

### Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: The New Al Qaeda?

Two weeks ago the US State Department issued a warning for all United States citizens in Saudi Arabia of a possible terror attack on United States interests. Early this morning, a group of suicide bombers made an attack on an apartment complex in the Saudi city of Riyadh. The attack has left hundreds injured and over twenty dead including seven American citizens. With the coincident terror warning, this attack has finally given some credibility to United States terror warnings. Additionally, this attack once again brings the spotlight back onto the Al Qaeda terror network. Several issues in this story make the future of the War on Terror a very interesting one.

Since the attacks on America on September 11, 2001, a great deal of United States money and time has been spent trying to follow all leads and connections to the terrorist network of Osam Bin Laden. Bin Laden, the Saudi-born leader of Al Qaeda, was the first of many connections made between the attacks and Saudi Arabia. Additionally, 15 of the 19 hijackers in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were from Saudi Arabia. Despite these connections to Al Qaeda, nothing has ever been found linking the government of Saudi Arabia to Al Qaeda or support of international terrorism. As the international spotlight again turns toward Saudi Arabia, it is increasingly important that the Saudi government stands firmly against the terrorist actions and thoroughly pursues the investigation.

Since the attacks on Riyadh, Saudi officials have made several statements of sympathy as well as several stern pledges for justice for those responsible. These pledges and statements are extremely important to the United States and the War on Terror. US

officials have expressed hope that the Saudi Arabian government will support unfettered US investigation of the crime scenes and surrounding area. In this manner, the investigation of the attack on Riyadh will serve as an important test of Islamic support post-Iraq.

Similar to the pledges of the Saudi Arabian government, Russia released statements of support and sympathy that speak to the commonality between the Riyadh attacks and a Chechen terrorist attack on Monday. Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a call for continued vigilance in the global war on terrorism that all free countries must support. These supportive statements that have been issued in the wake of such a horrifying attack on civilian life are vital to the continued success of the War on Terror.

President Bush also responded sympathetically to the attacks. After expressing his condolences to the families of the victims, Bush made a pledge to bring the “ruthless murderers” to justice. State Department officials made statements today that deep investigations are being made into intelligence data taken over the last several weeks to determine any possible clues or hints as to the target or date of the Riyadh bombings. Such clues or tips could lead to better warnings and preventions in the future.

The Riyadh bombings were a terrible attack on Arab and American interests alike. The violent attacks on Saudi Arabian soil might very well have made one more player in the war on terror. With the support of Saudi Arabia, the post-Iraq War on Terror looks to still have a future under the international spotlight. The investigation ahead will determine the other effects that Riyadh will have on international politics.