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Saudi Compound Bombings (SCB) – v1.4  
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**NOTE:**

THIS IS A DYNAMIC WORKING DOCUMENT AND SUBJECT TO FREQUENT CHANGE. IT IS BASED ON CURRENT INTELLIGENCE. NOT ALL INFORMATION HAS BEEN VERIFIED.

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**POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- The coordination needed to conduct four near-simultaneous bombings of which at least three were vehicular bombings in which the attackers used a second vehicle of shooters to breach the gate points strongly to either direct al-Qaeda involvement or strong sponsorship.
- The attacks may motivate individual extremists or related groups to carry out individual actions in solidarity.
- The possibility of another significant strike timed to coincide with this attack cannot be ruled out. An operational cell tasked to execute an attack simultaneously may decide to wait X hours in order to achieve a higher likelihood of success.
- Based upon al-Qaeda's last three claimed operations in October and November of 2002 (the Limburg, Failaka and Mombasa), it will, typically through its Political Bureau, issue a claim of responsibility within 4-10 days if it was directly involved.
- The attack is consistent with al-Qaeda messaging during the past 11 months, which has placed an emphasis on betrayal by countries such as Saudi Arabia and laid the foundation for a justification for executing attacks there.
- Osama bin Laden sees civilians as legitimate targets. His logic behind this is that in order to participate in jihad you don't only take part by taking up arms. People donating money and other support are taking part in jihad just as the frontline fighters are. According to this logic, bin Laden sees American tax payers as participating just as much in the fight as US soldiers.
- Al-Qaeda has sought to bridge the CBRN gap by executing conventional attacks in a style and on a scale never before seen. This allows the group to continually grab attention unlike any other group before while still waiting to execute an attack using CBRN until it feels fully confident in its ability to do so. The most common modifiers used by al-Qaeda in this regard are simultaneous strikes against multiple targets as geographically removed

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as another country. That being said, al-Qaeda has looked at mixing the above techniques into traditional attacks as a force multiplier of sorts. For example, mixing chemical agents in with an explosive, using radioactive material in traditional explosive devices to create a "dirty device." We need to keep this in mind. Also, if a biological agent or radiological component is used, you can't see what you can't see. Without the appropriate detection equipment you can't tell if there is anything else you should be concerned about. The obvious and clear as day technique does not preclude a second more covert technique from being used in conjunction.

- While operations by al-Qaeda and its affiliates frequently occur during business hours, this attack was staged during the window when the greatest number of people were likely to be at home in the target zone. Chechen rebels used similar timing when attacking apartment complexes in Russia.

- The average planning/execution cycle for major al-Qaeda operations is 1-3 years.

- This event will provide renewed energy to Muslim extremist groups in terms of both fund raising, recruiting and morale.

- The majority of the Muslim extremist groups are seeking the creation of Khilafah or Islamic state. There are efforts currently underway to establish this in Chechnya, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other places around the world. This is nothing short of a holy struggle in the extremist's eyes and they will not stop until all of the kufr, infidels, have been beaten down and destroyed. This is not a group fighting for a few political demands.

- Terrorists only have to get lucky once, we have to get lucky every time.

- You simply cannot prevent every attack of terrorism from occurring. All you can do is stack the odds in your favor.

- Just because you've destroyed one cell doesn't mean you've done anything to disrupt another cell's ability to operate.

- Much like we learned drug dealers are not just a bunch of thugs standing on a street corner, we also need to understand that Muslim extremists are not just a group of mindless fanatics running around with explosives. The image of an Afghan mujahideen fighter standing with a Kalishnikov slung over his shoulder in a barren Afghan desert and all the stereotypes that go with it will forever skew our understanding of the threat. Until we come to grips with the fact that that individual can also fly a plane, send secure communications, conduct complicated intelligence operations, run a high-profile business, hack into computer systems and otherwise blend into every level of our society, we don't stand a chance at defeating our opponent. If you don't understand your enemy, you will be forever doomed to underestimate their ability.

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## **BOMBING SUMMARY DETAILS**

- At least 34 people were killed and 194 injured (some conflicting reports have the death toll as high as 91). A partial breakout of the dead is 8 Americans, 3 Philippine, 2 Australian, 7 Saudi, 2 Jordanian, 1 Lebanese, 1 British, 1 Irish and 1 Swiss national. One of the dead is unidentified. Nine of the attackers were killed. More than 40 of those injured are Americans. Casualty numbers are still preliminary.
- The bodies of nine suspected suicide bombers were recovered. An unknown number of bodies were found in the vehicular bombs, according to Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayif bin Abd-al-Aziz. According to the Minister one of the vehicular bombs had three bodies in it. According to Saudi authorities a total of 15 attackers took part in the strikes. All of the 15 are believed to be Saudis.
- The compounds housed American, British, Italian, French and other Western nationals as well as some Saudis.
- There are conflicting reports ranging from between 2315-0200 local time on 12/13 May [2100-2300 GMT 12 May] for exactly when the attacks occurred, however, all reporting points to near-simultaneous strikes with the exception of the bombing of the Saudi Maintenance Company which appears to have occurred shortly after. According to Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayif bin Abd-al-Aziz two of the compound attacks occurred by 0130 local time.

## **BOMBING – AL-HAMRA – OASIS VILLAGE**

- Between 2315-0200 local time on 12/13 May [2100-2300 GMT 12 May] a Toyota sedan was driven up to the gate with a GMC Suburban truck following behind. Shooters dismounted from the Suburban and engaged the guard post. After shooting and injuring one guard they managed to breach the gate. Both vehicles were driven into the center of the compound with the shooters engaging anything they came across on their way. Once the vehicles reached a housing area south of the main recreation and sports complex, a suicide bomber detonated the explosive device in the GMC Suburban.
- The compound is primarily occupied by Americans and other Westerners.
- At least 10 people were killed
- Mohammad al-Blaihed, 35, the son of the Riyadh governor was among those killed.

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## **BOMBING – CORDOVAL COMPOUND – VINNELL CORPORATION**

- Between 2315-0200 local time on 12/13 May [2100-2300 GMT 12 May] a vehicular bomb was driven through the gates of the Cordoval housing compound in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and was detonated.
- At least eight people were killed
- In the attack on the Vinnell compound, gunmen reportedly took 30 seconds to a minute to eliminate a security post. The shooters rammed the compound gate with a Ford Crown Victoria sedan, which then became stuck in the gate. Shooters in a Dodge Ram pickup truck then dismounted and engaged the guard post with small arms. All the Saudi National Guard forces at the guard post were killed. The shooters managed to force open the gate and drove the Dodge Ram into the compound next to a four-story residential building where its explosive payload was detonated.
- Initial estimates suggest 400-500 kilograms of high explosives were used in the attack.
- The Vinnell compound is a residential and office facility used by employees of Vinnell Arabia, a subsidiary of Northrop Grumman.
- The compound was located on a Saudi National Guard controlled facility.

## **BOMBING – JEDAWAL COMPOUND – LUCENT TECHNOLOGIES**

- Just prior to 2315 local time on 12 May the attackers made an assault on the Jedawal Compound in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The shooters successfully penetrated the first watch post at the rear corner of the compound where they killed one guard. The assault team then advanced to the next gate, which was to a service entrance at the back of the compound. At this point the assault team and suicide bombers failed to breach the gate and detonated the device at the gate at 2315 local time.
- A Saudi Air Force Guard, security guard and support staffer were killed.
- The Jedawal compound suffered the least damage of the three attacked.
- The explosives and arms cache seized by Saudi authorities in connection with the Riyadh cell was found 400 meters from the compound.

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## **BOMBING – SAUDI MAINTENANCE COMPANY (Siyanco)**

- Early on the morning of 13 May an explosive device reportedly detonated at the headquarters of the Saudi Maintenance Company (Siyanco). The company is a joint venture between Frank E. Basil, Inc. of Washington and local Saudi partners.
- No casualties were reported.

## **RIYADH AL-QAEDA CELL**

- On 6 May, Saudi security forces engaged a number of gunmen believed to be part of an al-Qaeda cell of 19 people in Saudi Arabia. All of the gunmen escaped from the firefight. Saudi security forces launched a manhunt for the 19 suspects and announced a reward for information leading to their capture.
- On 8 May, Saudi authorities seized about 829 lbs of RDX, 55 grenades, rifles, ammunition, computers, communications equipment and cash in connection with the cell. The location of where the material was seized 400 meters from the Jedawal compound.
- The Saudi Interior Minister said all 19 suspected terrorists being were "known agents of al-Qaeda."
- The 19 are comprised of 17 Saudis, a Yemeni and an Iraqi of joint Kuwaiti-Canadian citizenship.
- According to Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayif bin Abd-al-Aziz, one of the 19 suspects turned himself in and provided Saudi authorities with some limited information.
- In emails sent to the Arab-language London-based magazine al-Majalla on 10 and 11 May, al-Qaeda member Abu Mohammed al-Ablaj (a.k.a. Abu Bakr) said the group's plans were not affected by the seizure of the weapons. He said only three of the 19 sought by Saudi authorities belong to al-Qaeda.

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- Khalid ibn Mohammed al-Juhani is believed by Saudi authorities to be the leader of the cell. The second photo is an FBI Laboratory photographic retouch.

### THREATS

- On or before 11 May, a statement was circulated in Jihadi circles urging followers to “strike and destroy American interests on land, at sea and in the air” in response to a firefight on 6 May in Saudi Arabia and subsequent manhunt for suspected members of an al-Qaeda cell there (see RIYADH AL-QAEDA CELL). In the statement, which was signed the Mujahideen in the Arabian Peninsula, the group said, “It is absolutely necessary that we all be united in the war against the aggressors and that we pursue them all over the world.” It added that the munitions seized by Saudi authorities were “intended to kill the Crusaders, who are attacking our brothers in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq.” Referring to Saudi efforts to capture the cell’s members, it said, “We are preparing to take our revenge. It is our duty to prepare the means to terrorize the enemy.” The statement also demanded that Muslims “spill the blood” of Saudi officials. Commenting on the Saudi security forces release of the pictures of the suspected cell members to the media, the statement said, “The publication of their photographs ... is just another link in the chain of [Saudi government] collaboration with the accursed Crusaders.”
- al-Qaeda spokesman Thabet bin Qais in an email to al-Majalla: [The US Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan] does not necessarily form a pressing target and striking it is not a priority for the organization compared to the plans being made now for a strike of the size of the September 11 attacks in the US.

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- In emails sent to the Arab-language London-based magazine al-Majalla on 10 and 11 May, al-Qaeda member Abu Mohammed al-Ablaj (a.k.a. Abu Bakr) said the group had set up “martyrdom” squads in Saudi Arabia to launch a “guerrilla war” on Saudi leaders and the US. He said, "Beside targeting the heart of America, among the strategic priorities now is to target and execute operations in the Gulf countries and allies of the United States, particularly Egypt and Jordan. The list of assassinations, the raid teams and the martyr operation squads are ready. The caches of weapons, ammunition, explosives and bombs are plentiful, and the authorities cannot uncover them. We will start by creating tensions to confuse the security services, then carry out major operations and lethal strikes." He continued, “Osama bin Laden has issued strong directives to launch a guerrilla war in all forms, on a long term, in the nations of the Gulf ... We are ready to carry out many, very large operations. Al-Qaeda shall carry the battle with all the guerrilla war experience it gained in Afghanistan and Chechnya to the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula." Al-Majalla plans to publish the full account of their email interview with al-Ablaj on 16 May.
- In Abu Mohammed al-Ablaj’s first email to al-Majalla on 7 April 2003, he said that al-Qaeda was setting up ammunition warehouses in the Persian Gulf and preparing for an attack. Al-Ablaj said, "The world will see how we make America pay the price for invading Iraq.”

### **RECENT ACTIVITY IN SAUDI ARABIA**

- At 1430 local time [1330 GMT] on 1 May 2003, an unknown gunman shot and injured a US civilian contractor near the King Abdul Aziz Naval base in al-Jubayl. The victim is expected to fully recover. The gunman escaped.

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