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Firearms Training For Jihad in America

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The Violence Policy Center (VPC) has obtained a copy of the document, *How Can I Train Myself for Jihad*. The six-page document—which has reportedly been found in terrorist safe houses in Kabul, Afghanistan—advises that “military training is an obligation in Islam upon every sane, male, mature Muslim, whether rich or poor, whether studying or working and whether living in a Muslim or non-Muslim country.”¹ It offers tips on various ways to make “suitable preparations for battle,” including physical training, martial arts, survival and outdoors training, firearms training, and military training. This report focuses on the firearms and military training aspects of the pamphlet.

Origins of the Pamphlet. The pamphlet appears to have been originally posted on Azzam.com, run by the British company Azzam Publications, and on qoqaz.net, an affiliate of Azzam.² Azzam was founded in late 1996 and is named after Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, a mentor to Osama bin Laden.³ Azzam has operated a site dedicated to worldwide jihad, from which funds have been steered to the Taliban in Afghanistan and to guerillas fighting the Russians in Chechnya.⁴ Azzam sites reportedly published explicit photographs of laughing mujahedeen warriors brandishing the body parts of Russian soldiers,⁵ and praised suicide bombers as “martyrs.”⁶ Some of those sites have been shut down, but archived sites contain duplicate information such as *How Can I Train Myself for Jihad*. The Violence Policy Center obtained its copy from one of those sites.

Links to Al Qaeda Terrorists. In addition to the general support for worldwide jihad described above, the training pamphlet was posted on one of the Azzam-affiliated web sites, www.qoqaz.de in Germany.⁷ After a hacker cracked the Azzam site, posted a list of subscribers to Azzam newsletters offered through the site, and turned the list over to authorities, it was discovered that Said Bahaji was apparently one of the subscribers.⁸ Authorities investigating the September 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States have described Bahaji as the “brains” behind a key support cell that the investigation uncovered in Germany.⁹ German investigators say that Bahaji was responsible for logistics, including helping the suicide pilots who crashed jetliners into the World Trade Center obtain their visas to enter the United States.¹⁰

Firearms and Military Training Urged in Pamphlet. In addition to urging would-be holy warriors to prepare themselves for jihad physically and through martial arts, the pamphlet notes the advantages the United States offers for firearms training and advises readers on how to exploit them:

- “Firearms training differs from country to country....In some countries of the World, especially the USA, firearms training is available to the general public. One should try to join a shooting club if possible and make regular visits to the firing range. There are many firearms courses available to the public in USA,

ranging from one day to two weeks or more. These courses are good but expensive. Some of them are only meant for security personnel but generally they will teach anyone. It is also better to attend these courses in pairs or by yourself, no more. Do not make public announcements when going on such a course. Find one, book your place, go there, learn, come back home and keep it [to] yourself. Whilst on the course, keep your opinions to yourself, do not argue or debate with anyone, do not preach about Islam....You are going there to train for Jihad, not call people to Islam."

- "Useful courses to learn are sniping, general shooting and other rifle courses. Handgun courses are useful but only after you have mastered rifles."
- "In other countries, e.g. some states of USA, South Africa, it is perfectly legal for members of the public to own certain types of firearms. If you live in such a country, obtain an assault rifle legally, preferably AK-47 or variations, learn how to use it properly and go and practice in the areas allowed for such training."
- "Respect the laws of the country you are in and avoid dealing in illegal firearms. One can learn to operate many arms legally, so there is no need to spend years in prison for dealing in small, illegal firearms. Learn the most you can according to your circumstances and leave the rest to when you actually go for Jihad."

Related VPC Publications. The Violence Policy Center has published a number of reports describing specific dangers highlighted by terrorist exploitation of America's weak gun laws. These include, among others:

- *Voting from the Rooftops: How the Gun Industry Armed Osama bin Laden, Other Foreign and Domestic Terrorists, and Common Criminals with 50 Caliber Sniper Rifles* (October 2001).
- *Cashing in on the New Millenium: How the Firearms Industry Exploits Y2K Fears to Sell More Guns* (December 1999).
- *One Shot, One Kill: Civilian Sales of Military Sniper Rifles* (May 1999).
- *Gun Shows in America: Tupperware® Parties for Criminals* (July 1996).

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Endnotes

1. Anonymous pamphlet, *How Can I Train Myself for Jihad*, copy in files of Violence Policy Center.
2. "Extremist sites under heightened security," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, 8 October 2001.
3. "Extremist sites under heightened security," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, 8 October 2001; see also, Azzam Publications, "Biography of Abdulla Azzam," downloaded from MSA News, <http://msanews.mynet.net/MSANEWS/1997303/19970317.6.html>, on 20 November 2001.
4. "Terrorists Taking Up Cyberspace," *The Los Angeles Times*, 8 February 2001, p. A1.
5. "Local link to recruiting," *Herald Sun* (Australia), 20 November 2001, p. 13.
6. "Website Teaches Message of Hate; Make Your Kid a Terrorist for GBP 10," *Daily Star*, 20 September 2001, p. 6.
7. "Islamic militant groups turn to the Internet to promote their cause," *Newsweek* (Atlantic Edition), 15 October 2001, p. 48; "German police seek users of Islamic fundamentalist Web site visited by suspect," *AP Worldstream*, 19 September 2001.
8. "As German investigators cast wide net against terror, question emerges: Were we naive?" *AP Worldstream*, 19 September 2001; "Student believed to be key organizer in U.S. attacks, German police say," *Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, 19 September 2001; "Militant terrorists used Internet communications in Germany," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 18 September 2001.
9. "Student believed to be key organizer in U.S. attacks, German police say," *Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, 19 September 2001.
10. "A Nation Challenged: The Investigation; Retracing a Trail to Sept. 11 Plot," *The New York Times*, 18 November 2001, p. 1A; "Student believed to be key organizer in U.S. attacks, German police say," *Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, 19 September 2001; "Militant terrorists used Internet communications in Germany," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 18 September 2001.

