Abu Musab al-Zarqawi
and
Al-Qaida in Iraq

The Overall Classification of this Briefing is

SECRET//NOFORN
Abu Musab al-Zarqawi

- Background
  - In Afghanistan/Pakistan late 1980s/early 1990s
  - Detained in Jordan in mid-1990s
  - Returned to Afghanistan/Pakistan, ran training camp
  - Late 2001 fled to Iran, established base in N. Iraq
  - Traveled throughout region in 2002/2003, in Iraq since mid-2003

- Pre-OIF involvement in several terrorist operations
  - Toxins network/operations in Europe/Middle East

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (aka Ahmed Fadhil al-Khalaliyah)
Nationality: Jordanian of Palestinian descent
DOB: 30 Oct 1966
Al-Zarqawi Merger With al-Qaida

- Al-Zarqawi is the key face of jihad in Iraq
  - Executed more high-profile attacks in Iraq than Usama Bin Ladin has worldwide
  - Capability and intent to conduct operations outside of Iraq

- Publicly pledged allegiance to Bin Ladin in October 2004
  - Changed group name to al-Qaida in Iraq
  - Formal alignment with bin Ladin will augment capabilities of jihadists in Iraq and Afghanistan/Pakistan
  - Increases likelihood transnational operations will be conducted by veterans of Iraq jihad

- Iraq jihad will continue after al-Zarqawi is captured/killed
  - Network has proven adaptability and resiliency
  - External support nodes will remain critical
Al-Qaida in Iraq: Goals and Strategy

- Al-Zarqawi strategy detailed in letter to Bin Ladin in Jan 2004
  - Window of opportunity for jihad battle
  - Inciting war with Shia key to prolonging instability, motivating Iraqi and foreign Sunni extremists

- Iraq elections have not altered al-Qaida goals, strategy, target set
  - Al-Zarqawi views Iraqi Government as a US proxy, "apostate regime"
  - Targets include MNF-I, Iraqi Government, Shia, secular Kurdish leaders, elements supporting reconstruction efforts, and international organizations
  - Focusing attacks against Iraqi Government/security forces and MNF-I to hinder stability

- Propaganda is window into jihadist goals
  - Al-Zarqawi stated jihad in Iraq will continue until Islamic state established
  - Bin Ladin reference to Iraq as a "decisive war"
Al-Qaida in Iraq: Outlook for 2005

- Resilient despite major set-backs
  - More than 50 significant al-Zarqawi associates killed/captured since 2003
  - Loss of al-Fallujah as main operating base in late 2004
  - Coalition actions force network to continuously adapt

- Continued high operational/propaganda tempo
  - 2005 pace of attacks, propaganda higher than 2004 averages
  - Percentage of jihadist attacks small, but have disproportionate effect

- Five key strengths
  - Percentage of acquiescence/support from local populace, mergers with Iraqi extremist groups ensure freedom of movement
  - Mix of centralized/decentralized C2 fosters efficient, flexible attack plans
  - Propaganda garners sustained external support
  - Logistical pipelines replenish losses
  - Operatives able to quickly assume new responsibilities after key personnel losses

- Al-Zarqawi as key driver of plots outside Iraq
  - Support for multiple operations – Europe, Jordan, Lebanon, and Arabian Peninsula, including possible CONUS attack