Part I  Security Environment Surrounding Japan

Section 3  International Terrorism

General Situation

The 9/11 attacks that took place in 2001 prompted the entire world to reaffirm the threat of international terrorism, and became the spark that ignited the current fight against terrorism by the United States and other countries.

In the military operation in Afghanistan led by U.S. and U.K. forces shortly after the 9/11 attacks, many of the leaders of Al-Qaeda, who were believed to have directed the 9/11 attacks, and the Taliban, who harbored Al-Qaeda, were killed or captured. In May 2011, Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda hiding in Pakistan, was killed in an operation conducted by the United States. The killing of Bin Laden, however, has not rooted out the possibility of Al-Qaeda attacks. In some areas including the border district between Afghanistan and Pakistan, where Al-Qaeda forces and the Taliban are considered to be hiding, the U.S.-led multinational forces, the Afghan, the Pakistani, and other militaries are continuously engaged in clearing operations.

Core members of Al-Qaeda still seem to have committed to high-profile attacks against the West, continuing to pursue a range of attack methodologies and recruiting operatives familiar with the West. On the other hand, some point out that in the light of the loss of experienced personnel, Al-Qaeda will seek to augment plots by increasing its operational tempo with smaller, simpler ones to demonstrate its continued relevance.

With respect to the relation between Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, while the Islamic extremism of Al-Qaeda has been spreading throughout the world, the command and control capabilities of the core Al-Qaeda group is believed to be declining. This declining command and control of the core Al-Qaeda group seems to have reduced the likelihood of large-scale organized attacks but some say it allows the franchises to innovate on their own more sophisticated attack methods which has radicalized affiliates. In the wake of the death of Osama Bin Laden, some point to the potential for Al-Qaeda operatives and related groups to try to avenge his killing.

Al-Qaeda affiliates that include “Al-Qaeda” in their name perpetrate terrorism mainly in North Africa and the Middle East; however, it is pointed out that these affiliates vary in their strategic agenda, external reach, and capabilities to conduct terrorist attacks.

We have also seen in recent years, cases where radical individuals and groups who have had no interaction at all with the Al-Qaeda network have adopted Al-Qaeda’s ideology and have become terrorists. In particular, since the attacks on the

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1 In his “National Strategy for Counterterrorism” released in June 2011, President Obama noted that the preeminent security threat to the United States continue to be Al-Qaeda and its affiliates and adherents, and clarified that their eventual defeat was the ultimate objective. He laid out a policy of pursuing the ultimate defeat of Al-Qaeda in the Afghanistan-Pakistan theater.

2 U.S. Director of National Intelligence (DNI), “Worldwide Threat Assessment” (February 2011).

3 A statement made by Michael Leiter, Director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), at the hearing of the Homeland Security Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives (February 9, 2011).


5 United States “Country Reports on Terrorism 2009” (August 2010).

6 In January 2009 Al-Qaeda in Yemen (AQY) and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) merged to become Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and announced it on their website.

7 “Worldwide Threat Assessment” by DNI (February 2011). Out of various affiliates of Al-Qaeda, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has been enhancing its new recruitment activities through such measures as launching a new English organizational journal, “Inspire,” on the Internet in June 2010.

8 “Al-Qaeda in Yemen and Somalia,” a Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate (January 21, 2010).
Terrorist attacks have recently been on the rise targeted at diplomatic delegates and other groups in Yemen. In October 2010, some explosive materials were discovered in multiple air cargoes, which were revealed to have originated in Yemen. It is thought that these attacks were conducted by groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda, and it has been pointed out that the deterioration of Yemeni government control could allow for further planning and execution of attacks by groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda. It has also been pointed out that Al-Qaeda has several hundred members in Yemen who have grown in strength.

Even after the Transitional Federal Government was established in Somalia in 2005, there continued to be no government that effectively governed the entire country, and battles between the radical Islamic group Al-Shabaab and government forces continued. Core Al-Shabaab leadership is ideologically aligned with Al-Qaeda and has made statements praising Osama Bin Laden and linking the movement to Al-Qaeda in January 2010. As such, they seemingly have a certain degree of relationship to Al-Qaeda.

In Algeria, there were a series of terrorist attacks in 2007 targeting the government and army. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for these attacks. In addition to Algeria, in recent years AQIM factions have also been active in sub-Saharan countries (Mali, Niger, and Mauritania). The group has targeted Western citizens, and there have been cases of kidnappings of westerners apparently conducted by the group.

South Asia has long been suffering frequent terrorist attacks. In India, many foreign citizens, including a Japanese national, fell victim to the Mumbai terrorist attacks in November 2008, and so-called Naxalites, a group of extremists active particularly in Eastern provinces, pose security threats. Pakistan has also experienced a number of terrorist attacks since 2007, including the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and attacks by armed groups targeting government and security organizations such as the military and the police.

Southeast Asia is still subject to frequent terrorist threats, particularly by Islamic extremists, although some progress has been made in countering terrorist organizations. In Indonesia, Zarkashi and Abu Dujana, the highest-ranking leaders of Jemaah Islamiya (JI), a radical Islamist organization, were apprehended in 2007. In 2009, Nurdin, leader of a splinter JI group and a suspect involved in the simultaneous bombings of foreign-owned hotels in Jakarta in July of that year, was shot dead. Through these incidents, Indonesia is making significant progress with their efforts to crack down on terrorists. In the Philippines, the communist New People’s Army (NPA), the Islamic extremist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) are the biggest domestic public security concerns and the government is making a strong effort to respond. In February 2011, the Aquino Administration formally agreed to resume formal peace negotiations with the NPA and MILF, showing its efforts to work with those groups.

(See Fig. I-1-3-1)
Fig. I-1-3-1 Number of Terrorism Incidents by Region

Middle East
- More than 80% in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Continuously increasing in Afghanistan
- Decreasing in Iraq since 2006 at its peak
- Increasing in Yemen since 2008

Europe and the former Soviet Union
- Russia accounts for 40 to 60%

Africa
- (928 incidents, 8.0%)

Asia and Oceania
- (2,951 incidents, 25.5%)

North, Central, and South America
- Columbia accounts for 80%

Somalia has accounted for more than 40% since 2007 (More than 60% in 2010)

Note: Created based on the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center database.