

CHAPTER 8

Influencing Terrorist Acquisition and Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction: Exploring a Possible Strategy*

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The potential acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by a terrorist group is one of the major security threats confronting the United States and its NATO allies in the early 21st century. At least for now, the most dangerous WMD threat is from the entities that comprise the al Qaeda-Jihadist movement, from the core leadership of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri to Jihadist groups or cells affiliated with or inspired by that core leadership and its vision of global jihad.

This movement alone combines a proven past interest in acquiring WMD, arguments allegedly justifying the moral-religious legitimacy and justifiability of the use of such weapons, and writings that put forward a number of perceived strategic motivations for escalating to WMD violence. In turn, assistance by outside aiders and abettors not directly affiliated with the al-Qaeda-Jihadist movement could well be critical to its successful acquisition and use of WMD.

Efforts to prevent al-Qaeda and its Jihadist affiliates – or for that matter, any other terrorist group – from acquiring WMD are the first line of defense against this threat. Since the start of the precedent-setting Cooperative Threat Reduction program in the 1990s, many actions have been taken by the United States and other countries to enhance security and controls on nuclear weapons, nuclear weapons-related materials and other WMD-related materials, know-how, components and inputs.

* Originally published in the NATO Defense College book titled *NATO and 21st Century Deterrence*, edited by Karl-Heinz Kamp and David S. Yost, Rome, Italy, May 2009, pp. 126-142.

A robust set of actions continue to be taken to buttress prevention, typified by cooperation among more than 60 countries under the U.S.-Russian Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. By contrast, despite periodic talk of the need to think seriously about “detering terrorist use of WMD,” the lack of a strategy to influence terrorists’ thinking about whether to seek to acquire or use WMD remains a major gap in U.S. and global actions to counter the terrorist WMD threat.

Against this backdrop, this paper first sets out a framework for thinking about influencing terrorists’ WMD acquisition and use calculus. It then applies that framework in two different cases: the al-Qaeda core leadership and possible state, criminal and individual aiders and abettors of WMD terrorism. The discussion concludes by briefly discussing the way ahead.

Before proceeding, however, three prefatory points are in order. First, an influencing strategy should be viewed as only one element of an overall U.S. and global strategy to counter the threat of terrorist escalation to the use of WMD – but a potentially important and as yet still under-developed element. Second, the strategy set out here assumes an element of rational calculation, a weighing of costs and benefits, in any terrorist decision to attempt to acquire or eventually use WMD. That element of rationality may be more or less, depending on the group and its individual members. It also will be influenced by the particular lenses through which a group or its leaders view the world.

Nonetheless, past terrorist behavior, including that of the most dangerous threat, al-Qaeda, warrants making this assumption. Third, use of the term influencing encompasses the concept of deterrence – whether by the threat of punishment or by denying terrorists the benefits sought. But the concept of influencing is intended to point toward a broader set of actions that might be pursued than simply punishment or denial. Use of the term “influencing” instead of “deterrence” also is intended to highlight a more uncertain nexus between U.S. and others’ actions and terrorists’ WMD calculus.

Framework for Influencing Terrorist WMD Acquisition and Use Calculus

The most important concepts of the framework set out here can be summarized by a series of propositions. These propositions are:

Disaggregate the terrorist “whom” to be influenced;

- Disaggregate the aider and abettor “whom” to be influenced;
- Identify the specific leverage points that could be used in an attempt to influence each of the different groups and their component entities as well as specific aiders and abettors;
- Think broadly in terms of “who” does the influencing – not simply governments; and
- Be prepared to use both soft and hard power, words and deeds.

Consider each of these concepts in turn.

Disaggregate the Terrorists.

There are many different *terrorist groups and entities*. With regard only to the most dangerous threat of the al Qaeda-Jihadist movement, that movement comprises: the al-Qaeda core leadership of Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri; directly affiliated organizations such as al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia and al-Qaeda in the Maghreb; inspired or more loosely-linked groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah in southeast Asia; inspired cells such as those that have carried out terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom; and individuals often linked together and with other al-Qaeda entities via the Internet. Potential future recruits to any of these entities also are an important category of people to influence.

More generally, it is useful to distinguish al-Qaeda and its Jihadist affiliates from the many non-al-Qaeda terrorist groups. Prominent among the latter are such Islamist groups as Hamas and Hezbollah and non-Islamist groups such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

At least for now, these non-al-Qaeda terrorist groups do not appear interested in escalating to WMD violence, most likely reflecting a judgment that WMD use would alienate their supporters, antagonize their opponents and make it more difficult to achieve their goals.

By contrast, the entities that make up the al-Qaeda-Jihadist movement have sought to acquire WMD. Prominent Jihadists also have argued WMD use and mass killing would be consistent with the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet – howsoever falsely.

Disaggregate the Aiders and Abettors

Three major categories of potential aiders and abettors of terrorist acquisition or use of WMD stand out: states, criminal and other organizations, and individuals.

State involvement could be witting, involving senior-most leadership or lower-level officials or technical experts. Or state involvement could be unwitting, occurring despite best-faith efforts by a state to prevent terrorist access to WMD-related materials or know-how. There also are in-between cases. As for criminal organizations, ties already exist between some of those organizations and terrorist groups. Illicit trafficking in the former Soviet Union is a good example. In pursuit of financial or other organizational gain, there is little reason to distinguish between smuggling drugs, cigarettes, other contraband, or the small quantities of nuclear materials so far detected and seized.

Personal gain also would be the most likely motivation for individuals to provide assistance to a terrorist group seeking to acquire or use WMD. The model would be the former head of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, A.Q. Khan, who sold nuclear know-how to Iran, North Korea and Syria. But fear and blackmail also cannot be excluded as motivating forces. In turn, some individuals could well provide assistance unknowingly, whether due to the disregard of established procedures to control sensitive information, through unguarded conversations, or in other ways.

Many different types of support could be provided by aiders and abettors. Some examples include: financial backing; insider access to facilitate diversion or to defeat detection and interdiction actions; direct

supply of needed inputs; provision of technical information; and logistics and transportation. The provision of so-called technical know-how and art may be the most important type of assistance – that is, the often-unwritten knowledge needed to make a particular WMD-related production process work effectively or to carry out a given operational step in a WMD attack.

The critical importance of technical art is best exemplified by the unsuccessful 1993 attempt by the Japanese cult group, Aum Shinrikyo, to kill hundreds of thousands of people by releasing anthrax in downtown Tokyo. The group mistakenly released a non-lethal vaccine strain of anthrax, thereby having no impact. More generally, lack of access to technical art has been a repeated source of terrorist WMD attack failure.

Identify Potential Leverage Points.

At least in principle, there is a spectrum of potential leverage points that might be used to influence the calculations of different terrorist groups as well as their aiders and abettors. Is the use of WMD – and quite possibly the killing of innocent civilians – justifiable and legitimate in the terms of the religious or moral teachings adhered to by the group and equally so by its wider public audience of potential supporters? What is the prospect of technical success whether in acquiring WMD or in carrying out a successful attack – the feasibility? Are there better ways to use the group’s technical, organizational, financial, operational and other resources than seeking to acquire and then use WMD? More broadly, how smart would be the use of WMD as a means to achieve the goals that animate the group and its members? Finally, how much risk would be involved in attempting to acquire and use these weapons – or in aiding and abetting such acquisition and use? Depending on the particular group or on the specific aiders and abettors, the answers to these questions will vary.

Think Broadly Regarding “Who” Does the Influencing.

Many different players will need to be involved in implementing an influencing strategy. At one level, the United States should seek the support of like-minded governments among traditional U.S. friends and

allies. In addition, support could be sought from moderate governments throughout the Muslim world. Despite differences with the United States on certain issues, these Muslim governments share an interest in preventing the ascendance of the al-Qaeda-Jihadist movement.

Moreover, neither traditional U.S. friends and allies nor other governments should assume that the victim of a terrorist WMD attack would necessarily be the United States. They, too, could be struck – whether due to an accident, loss of control, or deliberate intention.

Somewhat differently, international, non-governmental and community organizations also can contribute, from a traditional entity such as the United Nations to professional, scientific, industry and academic organizations. Other players would be Islamic as well as non-Islamic religious councils and associations, non-violent wings of domestic political-separatist movements across different countries, and prominent groupings of individuals with religious, social action, or other affiliations. Certain types of individuals alone, e.g., a highly-respected clerical authority, also could be sources of influence. Moderate Muslims in NATO nations and elsewhere also may be able to exert some impact on the thinking of the wider Muslim community around the globe that is the ultimate audience as well as the source of recruits for the Jihadist movement inspired by al Qaeda.

Use Soft and Hard Power, Words and Deeds

Influencing terrorists' WMD acquisition and use calculus – and of aiders and abettors – will partly entail use of soft power. In particular, efforts are essential to foster a wider public debate to influence perceptions of the legitimacy and justifiability of WMD use. In that regard, the lack of widespread outrage across the Islamic world at al Qaeda's use of chlorine-explosive bombs in Iraq during 2006-2007 may have been a lost opportunity. Perhaps more controversially, the declaratory policies of the nuclear weapons states can shape more diffuse perceptions of the legitimacy of nuclear use.

By way of example, consider a joint affirmation by the P-5 nuclear powers – the United States, Russia, France, the United Kingdom and China – that given any use of a nuclear weapon would be a calamity, they

will act individually and together to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again.

Closely related, decisive engagement by the P-5 in pursuing the goal of nuclear abolition also could de-legitimize nuclear use, though it would require them to make the case for their continued possession of nuclear weapons as a regrettable but necessary interim status pending the conditions for ultimate abolition. Declaratory policy is a means as well to influence perceptions of the risks of becoming involved in WMD terrorism.

For its part, the threatened use of hard power may be particularly important to influence perceptions of risk – whether on the part of certain terrorist entities or their aiders and abettors. Hard power encompasses but goes beyond military operations. It also includes economic and financial sanctions, covert operations and law enforcement actions.

Influencing in Action: Applying the Framework

Turning to specific cases, this section illustrates how the “influencing framework” could be implemented. The discussion focuses first on influencing the al-Qaeda core leadership and then on possible state, criminal, and individual aiders and abettors.

The al-Qaeda Core Leadership

Efforts to influence the WMD calculus of the al-Qaeda core leadership – Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and their close associates in al-Qaeda center presumed to be located on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border – are the toughest case. As already noted, their writings and statements as well as those of individuals closely linked to them make clear in their view, even indiscriminate killing using nuclear or biological weapons is seen as fully *legitimate and justifiable*. Howsoever falsely, their writings contend WMD use is fully consistent with the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet.

Thus, once in possession of WMD, the core leadership would have no moral or religious compunctions concerning use. For them, there is no controversy about the legitimacy or morality of using WMD against all

enemies even if it results in loss of life among Muslims.¹ This leverage point simply does not apply.

Actions to influence the leaders' *perceptions of the risk* of escalating to WMD violence would have somewhat greater but still limited applicability. For the past decade, the United States has sought unsuccessfully either to capture or kill both bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. Particularly during the period when they were "on the run," they would likely have discounted any additional threats of capture or death. Now that the al-Qaeda core leadership appears to be recreating a base of operations on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border – and now that the Taliban is gaining strength in Afghanistan – the two leaders could be more concerned about the risks of WMD use.

For such use could well provide a powerful argument for the United States to use with its NATO allies that these countries should step up greatly their on-the-ground military commitment to defeating the Taliban. After WMD use, Pakistan also could well come under irresistible U.S. and international pressure to take effective measures against al-Qaeda-Taliban safe-havens – or to turn a blind eye to stepped-up U.S. special operations in those regions.

By contrast, a much more promising leverage point would be the core leadership's perception of whether acquisition and escalation to WMD use would be *smart*. In part, smartness is tied to the leadership's assessment of whether WMD acquisition and use would be a feasible and effective use of the organization's resources as well as whether WMD use would shatter American resolve and lead to the elimination of U.S. influence from the Muslim world. Smartness also entails the leadership's calculation of whether escalation to WMD violence would alienate al-Qaeda's wider Islamic audience and make it all the more difficult to achieve its goals of an Islamic renewal and a new Islamic Caliphate. In different ways, each of these dimensions of "smartness" is subject to potential influence.

Influencing Actions

With regard to perceptions of *feasibility and use of resources*, many denial actions already are taken to make it much harder for any

terrorist group to acquire or use WMD successfully. The Cooperative Threat Reduction program and its wider counterpart the G-8 Global Initiative, the newer Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and implementation of United Nations Resolution 1540 (which obligates all states to put in place controls against WMD access by non-state actors) are but a few highly-visible examples.

There are, of course, gaps in these prevention efforts which still need to be addressed. Even so, U.S. and global pursuit of these types of prevention, interdiction and consequence management actions all would create uncertainties in the al-Qaeda leadership about the feasibility and impact of WMD acquisition and use. As such, they all send the message to the core leadership that it would be smarter to invest its scarce resources in the more proven “bombs and bullets” modes of attacks that have long been at the core of its operational code.

Still other actions would be intended to influence the core leadership’s perception of whether escalation to WMD use would shatter *U.S. political will and resolve*. Continued actions to build habits of global cooperation against WMD terrorism would be one way to signal the core leadership that WMD use would not defeat the United States and its allies. Indeed, visible global cooperation would suggest that escalation to WMD violence could well rally other countries to the American side, much as occurred after the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Enhanced consequence management capabilities also would be important. Plans, procedures and capabilities to manage successfully the physical, psychological, social and economic consequences of a WMD attack – and more generally to foster public resiliency – are desirable in their own right. But they, too, could contribute to influencing the core leadership’s WMD calculus.

Again, for influencing purposes, these actions need to be made highly visible. Not least, the outcome of the Iraq War is likely to be a key factor in shaping perceptions of U.S. resolve for better or for worse. If al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia is defeated and a measure of stability restored, it will be a major al-Qaeda defeat and a demonstration of American resolve.

Finally, actions also should be taken to heighten concerns that WMD use would *provoke a backlash among the wider Muslim audience*

that the al-Qaeda core leadership seeks to rally to its cause. One way to do so would be to encourage more moderate Muslims at all levels to condemn WMD use. Across the global Muslim community, as reflected in recent public opinion data, there is widespread rejection of Jihadist attacks on innocent civilians, including American civilians.²

Though it would be difficult and probably counter-productive for U.S. officials to do so directly, the United States should work with friendly Muslim governments to encourage Islamic religious associations and prominent clerics to speak out against al Qaeda's escalation to WMD violence. In turn, a wider theological debate on the issues of the justifiability and legitimacy of WMD use should be encouraged, again with the aim of creating uncertainty in the minds of the core leadership about their audience's response to mass killing using WMD.

This last set of actions to influence the core leadership's perceptions of smartness is perhaps the most controversial. Some U.S. experts argue bin Laden and al-Zawahiri ultimately arrogate to themselves the right to act on behalf of the right-thinking Muslim community. Thus, they would not be influenced by any such concerns about Islamic public attitudes. Instead, they would assume if WMD use had the desired decisive impact, their Muslim audience would rally behind al Qaeda's decision.³

Nonetheless, there are good reasons to believe the core leadership is concerned about how its wider Muslim audience would respond to mass killing and use of WMD. Its investment of considerable energies in arguing for the legitimacy of WMD use is but one indication that there has been push-back on this question. Indeed, the most authoritative Jihadist religious discourse on this subject, the May 2003 *fatwa* by a Saudi cleric linked to bin Laden, Nasir bin Hamd al-Fahd, acknowledges such questions about killing innocent civilians. Al-Fahd refers explicitly to "specious arguments" against the use of WMD before seeking to counter each of those arguments.⁴

In addition, in his Oct. 11, 2005 letter to Musab al-Zarqawi, Ayman al-Zawahiri expressed concern about the excessive violence of al-Qaeda in Iraq and went on to emphasize: "If we are in agreement that the victory of Islam and the establishment of a caliphate in the manner of the Prophet will not be achieved except through jihad against the apostate

rulers and their removal, then this goal will not be accomplished by the mujahed movement while it is cut off from public support. . . .”

Al-Zawahiri continued “[t]herefore, the mujahed movement must avoid any action that the masses do not understand or approve, if there is no contravention of Sharia in such avoidance, as long as there are other options to resort to.”⁵ Somewhat similarly, Osama bin Laden in his Oct. 23, 2007 audiotape against the “fanaticism” of the “mujahidin in Iraq,” stressed “[t]he strength of the faith is the strength of the bond between Muslims and not that of a tribe or nationalism,” and urged “the interest of the Umma should be given priority.”⁶

This message again highlights the extent to which the al-Qaeda core leadership is sensitive to the impact of its actions on the wider Muslim community. For all of these reasons, therefore, seeking to reinforce concerns that WMD use would backfire should be part of an influencing strategy aimed at that leadership.

Other al-Qaeda and Non-Al Qaeda Terrorist Entities

Space precludes a comparable discussion of influencing either the other entities that make up the al-Qaeda-Jihadist movement or the many non-Al-Qaeda terrorist groups (whether Islamist or not).⁷ Suffice it only to state here that across these other different terrorist groups and their component entities, perceptions of the more instrumental aspects or “smartness” of WMD acquisition and use again appear to be the most promising leverage point. In turn, most of the specific influencing actions identified above – from denial measures to creating uncertainties about the possible blowback from their supporters – also offer means to influence these other groups’ calculus.

In addition, particularly for those non-al-Qaeda groups and entities that in the future could come to think about WMD acquisition and use, e.g., Hamas or Hezbollah among Islamist groups or the Tamil Tigers among non-Islamist groups, actions to influence their own perceptions not simply of the “smartness” but also of the justifiability and legitimacy of WMD use should not be dismissed out of hand. At least for now, unlike al-Qaeda, these non-al-Qaeda groups have not developed a line of

argument to square WMD use and mass killing with their core religious, moral and political beliefs.

Aiders and Abettors

Turning to aiders and abettors, consider first possible state supporters. Two objectives stand out: on the one hand, the United States and like-minded countries should continue to take steps to encourage actions by state officials to prevent unauthorized or unwitting support to terrorist WMD acquisition and use and on the other, to dissuade official, authorized and witting support by a state's leadership to a terrorist WMD attack. As above, what leverage points and associated influencing actions stand out?

State Supporters

Leaders' perceptions that direct support for terrorist acquisition of WMD (or indirect support by not acting to put in place effective controls against diversion) would not serve their personal or national goals are one potential leverage point. Equally so, concern about the possible personal risks, especially of witting rather than unwitting support, is another leverage point.

A belief that assistance to WMD terrorism is neither justifiable nor legitimate state behavior – and conversely, that it is international “good behavior” to take actions to prevent unintended or unintentional support from within their countries – also could shape the policies of leaders and elites in most if not virtually all states.

Given these leverage points, the May 2008 statement by U.S. National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley stated “the United States will hold any state, terrorist group, or other non-state actor or individual fully accountable for supporting or enabling terrorist efforts to obtain or use weapons of mass destruction -- whether by facilitating, financing, or providing expertise or safe haven for such efforts”⁸ is an important initial

step. The United States should now seek other countries' support for this type of "*holding accountable*" declaratory policy and posture.

Going a step further, it could be desirable to seek a United Nations Security Council Resolution stating the international community's readiness to hold accountable aiders and abettors – or supporters and enablers, to use the Hadley formulation – of terrorist acquisition or use of WMD. Short of a Security Council resolution, the five permanent members of the Security Council – the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China – could make a common holding accountable declaration.

How the United States and like-minded countries would implement an accountability policy would need to be determined in the specific situation. Sufficient flexibility should be retained to adapt the response to different degrees of witting or unwitting state leadership involvement, the relative certainty with which a particular terrorist WMD attack or attempted attack could be tracked back to those leaders, the outcome of the attack, and other unique situational dimensions. The credibility and wider acceptability of a holding accountable policy, moreover, calls for making clear that there is a very wide range of means to use to implement it – and not simply or exclusively military means.

In a situation entailing unwitting state support for an unsuccessful terrorist WMD attack, for example, the response might be to demand the state's leadership join with the United States and others to take needed security measures to prevent any repetition as well as to punish the perpetrators. By contrast, in the case of clearly established, witting involvement by a state's highest leadership, military action proportional to the damage inflicted by the terrorist WMD attack could be warranted.⁹

Continued actions to build up habits, institutions and mechanisms of international cooperation against WMD terrorism are another important influencing action. The International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 – as well as the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism – are three such examples. Building these habits of cooperation would help to create a presumption in the minds of possible state supporters that the international community would act against them. It

also would make it easier for all states to take needed actions to prevent unintentional assistance.

The relative effectiveness of these types of efforts to influence state leaders' calculations clearly would depend on the perceived ability of the United States and other countries, possibly in collaboration with international organizations, to track a terrorist WMD attack back to the source. Unless the aiders and abettors can be identified, it will not be possible to hold that state's leaders accountable. Attribution will depend partly on technical forensics. It also would entail cooperation among intelligence and law enforcement authorities both in the United States and abroad.

Attribution already is being emphasized as part of U.S. counter-terrorism actions and a Working Group on the subject exists under the U.S.-Russian Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. In support of an influencing strategy, it would be desirable to publicize advances in the attribution capabilities and cooperation of the United States and other nations, to the extent possible without compromising sensitive technical information. Additional exercises and table-top games on the subject of attribution also would showcase and build habits of cooperation in this area.

Criminal Organizations

For criminal organizations, perceptions of risk stand out as the most compelling potential leverage point to convince them that the dangers of aiding and abetting a terrorist organization's acquisition or use of WMD far outweigh possible financial or other gains – whether risk to the organization as a whole or to specific members. Continued actions to build habits of global cooperation against WMD terrorism would be one means to signal the risks of helping a terrorist organization to acquire or use WMD.

Strengthening national legal mechanisms as well as procedures for international legal collaboration against WMD smuggling would be another such means. Here, both the International Convention to Suppress Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 provide a framework for accelerated action. Highly

publicized actions could be taken against criminal organizations tied to terrorist pursuit of WMD, whether legal prosecutions or more direct action.

More unconventionally, likely informal if unacknowledged back-channels could be used to tell criminal organizations and their membership that the authorities would not tolerate aiding and abetting terrorist WMD acquisition and use – even if corrupt officials might have been prepared to look the other way at other types of smuggling.

In turn, background briefings to the press as well as other means could be used to manipulate fears that personal injury to the smugglers themselves might result from engaging in this type of illicit trafficking even if they were not caught, e.g., from exposure to radiation in the case of nuclear smuggling or lethal disease from biological agents.

*Individual Aiders and Abettors*¹⁰

Particularly for those individuals that might become unintentionally involved, a desire not to have innocent blood on their hands could be a potential leverage point. Perceptions of feasibility also could provide leverage, particularly the prospects for successfully trading WMD-related materials, know-how or access for financial or other personal gain. Nonetheless, given likely motivations, actions aimed at influencing individuals' perceptions of risk may be the most promising leverage point.

Turning to specific influencing actions, steps to enhance national controls and to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 in that area would be one means to shape perceptions of the likelihood of success. Encouraging different technical communities, especially in the biological sciences area, to develop their own codes of conduct could help strengthen individual awareness and responsibility. Not least, actions are needed to *influence individuals' perceptions of the personal risk* of indirectly or directly aiding or abetting terrorists' acquisition or use of WMD.

Here, too, a place to start is explicit declaratory policy statements by the United States and other countries they would join together to hold individuals accountable for such WMD-related activities. Highly

publicized actions by states to put in place needed legal authorities and other mechanisms to allow cooperation to apprehend and/or extradite or prosecute WMD aiders and abettors also would signal heightened risks.

Going a step further, states could cooperate to make examples of publicly known figures involved in helping non-state actors seek or gain access to WMD materials or know-how – or in other WMD-related smuggling or illicit networks. Well-publicized prosecutions would be one means to do so; more direct covert action against such individuals could be another. Again the purpose would be to cause other potential aiders and abettors to reassess the risks of such action.

A Concluding Thought

Many different U.S. and international actions to counter the threat of WMD terrorism by preventing terrorist access to WMD-related materials or weapons are currently being pursued. These prevention activities are the first line of defense against WMD terrorism – and should be vigorously pursued and where needed, strengthened.

This paper has set out a complementary strategy for deterring – or better put, influencing – terrorists' acquisition and use of WMD. It has also sketched how that strategy could be applied in two key cases: that of the al-Qaeda core leadership and that of possible aiders and abettors of any terrorist WMD attack.

More important, though differences in their susceptibility to influence clearly exist, for all of today's terrorist groups and entities, one or more potential leverage points can be identified – along with associated influencing actions. This includes the toughest case of the al-Qaeda core leadership.

In turn, potential leverage points and actions can also be identified for influencing those aiders and abettors that could tip the balance between a failed and a successful terrorist WMD attack, including state supporters, criminal organizations and individuals. Thus, the prospects for successfully influencing terrorists' WMD acquisition and use calculus – as well as aiders and abettors – could well be considerably greater than might be initially assumed.

Application in practice of such an influencing strategy will call for a number of enabling actions, from developing more detailed knowledge of the thinking and workings of particular terrorist groups to enhanced technical-political capabilities for attribution of the source of a terrorist WMD attack – including possible involvement of aiders and abettors. The task will be a challenging one. However, pursuit of such an influencing strategy also can leverage the many other efforts to counter the threat of WMD terrorism, not least prevention and denial writ large.

By way of conclusion, the argument of this paper is quite clear. Put most simply, the time has come to pursue a strategy to influence the WMD calculus of terrorist groups and their aiders and abettors. An influencing strategy can be a valuable adjunct to the overall set of U.S. and global actions to counter WMD terrorism. Influencing actions is part of the answer to dealing with the threat of a terrorist WMD attack against the United States, one of its friends or allies or any other country around the globe.

Notes

¹ See the discussion in Rebecca Givner-Forbes, “To Discipline the Savage Cowboys – An Analysis of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Jihadist Primary Documents,” in Lewis A. Dunn (ed.), “Next Generation Weapons of Mass Destruction and Weapons of Mass Effect Terrorism,” *op. cit.*

² See Steven Kull, Principal Investigator, “Muslim Public Opinion on U.S. Policy, Attacks on Civilians and al-Qaeda,” WorldPublicOpinion.ORG, University of Maryland (April 24, 2007), 9-13, *passim*.

³ These points were emphasized to the author by an expert in an earlier not-for-attribution discussion of influencing terrorists’ WMD acquisition and use calculus.

⁴ See, Nasir bin Hamd al-Fahd, “A Treatise on the Legal Status of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction against Infidels” (May 2003).

⁵ “Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi” (Oct. 11, 2005), released by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, ODNI New Release No. 2-05, 4, 5.

⁶ “Osama bin Laden, “A Message to the People of Iraq” (Oct. 22, 2007). Translation of bin Laden’s message, Aljazeera.net (Oct. 23, 2007).

⁷ For elaboration see Dunn, “Influencing Terrorists’ WMD Acquisition and Use Calculus” in “Next Generation WMD and WME Terrorism,” Section 3 – Part 2.

⁸ Remarks by National Security Advisor Stephen J. Hadley at the Proliferation Security Initiative Fifth Anniversary Senior Level Meeting, Washington, D.C., (May 28, 2008).

⁹ Even assuming a military response to a WMD attack, there would be many options open to the United States short of responding with nuclear weapons. Though obvious given U.S. conventional capabilities, this point needs to be made because some persons have already asserted that the U.S. declaratory policy of “holding accountable” is tantamount to threatening a nuclear response against enablers and supporters of a terrorist WMD attack on the United States.

¹⁰ This category partly overlaps with the two preceding ones to the extent that states and criminal organizations are made up of individuals. Nonetheless, it warrants separate treatment because potential individual aiders and abettors need not be either senior state officials or members of a criminal organization.