personal recommendations for attacking the Citigroup Center. The five plans he suggests are: "park a vehicle next to one of the columns, park a vehicle directly on Lexington Avenue near the front entrance, rent office space inside Citigroup itself, arson (hijacking petrol/oil tankers or anything similar and steering in...), flying object."²⁵ He further explains his perceptions of the benefits and setbacks of each suggestion, to be considered in the future when a final plan is developed.

Barot uses a similar format for the rest of his plots, focusing on background, structure and organization, and vital statistics. He simply adapts the package depending on features of the specific building he is describing. For example, in the case of the twenty-eight page New York Stock Exchange surveillance, Barot hones in on the NYSE Interactive Education Visitor Center. For Barot, the Visitor Center is notable because it is free and attracts many tourists.²⁶ Unlike the Citigroup Center, Barot concludes by choosing what he believes to be the best method in this case—arson.²⁷

Barot presents information on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Headquarters and the World Bank Headquarters in a combined package. After analyzing the IMF data, he recommends "arson at façade or in underground carpark."²⁸ Based on the information released by the Metropolitan Police Service, it does not appear he made specific attack recommendations for the World Bank Headquarters.

Finally, Barot developed information on the Prudential Plaza in Newark, New Jersey. Upon evaluation of all relevant factors, Barot makes detailed recommendations to drive limousines full of explosives into the underground parking garages which would explode directly underneath the main offices. This suggestion very closely mirrors the detailed plans he developed for a gas limos

²¹ Dhiren Barot, targeting package on the Citigroup Center. Released by the Metropolitan Police Service, published on the web by the NEFA Foundation, 5.

²² Barot, Citigroup, 13.

²³ Barot, Citigroup, 22-23.

²⁴ Barot, Citigroup, 25.

²⁵ Barot, Citigroup, 36-37.

²⁶ Barot, Citigroup.

²⁷ NEFA Foundation, *East Coast Buildings*, 6.

²⁸ NEFA Foundation, *East Coast Buildings*, 7.

project in London.²⁹ However, Barot—always thorough—does offer an alternative option to ram trucks “straight in through the glass front entrance into the lobby area.”³⁰

Along with the detailed surveillance packages, Barot recorded video observations of the buildings he wanted to target. Authorities found this footage tacked on to the end of a videotape of the 1995 movie *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, a movie that not coincidentally is about a series of terrorist attacks in New York.³¹

One can only speculate on whether or not Barot’s packages had the potential to actually be executed. However, his meticulous observations and attention to detail provide proof of his extreme commitment to eventual success. The fact that he seems to have covered so many internal and external factors and how they might affect different recommendations both positively and negatively suggests that if he had enough time Barot could have potentially developed a very threatening plan. Especially because he personally had extensive firsthand experience with terrorism and had undergone extensive training. Barot was by no means an amateur and had access to Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and other important figures in al-Qaeda who could have assisted in the plans’ success.³²

6. Role of informants

No informants were involved in facilitating the arrests of Barot and the other seven men. Investigations of computer files after arrests in Pakistan led authorities to suspect a cell in Britain. Their discovery was a result of cooperative international investigations, not informant assistance.³³

7. Connections

Barot had connections to terrorist groups in Pakistan and Kashmir, and is believed to have been a trusted leader within al-Qaeda. According to reports released by the September 11 Commission, Barot received orders from Khalid Shaikh Mohammed “to case economic and ‘Jewish’ targets in New York City in early 2001.”³⁴ There is also evidence that in 2000, he traveled with an important member of al-Qaeda, Tawfiq bin Attash, to Kuala Lumpur at a time when “early plans for the September 11 attacks were discussed.”³² While there is no evidence that Barot had any knowledge of the development of the September 11 plots, he was clearly highly involved within al-Qaeda in other ways.

Furthermore, Barot’s arrest came after a series of arrests which resulted in the discovery of United States plans and the “Gas Limos Project” on computer files found in Gujarat, Pakistan.³⁵ The prosecutor believed that Barot

²⁹ Dhiren Barot, targeting package on the Prudential Plaza, Released by the Metropolitan Police Service, published on the web by the NEFA Foundation, 31.

³⁰ Barot, Prudential Plaza, 32.

³¹ Lee Glendinning, “The videos that sent al-Qaeda plotter to jail,” *The Times*, November 7, 2006.

³² Isikoff and Hossenback, “Mystery Man”

³³ Opiel, “Threats and Responses.”

³⁴ Isikoff and Hosenball, “Mystery Man.”

³⁵ NEFA Foundation, *East Coast Buildings*, 14.

had “returned to Pakistan in early 2004, apparently to seek approval and financing for his plans.”³⁶ However, the arrests of the major actors interrupted the process, and it is unknown whether they would have been approved and/or adopted for execution.

The group of Britons arrested in conjunction with these conspiracies is referred to as a terrorist cell. This, coupled with the necessity to submit the potential attack plans for approval, suggests relatively significant terrorist networking. Barot, especially, had multiple connections to important al-Qaeda leaders.

8. Relation to the Muslim community

Little information is available on the relationship between the eight men and their local Muslim community. While all eight are perceived as dedicated to the ideals of jihad,³⁷ Mosque attendance was essentially irrelevant to this particular case, and information is unavailable about how they related to their local Muslim community.

9. Depiction by the authorities

The authorities in both the United Kingdom and the United States depicted Barot and the other seven men as extremely threatening and dangerous. This perception was reflected in both actions and statements on behalf of authority figures. The British judge denied the men bail due to the “‘nature and gravity’ of the allegations.”³⁵ And when they were sentenced, they received extensive periods of time in jail, ranging from fifteen to forty years,³⁸ despite the fact that the plans were solely in the early planning stages and had not come close to being executed.

Furthermore, the head of London’s counterterrorism police, Peter Clarke, said “If he (Barot) had succeeded, hundreds, if not thousands, could have died.”³⁹ Clarke also said he believed that Barot had received permission to carry out his plans and would do so in late 2004.⁴⁰ However, he is the only person who mentions that Barot had received permission to go ahead with any plans, and at the time of the men’s arrest no materials or concrete plans seemed to be in order—suggesting that Clarke is perhaps exaggerating the threat.

However this sentiment was mirrored during the sentencing, when the judge said he believed Barot “would pose a threat to the public for many years,” and questioned whether it would ever be safe to release him.⁴⁰ And another counter-terrorist source claimed, “His plans, had he not been arrested, would

³⁶ Alan Cowell, “British Court Hears of Qaeda Plans for ‘Black Day’,” *New York Times*, November 7, 2006.

³⁷ Oppel, “Threats and Responses.”

³⁸ Home Staff, “Commander’s Team.”

³⁹ Alan Cowell, “British Muslim Sentenced in Terror Attacks,” *New York Times*, November 7, 2006.

⁴⁰ Sean O’Neill, “Forty years in jail for plotting carnage in the capital” *The Times*, November 8, 2006.

have caused the death of hundreds if not thousands of innocent people...al-Qaeda has lost an experienced, utterly dedicated and vicious terrorist.”⁴¹

Especially in America, critics speculated that reactions by authorities in the 2004 election year were exaggeratedly alarmist and politicized. The announcement of the men’s arrest led to higher security levels in the three cities where the financial buildings were located, and “severely restricted access to the Republican National Convention in New York,” leading Democrats to accuse that “the timing of the announcement, three months before the November election, was meant to bolster President Bush’s standing as a president tough on terrorism.”⁴²

Since no bomb making materials or other concrete signs of imminent attacks were present when the men were arrested, the reaction by authorities may have been slightly alarmist. While the conspiracy may have been revised and edited up until 2004,⁴² it was still just that—a conspiracy. When the eight men were arrested authorities found many reconnaissance plans, but no evidence that any of the men owned materials for carrying out the violence which might suggest an attack was imminent. If left to their own devices, it is very possible that an extremely dangerous plan could have been further developed, as authorities suggested throughout the arrest to conviction. However, their language and actions might seem slightly alarmist considering Barot and his men were by no means in the advanced stages of carrying out a plot.

10. Depiction by the media

If the depiction by authorities could be seen as slightly alarmist, the depiction by the media was somewhat more moderate and responsible. Due to the nature of the plots, there was obviously extensive media coverage in both the United Kingdom and the United States over the course of three years—during which time the men were arrested, charged, convicted, and sentenced. However, for the most part, this coverage comes across as responsible and cognizant of the “big picture,” when analyzing the case.

Media in both countries was generally open and balanced with the amount of information published. In the case of the *New York Times*, most stories included the alarmist reactions by authority figures, but they also countered those statements with facts about the case. For example, one article outlined the fears of the police that thousands could have died, but followed with the statement, “No evidence was presented at trial, however, that Mr. Barot was on the brink of carrying out an attack when he was arrested.”⁴³

In London, *The Times* was also rather responsible in its reporting, but almost too much so. In fact, in Britain “The news media are often strictly restricted by judges to avoid making links with other cases.”⁴⁴ If anything,

⁴¹ Fresco, “Schoolboy.”

⁴² David Johnston and Eric Lichtblau, “3 Indicted in Suspected Plot on East Coast Finance Sites,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2005.

⁴³ Cowell, “British Muslim Sentenced.”

⁴⁴ Jane Perlez and Elaine Sciolino, “Openness Sought in British Terror Trials,” *New York Times*, May 25, 2007.

complaints about the British media were that they did not provide enough information about the case to inform the general public of the threats that it faced. Laws often limited the amount of information allowed to be distributed to the public so much that authorities worried that citizens did not take terrorist threats seriously *enough*. In fact, in order for many of the facts about this case to be revealed, reporting restrictions had to be lifted. Up until 2006, courts had carefully restricted information flow because they were afraid of causing too much fear and prejudice in the trials. However, the police and outside media sources were convinced that the importance of understanding potential threats was too great, and petitioned the British government to allow media to be more open.⁴⁵

11. Policing costs

Many agencies in different countries were involved in the policing and capture of these men. Barot's discovery "began with the arrest of al-Qaeda's communications expert (Naeen Noor Khan) on July 13, 2004."⁴⁶ Pakistani authorities arrested Khan at an airport, and after interrogations, and possibly torture, he leaked the address of a terrorist safe house in Gujarat, Pakistan.⁴⁶ After a violent raid of the house, the authorities found a plethora of information about potential terrorist attacks, one of which was a report, "Rough Presentation for the Gas Limos Project," stored on one of the computer's hard drives. Furthermore, Barot's fingerprints were found on an electronic circuit diagram at the safe house.⁴⁶

In response to the discovery of the extensive information in the safe house, 300 computers were seized and 1,800 items of data storage were searched.⁴⁷ "The complexity of the case also convinced police and security services of the need to expand and improve high-tech investigative capabilities."⁴⁷ Not only did investigations take place on an international scale, but they involved extensive amounts of technological resources.

After the raid in July, "Mr. Barot eluded surveillance teams in Britain...just as evidence emerged in Pakistan that he planned to attack buildings using limousines packed with gas canisters."⁴³ By this time, the United States had become aware that the buildings were targets of attack as well, and a major terrorism alert was issued in America until the British authorities arrested Barot and his men on August 3, 2004.

Due to the fact that the men had been developing plots in both the United Kingdom and the United States, they faced charges in both countries. The United States charged Barot, Tarmohamed, and Shaffi with "conspiracy to use unconventional weapons in the United States and providing material support to terrorists," and officials said they would seek extradition, but British officials "would not even consider extraditing the men until their trial was over."⁴⁸ The arrests occurred in August 2004, but Barot was not sentenced until 2006 and the

⁴⁵ Home Staff, "The face of terror," *The Times*, November 8, 2006.

⁴⁶ Sean O'Neill, "A manual for death and destruction," *The Times*, November 8, 2006.

⁴⁷ O'Neill, "Forty years in jail."

⁴⁸ Johnston, "3 Indicted."

rest of his team did not receive their sentences until 2007. They are currently serving time in prisons in the United Kingdom after seven of the men pled guilty in 2006 and 2007, and one (Shaffi) was convicted in trial.

12. Relevance of the internet

The internet had little to no clear relevance to the networking and intelligence gathering in this case. The men were very wary of potential surveillance of their internet activities, and only communicated electronically if the messages were coded and sent from internet cafes.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the majority of surveillance of all financial buildings was done personally by Barot—at times with the help of Shaffi or Tarmohamed.

That is not to say that Barot refused to look at the internet for further information gathering. He did recognize the usefulness of websites for providing more up to date information about the specific buildings. For example, in the International Monetary Fund targeting package, Barot recommends, “For more information regarding the IMF Center, see their website.”⁵⁰

13. Are we safer?

Personally, I believe that we are definitely safer because these men are behind bars. While I do not believe they posed an immediate threat to any nation at the moment of their arrests, they were very clearly planning to execute attacks in the future. These were not just hypothetical ideas for violence, but rather meticulously thought out plans to commit terrorism.

One might ask the question, would Barot and his men actually have ever followed through with committing their violent attacks? While the men seem to have developed multiple plans, they did not appear to have committed themselves to carrying any of them out over the course of three years. By the time they were arrested in 2004, they had not yet committed violence and were apparently still very far from doing so even though they had been in the process of developing plans since early 2001.

It seems either the lack of concrete action has an explanation, or the men were interested in plotting terrorist attacks, but not committed enough to carry them out. Although we will never know for sure, evidence suggests that there may be an explanation for the delay. At a very basic level, Barot does not appear to have been afraid to become involved with terrorism—he was very committed to the cause. Proof of this commitment can be seen in his involvement in Kashmir and Pakistan, and the jihadist sentiment he preaches in *The Army of Madinah in Kashmir*. Furthermore, Barot was apparently so committed to the ideals of Islam that “authorities were so concerned about his ability to radicalize other prisoners that he was moved out of Belmarsh jail” and transferred to a different prison.⁵¹ Apparently officials worried about his influence over other

⁴⁹ NEFA Foundation, *East Coast Buildings*, 3.

⁵⁰ Dhiren Barot, targeting package on the International Monetary Fund, Released by the Metropolitan Police Service, published on the web by the NEFA Foundation, 16.

⁵¹ Sean O’Neill, “Did al-Qaeda leader pass on his plans from inside prison?” *The Times*, July 3, 2007.

Muslim prisoners, and his desire to convert all other non-Muslims. Barot's aspirations to further the principles of jihad did not end once he went to prison, but instead he encouraged others to take up the cause.

If Barot was truly committed, why didn't he actually follow through with any of his plans? One explanation is that he would have done so soon. He had recently sent out many of his attack proposals, and was presumably awaiting approval—and even funding—from al-Qaeda. Explanations for why he had not moved for this approval sooner posit that

While Barot's cell collected detailed information on U.S. targets prior to 9/11, according to Edmund Lawson, the plans were temporarily "shelved by reason of what the terrorists would have regarded as their 'success' in 9/11. They were not, however, forgotten."⁵²

Supposedly Barot and his men were basking in the success of the September 11 attacks, and merely planned to wait a little while and then strike again. Support can be found in the fact that the men had updated the packages and plans as recently as 2003, and possibly even in 2004.⁵²

While it is impossible to know for certain whether or not Barot and his men would have committed the violent acts they had developed if they had been left to their own devices, I believe that they were committed enough to have carried out at least one of the many attacks they had proposed. Based on Barot's very real background in terrorism and legitimate connections to al-Qaeda, I believe he and his men received appropriate sentences. Who knows what could have happened if they had received approval and funding from al-Qaeda, but I believe they would have followed through on their threats.

14. Conclusions

This case is unique from others discussed in this book. Not only were the men plotting the attacks from out of the country, they also were perhaps the most organized and legitimate group of all the plots since September 11. In fact, their leadership and planning strategies paralleled those of September 11 and Barot had close ties to Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. Unlike almost all of the other cases, these eight men were members of an organized, active terrorist cell and appeared to have strong relations to al-Qaeda. While this case did not involve successful terrorist attacks, neither did all but two other cases. However, Barot and his men had arguably developed the most sophisticated and thorough plans to do so based on their detailed targeting packages and reports. Because of Barot's connections, his group also had the knowledge and capabilities to bring their ideas to fruition.

Barot and his men wanted to bankrupt the American economy by targeting important economic centers.⁵³ Due to the nature of the case the plans never got off of the ground, but one might suspect that attacking five financial buildings would fail to strike an irreversible blow to the American economy. The World Trade Center towers were two important economic buildings, but the United States was able to bounce back economically with time.

⁵² NEFA Foundation, *East Coast Buildings*, 4.

⁵³ NEFA Foundation, *East Coast Buildings*, 15.

The nature of the cell of Britons does fit a description of terrorists developed by the United States Department of Homeland Security: “Terrorists have proven to be relentless, patient, opportunistic, and flexible, learning from experience and modifying tactics and targets to exploit perceived weakness and avoid observed strengths.”⁵⁴ Barot and his team were absolutely relentless, developing multiple plans in both the United States and the United Kingdom to maximize their options. They were patient, developing these plans over the course of years. And most especially they were flexible and opportunistic. The targeting packages developed by Barot and his men provided extensive information which could have been useful for the development of many different plans depending on available resources. Barot even made multiple recommendations in each package for potential attacks, listing their perceived benefits and setbacks. Before their arrests, the men were able to modify their attack depending on which of the many plans they had developed could be the most successful.

This is a very interesting case in that so many primary documents are available to be studied. The Metropolitan Police Service released edited versions of all of the targeting packages and the gas limos publication—all written by Barot himself. These, along with Barot’s book, *The Army of Madinah in Kashmir*, are important sources for details about the terrorist perspectives on the case. From Barot’s writings we are provided valuable insight into the thought process of those truly committed to Islamic jihadist ideals. Anyone interested in further research on this particular case should be directed to these primary sources which have all been published through The NEFA Foundation.

In general, the case of Barot and the other seven men can be seen as an example of successful international investigations leading to the arrest of terrorists before they are able to follow through with any of their plans. At least three different countries, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States all had stakes in the arrest of the men. Speculations that Barot and the others may never have carried out their plans provide little comfort considering the degree of dedication and extensive amount of research put into the many packages they developed, and the scope of the potential targets. Despite any doubts which may exist over whether the men would follow through on their plans, few would disagree that given the circumstances society seems safer with these men behind bars.

⁵⁴ Department of Homeland Security, *National Infrastructure Protection Plan: Partnering to enhance protection and resiliency*. Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2009.