

Foreword

*The United States will continue to lead an expansive international effort in pursuit of a two-pronged vision: 1) The defeat of violent extremism as a threat to our way of life as a free and open society; and 2) The creation of a global environment inhospitable to violent extremists and all who support them.*¹

— President Bush September 2006

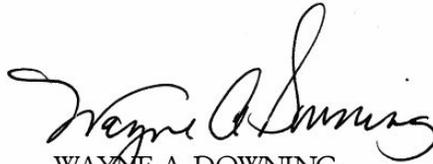
In February 2006, the Combating Terrorism Center released *Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting al-Qa'ida's Organizational Vulnerabilities*. Its authors analyzed declassified internal al-Qa'ida documents captured during operations in support of the Global War on Terror and maintained on the Department of Defense's Harmony Database. These declassified documents, which are corroborated by multiple open source materials, provide evidence that al-Qa'ida struggles with many of the same issues and challenges that all organizations in the private and public sectors confront. The Combating Terrorism Center recommended that effective strategies to defeat al-Qa'ida and likeminded groups should include measures that leverage and heighten their dysfunctional structure, competition, and behavior.

In *Al-Qa'ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa*, the Combating Terrorism Center's team of area experts and terrorism scholars analyzed al-Qa'ida's attempts to establish bases of operations and recruit followers in the Horn of Africa. According to a new set of recently declassified documents from the Harmony Database, al-Qa'ida operatives encountered significant problems as they ventured into the foreign lands of the Horn. The environment was far more inhospitable than they anticipated. The same conditions that make it difficult, or in many cases impossible, for state authorities to exert control in this region—poor infrastructure, scarce resources, competition with tribal and other local authority structures—were significant problems for al-Qa'ida as well.

The theories and case evidence presented in this report indicate that the second part of the President's vision—creating a global environment inhospitable to extremists and their supporters—can be well served by recognizing, understanding, and reinforcing local and regional suspicions and often outright hostility to an unknown group of foreign, religious extremists. As the report's authors argue, we should neither assume that al-Qa'ida's members are any more adept at operating in foreign countries than we are nor should we inflate the appeal of their rhetoric or the resonance of their extremist ideology. In Africa, the U.S. and al-Qa'ida are in an ideological struggle and experience similar advantages and disadvantages; however, the U.S. has more (but not unlimited) resources and options at its disposal. The key is to efficiently apply these resources in a manner that is appropriate, sustainable, and does not strengthen al-Qa'ida's appeal. Crucial to this effort is a low-to-invisible American profile in the region. The report's specific recommendations—*informed by al-Qa'ida's internal deliberations and formulated by counterterrorism practitioners and area experts*—are a major contribution to this end.

¹ *National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, September 2006; <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/>

Sun Tzu warns that, “He who attempts to defend everywhere defends nowhere”; yet this is largely the challenge that confronts us in our current worldwide struggle against radical Islamist Jihadis. This report draws on the lessons learned from al-Qa’ida’s experiences in the Horn to focus U.S. resources on those areas with the largest payoff in order to more efficiently allocate our scarce resources so that this country can sustain this generational struggle.



WAYNE A. DOWNING
General, U.S. Army (retired)
Distinguished Chair
Combating Terrorism Center
U.S. Military Academy

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army or any other agency of the U.S. Government.