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A New Face of Terrorism and Coming Anarchy

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Animesh Roul outlines the challenges facing the world community, particularly the US, as terrorists begin to use unconventional means to intimidate and redefine established contours of terrorism

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Terrorists want “a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead”, but this has changed after the September Eleven multiple hijacking and synchronized suicide attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon. The world watched helplessly as thousands died. Besides its economic and psychological fallout, the physical debris would take one year to remove. These terrorist attacks have redefined the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘weapon of mass destruction’.

During the Cold War period, terrorist movements had some political motives and political goals to achieve. But the last decade has seen the emergence of ‘super-terrorism’ motivated by fundamentalism. Walter Lacquer finds this dangerous situation to embody the confluence of two separate trends: the emergence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) – and religious fanaticism. In this brutal game, the players are religiously motivated, ready to die for their cause, and have no regard for human life. From Soko Asahara to bin Laden, these crusaders have one thing in common: strike terror in the minds of millions in the name of God.

Who is the target of this religious fanaticism? Recent history informs us that India and America – the two largest democracies – bear the brunt of this fanaticism. From Kashmir to New York, these terrorists have one common purpose to achieve: perpetrating fear and devastation through (un)holy wars. Their breeding grounds have been Pakistan and Afghanistan. The governments of these countries are directly and covertly sponsoring terrorist activities in the name of Jihad, freedom struggle or struggle for self-determination. Terrorist outfits are mushrooming in them.

Another aspect of this problem, which affects the international community, is their attack methods. In the past, hijacking, hostage-taking for ransom, and sabotage were in vogue. A revolution in terrorist activities (RTA) has now occurred due to the proliferation of NBC weapons, and the advent of a new breed of terrorists called fidayeen. This has completely changed the threat emanating from various terrorist organizations. Fidayeens are highly motivated but deranged individuals who have no qualms about their death, which has enhanced their killing power by enabling them to strike their chosen targets with precision. They glamorize death by sacrificing themselves for the sake of God, not for money. These new breeds of ‘rebel with(out) a cause’ are influenced by the Kamikazes of Japan and the LTTE in Sri Lanka.

However, the dangers of WMD terrorism, especially using chemical and biological weapons, have become imminent with the improving capabilities of terrorists to develop these lethal weapons. Although there have been few known instances of the use of WMDs by terrorists, a future shock is not unthinkable, although WMD terrorism has certainly been over-hyped. An apocalyptic scenario requires little imagination but would need very large resources for counter-terrorism policies being pursued worldwide, especially in America. This obsessive concern in America to counter germ and chemical attacks and its preparedness in this regard might compel terrorists to find some other effective ways to hit the headlines across the world.

On September Eleven, they used four civilian aircraft with full fuel tanks as guided missiles and turned them into new weapons of mass destruction. This case of multiple hijackings was not new for terrorism in the world. The first case was noted in 1970 when four planes were hijacked by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine from Jordan. Ironically, this incident also occurred in the month of September. On this occasion, the terrorists have gone a step further and have shown the world how a WMD attack on America or any other country, for that matter, can be launched by unconventional means. They have achieved their objectives of causing damage and creating chaos and fear in the American psyche.

In the end, it is pertinent to ponder over two questions: are we heading towards Armageddon? Will it be a sequel to the medieval crusades, or will it be a clash (war) of civilizations which leads up to World War III? America has already declared a war against terrorism. Bin Laden, the prime accused and enemy number one of America, had proclaimed war against America in a fatwa delivered in February 1998. Since then, Osama and his Al Qaeda network have attacked American installations and interests worldwide. Unlike in other wars, the enemy is scattered over several states. America can kill bin Laden and destroy his Al Qaeda network, but it could rise again with a different name and form. Therefore, this will be a war without a beginning or an end, requiring a prolonged struggle against terrorism, with the whole world being its theatre.



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Biological Weapon: Most Preferred WMD

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Animesh Roul argues out a case for biological weapons being the preferred weapon of mass destruction for non-state actors. https://ipcs.org/comm_select.php?articleNo=634

Coinciding with the 'strike against terror' by the US led coalition, the terrorists have unleashed the germs of terror against the 'civilized' world. A biological weapons (BW) strike by terrorists has become part of the international debate in the US during the last decade. Opinion is divided between the alarmists and those holding the threat to be unrealistic. But within the last twenty days there have been 45 cases of exposure to anthrax (16 confirmed cases of anthrax with 4 deaths); this has started a new trend in recent terrorist activities. They choose to deliver fear and death through the postal services, leading to a 'mail phobia' all over the world.

Why did the terrorists choose anthrax spores instead of other conventional or unconventional weapons? What if the terrorists use the more lethal ebola, tularemia or small-pox; or designer viruses instead of anthrax? These questions will haunt us in future.

In biological war, living organisms like bacteria, virus, fungi and rickettsiae, and their natural byproducts (toxins) are used to cause death or disability on a large scale in human beings, animals, and plants. The military and economic advantages in their production and use make biological weapons the weapons of choice for states. They kill people but cause no harm to buildings, factories etc. Their detection and identification is difficult. These weapons can be produced in an antibiotic factory or in a brewery and can be disseminated by letters, packets, crop-dusters or agricultural sprayers. One can contaminate water supplies or pour agents into a ventilator. More importantly, the difficulties of acquiring nuclear weapons capabilities due to technical and fiscal costs has stimulated interest in developing chemical and biological weapons capability by States and non-State actors, comprising terrorists group, religious cults, mafia syndicates and deranged individuals. Also, chemical weapons as compared to BWs require a moderately advanced facility. The availability and accessibility of ingredients for BWs makes them more attractive.

There are many factors that attract a terrorist group towards biological weapons and biological weapons attack. Most important is their toxicity. It is estimated that one ounce of botulinum toxin can kill 60 million people if dispersed properly. Another estimation by the World Health Organization's Expert Committee is that 50 Kgs of tularemia bacteria, dispersed in aerosol form over a city with a population of 5 million, would cause an estimated 19,000 deaths and a total of 250,000 incapacitating casualties. According to an Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) study, very few tularemia organisms are required to cause the onset of symptoms. Unlike anthrax,

however, plague and small-pox pose a different problem. They can spread from person to person and lead to epidemics. Another study noted that four tons of nerve agents and 50 kgs of anthrax spores would cause the same number of casualties in a crowded urban center. Some scientists claimed that the mortality levels from a biological weapons attack could exceed that of a large nuclear explosion. Besides the toxicity factors, their undetectability and capacity to reproduce rapidly make BWs a prime choice.

But the drawbacks are many. They seldom inflict casualties instantly and take time to injure or kill depending upon the incubation period of the pathogen. This process cannot be expedited and the results are often uncertain. More importantly, BWs are double edged weapons and do not discriminate between friends and foes. Looking at these drawbacks experts termed BWs as strategic weapons which can cover a large area if dispersed properly, but they have underestimated the likelihood of a BW attack in the past. The prevailing situation is proving them wrong.

However, one vital question, which has galvanized the defense and scientific communities all over the world, including India, is how to counter a large-scale biological weapons attack? A future attack on India is not remote. Hoax calls and false alarms are taking their toll in India. Till now, one letter has tested positive. If a sudden outbreak occurs, it will definitely cause mass casualties. Ironically, India is not prepared even for a natural outbreak of diseases. The disease currently in the news, in its natural outbreak, has never been contained in India. Statistics shows that there are some 35 cases of human anthrax documented during the last decade and since 1953 some 182 cases of human anthrax have been documented.

Looking at the possible emerging scenarios, an effective surveillance mechanism for detection and identification, physical protection and decontamination, and medical countermeasures are some of the steps India should undertake. Recently India has started working on a surveillance mechanism under the auspices of National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD). It is vitally important that India maintains effective protective measures for both the armed forces and civilians against potential biological threats.



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Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI): A Multilateral Effort towards Preventing WMD Proliferation

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Animesh Roul examines the prospects of the PSI and urges India's participation in the group

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Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) have become a buzzword after 9/11 and are arguably posing the most serious threat to international security. By WMD, we generally mean nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their delivery systems. While there are some international regulations and norms to curb the proliferation of these weapons, a coordinated effort is imperative to check their 'horizontal' spread and prevent terrorist groups from acquiring these weapons.

To meet this challenge, Washington had announced the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) on May 31, 2003, presently an eleven-member conglomerate, as part of its emerging doctrine of pre-emption to combat WMD proliferation and to encourage nations to take adopt an aggressive approach towards tracking and seizing WMDs, their delivery systems and related items in transit. This multilateral forum is designed to prevent countries like North Korea, Iran and to some extent, Pakistan from importing or exporting materials that could facilitate their weapons programs – especially missile technologies. The United States and its allies have sensed the urgency of this kind of regime when the Spanish authorities, tipped off by American intelligence, seized a North Korean ship carrying 15 Scud missiles in the Indian Ocean. However, they had to release the cargo and the ship heading towards Yemen after discovering that existing international laws did not ban the missiles. This setback has sounded a wake-up call for the United States and its allies.

International law forbids interdictions both in sea and air. But this multilateral forum is all set to become a powerful grouping in future. Since President Bush's Wavel Royal Castle speech in Poland, this new 'interdiction regime' has progressed substantially with two formal meetings — first on June 12 in Madrid and the second on July 9-10 in Brisbane. While the third round is scheduled to be held in Paris in September, the real action is yet to begin. The Brisbane meeting of the PSI took the initiative a step further by agreeing to start military training and related exercises to interdict missile shipments by sea or air. The exercise is scheduled to be held in September 2003 off the coast of Australia, which would involve planning for high-sea interdiction. Along with the United States, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Britain, all PSI members would simulate pre-emptive interdiction, including detaining and searching ships and aircraft within the territorial waters of PSI member countries.

The vital question is, how far would this be successful in its efforts to rein in the proliferators and countries of concern? While the PSI is currently pre-occupied with North Korea, it has been speculated that Asia will be its Achilles heel in the future. Asia has the highest number of nuclear and missile producing countries and most of them are potential

proliferators. Without the active involvement of Asian nations, including South Asian countries, the PSI would be a damp squib. Besides Japan, which is already a PSI member, Russia and India must join this grouping to add teeth to this initiative. More than Russia, the PSI grouping would like to include China into this forum as the Chinese mainland is a major transit route for North Korean cargo. Recently, the Chinese authorities indicated that North Korea would not be allowed to use China to evade international sanctions designed to prevent it from exporting WMDs. But it showed serious reservations about the way the PSI will carry out its interdiction activities and the quality of intelligence they will use.

It is imperative for India to be a part of this international grouping as soon as possible, to prove its commitment towards international arms control and disarmament efforts, but also to secure itself from the designs of Asia's nuclear triumvirate— China, North Korea and Pakistan. As China was involved in the proliferation of missiles and nuclear technologies to Pakistan and Iran, along with North Korea, complacency in this regard would be fatal for India. It is only a matter of time before the United States will urge India to join this multilateral initiative and adopt appropriate measures to restrict WMD trafficking through its zone of influence.



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Nuclear Nexus and Iran's Quest for the Bomb

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Animesh Roul probes the possible foreign linkages in Iran's nuclear weapons programme

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There is an intense debate over Iran's quest for Nuclear weapons and its Uranium enrichment programme, which has been taking rounds in almost all international security conclaves since the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) raised concerns publicly about Iran's nuclear program in June this year. The IAEA, the UN's nuclear watchdog, has observed that Iran failed to report 'certain nuclear material' and activities as required by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), of which Iran is a signatory.

The IAEA has already issued a 'non-negotiable' deadline of October 31 to Iran to provide full transparency and full disclosure to substantiate its claim that it is not seeking to produce nuclear weapons under cover of its civil nuclear program. While the most important issue would be 'to verify the nature and extent of Iran's uranium enrichment program, according to IAEA Director General Mohamed El Bardei, it is equally imperative to probe the 'assistance factor' in the whole process of Iran's quest for nuclear bombs.

Although much before, the intelligence services of the United States, Israel and Germany have confirmed the existence of a promising but clandestine nuclear program to manufacture weapons, American concerns over Iran's nuclear program intensified in mid-2002, when its intelligence learned of the existence of two secret nuclear facilities—Nantanz uranium enrichment facility, where IAEA has found traces of weapons-grade uranium recently and Arak heavy water production plant. One of the constituents of the so-called 'Axis of Evil', the US Department of Defense cited Iran as 'one of the countries most active in seeking to acquire NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) and missile-related technologies'. It has been speculated that though Iran has the rudiment nuclear technology and infrastructure to build a bomb, its success in achieving a nuclear capability will largely depend on the supply policies of Russia and China and its illicit acquisition of adequate quantities of fissile material like highly enriched uranium (HEU) from friendly countries.

There are several possible enrichment methods, but the only two that are largely used are gaseous diffusion and gas centrifuging. In the later method, the uranium hexafluoride gas is fed

into a high-speed centrifuge, which is a more expensive piece of equipment, but the degree of enrichment per stage in a centrifuge is greater than that obtained in a gaseous diffusion chamber. While Iran previously claimed that the technology have been developed from open source information and computer simulations, IAEA experts concluded that the technology was too sophisticated to be developed by these methods. In the early 2003, the IAEA was refused access twice to a small complex of buildings at the Kalaye Electric Company in Tehran. The agency had suspected that the Iranians were using this site to research and develop nuclear weapons. After hurried sanitization of the site, the IAEA inspectors were allowed entrance where it discovered traces of weapons-grade enriched uranium.

Despite the fact that this is the second site in Iran where traces of weapons-grade enriched uranium have been found, Iran after much coaxing, indicated in August last that it had bought the centrifuges and that the original supplier(s) must have contaminated the equipment. This is where the most startling question arises: who is the original supplier of the centrifuges? Though Iran has not yet identified clearly the source, evidence collected in Iran by the IAEA implicated Pakistani companies as suppliers of critical technology and parts. The contaminated equipment in question was from a type of centrifuge acquired (allegedly theft) by Pakistani scientists in the 1970s and used in Pakistan's domestic nuclear program.

As soon as several reports have pointed the fingers at Pakistan, the blame game has begun immediately. While Islamabad denied any link to Iran's nuclear program, it pointed fingers at freelance scientists from the erstwhile Soviet Union. India too could not escape the Pakistani tirade. It is alleged that India is currently helping Iran in processing nuclear fuel, designing warheads and tuning missile accuracy and some eleven scientists are working at the Zelzal missile plant in Esfahan, suspected home to a small reactor and a zirconium production facility for cladding reactor fuel. Although reports in the early 1990s citing German intelligence sources indicated that Pakistan had supplied design information on Urenco G-1 and G-2 centrifuges to Iran, there are documentary evidence of Iran's collaboration with several other countries including the United States, China, Russia, Germany, France, and South Africa, to develop its civil nuclear energy program, since mid-1970s.

However, Iran has now started handing over lists of parts imported for its nuclear programme, which is a key demand of the IAEA, to the visiting IAEA inspectors. This time, Iran has to satisfy the inspectors otherwise, the issue might be referred to the UN Security Council, which may consider sanctions. Although in its effort to provide information on the imported parts, Iran has cited the hands of 'middlemen' in the transactions while concealing the name of the country, the clandestine nuclear nexus would remain unclear and could aggravate future nuclear proliferation.



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Ricin: Return of Bioscare

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Animesh Roul highlights the danger that is posed by the biological toxin – ricin

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With the recent finding of deadly Ricin powders in the Capitol Hill, United States, a renewed bio-terror threat again brought the 'American life' to a standstill. This is the second incidence after the Anthrax attack of 2001, which undermined the much hyped preparedness and surveillance against terrorism (part of Homeland Security). Unlike the earlier event, the alert agencies could only reduce its lethality. Since the finding of ricin in a letter addressed to Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist on February 2, 2003 the Administration closed three Senate office buildings and some 40 odd Senate office workers had been decontaminated with usual disruption of work. Till now, while denouncing that it's a handiwork of terror networks, the authorities zeroed down their suspicions on the truckers.

Ricin, a potential biological toxin for crime syndicates and terrorist outfits for murder and creating fear, is a by-product (a glycoprotein) in the production of castor oil from castor beans. The large castor plant, a native to Africa and cultivated in India and Brazil along with other tropical and temperate climates, largely for their oil, is grown commercially for the pharmaceutical and industrial uses of its oil. Its fruit are often removed before they mature because of the poison ricin concentrated in the beanlike seeds.

Although it requires a significant amount of castor beans to develop a weaponised aerosol device, its main threat is by direct contact through inhalation and by ingestion. The incubation and lethality depends on the mode of entry into the host. Not as lethal as Anthrax, an estimate shows that it would take 4 tons of aerosolized ricin to equal the killing power of one kilogram of Anthrax. But it is 6,000 times more powerful than cyanide. While there is no known cure for a ricin victim, if penetrated through skin, ricin can cause hemorrhage of the lungs, liver, spleen, and kidneys leading to multi-organ system failure followed by death in less than a week.

Regarded as the weapon of 'targeted assassination', ricin came to prominence of notoriety during the heights of Cold War when suspected KGB agents killed a Bulgarian dissident journalist, Georgia Markov, by using a toxin-laced pellet fired from an umbrella tip in 1978 on London's

Waterloo Bridge. And approximately a quarter century after, ricin became a matter of concern, when western intelligence agency broke the news that Al Qaeda along with other terror networks has it and an attack was in the offing.

In 2003, at least four ricin related incidents took place. In the beginning of the year, on January 5, 2003, six Algerians, believed to be a part of 'Chechen network' (or, Ansar al-Islam, a group linked to Al-Qaeda and Iraq) were arrested during a raid on a flat in Wood Green, North London, by the British security agencies on charges of being in the possession of ricin. Castor seeds and equipments to make ricin were recovered from the flat. In March, traces of ricin were found by the police in two phials inside a locker at Gare de Lyon railway station in Paris. On October 2003 a metallic container with ricin was discovered at a Greenville, postal facility in South Carolina, United States. The small container had a threatening note, expressing anger against regulations overseeing the truck (transport) industry. A recent disclosure confirms that traces of ricin were also found in mail bound for the White House in November 2003. However, no one was hurt in any of the four cases due to the toxin.

The United States Chemical Warfare Service had started studying ricin poison as a potential weapon during World War I. During the Second World War, a ricin bomb (Code named as Compound W or W-bomb) was developed by the British military at the Porton Down biological weapons establishment situated at Wiltshire in western England. In recent times, due to the fear factor involved and cost effectiveness, the deadly toxin has found its way into the arsenals of rogue states, crime syndicates, and transnational terrorist groups. During 1980s, ricin was allegedly used on the battlefield during the Iraq-Iran war. As per the UNSCOM's investigation, Iraq had 155-mm shells filled with ricin toxin. Syria, according to UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), had produced and stored between five and eighteen metric tons of castor beans annually between 1980 and 1995. However, there was no such evidence of ricin isolation. During the war on terror, US forces claimed to have found crude ricin in the hideouts of the Al Qaeda near Kabul in November 2001. Till now it is tested only on livestock and patients under medical supervision, but never used against soldiers or civilians for an offensive purpose. Nevertheless, with all fear factors intact, its easy availability and technology could lure underground outfits to launch an attack using ricin to perpetrate mass panic, if not mass destruction. The possibility is not remote.



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Overshadowing Osama: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as Terror Master Mind

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Animesh Roul gives a profile of the terror master-mind al-Zarqawi and his activities in Iraq
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"If they don't turn in al-Zarqawi and his group, we will carry out operations in Fallujah. We will not be lenient," Iyad Allawi, Prime Minister of Iraq said on 13 October 2004, issuing an ultimatum to the people in Sunni majority Fallujah city to hand over the Jordanian born terrorist leader. Preceding this ultimatum, the Multi National Force (MNF) in Iraq has been making raids, arrests and strikes against his command and control centres in and around Fallujah, causing inevitable collateral damage to arrest Zarqawi and his associates.

Who is this Abu Musab al-Zarqawi? He has been heading many splinter terrorist outfits under al Qaeda since he was released from a Jordanian prison in 1999 after serving seven years on charges of treason and conspiracy to overthrow the Monarchy. He was active in Afghanistan against the allied forces in the 2002. Zarqawi reportedly joined Ansar al-Islam group, for some time, that fought against Kurdish nationalist forces in the Middle East, while re-organising his Jamaat al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad (Monotheism and Holy War) group. He slipped into oblivion for a while and was rumored to be dead; Zarqawi's name resurfaced in US diplomat Laurence Foley's murder case that took place in Amman in October 2002. Suspects arrested in this case have confessed that they were armed and paid by Zarqawi to kill Foley.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussain's regime, Zarqawi and his outfit have been orchestrating a series of terror activities ranging from abductions, beheadings, suicide attacks, and provoking anti-US insurgency in Iraq to new heights. A \$25 million reward has been offered by the US for information leading to Zarqawi's arrest which almost equals the amount offered for Bin Laden. Most recently, the outfit claimed responsibility for one of the most deadly attacks in Baghdad's Green Zone, the administrative hub, that killed at least 10 persons, including four Americans on 14 October 2004. This was not an isolated event. Zarqawi and his group have been targeting US posts and other vital installations foiling efforts to restore order in Iraq.

In his anti Shia campaign, Zarqawi perpetrated one of the bloodiest attacks in 2003 on a shrine in Najaf killing some fifty Shia worshippers including the cleric, Ayatollah al-Hakim. The list of Zarqawi's signature acts has been growing ever since. In 2003, he was named the mastermind

behind a series of lethal terror attacks from Casablanca to Istanbul. His name was appeared in the Madrid bombings that took place on 11 March this year.

Once identified as al Qaeda's chief biochemical engineer, it is believed that Zarqawi imparted training to a special terror cell on the the use of bio/chem agents for possible attacks in Europe and the Middle East. Jordan's secret service establishment foiled a plot to detonate a chemical weapon capable of killing thousands of people and to attack the US Embassy and Prime Minister's office with poison gas in April this year. Arrested suspects have confessed that Zarqawi hatched these plots. The Jordanian authority has formally charged Zarqawi and his alleged Syrian point man Abu al Ghadia for alleged role in the thwarted chemical attack using suicide bombers. Prosecutors in this case have informed that confessions revealed this group was operating under the name of Kateab al Tawhid (Brigades of Tawhid) affiliated to Zarqawi's Tawhid wa'l-Jihad.

Of late, Zarqawi and his outfit have become notorious for their acts of hostage taking and beheadings in Iraq. The outfit has abducted more than 70 foreigners in recent months in a campaign aimed at forcing participating nations to withdraw their troops and organizations backing US troops and reconstruction efforts in Iraq. One estimate suggests that this group is responsible for more than 20 hostage killings since April 2004. The most gruesome act was the beheading of Nick Berg in May 2004 in retaliation for the US abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison. Those killed in this fashion include: British hostage Kenneth Bigley in October, American engineer Eugene Armstrong in September, South Korean translator Kim Sun-il and Bulgarian truck driver Georgi Lazov.

Zarqawi is now overshadowing the world's number one terror mastermind Bin Laden. Previously thought to be a rival of Bin Laden, Zarqawi's network has pledged its allegiance to al Qaeda in a statement released on 17 October, which made clear that Tawhid wa'l-Jihad was in contact with al Qaeda regarding operations in Iraq.

With the US State Department officially adding Zarqawi's organization as the 39th foreign terrorist entity and slapping sanctions on it and its allies, the focus of US forces has now shifted from elusive Osama to Zarqawi. It remains to be seen how the US led MNF fares in arresting Zarqawi's spreading tentacles in Iraq.