

Al Qaida unit posts details of plan to hit US economy

Group promises barrage of small-scale attacks.

- AP
- Published: 00:00 November 22, 2010



Washington: Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula is promising more small-scale attacks like its attempts to bomb two US-bound cargo planes, which it likens to bleeding its enemy to death by a thousand cuts, in a special edition of the Yemeni-based group's English online magazine, *Inspire*.

The editors boast that what they call Operation Hemorrhage was cheap, and easy, using common items that together with shipping, cost only \$4,200 (Dh15,414) to carry out.

Alerted to the late October bomb plot by Saudi intelligence, security officials chased the packages across five countries, trying frantically over the next two days to prevent an explosion that could have come at any moment.

The pursuit showed that even when the world's counter-terrorism systems work, preventing an attack is often a terrifyingly close ordeal.

The group says it's part of a new strategy to replace spectacular attacks in favour of smaller attacks to hit the US economy, according to the special edition of the online magazine, made available by both Ben Venzke's IntelCentre, and the Site Intelligence Group.

"To bring down America we do not need to strike big," the editors write. With the "security phobia that is sweeping America, it is more feasible to stage smaller attacks that involve less players and less time to launch" thereby circumventing US security, they conclude. In the magazine, an author identified as the group's head of foreign operations says the package attacks were intended to cause economic harm, not casualties.

New target

"We knew that cargo planes are staffed by only a pilot and a co-pilot," the author writes, "so our objective was not to cause maximum casualties but to cause maximum losses to the American economy," by striking at the multi-billion dollar US freight industry.

The Al Qaida offshoot insists it also brought down a UPS cargo plane in Dubai in September, in addition to the October 29 attempts to bring down a FedEx plane, and a

UPS plane bound for the US. But US officials insist the Dubai crash was an accident caused by a battery fire, not terrorism.

The editors boast that they chose printer cartridges in which to hide the explosive because toner is carbon-based, with a molecular composition "close to that of PETN," so it would not be detected.

In another article, the editors bragged of how inexpensive the operation was, listing the cost of the items, including two Nokia mobiles, at \$150 each, two HP printers, at \$300 each, plus shipping, transportation and other miscellaneous expenses add up to a total bill of \$4,200.

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