

This article was downloaded by: [Universite De Paris 1]

On: 23 June 2013, At: 07:28

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Studies in Conflict & Terrorism

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/uter20>

### Strengths and Weaknesses of Grassroot Jihadist Networks: The Madrid Bombings

Javier Jordan <sup>a</sup>, Fernando M. Mañas <sup>a</sup> & Nicola Horsburgh <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Granada, Granada, Spain

<sup>b</sup> King's College London, London, United Kingdom

Published online: 03 Jan 2008.

To cite this article: Javier Jordan, Fernando M. Mañas & Nicola Horsburgh (2008): Strengths and Weaknesses of Grassroot Jihadist Networks: The Madrid Bombings, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 31:1, 17-39

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576100701767148>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## Strengths and Weaknesses of Grassroot Jihadist Networks: The Madrid Bombings

JAVIER JORDAN  
FERNANDO M. MAÑAS

University of Granada  
Granada, Spain

NICOLA HORSBURGH

King's College London  
London, United Kingdom

*Grass-roots jihadist networks represent a launch-pad for the Global Jihad Movement, particularly in Europe and the United States. This article explores the concept of a grass-roots jihadist network, the profile of its members, and what influence the network may have on key elements within the Global Jihad Movement. The article will also analyze in detail the strengths and weaknesses of these networks. To do so, it will use the Madrid bombings in March 2004 as a case study.*

A substantial number of terrorist attacks since 9/11 are the work of grass-root jihadist networks (GJN). These groups consist of individuals that operate within the country that they reside and share the strategic objectives of the Global Jihad Movement (GJMV) but do not formally belong to the “Al Qaeda organization” or other associated groups. Concretely, at the time of writing two of the three main attacks carried out in Europe since 9/11 (the Madrid bombings and the assassination of Theo Van Gogh) have been orchestrated by said groups.

The jihadi strategist Mustafa Setmari (aka Abu Musab Al-Suri) referred to the GJN when discussing the future of jihadism in his book *The International Islamic Resistance Call*. The GJN represents the backbone of what Setmari considers the “third generation of [the] mujahideen,” a generation currently in the process of being defined, born after the “September happenings, the occupation in Iraq, and the Palestinian Intifada.” While extorting the third generation to remain rooted in the international movement, Setmari outlines his 1990 decision that jihadist groups cannot hope to confront America and its allies directly. The groups must instead move from the classical structure of an underground organization with a hierarchical “pyramid”-shaped chain of command, to a “secret gang-war [structure], which has different and numerous cells untied together.” This structure will permit the network to conduct decentralized urban warfare on enemy territory.<sup>1</sup> In this

Received 23 October 2006; accepted 20 March 2007.

Address correspondence to Javier Jordan, Departamento de Ciencia Política y de la Administración, Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociología, Universidad de Granada, C/Rector Lope Argueta, 4, Granada 180001, Spain. E-mail: jjordan@ugr.es

light, the GJN constitutes a more advanced phase in the jihadi insurgency project initiated by Al Qaeda. Furthermore, the evolution of the GJMV depends largely on any future strategic and political gains made by the GJN that operate in the west.

Ultimately, this article intends to examine the concept of the GJN and its strengths and weaknesses as an organizational model, so as to extrapolate useful lessons for counterterrorism. The case study, the Madrid bombings, is a clear example of a GJN. The bombings also represent an example of the worst jihadist attack in Europe. The study will benefit from a wealth of information on the network that perpetrated the Madrid bombings. However, it is acknowledged that one case study is not sufficient to test the theoretical framework adopted here. This article therefore represents merely a first step toward a rough theoretical framework, a draft to be used later when examining other case studies.<sup>2</sup>

The key source used in this work is Indictment 20/2004 of the Spanish National Audience on the Madrid bombings. This document, over 1,400 pages in length, contains numerous police reports and protected-witness testimony. Use has also been made of the report (36/05) on the sentencing of the Abu Dahdah network (over 400 pages long). The Abu Dahdah network, a jihadist group dismantled in 2001, contributed to the formation of the Madrid bombing network.<sup>3</sup> To these two key sources the authors have added hundreds of news items concerning the investigation and several personal interviews with members of the Spanish security agencies.

It should be noted from the outset and for the purpose of clarity that in terms of profile-building only those that presumably participated or collaborated in the Madrid bombings have been examined. For example, in January 2006 there were a total of 116 individuals imputed for the bombings. Most of these were not imprisoned and a considerable number were not Muslim; instead, they were common delinquents that participated purely for financial gain, facilitating funding and the obtainment of explosives for the Madrid GJN.<sup>4</sup> The Indictment on the bombings ultimately included only 29 individuals, of which a considerable number were non-Muslim Spaniards and mere common delinquents. For this reason, analysis here is limited to those individuals that can be considered with more certainty to be jihadi. Jihadis include those that have been arrested (also those who have committed suicide or fled) for presumed links to networks that in many cases have participated in meetings where the *Jihad* is promoted, or where propaganda has been distributed, and those that definitely sympathized and shared the jihadist cause. In total the authors have selected 45 individuals (numbered in the Appendix). Throughout this article the authors have also taken into account non-jihadi common delinquents linked to the perpetrators. This allows better identification of the cluster involved in the transaction of drugs traded in exchange for the explosives used in the Madrid bombings.

### **Conceptualizing the “Grassroots Jihadist Networks” (GJN)**

Before the analysis begins it is convenient to conceptualize what a “grass-root jihadist network” represents. This article adopts the following definition of the GJN: *a group of individuals that accept the strategic objectives (top-level goals and aims) of the Global Jihad Movement and attempt to contribute to these from their country of residence. The leaders and members of a GJN do not belong formally to the hierarchical structure of Al Qaeda or other associated GJMV organizations, although generally they might have links to members of these organizations. The tasks carried out by a GJN can be logistical and explicitly violent in character, these are carried out independently at tactical level (specific activities carried out on a daily basis) and in most cases, operational level (activities and operations carried out in pursuit of strategic goals).*

The GJN can be distinguished clearly from commanders or groups of operatives belonging to Al Qaeda or other GJMV groups (like the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), Ansar al Islam, and al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad) that enter a country to carry out an attack. The clearest example of this is the pilots and hijackers of 9/11.<sup>5</sup> Another example would be the “Meliani command,” a cell of the GSPC established in Frankfurt (Germany) that intended to attack Strasbourg (France) in early 2001.<sup>6</sup> These groups are also known as *hit squads*.<sup>7</sup>

The GJN are also different from what one could call *local cells* belonging to Al Qaeda or related groups. The members of these cells typically reside in the country that they attack and are autonomous at tactical level. However, they are part of a wider hierarchical organization, and depend on the directives of that organization at strategic and operational levels. Not all members of a cell are members of the mother organization, but their leaders usually are. Since 9/11, tens of local cells have been dismantled in Europe. Examples of this kind of cell are those belonging to the GSPC in Spain (dismantled in September 2001 and December 2004) or an al-Tawhid cell closed down in Germany in April 2002.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, the GJN can follow a hierarchical structure with a specialized distribution of tasks but the small size and informal nature of the network means that they are far different from Weber’s bureaucratic model with a strict regulation of activities, clear professionalization, and a rigid division of tasks for individuals associated with the organization. Instead, the GJN relies on personal links and a shared common ideology. In many cases they have no name to differentiate themselves as a group or organization. However, GJN can have links to more structured jihadist organizations or to other GJN. The Madrid GJN had links to the GJN responsible for the assassination of Theo Van Gogh in November 2004, through the Moroccan Abdeladim Akaoulad.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, a fusion of different GJN might take place; this explains the formation of the Madrid GJN following the union of small radical subgroups.

It is also possible that members of the same GJN live in different countries but work in union. An example of this is a GJN whose members resided in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. This GJN was dismantled between October 2005 and June 2006. Members were planning a campaign of attacks in each respective country, without the support or oversight from central Al Qaeda leadership.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, GJN are capable of adopting flexible structures, contributing to the master network of networks that is the GJMV. The following section will now explore the characteristics of the GJN, using two analytical criteria:

- Background and personal profile of members;
- Influence and control exercised by the central core of the Global Jihad Movement upon the GJN.

### ***Background and Personal Profiles***

The personal profile of GJN members varies. Salafist jihadism has developed in different segments among the Muslim population in Europe and the United States. Thus a reliable, uniform portrait cannot be established.

Typically, many were not born in their country of residence. Others are second/third generation immigrants (particularly in France and the United Kingdom). Of the first generation immigrants some become citizens, residents, or illegal residents. A GJN can house several nationalities, but usually there is a predominant nationality or region (as in North Africans, Middle Eastern, or Pakistani). In some cases members might be former training colleagues or war veterans from the *Jihad* fronts in Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan,

or Iraq. These members are usually leaders of a GJN. However, most GJN members do not have such “battle” experience. Likewise, the profile and background of members does not vary from the profile of the average Muslim immigrant.

There are two studies on jihadis arrested in Europe and North America that can help one to better understand the profile of GJN members. These studies were undertaken by Robert S. Leiken and Steve Brooke, and Marc Sageman, respectively. Unfortunately, many of the individuals included in the aforementioned studies belong to hit squads and local cells linked to Al Qaeda or other related groups, not GJN.

Leiken and Brooke focused on 373 suspected and convicted terrorists implicated in North America and Western Europe since the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 through December 2004. Of the 373, 86% were Muslim immigrants, and the remainder mainly converts (9%) and African American Muslims.<sup>11</sup> In many cases these are individuals with low socioeconomic backgrounds, from diverse ethnic communities with difficult perspectives on social integration. This lack of integration is particularly disheartening among the second and third generation immigrants that do not identify with the country in which they were born or the country of their ancestors. However, Leiken and Brooke did highlight the presence of jihadis studying at universities and holding down middle-class jobs. These jihadis usually formed part of what he termed “sleeper cells” or “insiders.”

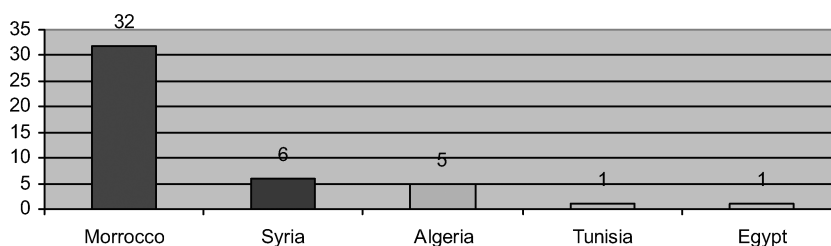
In his study Marc Sageman focused on 172 individuals, uncovering wide variation in areas such as education, socioeconomic status, and previous religious practices.<sup>12</sup> When discussing the arrest of suspects in Europe from the Maghreb region, Sageman highlighted their lack of education, a predominance of the middle-low class, and common delinquency. Sageman’s study also reveals that many jihadis were married with children. Crucially, all were in contact with the Jihad in a country different to the one in which they were born and grew up. Many intensified their religious practices shortly prior to their integration into the jihadist networks.

Although the two studies cover mostly non-GJN members, it is argued here that the same profile characteristics generally apply to the Madrid GJN. From this, one can extrapolate further to other GJN in the hope that other empirical studies will validate these assumptions. Overall, the conclusion is disquieting, because it demonstrates that an attraction to jihadist salafism (the current ideology that inspires Al Qaeda and the GJMV) is evident among a wide range of individuals. Furthermore, social marginalization is not a key indicator. Many socially marginalized immigrants do not join the *Jihad* but there are abundant examples of middle-class jihadis, especially among those that fulfill senior and leadership roles. As a consequence, although social politics can have a positive affect on integration they cannot alone prevent the emergence of GJN among first, second, and third generation Muslim immigrants.

A study of the Madrid GJN highlights several key characteristics. First, most of the members were legally resident in Spain (see Table 1). None were born in Spain but many

**Table 1**  
Legal residency status

	Residence permit	Nationalized	Irregular status	Native	No data	Total
	37	5	2	—	1	45
Percentage	83%	11%	4%	—	2%	100%



**Figure 1.** Countries of origin: Madrid network.

had resided permanently in the country for several years, particularly the key members. For example, the brothers Almallah Dabas, key ideological figures within the group, had become Spanish nationals. Serhane Abdelmajid (“the Tunisian”), ideological and operative leader of the network, arrived in Spain in 1994 to study economics, funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation. Jamal Ahmidan, involved in the financing of the GJN, had resided in Spain since the mid-1990s and had a son with a non-Muslim Spaniard.<sup>13</sup> The Algerian Allekema Lamari, another leader of operations, had lived in Spain since 1992.

Nationalities of the suspected jihadis connected to the bombings include Tunisians, Algerians, Egyptians, Syrians, and Moroccans (see Figure 1). However, most were Moroccans recruited in Spain. The prevalence of Moroccans is unsurprising given that they represent the largest proportion of immigrants resident in Spain and in recent years Moroccan jihadis have played a greater role in the GJMV.<sup>14</sup> In antiterrorist operations following the Madrid bombings the predominant nationality of those arrested has remained Moroccan.<sup>15</sup>

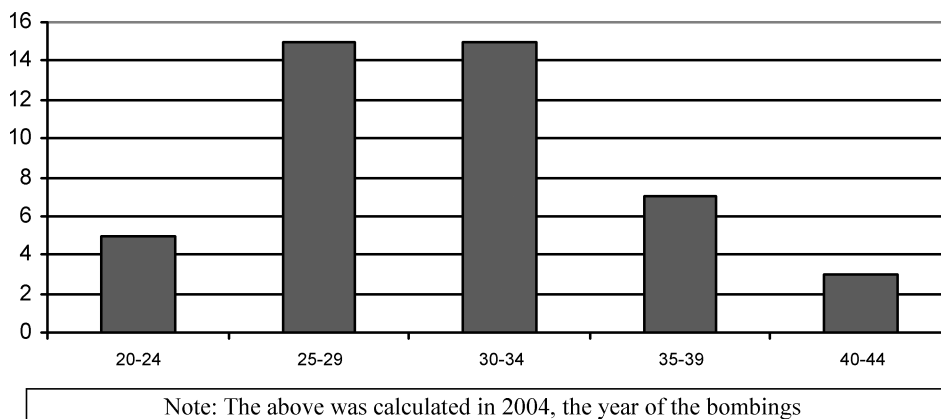
None of the operational leaders or members of the network had passed through a foreign training camp, nor fought for the Jihad abroad (as in Afghanistan, Bosnia, or Chechnya). Apart from the Algerian Allekema Lamari (imprisoned in Spain in 1997 for his links to the GIA), none of them could be considered as Jihad veterans, with a long and committed militancy to the cause. Some were only sympathizers of previous networks in Spain (like the Abu Dahdah network). Precisely because of this, they were not arrested when the Spanish police dismantled the Abu Dahdah network three years prior to the Madrid bombings. They were known by the police information services but given their low-key involvement it was impossible to press charges against them.

Although the average age is relatively young (most were 25–35 years old when the attack took place), the perpetrators of the Madrid bombings were older than those involved in the July 2005 London bombings. In the latter most were less than 23 years old (see Figure 2).

The Madrid bombings network was predominantly working-class (see Table 2). Some earned a respectable salary; others lived at subsistence level as demonstrated by the state

**Table 2**  
Distribution according to social class

	Working	Middle	No data	Total
	39	4	2	45
Percentage	87%	9%	4%	100%



**Figure 2.** Distribution according to age.

of their bank accounts revealed during the legal investigation into the Madrid attack.<sup>16</sup> All in all, the economic situation was not that dissimilar to other Maghreb immigrants starting out in Spain. In addition, it cannot be claimed that the majority were socially marginalized.

A study of their employment status leads one to another interesting conclusion: what the authors call “part-time militant jihadism.” Many led normal lives before their arrest. Their commitment to the *Jihad* was principally based on attendance to meetings discussing the *Jihad*; frequent contact with members of the group; or illicit funding activities.

A few demonstrate a full-time commitment to jihadism, but this profile is usually more distinctive. It belongs to the leaders and seriously committed individuals that are funded by way of delinquency and donations made by sympathizers of the *Jihad*. Mouhannad Almallah Dabas was considered unemployed yet on many occasions returned home with large sums of money.<sup>17</sup> The same can be said of Mustafa el Maymouni. Many of the core members of the Madrid bombings network terminated their employment a few months prior to the attack. Indeed, Jamal Ahmidan used drug money and small-time robberies to pay for the group’s personal expenses.<sup>18</sup>

Other indicators of their socioeconomic integration include their command of the Spanish language and their family status. There is a lack of information on their level of fluency but given the number of years resident in the country and the fact that they worked in Spain, it is to be assumed that they spoke acceptable Spanish. In terms of family status, marriage or a stable relationship arguably contributes to social integration. Approximately half of the presumed jihadis were married, usually to Moroccan women (see Table 3). Many had large families. This finding concurs with Marc Sageman’s investigation.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 3**  
Family status

	Married	Single	No data	Total
	22	22	2	45
Percentage	48%	48%	4%	100%

Thus, an alarming second major characteristic of the Madrid GJN members is that most can be categorized as *socially integrated*. This contrasts with members of other dismantled terrorist networks in Spain where the dominant profile is one of *social marginalization*; as was the case of a GJN composed of Moroccans and Algerians dismantled by the Spanish police between October–November 2004. This network largely consisted of current and former convicts preparing for a new campaign of attacks to be carried out on the first anniversary of the Madrid bombings. From this it can be argued that both socially integrated and socially marginalized individuals within these networks are equally dangerous. This finding highlights the value and importance of understanding the factors related to identity; sense of belonging and the social ties between members. Said “social integration” or “marginalisation” is based on socioeconomic indicators. However, a common denominator among GJN members is the sense of a lack of belonging to society, hostility toward society, and the construction of an identity according to the boundaries of a virtual community that is the GJMV.<sup>20</sup>

The aforementioned highlights the importance of the “Jihadist counterculture” (the system of values shared by militants within the GJMV) which, in the authors’ opinion, constitutes a key variable that explains motivation for said militancy. In this regard, the theoretical framework proposed by Manuel Castells in his book *The Power of Identity* is most relevant. Castells explains that many individuals witness the unraveling of traditional identities in the globalized world, where the predominant social and economic model is found profoundly marked by individualism. To protect one from these effects, some individuals resort to an identity oasis based on ethnics, religion, gender, and other postmaterial values (like defense of the environment and solidarity). Castells warns that in some cases these identities can convert into “resistance identities”; in other words, identities “generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society.”<sup>21</sup>

Using “internal” propaganda on video or online, the jihadist networks support each other through interpersonal relations, to attract new recruits and maintain old ones. The role of interpersonal relations or the group dynamic in motivation has been stressed by Marc Sageman in his study of jihadist networks<sup>22</sup> and by Donatella Della Porta in relation to the Red Brigades and the Red Army Fraction.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, considerable interaction within the Madrid GJN should be noted. Moreover, membership of a network is usually preceded by ties of friendship or family. In reality, the Madrid network was composed of a few leaders (Lamari, Serhane, and Jamal Ahmidan) and a group of trusted radical confidants.

### ***Influence and Control of the Core of the GJMV Over the GJN at Strategic, Operational, and Tactical Levels***

The GJMV can be considered as a Loosely Coupled Movement, a category devised by Brian A. Jackson.<sup>24</sup> It is a social movement because GJMV consists of “a group of people with a common ideology who try together to achieve certain general goals.”<sup>25</sup> These general goals are the strategic objectives of the global *Jihad*. Similarly, there is a considerable degree of tactical and operational decentralization in achieving these objectives. According to Jackson, “The level of operational or tactical control that can exist in a movement is limited” although this does not mean that there is no coordination at all: “mechanisms for limited types of operational and tactical influence may exist—for example, the consensus on legitimate target sets or even circulated lists of priority targets.” Elsewhere, Shaul Mishal

and Maoz Rosenthal have depicted Al Qaeda as a “Dune organization.” According to these authors, “the Dune movement is almost random, moving from one territory to another, affecting each territory, changing its characteristics and moves on to the next destination. When one takes this metaphor and applies it to the world of terrorist organizations, the resemblance of the geological Dune to the organization Dune becomes apparent. That is, terrorist organizations acting in the manner described with respect to Al Qaeda, act in a dynamics of a fast-moving entity that associates and dissociates itself with local elements while creating a global effect.”<sup>26</sup>

As highlighted previously, the GJN accept the strategic influence of the GJMV central core to mark out general goals but the networks are usually autonomous at the operational and particularly tactical level. The GJMV central core is taken here to constitute the ideological strategists and instigators of Al Qaeda (bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Ayman al-Hilali, Mustapha Setmariam, Abu Yahya al-Libi, or Sayf al-Adl, and operative leaders at a second level) and other prestigious leaders belonging to radical groups and with considerable autonomy from the “Al Qaeda organization” like the late Abu Musab al-Zarkawi, Yusuf al-Ayiri, and Abdel Aziz al-Muqrin.

On occasion, suggestions and directives are made between leaders of one GJN and senior members of Al Qaeda and other organizations. But the strategic influence of the central core of the GJMV over militants in GJN does not require personal contact. Instead, there are several ways in which influence is possible:

- *Terrorist attacks.* 9/11 was a clear example of “propaganda by the deed” with global repercussions. Since then, numerous GJN have attempted to emulate Al Qaeda.
- *Strategic directives from jihadi leaders via the media and above all, the Internet.* Thanks to the information revolution, terrorists are able to control the process of production and distribution of propaganda. As Bruce Hoffman states, “The ability to communicate in real time via the Internet, using a variety of compelling electronic media—including dramatic video footage, digital photographs, and audio clips accompanied by visually arresting along with savvy and visually appealing web design—has enabled terrorists to reach a potentially vast audience faster, more pervasively and more effectively than ever before.”<sup>27</sup> In this way, the GJMV central core has been able to extend its ideology in a uniform manner without direct contact with new followers. Likewise, hundreds of grass-root sympathizers have imitated the central core, producing and in particular copying and distributing propaganda.

However, as highlighted by Jackson, the influence of Al Qaeda is not limited to strategy. Al Qaeda has not become just a simple idea.<sup>28</sup> The organization continues to exercise its operational, and on occasion tactical, influence in the following ways:

- Al Qaeda leaders continue to highlight potential targets and transmit operational directives. For example, Osama bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri have indicated countries and concrete installations (for example, oilfields) to attack.
- The way in which attacks are carried out by groups linked to the GJMV central core also influences the operational behavior of GJN. Some GJN have imitated attacks, targeting various objectives simultaneously, thereby increasing the number of civilian casualties. On many occasions the attack is carried out by suicide bombers and against poorly guarded soft targets. The process is self-fulfilling and self-sustaining so that GJN become inspired by one another.
- Training camp veterans from Afghanistan remain members of GJN, involved at tactical and operational levels worldwide. Although this “Afghan Alumni” does not

maintain formal links to Al Qaeda or other related organizations, they imprint upon GJN a modus operandi used by pioneering organizations within the GJMV in terms of finance, distribution of propaganda, recruitment, and preparation of attacks. This dynamic predates 9/11 and has continued with the dispersion of individuals that fought in Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Iraq.<sup>29</sup>

- Al Qaeda and other organizations linked to the GJMV have diffused, via the Internet, thousands of manuals for the *Jihad*. Naturally, the practical use of these manuals is limited. There is a universe of tactical skills in which “book learning” is an important first step but this in itself will never be a viable substitute for practice in the real world. This is true also of the techniques used for intelligence, kidnapping, arms deals, and particularly for the fabrication of explosives.<sup>30</sup> Notably, these manuals assume a degree of tactical and operational influence of the GJMV central core over the GJN in the planning and execution of attacks.

A study of the GJN responsible for the Madrid bombings highlights the importance of the mechanisms highlighted earlier in the strategic influence of the GJMV central core.

Contrary to several media reports, the Madrid GJN was not a local cell of the GICM. However, some of the members, especially the leaders, maintained contact with formal members of organizations like the GICM and Al Qaeda. One of the members, the Algerian Allekema Lamari, was linked to the GIA since the 1990s. Overall, there existed three main pathways that connected the Madrid GJN to a senior level of the GJMV:

- The first connection existed via the brothers Allmalah Dabas. The brothers are of Syrian origin with Spanish nationality (Mohannad was detained in Spain and Moutaz in London). It is suspected that they played a relevant role in the recruitment and indoctrination of the Madrid GJN and that they maintained contact with Mohamed Bahaiah, Abu Khaled (considered the personal messenger for Osama bin Laden in Europe), and Abu Qutada in London.<sup>31</sup>
- The second connection is Moroccan Yousef Belhadj. He was arrested in March 2005 in Belgium and has been identified by relatives (several were arrested for their involvement in the Madrid attack) as a member of Al Qaeda and the GICM.<sup>32</sup> Belhadj was in Spain in February 2004 and abandoned the country a few days prior to the Madrid attack. He was in contact with members of the network, particularly Serhane “the Tunisian.”<sup>33</sup> Yousef Belhadj was involved in a recruitment ring in Belgium that sent volunteers to Iraq. Through this activity Belhadj had contact with a jihadist cell in Syria.<sup>34</sup>
- The third connection was based on ties to another Moroccan, Amer Azizi. Azizi was one of the few senior members of the Abu Dahdah network that managed to escape Spain following a police operation in 2001. Today, the police suspect that Azizi is hiding out in Pakistan or Afghanistan, although there exist unconfirmed reports of his death in Iraq. Moutaz Allmalah Dabas and Serhane “the Tunisian” were in contact with him via e-mail.<sup>35</sup> The Abu Dahdah network was a local cell of Al Qaeda and it is possible that Azizi, if still alive, remains in contact with that organization (although it is unclear whether he is a formal member).

All these connections contributed to the Madrid GJN acting under the strategic and perhaps operational influence of the GJMV central core. One of the pending issues of the judicial investigation into the Madrid attack is determining the mastermind behind the bombings. It is unclear whether the idea originated from a senior element of the GJMV via any of the three connections highlighted earlier or if the idea simply came from the GJN (for example,

during one of their meetings when discussing the status of Muslims in the world and the need to support the Mujahaddin).

In any case, it has been demonstrated that senior elements (in particular Youssef Belhadj and the Almallah Dabas brothers) fulfilled an important role in the indoctrination and general motivation of the Madrid GJN. As can be observed from Figure 3, these individuals occupied a peripheral position within and outside the network. Normatively speaking, these individuals shared fewer values in terms of closeness, in contrast to other members. The only exception is Mouhannad Almallah Dabas, who maintained a relationship with various trusted members of the network. Remaining on a secondary level within the GJN is a security practice common among members of a certain level within the GJMV and demonstrates that in the analysis of networks the number of linkages is not a definitive indicator of individual importance in the group.<sup>36</sup> Thus, when determining hierarchical structures and the influence of individuals over the group a qualitative analysis of the testimonies and judicial evidence is necessary. Mere quantitative analysis does not suffice. Beyond these connections, two key elements also contributed to the strategic influence of the GJMV central core on the GJN:

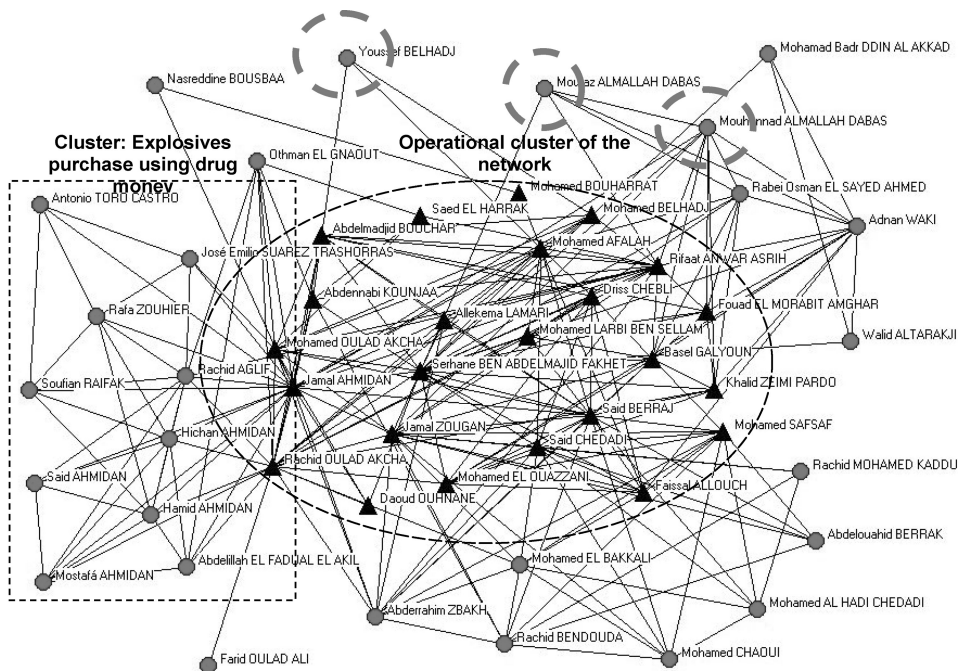
1. *Terrorist attacks.* In the first communiqué issued by the Madrid GJN following the Madrid bombings, the terrorists made reference to 9/11 and the withdrawal of American troops following casualties from Lebanon (1983) and Somalia (1993).
2. *Strategic directives from the GJMV central core.* Computers belonging to the terrorists contained tens of documents by Osama bin Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Abu Qatada, and Mohamed Fizazi (a radical Moroccan preacher) encouraging the struggle against infidels, in defense of Islam. The terrorists also had works by classical authors like Ibn Taymiyya, Sayid Qutb, and Abudullah Azzam.<sup>37</sup>

At the operational and tactical level, the following can be appreciated.

*Operational Directives of the GJMV Central Core.* In an audio communiqué issued on 18 October 2003 Osama bin Laden threatened that Spain was a target for attacks because of its military involvement in Iraq. Less than two months later Global Islamic Media issued to its mailing lists two jihadi documents on the Iraq crisis. Evidence from the computers belonging to the terrorists demonstrates that at least one of them was a subscriber to that radical mailing list.<sup>38</sup> The first of the documents considered Spain the most vulnerable coalition member from a political standpoint (whilst the crisis and war in Iraq developed, Spain experienced enormous internal political and social turmoil. In the streets, thousands protested and consensus on foreign policy between the main political parties ceased). In the jihadist paper it was hypothesized that should Spain suffer any casualties in Iraq, it would be forced to retreat given internal social pressure and political opposition from the Socialist Party or it would lose the elections. For this reason, the document animated jihadis to take maximum advantage of the forthcoming general elections in Spain to carry out attacks against Spanish troops in Iraq. This document was discovered by accident on the Internet by a researcher from the Forsvarets Forskningsinstitut (Norwegian Defence Research Establishment).<sup>39</sup>

Another document, little more than a brief but of great value, was published on the same jihadist website as the document just discussed. This second document published on 8 December 2003 contains a more explicit threat and hinted at the possibility of an attack against Spain outside of Iraq. The document was located and translated by the senior researcher Reuven Paz.<sup>40</sup>

It is not clear how far the operational directives influenced the Madrid GJN. The day after bin Laden's explicit threat to Spain in October 2003, Youssef Belhadj purchased in Belgium a telephone card (0485731886) using a false name and date of birth: 11 March 1921 (11 March 2004 was later the date of the Madrid bombings). For his other phone



**Note:** The dark triangle represents members of the operational cluster of the network (those that directly participated in the preparation or execution of the attack). Individuals that have collaborated with the network, but are not jihadists or Muslims, have also been included. Therefore, the total number of individuals represented is greater than the 45 mentioned in the Appendix. The discontinuous circle represents individuals that fulfilled an important role in the indoctrination of and strategic influence over the group.

**Normalized degree (percentage plus three decimals)**

Jamal AHMIDAN**	52.000	Driss CHEBLI	20.000	Soufian RAIFAK	12.000
Serhane BEN ABDELMAJID FAKHET**	52.000	Mohamed EL OUAZZANI	20.000	Abdelillah EL FADUAL EL AKIL	12.000
Rachid OULAD AKCHA	46.000	Hichan AHMIDAN	18.000	Mohamed AL HADI CHEDADI	12.000
Said BERRAJ	40.000	Rachid BENDOUDA	18.000	Abdelouahid BERRAK	10.000
Jamal ZOUGAN	36.000	Hamid AHMIDAN	18.000	José Emilio SUAREZ TRASHORRAS	10.000
Rifaat ANWAR ASRIH	36.000	Fouad EL MORABIT AMGHAR	18.000	Moutaz ALMALLAH DABAS*	10.000
Mohamed AFALAH	32.000	Mohamed EL BAKKALI	18.000	Said AHMIDAN	10.000
Mohamed OULAD AKCHA	32.000	Khalid ZEIMI PARDO	18.000	Saed EL HARRAK	8.000
Said CHEDADI	28.000	Rabei Osman EL SAYED AHMED	18.000	Daoud OUHNANE	8.000
Abdelmadjid BOUCHAR	26.000	Abdennabi KOUNJAA	16.000	Rachid MOHAMED KADDUR	8.000
Basel GALYOUN	24.000	Allekema LAMARI **	16.000	Antonio TORO CASTRO	8.000
Mohamed SAFSAF	24.000	Mohamed LARBI BEN SELLAM	16.000	Mohamad Badr DDIN AL AKKAD	6.000
Adnan WAKI	24.000	Mohamed BELHADJ	16.000	Walid ALTARAKJI ALMASRI	6.000
Abderrahim ZBAKH	24.000	Mostafa AHMIDAN	14.000	Youssef BELHADJ *	6.000
Rachid AGLIF	22.000	Mohamed CHAOUI	14.000	Mohamed BOUHARRAT	4.000
Faissal ALLOUCH	20.000	Othman EL GNAOUT	14.000	Nasreddine BOUSBAA	4.000
Mouhammad ALMALLAH DABAS*	20.000	Rafa ZOUHIER	14.000	Farid OULAD ALI	2.000

**Figure 3. Madrid GJN. (Continued)**

## Normalized betweenness (percentage plus three decimals)

Jamal AHMIDAN**	25.468	Mohamed EL OUZZANI	0.970	Mohamed AL HADI CHEDADI	0.120
Serhane BEN ABDELMAJID FAKHET**	15.788	Rachid BENDOUDA	0.862	Mostafa AHMIDAN	0.110
Rachid OULAD AKCHA	15.585	Faissal ALLOUCH	0.852	Allekema LAMARI**	0.097
Said BERRAJ	8.808	Mohamed BELHADJ	0.749	Abdelillah EL FADUAL EL AKIL	0.083
Jamal ZOUGAN	8.515	Mohamed SAFSAF	0.633	Souffian RAIFAK	0.075
Mohamed AFALAH	7.580	Khalid ZEIMI PARDO	0.616	Mohamed CHAOUI	0.070
Rifaat ANWAR ASRIH	6.012	Mohamed LARBI BEN SELLAM	0.581	Rachid MOHAMED KADDUR	0.060
Mohamed OULAD AKCHA	3.638	Othman EL GNAOUT	0.550	Saed EL HARRAK	0.047
Said CHEDADI	2.681	Driss CHEBLI	0.492	Moutaz ALMALLAH DABAS*	0.026
Abdelmadjid BOUCHAR	2.375	Nasreddine BOUSBAA	0.446	Antonio TORO CASTRO	0.020
Abderrahim ZBAKH	2.017	Rabei Osman EL SAYED AHMED	0.430	Abdelouahid BERRAK	0.010
Rachid AGLIF	1.559	Hichan AHMIDAN	0.429	Farid OULAD ALI	0.000
Mouhannad ALMALLAH DABAS*	1.454	Hamid AHMIDAN	0.429	Said AHMIDAN	0.000
Abdennabi KOUNJAA	1.438	Fouad EL MORABIT AMGHAR	0.285	Daoud OUHNANE	0.000
Adnan WAKI	1.409	Rafa ZOUHIER	0.150	Mohamad Badr DDIN AL AKKAD	0.000
Mohamed EL BAKKALI	1.186	José Emilio SUAREZ TRASHORRAS	0.146	Walid ALTARAKJI ALMASRI	0.000
Basel GALYOUN	1.005	Mohamed BOUHARRAT	0.141	Youssef BELHADJ*	0.000

## Normalized closeness (percentage plus three decimals)

Jamal AHMIDAN**	67.568	Khalid ZEIMI PARDO	49.505	Moutaz ALMALLAH DABAS*	43.103
Serhane BEN ABDELMAJID FAKHET**	67.568	Basel GALYOUN	49.020	Mohamed CHAOUI	42.735
Rachid OULAD AKCHA	64.935	Rachid AGLIF	48.544	Rafa ZOUHIER	42.735
Said BERRAJ	61.728	Faissal ALLOUCH	48.077	José Emilio SUAREZ TRASHORRAS	42.373
Rifaat ANWAR ASRIH	60.241	Daoud OUHNANE	48.077	Souffian RAIFAK	42.373
Mohamed AFALAH	59.524	Driss CHEBLI	48.077	Abdelouahid BERRAK	42.017
Jamal ZOUGAN	59.524	Mohamed EL BAKKALI	47.619	Said AHMIDAN	42.017
Mohamed OULAD AKCHA	58.140	Adnan WAKI	46.729	Antonio TORO CASTRO	41.667
Abdelmadjid BOUCHAR	56.818	Hichan AHMIDAN	45.455	Nasreddine BOUSBAA	41.322
Abderrahim ZBAKH	54.348	Hamid AHMIDAN	45.455	Walid ALTARAKJI ALMASRI	41.322
Allekema LAMARI**	53.763	Othman EL GNAOUT	45.455	Mohamed AL HADI CHEDADI	41.322
Abdennabi KOUNJAA	53.191	Fouad EL MORABIT AMGHAR	45.045	Mohamad Badr DDIN AL AKKAD	41.322
Mouhannad ALMALLAH DABAS*	53.191	Mohamed SAFSAF	45.045	Saed EL HARRAK	40.984
Mohamed BELHADJ	51.020	Abdelillah EL FADUAL EL AKIL	44.643	Rachid MOHAMED KADDUR	40.323
Mohamed EL OUZZANI	50.505	Mostafa AHMIDAN	44.643	Farid OULAD ALI	39.683
Mohamed LARBI BEN SELLAM	50.000	Rabei Osman EL SAYED AHMED	44.643	Youssef BELHADJ*	38.760
Said CHEDADI	50.000	Rachid BENDOUDA	44.248	Mohamed BOUHARRAT	38.168

\* Individuals that fulfilled an important role in the indoctrination of and strategic influence over the group.  
 \*\* Operative leaders of the group.

Figure 3. (Continued)

(0484261908), the date of birth given was 16 May 1985.<sup>41</sup> Whether intentional or not, on a similar date, 16 May 2003, the Casablanca attacks took place. Two coincidences in the dates seem unlikely. However, it does seem a coincidence that on 18 October bin Laden issued his statement. By October 2003 the preparations for the attack were already underway: on 5 October the terrorists held their first meeting with traffickers regarding the purchase of explosives (for which plans were likely made in the summer), and in December 2003, when the documents on Iraq were distributed, plans were well underway.

Given the aforementioned, it can be argued that the message issued by bin Laden and jihadi analysis of Iraq did not inspire the attack in Spain. Instead, it is more likely they reaffirmed convictions held by jihadis in Madrid regarding the forced withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. Via communiqués the Madrid GJN threatened further attacks if the troops were not withdrawn and blamed the Aznar administration for the attack on Madrid (following the operational directives of the GJMV central core). In these communiqués the group confessed its admiration to Al Qaeda, calling itself “Ansar (supporters of) al Qaeda in Europe.”

*Presence of the ‘Afghan Alumni’ (or Veterans from Other Fronts) in the Madrid GJN.* As highlighted, the only veteran jihadi in the group was Allekema Lamari. It is not altogether clear whether he fought in Algeria before arriving in Spain in 1992. There is no evidence of other veterans involved in the planning and execution of the attack in Madrid. The other two leaders of the group: Serhane Abdelmajid (“the Tunisian”) and Jamal Ahmidan did not pass through a training camp and had not fought previously for the Jihad abroad. There remain five DNA samples of individuals placed at the scene of the bombings that have yet to be identified; however, it is probable that they fit a similar profile to the rest of the group.<sup>42</sup>

*Use of Manuals Distributed by the GJMV Central Core.* The computers used by the terrorists contained various jihadi manuals on different tactics, from intelligence, logistics, to the preparation of attacks, guerrilla tactics, and even nuclear strategy.<sup>43</sup> It is possible that the Madrid GJN played particular attention to sections that made reference to the security of operations (OPSEC), for example: countervigilance, communication security, and number of team members. Many documents offering this kind of advice were found. The Spanish police followed several members of the group before the bombing (without a clear sense of the danger these individuals posed) and observed the security measures and countervigilance efforts undertaken by the group.<sup>44</sup>

Overall, the influence of the GJMV central core over the Madrid GJN can be appreciated predominately at a strategic level, and to some extent at the operational and tactical level. This finding highlights the importance of the central core as the inciter-in-chief and not the commander of what was intended to be a worldwide Islamic insurgency.<sup>45</sup>

## **Strengths of Grassroot Jihadist Networks**

Once the concept has been refined and the influence of the central core of the GJM over GJN clarified, one can now appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of this organizational model. The following section will outline the strengths of the Madrid GJN as a case study.

### ***Autonomy in Operational and Tactical Command and Control***

The autonomy of GJN in terms of decision making and implementation at operational and tactical levels represents their first key strength. This permits greater flexibility and efficiency in the execution of daily tasks like recruitment, intelligence, finance, communication, and management. Moreover, the group functions in a more agile manner, without the need to constantly consult senior levels.

Command and control does not need to be individually based. Indeed, tactical leadership within the Madrid GJN was shared among three individuals: Allekema Lamari, Serhane Ben Abdelmajid (“the Tunisian”), and Jamal Ahmidan. It is possible that this multiple leadership structure facilitated further sharing of tasks and management of the group. The network was thus an ad-hoc group composed of several subgroups led by one of the three named individuals, all with the same goal: to carry out a terrorist campaign.

Multiple leadership and preexisting relationships between members of the Madrid GJN explains the many interconnections within the operative core of the network (see Figure 3) and the values of certain members. The values are categorized here as: degree (number of direct links with other members), betweenness (frequency of one node appearing between two other nodes), and closeness (sum of the distance that separates one node from the rest

of the nodes in the network, indicative of its ability to reach other nodes in the minimum number of steps).

As Figure 3 demonstrates, values are widely distributed between a relatively high number of individuals, all members of the operative cluster, with Serhane “the Tunisian” and Jamal Ahmidan “the Chinese” at the head. However, the inferior position of the Algerian Allekema Lamari, one of the key operative leaders of the group, should be noted. This somewhat contradictory feature perhaps acts as an indicator of the “professionalism” of this particular individual. Lamari had been a militant for several years, had spent time in prison for his involvement in jihadist terrorism, and logically adopted greater security measures. Among these measures, Lamari minimized personal links to those individuals that were senior and trusted figures.

### **Logistical Autonomy**

Logistical autonomy represents a key strength of the GJN. In terms of material and human resources the GJN proves itself to be self-reliant, without the direct support of the GJMV central core or other groups of the coalition. In a sense, this feature of the GJN constrains antiterrorist efforts against international financial networks of the GJMV.

Human resources emerge via recruitment, usually through social networks based on friendship, parentage, Islamic centers, or religious movements. This aspect of the GJN is also a weakness, an issue to be examined later in this article. In terms of material resources, funding typically consists of personal donations made by members of the group and common delinquency, petty crime, and drug trafficking. For the jihadis, this activity is acceptable when carried out for the sake of the *Jihad*. With this money the group can afford to bear the costs of preparing for an attack, usually estimated to be under a few thousand dollars.

In relation to logistics, another favorable factor in the GJN is its knowledge of the country in which it acts. This allows it to maintain contact with networks of common delinquency that might also contain members of the same nationality to those of a GJN.

The Madrid GJN offers a clear example of this logistical autonomy. Although the network had connections to jihadis outside Spain, it obtained funds and the explosives independently. The Spanish police calculate that the preparation for the attacks cost between 41,000–54,000 Euros (\$53,200–70,100). These figures include the cost of the explosives, the rental of three properties so as to prepare and later hide the bombs (two of the properties were located outside of Madrid and a third in a small town near Granada); the acquisition of arms (two sub guns and a pistol used on the police when the seven terrorists were cornered in Leganes); and a significant quantity of cash for personal expenses during the terrorist campaign (the Spanish police found 25,635 Euros (\$33,312) in the apartment in Leganes).

The Moroccan Jamal Ahmidan provided most of the funds via the trafficking of drugs and other criminal acts. Following his death, 19,010 Euros (\$24,700) in cash, 59.2 kg (190 pounds) of hashish, and 125,800 designer drugs (the price of these drugs oscillates between 1,353,677 and 1,537,663 Euros (\$1,759,102–1,998,153), were found in a relative’s property.<sup>46</sup>

The terrorists bought the explosives from a group of Spanish delinquents (led by José Emilio Suárez Trashorras and Antonio Toro), who in turn stole the explosives from a mineral mine in the Asturias region of Northern Spain. It has been estimated that they obtained 210 kg (463 pounds) of dynamite and 260 detonators. The payment was made by way of drugs (between 25 and 30 kg (55–66 pounds) of hashish) and a Toyota Corolla, stolen in Madrid on 18 September 2003.<sup>47</sup>

The terrorists were in contact with the Spanish group trafficking explosives thanks to a group of delinquent (non-practicing Muslim) Moroccans that Jamal Ahmidan knew through contacts in the drug underworld in Madrid, an underworld in which several of his brothers were immersed. In Figure 3 the transaction of drugs for explosives is represented, as is the key role played by Jamal Ahmidan and two of his trusted confidants, the brothers Oulad Akcha. For reasons of security and efficiency, the other jihadis within the network remained at the margins of this transaction.

### *Protection Thanks to Judicial Guarantees*

Lastly, it is hard to pin serious penal charges against a GJN until a network is in possession of arms or explosives. Without the latter it is difficult to prove that the GJN is a terrorist group. Most activities carried out by the GJN before it decides to initiate and prepare for a terrorist incident are not chargeable under the legal systems of most democratic nations. Examples of this kind of activity include possession of tens of documents and videos on the Jihad on a PC, meeting with friends to discuss the situation of Muslims worldwide, or praising the mujahaddin fighting in Iraq, Palestine, or Afghanistan. Moreover, it is difficult to demonstrate that a group of friends engaged in radical meetings represents a genuine terrorist cell. Formally, they do not belong to a terrorist organization like Al Qaeda, the GSPC, or the GICM and many might not even know members of the aforementioned organizations. Indeed, it is typical for members of a GJN to have no name for their grouping.

Instead, the police and intelligence agencies may become aware of a GJN through informants within the Islamic community or the criminal underworld. However, unless they can count on someone within the GJN or if the GJN itself commits serious security blunders it would be very difficult for the security services to know in advance when a GJN has initiated a terrorist operation.

This point is reiterated in the example of the Madrid GJN. The Spanish police were aware of the radical profile of many of the members, especially the operative leader Serhane Abdelmajid and the brothers Almallah Dabas. Under police surveillance it was observed that Serhane adopted many security measures. The police also knew that the group was holding radical meetings in which they praised the *Jihad*. Furthermore, via two informants the police were aware that at these meetings the members spoke of carrying out attacks in Spain and at one meeting Serhane requested martyrs to carry out attacks in Spain.<sup>48</sup> It is possible that an error in intelligence resulted in no action in response to this finding. However, the only evidence for a potential attack was based on this informant's information. There was nothing else to support it. Under judicial process it is likely that the group would be released based on a lack of evidence to prosecute and the police would lose their informant in the process.

Some members of the Madrid GJN maintained or had maintained links with other jihadist networks like the GICM, Adu Dahdah network (local cell of Al Qaeda), GIA, and Ansar al Islam. The Madrid group was not a formal member of any of the aforementioned organizations. On different occasions they have branded themselves "brothers of martyrs"<sup>49</sup> or "Muslim brothers."<sup>50</sup> During the terrorist campaign, they adopted the name "Ansar al Qaeda in Europe."

In sum, it could be argued from the aforementioned that had the Spanish police arrested key members of the Madrid GJN before the group managed to buy the explosives, the police would not have been able to accuse them of belonging to a terrorist organization. The explosives, key evidence, were transported to the terrorists in small quantities from Asturias

to Madrid, from January 2004 onward. By late February the group already possessed 210 kg (463 pounds) of dynamite, and less than a fortnight later they would carry out the attack in Madrid.

### **Weaknesses of the GJN**

The organizational model of the GJN is not perfect. There exist weak spots and flaws that can be exploited by antiterrorist agencies. These are outlined in more detail in what follows.

#### ***Lack of Professionalism***

The Achilles heel of the GJN is the lack of experience among its members. The Madrid GJN was weak in this area. None of the members of the group had passed through training camps or had experience in terrorist campaigns. The only exception to this was Allekema Lamari, with militant experience in a GIA cell based in Spain from 1992–1997, but his tasks were mostly logistical. Lamari's prestige within the GJN resided in his veteran status and five-year prison record.

As highlighted earlier, police surveillance demonstrates that in the months prior to the attack in Madrid numerous security measures were taken to avoid police tailings and the interception of communications. The mobile telephone card was changed frequently. For example, Serhane "the Tunisian" used seven cards in one day.<sup>51</sup> Others, like Allekema Lamari, always called from telephone booths. In general, the use of the telephone was avoided and they communicated using personal messengers or in open-air meetings. From July 2003, Lamari slept at different addresses and was frequently disguised.<sup>52</sup>

The terrorists were also successful in the acquisition of explosives and the rental of three properties for refuge during the terrorist campaign. However, they did commit grave mistakes in the OPSEC that later led to the dismantlement of the Madrid network.

Two principal errors were committed by the group. The first was the failure to use some of the mobile telephone cards in a pack of 30 that were bought to facilitate communication. The second error was the poor standard of the 13 bombs. The bombs were made in a rudimentary manner and this explains why 3 of the 13 bombs did not explode. One of these unexploded bombs provided information that led to the first arrests just two days after the bombings. In turn, the mobile phone found by the police led to the shops where both the phones and the top-up credit were bought. By 13 March, the police were aware of the telephone numbers of the 30 cards sold and traced calls made by these numbers. Thanks to the signals that cards emit to telephone antennae the police were able to pin-point locations. Three weeks after the attack the police located the core of the network hiding out in an apartment in Leganes. The police stormed the building and the jihadis committed suicide. Overall, the information obtained from these telephone cards and the intelligence previously amassed by the police on potential jihadis in Madrid proved crucial.

#### ***Networks Open to the Outside***

External exposure constitutes another key weakness for a GJN. Given their autonomous nature from the GJMV central core, the GJN need social exposure so as to recruit, finance, and accrue arms. In contrast, the 9/11 suicide pilots' cell was a closed cell, with no need for logistical support (they received money from Al Qaeda abroad) and for reasons of security, maintained few ties with other individuals in the United States.<sup>53</sup>

Interaction between the GJN and the outside is relatively predictable. Members of the GJN tend to use social networks to recruit or gather material. For example, via a friend a potential recruit will attend radical meetings and listen to radical preachings that discuss the Muslim situation in world affairs. These meetings serve as a precursor to more committed jihadist activity. Indeed, the importance of social networks in the recruitment process has been already established in numerous studies.<sup>54</sup>

Some of the social networks used by jihadis are closed and difficult to access. This description fits those social networks based on an old friendship. Family social networks are also common in jihadist groups. It is difficult for antiterrorist agencies to infiltrate these. However, other more accessible social networks used by the GJN include:

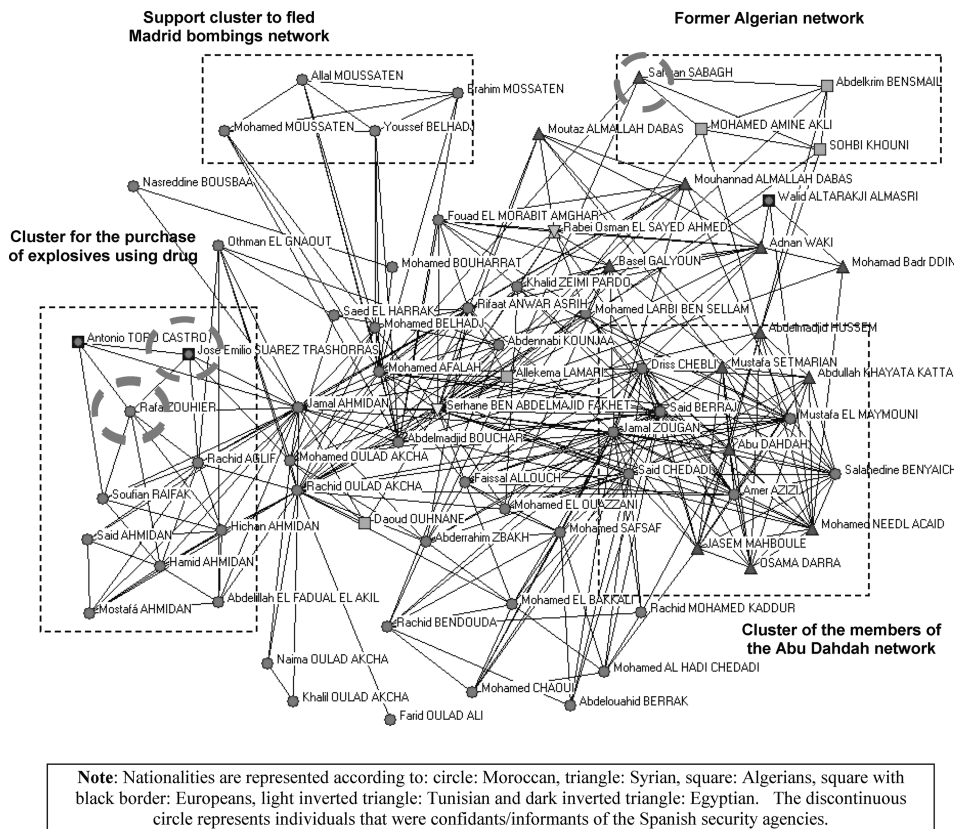
- *Networks of common delinquency.* GJN usually have some link to delinquency for funding purposes. Jihadists have to establish contact with non-jihadi delinquents to carry out drug transactions, sell stolen goods, or defraud credit cards to fund their activity. The world of common delinquency is frequently infiltrated by the police for anti-criminal purposes. It is therefore useful for those police units that monitor petty crime and drug trafficking to become sensitive to GJN activity in this area.
- *Social networks formed around mosques.* Although a place for prayer, mosques can also act as a meeting point and social center. The GJN have used this type of social network to attract sympathizers and donations.
- *Social networks linked to non-jihadist salafist and Islamist movements.* Salafist and Islamist movements have been used by jihadis for recruitment purposes. Despite overt rejection of terrorism by these movements they, on certain topics, share a similar interpretation of Islam and the world to that of jihadism. In this way, these movements become a melting pot for recruitment.<sup>55</sup> As a result, cooperation between members of the Islamic communities and the presence of informants, particularly those located in salafist or Islamist mosques, has the potential to alert security services to the existence of a GJN.
- *Social networks in prison.* Prison is a hostile environment where the individual has a greater need to belong to a social network for security and support. In some cases, these social networks have allowed jihadis to amass new sympathizers.<sup>56</sup>
- *Social networks linked to particular trades and recreations.* These networks can be formed around shops that sell Halal products, restaurants or tea houses frequented by individuals of Muslim origin, or even gymnasiums that offer martial art training (jihadist manuals insist on physical fitness and some combat training)
- *Social networks linked to former jihadist networks.* GJN do not generally appear spontaneously; there is almost always some linkage to members of former jihadist groups. Thus police surveillance of the relationship between incarcerated jihadis and former jihadi inmates might lead to the identification of a new GJN.

The Madrid GJN case highlights the importance of the social networks outlined earlier in the formation and activity of the group. In many cases these social networks are based on long friendship ties, for example the childhood friendship between Jamal Ahmidan and the Oulad Akcha brothers. Other ties were family based, as between the two sets of brothers Oulad Akcha and Almallah Dabas. Another example is that of Serhane Ben Abdelmajid, who married Mustafa el Maymouni's sister. El Maymouni was another radical that contributed to the formation of the Madrid GJN and was detained in Morocco in May 2003. Driss Chebli, member of the Abu Dahdah network, and previously imputed in the Madrid bombings, was the brother-in-law of Said Chedadi, a member of the Abu Dahdah network. In addition, Said Chedadi was the brother of Mohamed, another figure implicated

in the Madrid bombings. Overall, these types of social networks strengthened the GJN and complicated antiterrorist efforts.

Nevertheless, the Madrid GJN also used more open social networks; several members (like Serhane Abdelmajid (“the Tunisian”), Khaled Zeimi Pardo, and Mustapha el Maymouni) frequented the Jama’a At Tabligh Al-Da’wa, a pious Islamic movement, apolitical and nonviolent but used by jihadis for recruitment purposes.<sup>57</sup> Members of the GJN also frequented various mosques in Madrid, like the Abu Bakr mosques and the mosque of the M-30. Long meetings were typically held on the terrace of the M-30 mosque.<sup>58</sup> Although it is not clear whether the different subgroups met here, it is assumed that the meetings held added shape to what would later become the Madrid GJN.

The types of networks described earlier are more accessible to antiterrorism agencies and almost thwarted the Madrid bombing plans. In a Madrid oratory a subgroup belonging to Serhane Abdelmajid became acquainted with an individual that was posing as an imam, the Moroccan Abdelkader el Farssaoui. In reality el Farssaoui was a police informant, known as “Cartagena.” El Farssaoui participated, upon invitation of the group, in one of the radical meetings and alerted the police to the existence of this group that later formed part of the Madrid GJN.<sup>59</sup> However, “Cartagena” later lost contact with these individuals some months before the Madrid GJN adopted its definitive structure and initiated preparations for the Madrid attack (for this reason it does not feature in Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Relationship between members of the Madrid GJN, the Adu Dahdah network, and the former Algerian network to which Allekema Lamari once belonged.

Another type of social network used by the terrorists belonged to common delinquents that dealt in drugs, arms, and explosives. Thanks to this network the terrorists were able to acquire the means to carry out the Madrid bombings but these contacts almost ruined the terrorist project. Two of the individuals in contact with the GJN, the Spaniard Jose Emilio Suárez Trashorras and the Moroccan Rafa Zouhier (see Figure 4), were police informants on drug matters. However, on this occasion, they did not inform the police of the activity underway with the GJN. Had they cooperated with the police, the security agencies would have obtained information that might have prevented the massacre in Madrid and secured the arrest and incarceration of the terrorists.

Although to a lesser extent than other cases, the Madrid GJN case study does highlight the importance of social networks based in prisons as an entry point of contact with jihadism. Jamal Ahmidan converted to jihadism during his prison sentence in Morocco between the end of 2000 and mid-2003.<sup>60</sup> Without Ahmidan, it would have been difficult for the Madrid GJN to gather the necessary logistical resources to carry out the Madrid attack.

Another type of social network used by the Madrid GJN consisted of contacts with former members of jihadist networks dismantled in Spain: the old GIA network that belonged to Allekema Lamari (disbanded in 1997); and above all, individuals linked to the former Abu Dahdah network, dismantled between 2001 and 2003 (see Figure 4). The police investigation then identified some members of what would later become the Madrid GJN. Moreover, the Spanish National Centre for Intelligence (CNI) was aware, based on information from an informant (the Syrian Safwan Sabagh) that Allekema Lamari was planning an attack in Spain. The CNI issued this information to the police in November 2003 and recommended the immediate arrest of Lamari.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, Lamari was not found.

## Conclusion

The analysis offered here demonstrates that GJN have several advantages that antiterrorist agencies find difficult to counteract. These advantages include autonomy in operational and tactical command and control, the capacity to adapt to environments, logistical autonomy, and protection by way of judicial guarantees. Moreover, technological advances and lessons learned by GJNs improve the operational and tactical independence of the networks from the GJMV, although the latter still impress greater strategic influence on future generations of sympathizers.

Nevertheless, as highlighted here, GJN have two key weaknesses: first, a lack of professionalism and second, the need to be in contact with the social environment to ensure recruitment, finance, and the acquisition of arms. Both aspects represent the Achilles heel of the Madrid GJN. The first weakness permitted the security services a swift clampdown on the group to prevent further attacks. The second weakness almost prevented the entire Madrid attack from taking place. Thus *the recommendation is to concentrate on these, particularly on the need of the GJN to relate to its environment via several social networks.*

It has also been argued here that personal profiles vary. Therefore, the surveillance of a particular sector of society does not suffice. Instead, it is possible to identify and limit the concrete social networks used by jihadis as a recruitment and material supply source. The social networks discussed here include: networks of common delinquency, networks formed around mosques, networks linked to non-jihadist salafist and Islamist movements, social networks in prison, networks based around particular trades, and social networks with ties to former jihadist networks.

The infiltration of these social networks could potentially damage the efficiency and proliferation of the GJN. The fear of contacting an antiterrorist informant might increase the paranoia of members, isolating it from its surroundings, thereby diminishing its efficiency.<sup>62</sup> In the long term, the constant dismantlement of GJNs by infiltrating their related social networks might demoralize jihadist sympathizers, striking fear into those that form new groups that their activity might be detected and neutralized by antiterrorist agencies. This demoralization might also dissuade those less committed to the *Jihad*, thereby frustrating the recruitment of new members.

To conclude, *an interesting indicator of the detectability of a GJN is the number of members and type of social network(s) to which they belong.* The smaller and more socially restrictive the group (based on family ties and old friendships) the least likely it is for the security agencies to detect its existence. Detectability also depends on the finance system in place. If the GJN is small, closed to society, and self-financed then the operational nature and direction of the group will be difficult to ascertain. Unless the terrorists lack professionalism, it will be hard to prevent the group from carrying out its actions. This was probably noted by the terrorists that carried out the London bombings on 7 July 2005.

Nevertheless, the closed nature of these small networks, with few links to the outside, represents a double-edged sword in that it limits their operational capacity. The GJN would thus find it difficult to on the one hand target protected objectives like an embassy, oilfields, or military installations, and on the other hand to execute complex and destructive plans like 9/11.

However, although the peculiar nature of the GJN considerably limits the material danger that these groups represent, *this does not reduce the strategic danger posed by GJN.* Terrorist actions by these groups can have enormous social and political impact (particularly at the national level) with a relatively small number of casualties. Indeed, the Madrid bombings had social and political consequences of great magnitude in Spain not only because of the death of 191 people, but because the attack took place under exceptional circumstances: three days prior to general elections with a ruling government that had been massively criticized during the war of Iraq. The strategic impact of attacks can be found also in the assassination of Theo Van Gogh in November 2004 by a member of a GJN in Holland. His killing motivated others that consider Muslim immigration a danger to liberty in Europe. Reprisals and attacks against schools and Islamic centers in Holland polarized opinions and deteriorated positive social structures, a primary goal of the jihadists.

Lastly, this article has sought to explore two key *unknown factors* concerning the future of the “third jihadist generation.”

The first refers to the durability of the GJN model existing without any personal links to veterans or members of local cells belonging to “second generation” jihadist organizations (like Al Qaeda, the GICM, and GSPC). In other words, *is a third generation of jihadists—without links to older and more structured organizations—viable?* It is likely that the Madrid GJN would not have emerged were it not for existence of the Abu Dahdah network a few years earlier, and links between members of the GICM and possibly Al Qaeda. This begs the question, if the international struggle against jihadist terrorism manages to dismantle most second generation organizations, will the third generation be thwarted?

Second, *the extent to which the future GJN will follow the strategic directives of the GJMV central core (and the core’s coherence in strategy) remains unanswered.* One of the key assets of the GJMV and GJN is also a grave weakness. The autonomous operational nature of the GJN and incoherent strategic direction from the GJMV could lead to a chaotic absolutist agenda. In this light, certain activity carried out by the GJN could prejudice the GJMV in strategic terms. Take for example the impact of a hypothetical campaign

of kidnapping and decapitations recorded on video within Europe and the United States by a GJN, following the brutal model developed by Zarqawi in Iraq (which even Ayman Al Zawahiri later disagreed with<sup>63</sup>). An alternative scenario might see a GJN attacking immigrants of Muslim origin in Europe that do not lead their lives according to strict Islam principles. This is a growing practice within many radical groups in countries of Muslim majority, like Morocco, sapping support from a large sector of society.<sup>64</sup> As a result, the GJMV might face rejection by its support base, marginalizing the movement to a far greater extent than at present.

## Appendix: Members of the Madrid bombings GJN

1 Abdelkrim Benesmail	16 Hassan El Haski	31 Mohamed Saf Saf
2 Abdelmajid Bouchar	17 Jamal Ahmidan	32 Mouhannad Almallah Dabas
3 Abdelouahid Berrak	18 Jamal Zougam	33 Moutaz Almallah Dabas
4 Abdennabi Kounjaa	19 Khalid Zeimi Pardo	34 Mustafa Maymouni
5 Abderrahim Zbak	20 Mohamed Afallah	35 Nasreddine Bousbaa
6 Adman Waki	21 Mohamed Amine Akli	36 Otman El Gnaoui
7 Allal Moussaten	22 Mohamed Badr Ddin Akkad	37 Rabei Osman El Sayed
8 Allekema Lamari	23 Mohamed Belhadj	38 Rachid Bendouda
9 Anwar Asrih Rifaat	24 Mohamed Bouharrat	39 Rachid Mohamed Kaddur
10 Basel Ghalyoun	25 Mohamed Chaoui	40 Rachid Oulad Akcha
11 Daoud Ouhmane	26 Mohamed Chedadi	41 Saed El Harrak
12 Driss Chebli	27 Mohamed El Ouazzani	42 Said Berraj
13 Faisal Allouch	28 Mohamed Larbi Ben Sellam	43 Serhane Ben Abdelmajid
14 Farid Oulad Ali	29 Mohamed Moussaten	44 Walid Altaraki Almasri
15 Fouad El Morabit Amghar	30 Mohamed Oulad Akcha	45 Youssef Belhadj

## Notes

1. SITE Institute, "Abu Musab al-Suri Outlines Strategy for Attacks Against America, Britain, Russia, and NATO Countries," 13 July 2005.
2. Guy Peters, *Comparative Politics. Theory and Methods* (London: MacMillan Press, 1998), pp. 137–154.
3. Indictment 20/04, pp. 1341–1355.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 1150–1160.
5. Fred Burton, "Al Qaeda: The Next Phase of Evolution?" *Stratfor.com*, 7 June 2006.
6. Petter Nesser, *Jihad In Europe—A Survey of the Motivations for Sunni Islamist Terrorism in Post-Millennium Europe* (Forsvarets Forskningsinstitut Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2004), pp. 28–41.
7. Robert S. Leiken, *Bearers of Global Jihad? Immigration and National Security after 9/11* (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004), pp. 8–9.
8. Nesser, *Jihad In Europe*, pp. 51–60.
9. Indictment 20/04, p. 1357.
10. Fred Burton, "Al Qaeda: The Next Phase of Evolution?"
11. Robert S. Leiken and Steve Brooke, "The Quantitative Analysis of Terrorism and Immigration: An Initial Exploration," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18(4) (2006), pp. 503–521.
12. Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 73–82.

13. Indictment 20/04, p. 271.
14. Carlos Echeverría Jesús, "The March 2004 Terrorist Attacks in Madrid Two Years Later: The Lessons Learnt," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, available at (<http://www.fpri.org/pubs/articles.html>); Carlos Echeverría Jesús, "Radical Islam in The Maghreb Countries," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, available at (<http://www.fpri.org/pubs/articles.html>).
15. Javier Jordán & Robert Wesley, "After 3/11: The Evolution of Jihadist Networks in Spain," *Terrorism Monitor* 4(1) (12 January 2006).
16. Indictment 20/04, pp. 1129–1131.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 1223.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 1148.
19. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 79.
20. José María Irujo, *El Agujero. España invadida por la Yihad*, pp. 167–168; 198–199; 211–220; *El País*, 23 October 2004; *El Mundo*, 4 April 2004.
21. Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), p. 8.
22. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, pp. 110–120.
23. Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State. A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 136–185.
24. Brian A. Jackson, "A Command-and-Control-Driven Approach to Classifying Terrorist Organizations and Its Application to Al Qaeda," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (2006), pp. 241–262.
25. WordNet 2.0, *Wordnet 2.0—"Social Movement"* (Princeton University Cognitive Science Laboratory, [cited 18 March 2005]); available at (<http://wordnet.princeton.edu/>). Quoted by Jackson, p. 248.
26. Shaul Mishal and Maoz Rosenthal, "Al Qaeda as a Dune Organization: Toward a Typology of Islamic Terrorist Organizations," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 28 (2005), pp. 275–293.
27. Bruce Hoffman, *The Use of the Internet By Islamic Extremists*, Testimony presented to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 4 May 2006.
28. Jackson, "A Command-and-Control-Driven Approach to Classifying Terrorist Organizations and Its Application to Al Qaeda," p. 251.
29. Shaul Shay and Yoram Schweitzer, "The Afghan Alumni Terrorism. Islamic Militants against the Rest of the World," The Institute for Counterterrorism, 6 November 2000, available at (<http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articleidet.cfm?articleid=140>).
30. Fred Burton, "The Web of Jihad: Strategic Utility and Tactical Weakness," *Stratfor.com*, 13 June 2006.
31. Indictment 20/04, p. 1223.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 1316.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 1315.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 1358.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 1218.
36. Steven J. Brams, Hande Mutlu, and Shawn Ling Ramirez, "Influence in Terrorist Networks: From Undirected to Directed Graphs," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (2006), pp. 679–694.
37. Indictment 20/04, pp. 436–441.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 509.
39. Brynjar Lia and Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi Strategic Studies: The Alleged al Qaeda Policy Study Preceding the Madrid Bombings," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27 (2004), pp. 355–375.
40. Reuven Paz, *A Message to the Spanish People: The Neglected Threat by Qa'idad al-Jihad*, Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center, Prism Special Dispatches, 2(2) (18 March 2004), available at ([http://e-prism.org/images/PRISM\\_Special\\_dispatch\\_no.2-2.pdf](http://e-prism.org/images/PRISM_Special_dispatch_no.2-2.pdf)).
41. Indictment 20/04, p. 1316.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 342.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 411–412.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 411–412; 461; 1143.

45. Michael Scheuer, "Coalition Warfare: How al Qaeda Uses the World Islamic Front Against Crusaders and Jews, Part I," *Terrorism Monitor* 2(7) (31 March 2005), pp. 3–11.
46. Indictment 20/04, p. 301.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 1126–1137.
48. *El Mundo*, 13 February 2006.
49. Indictment 20/04, p. 1212.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 1220.
51. José María Irujo, *El Agujero. España invadida por la Yihad*, p. 266.
52. *El País*, 7 November 2004.
53. Robert S. Leiken, Bearers of Global Jihad? *Immigration and National Security after 9/11*, pp. 8–9.
54. Mark Juergensmeyer, "Terror Mandated by God," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 9(2) (1997), pp. 16–23; Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God. Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*; Nesser, *Jihad In Europe*.
55. Reuven Paz, "Middle East Islamism in the European Arena," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10(3) (2002), pp. 65–76; General Intelligence and Security Service, *From Dawa to Jihad*, December 2004, available at (<http://www.aivd.nl/contents/pages/42345/fromdawatojihad.pdf>).
56. Omar Guendouz, *Les soldats perdus de l'Islam: les réseaux français de Ben Laden* (Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 2002), pp. 44–46; Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 116.
57. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 6; Michael Clarke, *Defeating the Jihadists: A Blueprint for Action* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 2004), p. 80.
58. Indictment 20/04, p. 1219.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 1235.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 521.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 1206.
62. Fred Burton, "The 'Miami Seven: Disrupting the Network,'" *Stratfor.com*, 28 June 2006.
63. Michael Scheuer, "The Zawahiri-Zarqawi Letter: al Qaeda's Tactical and Theater-of-War Concerns," *Terrorism Focus* 2(21) (14 November 2005), pp. 3–14.
64. Alison Pargeter, "The Islamist Movement in Morocco," *Terrorism Monitor* 3(10) (19 May 2005), pp. 23–32.