

(Continued)

- ▶ The ongoing fight for freedom in Iraq has been twisted by terrorist propaganda as a rallying cry.
- ▶ Increasingly sophisticated use of the Internet and media has enabled our terrorist enemies to communicate, recruit, train, rally support, proselytize, and spread their propaganda without risking personal contact.

### *Today's Terrorist Enemy*

The United States and our partners continue to pursue a significantly degraded but still dangerous al-Qaida network. Yet the enemy we face today in the War on Terror is not the same enemy we faced on September 11. Our effective counterterrorist efforts, in part, have forced the terrorists to evolve and modify their ways of doing business. Our understanding of the enemy has evolved as well. Today, the principal terrorist enemy confronting the United States is a transnational movement of extremist organizations, networks, and individuals—and their state and non-state supporters—which have in common that they exploit Islam and use terrorism for ideological ends.

This transnational movement is not monolithic. Although al-Qaida functions as the movement's vanguard and remains, along with its affiliate groups and those inspired by them, the most dangerous present manifestation of the enemy, the movement is not controlled by any single individual, group, or state. What unites the movement is a common vision, a common set of ideas about the nature and destiny of the world, and a common goal of ushering in totalitarian rule. What unites the movement is the ideology of oppression, violence, and hate.

Our terrorist enemies exploit Islam to serve a violent political vision. Fueled by a radical ideology and a false belief that the United States is the cause of most problems affecting Muslims today, our enemies seek to expel Western power and influence from the Muslim world and establish regimes that rule according to a violent and intolerant distortion of Islam. As illustrated by Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, such regimes would deny all political and religious freedoms and serve as sanctuaries for extremists to launch additional attacks against not only the United States, its allies and partners, but the Muslim world itself. Some among the enemy, particularly al-Qaida, harbor even greater territorial and geopolitical ambitions and aim to establish a single, pan-Islamic, totalitarian regime that stretches from Spain to Southeast Asia.

This enemy movement seeks to create and exploit a division between the Muslim and non-Muslim world and within the Muslim world itself. The terrorists distort the idea of jihad into a call for violence and murder against those they regard as apostates or unbelievers, including all those who disagree with them. Most of the terrorist attacks since September 11 have occurred in Muslim countries—and most of the victims have been Muslims.