

SINGAPORE PLOT

Situation: Singapore officials uncover Al Qaeda plot to attack Western diplomatic missions, US Service personnel and facilities, and US corporations.

In September 2001, shortly after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC, a local informant told Singaporean officials of a man claiming to have connections to Al Qaeda. The informant's claims touched off an intensive investigation that uncovered widespread Al Qaeda activities across the small island nation. By the end of the investigation, three Al Qaeda linked terrorist cells had been uncovered and plots to attack Western diplomatic missions, US service personnel and facilities, and US corporations had been thwarted.



Soon after the discovery of the terrorist cells in Singapore, coalition forces in Afghanistan made a remarkable discovery. After bombing a house in Kabul, coalition forces found in the rubble a surveillance video and terrorist plans to attack Western interests in Singapore. The captured materials not only demonstrated the full extent of Al Qaeda's objectives in Singapore but also provide a rare glimpse into the pre-attack surveillance and planning conducted by Al Qaeda operatives prior to terrorist operations.

You can always be a target for terrorist attack even if you are not in a major theater of operation or in an area previously targeted. Terrorism is worldwide threat and can strike at any time in any location.



Surveillance against Singapore targets began around April 2000 when a terrorist cell in Singapore, known as Fiah Ayub, conducted reconnaissance near the US military facility at Sembawang. One of the terrorists brazenly walked through the Sembawang area with a video recorder narrating areas of importance, routines of people working and commuting through the public transportation nodes, and vulnerabilities that could be attacked.

One potential target was the commuter bus used by US Service personnel from the

Sembawang Wharf to the Yishun Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Station. Also targeted was a restaurant, bar, and sports facility often used by US Service Members in off duty hours; it was ironically named the "Terror Club." The narrator suggested bicycles with covered storage containers could be filled with explosives to bomb the Yishun MRT station.

The surveillance video was sent to Afghanistan for review by upper-level Al Qaeda leaders. It was eventually found in the rubble of a house belonging to Mohammed Atef, a close associate of Osama bin Laden. This clearly demonstrated Al Qaeda's central direction of a plot to attack US interests in Singapore, more than 3,000 miles away.

Always be vigilant for suspicious behavior. Individuals making videos, drawing sketches, or taking photos of places where US Service Members congregate may indicate a potential threat. If you see suspicious activity, report it to the proper authorities immediately.

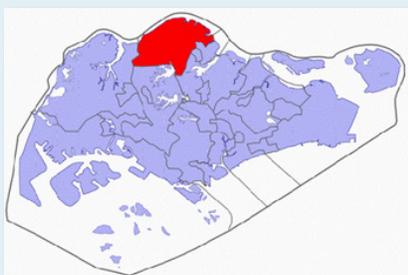
For more information on detecting suspicious activity, see the historical example on the [Oklahoma City Bombing](#).

Al Qaeda leaders decided not to immediately act on the targets identified in the narrated video; however, surveillance against potential targets in Singapore continued. In April 2001, a second terrorist cell, known as Fiah Musa, conducted surveillance of the nearby Paya Lebar Air Base, used by the US Air Force. To perform this surveillance, Al Qaeda apparently used local nationals with access to the facility to take photos and provide information. During the course of the investigation, Singapore officials recovered over fifty photos of the Paya Lebar facility.



During this surveillance, the terrorists cells examined several other facilities and potential targets including the embassies of the United States, Australia, and Israel, the shipping channel used by US Navy ships entering Sembawang, the British High Commission, and several US corporate office facilities.

Do not be paranoid in your daily activities, but be alert for an insider threat. Terrorists may use people with access to sensitive areas who can, even unwittingly, gather information. If you witness suspicious activities at your facility, you should contact the proper authorities immediately.



While Singaporean officials were able to break up the various terrorist cells before any attacks were carried out, the potential damage could have been severe. The terrorists had already acquired about four tons of ammonium nitrate and were in the process of acquiring another seventeen tons.

Several of the terrorists arrested in Singapore had been trained in Afghanistan and at least one was familiar with bomb-making techniques.

In the end, the Government of Singapore arrested nearly 40 suspected terrorists in connection with the plots to attack Western interests on the small Island. Many of the suspects were members of Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian terrorist organization affiliated with Al Qaeda. Some were from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a Philippine-based separatist group. While some of those arrested were eventually released, the vast majority remain in the custody of the Singaporean Government.

Security is everyone's responsibility and vigilance is essential. Remain alert, report suspicious activity, and help protect the security and welfare of your facility, unit members, and family.