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Terror predictions

Compiled by John Mueller, bbbb@osu.edu

With contributions by Ezra Schriccker

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1974

The problem is immediate. It is comparatively easy to steal nuclear material and step by step make it into a bomb. To fabricate a crude atomic bomb is simple: all one needs is some plutonium oxide powder, some high explosives, and a few things anyone can buy in a hardware store....It is already too late to prevent the making of a few bombs, here and there, now and then....In another ten or fifteen years, it will be too late.

Theodore Taylor

Quoted in John McPhee, *The Curve of Binding Energy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1974).

1990s

President Clinton said there was a 100 percent chance. He said that within the next 10 years, there was a 100 percent chance of a chemical or biological weapon attack in our country.

Richard Clarke

“60 Minutes,” *CBS*, October 22, 2000.

1995 April

In the absence of a determined program of action, we have every reason to anticipate acts of nuclear terrorism against American targets before this decade is out.

Graham Allison, “Must We Wait for the Nuclear Morning After?” *Washington Post*, April 30, 1995. [html](#)

1996 Fall

Proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction does not mean that most terrorist groups are likely to use them in the foreseeable future, but some almost certainly will.

Walter Laqueur, “Postmodern Terrorism,” *Foreign Affairs*, Sep/Oct 1996. [html](#)

2001 October

Tim Russert: What is Osama bin Laden going to be for Halloween?

Senator Lieberman: Dead.

Senator McCain: Dead.

Tim Russert: We’ll be right back.

“Meet the Press,” *NBC*, October 21, 2001.

2001 Fall

The only certainty shared by virtually the entire American intelligence community in the fall of

2001 was that a second wave of even more devastating terrorist attacks on America was imminent.... “They thought they were going to get hit again. They convinced themselves that they were facing a ticking time bomb,” recalled Roger Cressey, who then headed the Terrorist Threats Sub-Group of the National Security Council.... “I firmly expected to get hit again too. It seemed highly probable.”... “Feelings were very raw,” Bradford Berenson, a deputy in the Bush White House Council’s Office, later recalled.... “everyone was expecting additional attacks.” Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), pp. 3-5, 49.

2001

The Administration could decide that al Qaeda was just a nuisance.... Or it could decide that the al Qaeda terrorist group and its affiliates posed an existential threat to the American way of life, in which case we should do everything that might be required to eliminate the threat. There was no in-between.

Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies* (Free Press, 2004), p. 237.

2001 December

The United States is in retreat by the grace of God Almighty and economic attrition is continuing up to today. But it needs further blows. The young men need to seek out the nodes of the American economy and strike the enemy’s nodes.

Osama bin Laden

Quoted in Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (Columbia University Press 2006), p. 290.

2002 May

The multiyear time lag of all prior al Qaeda spectaculars is fundamentally disquieting because it suggests that some monumental operation might have already been set in motion just prior to September 11.... Terrorists seek constantly to identify vulnerabilities and exploit gaps in U.S. defenses.... the struggle against terrorism... is never-ending.

Bruce Hoffman, “Rethinking Terrorism and Counterterrorism Since 9/11,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 25 (May 2002):303-316.

2002 July

U.S. intelligence agencies are watching several groups of Middle Eastern men thought to be part of an infrastructure of as many as 5,000 al Qaeda terrorists and their supporters in the United States... “One [intelligence] estimate is that there are up to 5,000 people in the United States connected to al Qaeda,” one U.S. intelligence official said. The 5,000 figure was reported in classified intelligence reports sent to government policy-makers within the past month and is an increase from earlier estimates.... Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said some of the al Qaeda terrorists who were using Afghanistan as a base have fled to the United States, as well as to other countries. “They clearly have moved some to the United States, some to Yemen, some to Saudi Arabia, a variety of states,” Mr. Rumsfeld told reporters and editors of *The Times* on June 27.... Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Bob Graham, Florida Democrat, stated earlier this year that there are at least 100 al Qaeda operatives in the United States, including “some who have been here for a considerable period of time.” The terrorists have been trained and prepared to carry out attacks “when they were called upon to do so,” Mr. Graham said.

Bill Gertz, “5,000 in U.S. suspected of ties to al Qaeda,” *Washington Times*, July 11, 2002. [html](#)

2002 October

Understand the lesson of New York and Washington raids, which came in response to some of your previous crimes God is my witness, the youth of Islam are preparing things that will fill your hearts with fear. They will target key sectors of your economy until you stop your injustice and aggression or until the more short-lived of us die.

Osama bin Laden

Quoted in “The New Threats from ‘Bin Laden,’” *BBC News*, October 6, 2002. [html](#)

2002 October

FBI officials say that al Qaida cells are embedded in most U.S. cities with sizable Islamic communities. New York, Detroit, New Jersey, Los Angeles, the Virginia area, Florida and cities in North Carolina like Charlotte are all believed to contain cells and their supporters, usually living in run-down sections of urban areas or towns, these officials say. “Information indicates that quite a few al Qaida cells have been established within the continental United States,” an FBI official said. “The cells are up and active.” He added that there had been recent electronic intercepts of communications between some groups that show they are in the United States and “talking to each other.” . . . According to a half-dozen serving and retired federal officials, secret federal intelligence reports put the numbers of al Qaida operatives trained in Afghanistan or elsewhere and currently in the United States at between 2,000 and 5,000.

Richard Sale, “US al Qaida cells attacked,” UPI, October 31, 2002. [html](#)

2002 November

Leave us alone, or else expect us in New York and Washington.

Osama Bin Laden, “Full text: bin Laden’s ‘Letter to America,’” *The Guardian (UK)*, November 24, 2002. [html](#)

2002 November

Former senior counterterrorism official Larry Johnson told UPI he thinks al-Qaeda cell members in the United States may number “around 2,000.”

Quoted in “U.S. Exposes al-Qaeda Sleeper Cells from New York to Florida to L.A.” UPI, November 1, 2002. [html](#)

2003 April

There is a high probability that within two years al-Qaeda will attempt an attack using a nuclear or other weapon of mass destruction.

John Negroponte, Letter dated 17 April 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee, United Nations Security Council, April 17, 2003. [pdf](#)

2003 February

Despite the progress the US has made in disrupting the al-Qaeda network overseas and within our own country, the organization maintains the ability and the intent to inflict significant casualties in the US with little warning. The greatest threat is from al-Qaeda cells in the US that we have not yet identified. . . . Our investigations suggest that al-Qaeda has developed a support

infrastructure inside the US that would allow the network to mount another terrorist attack on US soil...al-Qaeda will probably continue to favor spectacular attacks.

Robert S. Mueller, III, Testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, February 11, 2003.

2003 February

Bin Laden has a sophisticated biological weapons capability.

George J. Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, Testimony, U.S. Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Hearing: Current and Future Worldwide Threats to the National Security of the United States, February 12, 2003

Quoted in Milton Leitenberg, *Assessing the Biological Weapons and Bioterrorism Threat* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005), p. 32. [pdf](#)

2003 March

The Intelligence Community believes that terrorists will attempt multiple attacks against U.S. and Coalition targets worldwide in the event of a U.S led military campaign against Saddam Hussein. A large volume of reporting across a range of sources, some of which are highly reliable, indicates that Al-Qaida probably would attempt to launch terrorist attacks against U.S. interests claiming they were defending Muslims or the Iraqi people rather than Saddam Hussein's regime....There are many recent indications that Al-Qaida's planning includes the use of chemical, biological, and/or radiological materials.

Tom Ridge, "National Threat Level Raised," Statement, March 13, 2003. [html](#)

2003 May

Dan Rather asks CBS News Pentagon correspondent David Martin, "David, how imminent is a possible terror attack to be?" Martin, "Very imminent, Dan, if you believe the intelligence which consists primarily of intercepted conversations among known al Qaeda operatives talking among themselves about something big that is going to happen in the next two or three days."

Brigitte L. Nacos, Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, and Robert Y. Shapiro, *Selling Fear* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 38.

2003 November

Recently, I co-chaired a meeting hosted by CNBC of more than 200 senior business and government executives, many of whom are specialists in security and terrorism related issues. Almost three-quarters of them said it was likely the United States would see a major terrorist strike before the end of 2004. A similar number predicted that the assault would be greater than those of 9/11 and might well involve weapons of mass destruction. It was the sense of the group that such an attack was likely to generate additional support for President Bush. These are serious people, not prone to hysteria or panic—military officers, policymakers, scientists, researchers and others who have studied such issues for a long time. They know that in country after country, elections have held an irresistible lure for terrorists. In Israel, Colombia, Russia, Sri Lanka, Spain, Turkey and elsewhere, recent elections have been disrupted by strikes designed to commandeer the spotlight, to derail democracy, or to discredit or perhaps inflame a political leader.

David J. Rothkopf, "Terrorist Logic: Disrupt the 2004 Election," *Washington Post*, November

23, 2003. [pdf](#)

2003 December

The U.S. intelligence community has received a substantial increase in the volume of threat-related intelligence reports. These credible sources suggest the possibility of attacks against the homeland around the holiday season and beyond. The strategic indicators, including al-Qaida's continued desire to carry out attacks against our homeland, are perhaps greater now than at any point since September 11th, 2001. The information we have indicates that extremists abroad are anticipating near-term attacks that they believe will either rival, or exceed, the attacks that occurred in New York and the Pentagon and the fields of Pennsylvania nearly two years ago. Recent reporting reiterates and this is a constant stream of reporting, that al-Qaida continues to consider using aircraft as a weapon.

Thomas Ridge, "Threat Level Raised," Press Office Release: Department of Homeland Security, December 21, 2003. [html](#)

2003 December

The "October surprise" affecting our election will be...a major terror attack in the U.S.

William Safire, "Office Pool, 2004," *New York Times*, December 31, 2003. [html](#)

2004

"People of America, I remind you of the weighty words of our leaders, Osama bin Laden and Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri, that what took place on September 11 was but the opening salvo of the global war on America The magnitude and ferocity of what is coming your way will make you forget about September 11 The streets of America shall run red with blood . . . casualties will be too many to count and the next wave of attacks may come at any moment."

Adam Gadahn

Quoted in *United States vs. Adam Gadahn*, indictment, unsealed Oct. 11, 2006. [html](#)

2004

It is my considered judgment that on the current path, a nuclear terrorist attack on America in the decade ahead is more likely than not.

Graham Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism* (Times Books 2004), p.15.

2004 August

William Perry, the former secretary of defense, says there is an even chance of a nuclear terror strike within this decade—that is, in the next six years. "We're racing toward unprecedented catastrophe," Mr. Perry warns. "This is preventable, but we're not doing the things that could prevent it."

Nicholas Kristof, "An American Hiroshima," *New York Times*, August 11, 2004. [html](#)

2004 March

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has warned the Texas oil industry of potential attacks by Al Qaeda on pipelines and refineries near the time of the November presidential election, although **added that the information it had received was uncorroborated.**

Terence Neilan, "FBI Warns Texas Oil Companies of Potential Terror Attack," *New York Times*,

March 25, 2004. [html](#)

2004 May

Credible intelligence from multiple sources indicates that Al Qaeda plans to attempt an attack on the United States in the next few months. This disturbing intelligence indicates Al Qaeda's specific intention to hit the United States hard. Beyond this intelligence, Al Qaeda's own public statements suggest that it's almost ready to attack the United States. Just after New Year's, Al Qaeda announced openly that preparations for an attack on the United States were 70 percent complete. After the March 1st attack in Madrid, Spain, an Al Qaeda spokesman announced that 90 percent of the arrangements for an attack in the United States were complete....Several upcoming events over the next few months may suggest especially attractive targets for such an Al Qaeda attack. These events include the G-8 summit, hosted by the United States in Georgia; the Democratic Party convention in Boston this summer; or the Republican Party convention in New York City.

John Ashcroft standing beside Robert Mueller

Transcript: "Ashcroft, Mueller Discuss Terrorist Threat," *Washington Post*, May 26, 2004.

2004 May

We can confidently expect that terrorists will attempt to tamper with our election in November. Michael Ignatieff, "Lesser Evils: What It Will Cost Us to Succeed in the War on Terror," *New York Times Magazine*, May 2, 2004, p. 48.

2004 July

DHS Secretary Tom Ridge, along with a senior intelligence official who joined him at a recent news conference on the subject, confirmed earlier statements that al Qaeda seeks to undermine U.S. elections. The *Washington Post* reported that Secretary Ridge and the intelligence official said they have no "specific" details on time or place of any attack, but the intelligence official also said, "Recent and credible information now indicates that al Qaeda is determined to carry out these attacks to disrupt our democratic processes."

John W. Dean, "Terrorism and the 2004 presidential elections," *CNN*, July 22, 2004. [html](#)

2004 October

It's practically an article of faith among counterterrorism officials that Al Qaeda will try to hit the U.S. homeland in the run-up to the presidential election.

Daniel Klaidman, "Homeland Security: If Terror Strikes the Polls, Al Qaeda attack is expected. So what happens if balloting is disrupted? The electoral chain of command," *Newsweek*, October 18, 2004. [html](#)

2004 November

"You've written no one should be surprised when Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda detonate a weapon of mass destruction in the United States," says Kroft. "You believe that's going to happen?" "I don't believe in inevitability. But I think it's pretty close to being inevitable," says Scheuer. A nuclear weapon? "A nuclear weapon of some dimension, whether it's actually a nuclear weapon, or a dirty bomb, or some kind of radiological device," says Scheuer. "Yes, I think it's probably a near thing."

“60 Minutes,” November 14, 2004

Rebecca Leung, “Bin Laden Expert Steps Forward,” [cbsnews.com](#) [html](#)

2004 November

Bush has argued that bin Laden’s videotape is a sign that bin Laden was too weak to attack before the election. But [Bruce] Hoffman and others say the tape was actually an indication that the months after the election may turn out to be more threatening than the months that preceded it. “Bin Laden, having uttered his warning, will be marshalling his resources to make good on his promise that Americans will not be able to avoid a new 9/11,” Hoffman says. “It’ll be a race against time.”

Siobhan Gorman, “War on Terror, Phase 2,” *National Journal*, November 20, 2004, p. 3534. [pdf](#)

2004 December

At the margin, 9/11 could join the Trojan Horse and Pearl Harbor among stratagems so uniquely surprising that their very success precludes their repetition....al-Qaeda’s best shot may have been exactly that.

Russell Seitz, “Weaker Than We Think,” *American Conservative*, December 6, 2004. [html](#)

2004 December

There is little doubt that al Qaeda intends to and can detonate a weapon of mass destruction on U.S. soil.

Warren B. Rudman, Stephen E. Flynn, Leslie H. Gelb, and Gary Hart, “Our Hair Is on Fire,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 16, 2004. [html](#)

2005 February

At a conference on the future of al Qaeda sponsored by Los Alamos National Laboratory last month, I posed a dark question to 60 or so nuclear weapons scientists and specialists on terrorism and radical Islam: How many of them believed that the probability of a nuclear fission bomb attack on U.S. soil during the next several decades was negligible—say, less than 5 percent? Amid somber silence, three or four meek, iconoclastic hands went up.

Steve Coll, “What Bin Laden Sees in Hiroshima,” *Washington Post*, February 6, 2005. [html](#)

2005 January/February

Speculating about the view from 2011, Richard Clarke, in a piece of “futuristic fiction” about terrorism in the United States published in early 2005, predicted, or anticipated, shootings at casinos, campgrounds, theme parks, and malls in 2005, bombings in subways and railroads in 2006, missile attacks on airliners in 2007, and devastating cyberattacks in 2008.

Richard Clarke, “Ten Years Later,” *Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2005. [html](#)

2005 February

Any attack of any kind could occur at any time.

James Loy

Quoted in Dana Priest and Josh White, “War Helps Recruit Terrorists, Hill Told,” *Washington Post*, February 17, 2005.

2005 July

“Anybody—any one of these security experts, including myself—would have told you on September 11, 2001, we’re looking at dozens and dozens and multiyears of attacks like this. It hasn’t been quite that bad.”

Rudy Giuliani

In “Giuliani: ‘Have to be relentlessly prepared,’” *CNN*, July 22, 2005. [html](#)

2005 July

Two weeks ago, Sen. Richard Lugar (R., Ind.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, released the results of an ambitious survey of arms experts. The study was conducted in late 2004 and early 2005. On average, the 85 respondents predicted a 29.2% chance of a nuclear attack in the next decade, with 79% saying that such an attack was more likely to be carried out by terrorists than by a government. Sen. Lugar said in the report that “the estimated combined risk of a WMD attack over five years is as high as 50%. Over 10 years this risk expands to as much as 70%.”

Carl Bialik, “Pondering the Chances Of a Nuclear Attack,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 7, 2005. [html](#)

2005 August

“As for you, the Americans, what you have seen in New York and Washington, what losses that you see in Afghanistan and Iraq, despite the media blackout, is merely the losses of the initial clashes. If you go on with the same policy of aggression against Muslims, you will see, with God’s will, what will make you forget the horrible things in Vietnam and Afghanistan.

Ayman Al Zawahiri

“Extracts from the Zawahiri Tape,” *CNN*, August 4, 2005. [html](#)

2005 September

The terrorists here would be a carefully husbanded resource. I believe in the U.S. we’ll see few attacks, spread farther apart, but catastrophic in nature.

Stephen E. Flynn

Quoted in Scott Shane, “London, Madrid, Bali. And Yet Nothing Here,” *New York Times*, September 11, 2005. [html](#)

2005 November

Corey Caldwell, spokeswoman for the Association of Flight Attendants, which has more than 46,000 members. “When weapons are allowed back on board an aircraft, the pilots will be able to land the plane safety but the aisles will be running with blood.”

Sara Kehaulani Goo, “TSA Would Allow Sharp Objects on Airliners,” *Washington Post*, November 30, 2005. [html](#)

2006 February

The application of these newly learned capabilities to urban centers in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and elsewhere could result in a precipitous escalation of bloodshed and destruction, reaching into countries and regions that hitherto have experienced little, if any, organized jihadi violence. While the threat to Europe is perhaps the most serious, the danger may

be greatest in Saudi Arabia: the country from which the overwhelming majority of jihadis (61 percent) fighting in Iraq hail.

Bruce Hoffman, Testimony presented to the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, "Combating Al Qaeda and the Militant Islamic Threat," February 2006. [pdf](#)

2006 March-April

What is the likelihood of a terrorist attack on the scale of the 9/11 attacks occurring again in the United States in the following time frames? Is it No chance, Very unlikely, Somewhat unlikely, Somewhat likely, Very likely, or Certain? By the end of 2011

- No chance

5 Very unlikely

16 Somewhat unlikely

41 Somewhat likely

29 Very likely

9 Certain

Survey of top 116 top foreign policy experts

Terrorism Survey Frequency Questionnaire, Center for American Progress, 2006. [pdf](#)

2006 May

Instead of talking 3,000 casualties, we are going to be talking hundreds of thousands, or millions of casualties....I think we are still extremely vulnerable. I think we are facing a huge threat....The big one is coming, but it's not an earthquake. It's a terrorist attack.

Michael Intriligator

Quoted in Troy Anderson, "Terror May Be At Bay at Port," *Daily News of Los Angeles*, May 18, 2006.

2006 June

RUSS MITCHELL, anchor: Ever since 9/11, the United States has been on alert for another terror attack. And now, after Canadian authorities broke up a terror plot over the weekend, US officials believe an attack is likely here and they say it could happen soon. But unlike 9/11, the officials say they expect the next attack to be the work of home grown terrorists. Jim Stewart in Washington has this CBS News exclusive. Jim:

JIM STEWART: Russ, US officials believe the Canadian arrest and three recent domestic incidents in the United States are evidence the US homeland will be hit again soon, and privately they say they'd be surprised if it didn't come by the end of the year....The next attack here officials predict will bear no resemblance to 9/11. The casualty toll will not be that high, the target probably not that big. We may not even recognize it for what it is at first, they say, but it's coming. And of that they seem very certain. Russ:

MITCHELL: Jim, do authorities believe these people who could be plotting these future attacks are already in the US?

STEWART: They believe that the likelihood is that these people are already here, but there has been a disturbing new development overseas in Iraq, where they have noted that several people now who volunteered to go and commit jihad, or war against the United States, there have been told to wait, stay where you are for possible developments in the United States or Europe. Russ:

MITCHELL: Jim Stewart in Washington. Thank you very much.
“US officials believe home grown terror attack likely,” *CBS Evening News*, June 5, 2006.

2006 October

Intelligence experts fear the UK is a target as never before, with extremists intent on carrying out a huge spectacular, on the scale of the US atrocities in 2001. “They viewed 7/7 as just the beginning,” said one senior source. “Al-Qaida sees the UK as a massive opportunity to cause loss of life and embarrassment to the authorities.” A second source agreed: “Britain is sitting at the receiving end of an al-Qaida campaign.”... “It’s like the old game of Space Invaders,” said one senior counter-terrorism source. “When you clear one screen of potential attackers, another simply appears to take its place.”

Rosie Cowan and Richard Norton-Taylor, “Britain now No 1 al-Qaida target—anti-terror chiefs” *The Guardian (UK)*, October 18, 2006. [html](#)

2006 November

British authorities are tracking almost 30 terrorist plots involving 1,600 suspects, the head of Britain’s domestic spy agency said.... In a speech released by MI5 Friday, Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller said her agency had foiled five major plots since the July 2005 transit bomb attacks in London.... Ms. Manningham-Buller said officials were “aware of numerous plots to kill people and to damage our economy.” “What do I mean by numerous? Five? 10?” she said. “No, nearer 30 that we currently know of.” She added that, “Today we see the use of homemade improvised explosive devices, but I suggest tomorrow’s threat will include the use of chemicals, bacteriological agents, radioactive materials and even nuclear technology.”

Jill Lawless, “Head of Britain’s MI5 Spy Agency Says it is Tracking 30 Potential Terrorist Plots,” *Associated Press*, November 10, 2006. [html](#)

2006 December

The chances of an attempted terror attack over the Christmas period are “highly likely”, John Reid has said. The home secretary told GMTV’s Sunday show the terrorist threat facing the UK was “very high indeed” although he did not think an attack was inevitable. “We know the number of conspiracies of a major type are in the tens—30 or round about that,” he said. “Christmas attack ‘highly likely’,” *BBC News*, December 10, 2006. [html](#)

2006 December

Last week Sir Ian Blair, the head of the Metropolitan Police, described ‘the threat of another terrorist attempt’ as ‘ever present’ adding that ‘Christmas is a period when that might happen’. ‘It is a far graver threat in terms of civilians than either the Cold War or the Second World War,’ he said. ‘It’s a much graver threat than that posed by Irish Republican terrorism.’ American security sources told *The Observer* that the threat was ‘sky high’. The DGSE report also mentions an al-Qaeda project for a ‘wave of attacks in an unidentified European country planned and run from Syria and Iraq’. The period of highest risk is said to be from September 2006 to April 2007.

Jason Burke, “Chunnel Tunnel is Terror Target,” *The Observer (UK)*, December 23, 2006. [html](#)

2007 January

The level of the terror threat to the UK is assessed by the government's Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre. The current threat is set at the second highest level, "severe", which means an attack is considered "highly likely".

"MI5 to send e-mail terror alerts," *BBC News*, January 9, 2007. [html](#)

2007 February

Rather than being degraded to the point that it can threaten only softer, more accessible targets like hotels and mass transit, Al Qaeda is very much sticking with its classic playbook of simultaneous, spectacular strikes against even hardened objectives. In other words, we have more to fear from this resilient organization, not less.

Bruce Hoffman, "Remember Al Qaeda? They're Baaack," *LA Times*, February 20, 2007. [html](#)

2007 March

New York City's counterterrorism chief said yesterday he wakes every morning braced for another terrorist attack—most likely from satchel bombs blown up near-simultaneously in the city's subway.

Richard Falkenrath quoted in Carol Eisenberg, "Waking up to terror," *Newsday*, March 7, 2007.

2007 April

Is al-Qaeda in the United States right now?

Tenet: My operational presumption is that they infiltrated a second wave or a third wave into the United States at the time of 9/11. Can I prove that to you? No. It's my operational intuition.

George Tenet

"60 Minutes," *CBS*, April 29, 2007.

2007 May/June

Al Qaeda is a more dangerous enemy today than it has ever been before.... Osama bin Laden has mounted a successful propaganda campaign to make himself and his movement the primary symbols of Islamic resistance worldwide. His ideas now attract more followers than ever.... Bin Laden might also be nurturing bolder plans, such as exploiting or even triggering an all-out war between the United States and Iran.... If al Qaeda survives, however, sooner or later it will attack the U.S. homeland again.

Bruce Riedel, "Al Qaeda Strikes Back," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2007. [html](#)

2007 July

A secret U.S. law enforcement report, prepared for the Department of Homeland Security, warns that al Qaeda is planning a terror "spectacular" this summer, according to a senior official with access to the document. "This is reminiscent of the warnings and intelligence we were getting in the summer of 2001," the official told ABCNews.com.

Brian Ross, Rhonda Schwartz, and Richard Esposito, "Secret Document: U.S. Fears Terror 'Spectacular' Planned," *ABC News*, July 1, 2007. [html](#)

2007 July

"I believe we are entering a period this summer of increased risk," Chertoff told the Tribune's editorial board in an unusually blunt and frank assessment of America's terror threat level.... And

he indicated that his remarks were based on “a gut feeling” formed by seasonal patterns of terrorist attacks, recent Al Qaeda statements and intelligence he did not disclose.

E. A. Torriero, “U.S. Security Chief Warns of Rising Risk: Chertoff Cites Worry over Summer Attack,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 11, 2007. [html](#)

2007 July

Key Judgments: We judge the US Homeland will face a persistent and evolving terrorist threat over the next three years....Although we have discovered only a handful of individuals in the United States with ties to al-Qa’ida senior leadership since 9/11, we judge that al-Qa’ida will intensify its efforts to put operatives here. As a result, we judge that the United States currently is in a heightened threat environment....We assess that al-Qa’ida’s Homeland plotting is likely to continue to focus on prominent political, economic, and infrastructure targets with the goal of producing mass casualties, visually dramatic destruction, significant economic aftershocks, and/or fear among the US population....We assess that the spread of radical—especially Salafi—Internet sites, increasingly aggressive anti-US rhetoric and actions, and the growing number of radical, self-generating cells in Western countries indicate that the radical and violent segment of the West’s Muslim population is expanding, including in the United States....We assess that this internal Muslim terrorist threat is not likely to be as severe as it is in Europe, however.

“National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland,” July 2007. [pdf](#)

2007 July

We believe the United States is long overdue for a jihadist attack. Like U.S. Homeland Secretary Michael Chertoff, we believe the elements are in place for such an attack in the near future. Fred Burton and Scott Stewart, “Al Qaeda and the Strategic Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” *Stratfor*, July 25, 2007. [html](#)

2007 July

In recent weeks a chorus of US officials have talked publicly about their concern that Al Qaeda is reemerging as a threat to the US. On July 15, National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley in a broadcast interview said that recently he had seen some terrorism developments that are a “source of concern.” Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff previously have issued similar warnings. “The organization is resilient and continues to plot attacks against high-profile targets with the objective of inflicting mass casualties,” said Thomas Fingar, deputy director of National Intelligence for Analysis, at last week’s House hearing.

Peter Grier, “Why US sees Al Qaeda as a growing threat,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 17, 2007. [html](#)

2007 September

reports from U.S. intelligence sources that al-Qaeda is marshaling its reconstituted forces for a spectacular new attack on the United States

Bruce Hoffman, “Scarier Than Bin Laden,” *Washington Post*, September 7, 2007. [html](#)

2007 November

Frances Fragos Townsend, who announced yesterday that she is leaving her job as White House

homeland security adviser, said the United States must be on guard against the threat of a terrorist attack tied to next year's election.

Holly Rosenkrantz, "Nation Is Urged To Be On Alert for '08 Attack," *Boston Globe*, November 20, 2007. [html](#)

2008 June

[Bruce Hoffman] argues that Al Qaeda is alive, well, resurgent and more dangerous than it has been in several years. In his corner, he said, is a battalion of mainstream academics and a National Intelligence Estimate issued last summer warning that Al Qaeda had reconstituted itself in Pakistan."....Dr. Hoffman's principal argument relies on the re-emergence of Al Qaeda, starting in 2005 and 2006, along the Afghan-Pakistan border. There is empirical evidence, he says, that from that base, Al Qaeda has been "again actively directing and initiating international terrorist operations on a grand scale."

Elaine Scioloino and Eric Schmitt, "A Not Very Private Feud Over Terrorism," *New York Times*, June 8, 2008. [html](#)

2008 October

Dame Eliza Manningham-Butler, the former director general of MI5, often said that in all likelihood al-Qaeda will detonate a "dirty bomb" in a western capital in the near future.

Sean Raymond, "Terror Threat Remains", *The Observer (UK)*, October 8, 2008.

2009 February

Former Vice President Dick Cheney warned that there is a "high probability" that terrorists will attempt a catastrophic nuclear or biological attack in coming years, and said he fears the Obama administration's policies will make it more likely the attempt will succeed...."I think there's a high probability of such an attempt. Whether or not they can pull it off depends whether or not we keep in place policies that have allowed us to defeat all further attempts, since 9/11, to launch mass-casualty attacks against the United States."

"Report: Cheney Warns of New Terrorist Attacks," FOX News, February 4, 2009. [html](#)

2010 January

God willing, our raids on you will continue as long as your support for the Israelis continues.

Osama bin Laden

Quoted in Jason Keyser, "In Audio Message, bin Laden Says He Endorsed December 25 Airline Bomb Plot," *The Washington Post*, January 25, 2010. [html](#)

2010 February

America's top intelligence official told lawmakers on Tuesday that Al Qaeda and its affiliates had made it a high priority to attempt a large-scale attack on American soil within the next six months. The assessment by Dennis C. Blair, the director of national intelligence...At Tuesday's hearing, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Democrat of California and chairwoman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, asked Mr. Blair to assess the possibility of an attempted attack in the United States in the next three to six months. He replied, "The priority is certain, I would say" — a response that was reaffirmed by the top officials of the C.I.A. and the F.B.I.

Mark Mazzetti, "Senators Warned of Terror Attack on U.S. by July," *New York Times*, February

2, 2010. [html](#)

2011 May

The triumphal news of Bin Laden's killing yesterday has also called into question—if not shattered—much of the conventional wisdom about al-Qaeda's leader and the movement he founded.... We can certainly expect acts of retribution, vengeance, frustration and punishment directed against the U.S. in the coming weeks and perhaps months....The potential for these smaller, independent-type of operations to provide a potential smoke-screen for a more serious attack, perpetrated by core al-Qaeda, cannot be discounted. This would be a useful way of distracting our attention from the potentially larger, more serious, threats by preoccupying and consuming the attention of intelligence and law enforcement and the military on lower level threats.

Bruce Hoffman, "Bin Laden's Death Shatters Conventional Wisdom," *The National Interest*, May 2, 2011. [html](#)

2011 May

The lack of "spectaculars" should not be seen as a sign of a weakening al Qaeda, but rather as an indicator of a shift in strategy. Watch for more small strikes in the weeks and months ahead, launched around the world.

John Arquilla, "The New Seeds of Terror," *Foreign Policy*, May 10, 2011. [html](#)