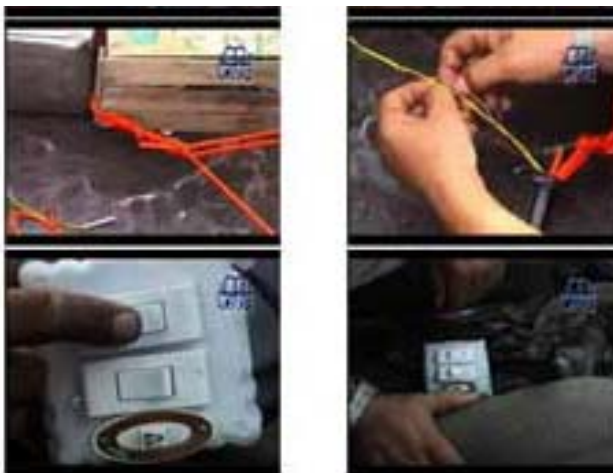




**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage
& Commemoration Center (IICC)**

August 31, 2008

Terrorism and Internet: Charges have recently been filed against an Israeli Bedouin, suspected of forming contact with Al-Qaeda through the Internet. The suspect was planning to perpetrate terrorist attacks in Israel, mainly a suicide bombing attack at the Beersheba central bus station.



Instructions for manufacturing explosive charges on one of Al-Qaeda's websites



The homepage of Al-Ikhlās, one of Al-Qaeda's major forum websites. Bottom: a photograph of Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's deputy, and a link to a clip by Al-Sahab, Al-Qaeda's media branch. According to the indictment, instructions and information on manufacturing explosive charges were downloaded by the suspect from the website.

Overview

1. On August 21, charges were filed in the Beersheba District Court against Khaled Bin Khalil Abu Ruqaiq, an Israeli Bedouin from Tel Sheva. The suspect attended Beersheba Technological College, where he obtained computer knowledge and graphic design skills. His indictment sheds light on his long-term online relationship with Al-Qaeda and global jihad elements. Also, the suspect used the Internet to form contact with a terrorist operative who identified himself as belonging to Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

2. The suspect planned to recruit a terrorist squad in order to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack at the Beersheba central bus station. He also planned to manufacture an explosive charge and set it east of Tel Sheva (a Bedouin town in south Israel), on a road frequently used by IDF vehicles. The suspect's plans were not realized. His attorney, Samir Abu Abed, said that his client denied the allegations (Haaretz daily, August 24).

3. Al-Qaeda and Islamic terrorist organizations make massive use of the Internet for indoctrination and for operative activity, such as **recruiting and handling terrorist operatives worldwide**. The present incident is **yet another example of Israel's Arab citizens being recruited** to Al-Qaeda and global jihad based on their affiliation with the ideology of Al-Qaeda and radical Islam, distributed online. It should be noted that we have recently seen **two other incidents** of young Arabs from Israel, four of them from East Jerusalem, forming relationships with Al-Qaeda through the Internet and planning to perpetrate terrorist attacks in Israel.¹

Contacting Al-Qaeda and global jihad operatives through the Internet

4. The indictment filed in the Beersheba District Court sheds light on Khaled Bin Khalil Abu Ruqaiq's online relationship with Al-Qaeda and global jihad elements. According to the indictment:

a. The relationship began in 2002 and lasted until the charges were pressed. During that time, the suspect entered websites associated with Al-Qaeda, global jihad, and radical Islam: **AI-**

¹ See Information Bulletins: ["Terrorism and Internet: charges have recently been filed against two Israeli Bedouins, members of the Islamic Movement. They are suspected of acting on behalf of Al-Qaeda. They formed and maintained contact with Al-Qaeda through the Internet, based on their ideological affinity with radical Islam"](#) (July 20, 2008); ["The Israel security forces recently detained six Israeli and East Jerusalem Arabs, some of them students. They planned to set up an Al-Qaeda network and planned to carry out terrorist attacks in Israel, including downing the helicopter of the American president during his visit to Jerusalem"](#) (July 21, 2008).

Ikhlas, Al-Hisba, Al-Buraq, Al-Maarek, Al-Firdaws,² Balsam al-Iman (whose name has since changed) and other websites.³

b. To conceal his identity, the suspect used different login names while visiting the websites. He took part in forums and online conversations in which he became acquainted with the organization's operatives in Gaza and elsewhere, with whom he discussed terrorist attacks which had occurred in various places worldwide. He also contacted a person who identified himself as a Fatah Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades operative. The suspect downloaded from those websites video recordings of terrorist attacks and songs encouraging suicide bombing attacks, and saved them on his computer.

c. As part of his activity on the **Al-Hisba** and **Al-Buraq⁴** websites, the suspect did computer graphics for documents he received. He downloaded documents and images calling to murder Americans and other "infidels" and photographs of terrorist operatives belonging to Al-Qaeda and Palestinian terrorist organizations such as Hamas's Izz al-Din al-Qassam Martyrs Brigades. He sent back the designs he did to those websites.

Transition from ideological affiliation to terrorist activity

5. On May 8, 2008, the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs published a report on the extensive use made by Al-Qaeda and global jihad of the Internet. The report discusses the emergence of "homegrown terrorists" operated by Al-Qaeda in various countries around the world, including the US. It details the process terrorist recruits go through, which includes losing their sense of identity and embracing jihadist ideology. In some cases, embracing that ideology is accompanied by a **transition** from mere association with Al-Qaeda's radical Islamic view **to actually perpetrating terrorist attacks** (the US Senate report refers to that stage as "**jihadization**", in which a web surfer exposed to radical Islamic indoctrination may become a "jihad warrior" involved in terrorist attacks).⁵

6. As the indictment shows, in the case at hand the suspect also moved from a stage of ideological affiliation with radical Islam to a stage of planning terrorist attacks in Israel:

a. During his activity on the websites of Al-Qaeda and the global jihad, **the suspect copied from the Al-Ikhlas⁶ website (one of Al-Qaeda's major online forums)**

² One of Al-Qaeda's major online forums.

³ Al-Hisba, Al-Buraq, and Al-Ikhlas were also mentioned in the charges filed in July 2008 against two Bedouins from Rahat, members of the Islamic Movement, who also formed a relationship with global jihad elements through the Internet (see footnote 1).

⁴ The two websites through which the two Rahat residents contacted Al-Qaeda (ibid).

⁵ See our Information Bulletin: "[Terrorism and Internet: a US Senate report analyzes the extensive use made by Al-Qaeda of the Internet in its war for hearts and minds. The report voices concerns over the exposure of American citizens to the websites of Al-Qaeda and other radical Islamic organizations](#)" (July 14, 2008).

⁶ *Ikhlas*—loyalty, devotion; also used in the religious context.

instructions and information on manufacturing explosive charges. The information and instructions he copied dealt with various types of explosives, explosive belts, rockets, and so forth, including instructional videos on the manufacturing of various explosives. Later, the suspect transferred the instructions he copied to his relative Osama Abu Ruqaiq, when the latter became interested in manufacturing explosives. The suspect also allowed his relative to use his own nickname on the Al-Ikhlās website to log in and talk to other forum members.

b. At some point in 2004, as part of the above-mentioned activity on Al-Qaeda and global jihad websites, the suspect decided to form and lead a **terrorist squad**. He intended to send the squad **to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack in Israel and kill Israeli Jews**. As part of recruiting members for the squad, he approached his classmate in Beersheba Technological College **and asked him whether he would be willing to wear an explosive belt and blow himself up at the Beersheba central bus station.**⁷ His friend refused.

c. At some point in 2006, the suspect planned to manufacture an explosive charge and set it east of Tel Sheva, on a road frequently used by IDF vehicles, in order to hit IDF soldiers. As part of the planning, he approached Osama Abu Ruqaiq, his relative in Tel Sheva, asking him for half a pound of potassium nitrate, a chemical substance that can be used for manufacturing explosives.⁸ He would then use the instructions downloaded from the Al-Ikhlās website to manufacture the IED. Osama Abu Ruqaiq gave him the substance; ultimately, however, due to time constraints and other factors, the suspect did not go forward with the terrorist attack he planned.

⁷ The Beersheba central bus station was once a target for a deadly suicide bombing attack. On August 31, 2004, two suicide bombers blew themselves up on two buses in Beersheba, killing 16 people and injuring about one hundred. The suicide bombers were sent by the Hamas network in Hebron.

⁸ A chemical mixture used as fertilizer. It is used by Palestinian terrorist organizations to make propellant engines for their rockets.