



UNISCI Discussion Papers

SPAIN: AN AL QAEDA HUB?

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1. The Context

Spain, the traditional gateway to Europe and beyond to North America remains a hub of Al Qaeda transit and base activity. As a rich recruitment base and a poorly regulated financial centre, as well as a place for rest, recuperation and housing, Islamism groups remains active in Spain.

During the growth phase of Al Qaeda in the second half of the 1990s, Spain's geographic, demographic and political factors and conditions facilitated Al Qaeda to methodically build clusters of robust support and operational infrastructure in Aragon, Catalonia, Murcia, Valencia, Alicante, Tudelilla, Andalusia, Barcelona, Castellón and Madrid. Despite the periodic arrests and interruption of Al Qaeda and other Islamism terrorist groups, Spain remains strategically and geopolitically important. A narrow Straits of Gibraltar separates Spain from Morocco and North Africa into the rest of the Arab world. The peculiar features of Spain that make the country conducive to Islamism penetration and activity are:

First, Spain hosts a large Muslim immigrant community that is vulnerable to virulent ideological and physical penetration by Islamism terrorist groups. Although its human and material infrastructure in Spain has suffered since 9-11, Al Qaeda and other Islamism groups are still able to operate in the country because they maintain strategic depth. Although vast majority of the Muslims are peace loving, several tens of thousands of politicised and radicalised Muslims in Spain are willing to support Islamism. The continuous flow of migrants and the abundance of sympathisers and supporters already inside Spain enable Al Qaeda and other Islamism groups to establish cells in Spain at short notice. In addition to Turkey, Spain remains the gateway for North Africans to enter Europe. For several hundred European cradle- and convert-Muslims, Spain is the point of departure for Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Algeria, Indonesia, and other emerging lands of jihad.

Second, Al Qaeda and its associated groups—notably the Salafi Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), Takfir Wal Hijra, Tunisian Combatant Group—established extensive financial infrastructure in Spain both to support Spanish and its other European operations. In

¹ Las opiniones expresadas en estos artículos son propias de sus autores. Estos artículos no reflejan necesariamente la opinión de UNISCI. The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors. These articles do not necessarily reflect the views of UNISCI

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addition to Spain emerging as a conduit for distribution of funds outside Europe, together with Belgium, it served as a centre for forged documents facilitating fraudulent use of credit cards and banking fraud. Islamist cells in Spain provide multiple forged, adapted and fraudulently obtained genuine documents for generating finance and for facilitating the travel of recruits and operatives. Although a number of Al Qaeda infiltrated genuine and terrorist-established charities and 30 Al Qaeda-linked companies operate in Spain, only some have been targeted. The funds came from multiple sources. Among the principal sources were Osama bin Laden, stores, restaurants, shops and mosques and charities.

Third, like Germany, Spain served as a forward operational base for Al Qaeda to mount surveillance and reconnaissance on targets in continental US before the 9-11 attacks. Like Al Qaeda held the first planning meeting for 9-11 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the final planning meeting for 9-11 was held in Spain. In addition to rest and recuperate, Spain also served as an important safe haven for important Al Qaeda organisers of attacks, financiers and operatives to convene, meet, plan, prepare and execute attacks.

2. Contemporary Wave

Spain like the rest of Europe had traditionally offered protection to Muslims fleeing from persecution in their homelands. This included Muslims from the Middle East where several tens of thousands found their way to Europe. Even before the wave of Algerian refugees in the 1990s, several thousand Syrians fled to Europe including to Spain when the late President Hafez Assad crushed Syria's Muslim Brotherhood in 1982.

The contemporary wave of Muslim support in Spain for Islamic radicalism dates back to the early 1990s. In response to the developments in Bosnia where the West turned a blind eye to the killing of Balkan Muslims (1992-1995), Spain developed an Islamist group — the “Soldiers of Allah” in Madrid in 1994. Its associated umbrella, the “Islamic Alliance” with overseas branches, played a coordination role by co-opting leaders of other groups. Operating out of the Abu Baker mosque in Madrid, they kept in contact with Armed Islamic Group of Algeria, Islamic Salvation Front of Algeria, Palestinian Hamas, Al Qaeda and other violent and political Islamist organisations. In rural Spain, the group organised and financed medical treatment and caring for those wounded in the fighting in Bosnia. For instance, Khayata Kattan, who fought in Bosnia and Kurdistan, Mohamed Needl Acaid, who fought in the Balkans, and Mohamed Zaher, alias Abu Hmeid, received sanctuary. Similarly, Osama Darra who fought in Bosnia opened a discount audio and video store in Spain. Likewise, Abdelkrim Hammad alias Aldelnassa, an Afghanistan trained GIA member wanted for murder arrested in Tudelilla in Spain in December 2002 had fought in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Kosovo. He had fled France for Spain in late 2001.

Soldiers of Allah founder Anwar Adnan Mohamed Saleh, alias Cheij Salah, alias Abdul Rachid, a Palestinian, wanted to move from Spain to Pakistan coordinate the support that was flowing from Europe. On the pretext of travelling to Granada, Saleh left Spain for Pakistan in early October 1995. The Spanish Imam Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, alias Abu Dahdah, a Syrian who headed the “Soldiers of Wings” replaced him faithfully. Saleh joined Al Qaeda's premier front organisation—Maktab-il-khidamat (MAK: Afghan Service Bureau)—located in Peshawar and operated with Al Qaeda's principal recruitment officer Abu Zubaidah. Saleh



facilitated the absorption of both the Soldiers of Allah and the Islamic Alliance and the co-option of their leaderships by Al Qaeda. After the Pakistan police arrested Saleh, he relocated to Jalalabad in Afghanistan.

The absence of Saleh was adequately compensated by his colleague and successor Abu Dahdah. Dahdah recruited Abdairahman Alarnaot Abu Aljer, alias Abu Obed, from Syria, and dispatched him to Bosnia for training in Zenica, where an Arab battalion fought in support of the Bosnian Muslims. For the purpose of training new recruits, both Dahdah and Alarnaot worked with Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, alias Abu Musab, an important Al Qaeda trainer and camp commander in Afghanistan. In Bassan Dalati Satut, alias Abu Abdo, the police found a diary containing the bank account number of Abu Musab. Among the others in the cell was Kamal Hadid Chaar alias Abu Nour, also Syrian, and like most others formerly a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria.

Dahdah, 37, who arrived in Spain in 1986, married a Spanish woman, acquired Spanish nationality, fathered five children. A used car dealer, Dahdah lived modestly and led a low profile life until his arrest in Madrid in November 2001. He travelled widely in Europe, Middle East and Asia including visits to the UK, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Turkey, Yemen, Jordan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. His contacts included Mazen Belnajo and Abu Talha in Saudi Arabia, Abu Rached and Jihad Barakat in UAE, and Abu Alfaraj, Mustafa Halime Abu Bashir, Abu Musab, Abu Khadiyah and Nabil Manakli in Yemen.³ In addition to visiting at least on ten occasions Abu Qatada, the Al Qaeda spiritual leader in Europe, he kept in contact with the Belgian of Tunisian origin Tareek Maroufi, the head of the Tunisian Combatant Group, an associated group of Al Qaeda. Dahdah also worked with the GSPC, another associated group with Al Qaeda. Six Algerian members of GSPC arrested in Spain on September 26, 2001 had links with Abu Dahdah and other eight Al Qaeda members charged on November 19, 2001.

Of the six GSPC members arrested on September 26, 2001, two met with an Al Qaeda Tunisian leader ESSID Sami ben Khemais in March 2001. Ben Khemais and five others were arrested in April 2001 in Italy over plans to attack the US Embassy in Rome.

On January 24, 2003 another 16 suspected Algerian members of Al Qaeda were arrested when they were preparing for new attacks; but they were freed later. Police seized chemicals in raids on 12 apartments in Barcelona and other cities in northeastern Spain.

Dahdah was trusted by the Al Qaeda core and penultimate leadership as well as the field commanders. Dahdah's work was appreciated by his masters, including Osama bin Laden. For instance, of 111 million pesetas (669,676 euros) provided by Al Qaeda for Islamist activity, Dahdah received 8 million pesetas (17,094 euros), Abu Ilias in Hamburg received 3 million pesetas (15,686 euros), Abu Salah in Yemen received 15,686 euros, Abu Khaled in Turkey received 107,457 euros, and Abu Zeinab in Belgium received 231,664 euros. Similarly, Dahdah's Madrid phone number appeared in an address book found in Atta's Hamburg apartment. On August 27, two weeks before the suicide hijackings, Dahdah engaged in a conversation with Shakur, a UK based Al Qaeda member, referring to a possible airline hijackings. Shakur said, "In our lessons, we have entered the field of aviation and we have cut the bird's throat" a statement interpreted by the intelligence analysts as attacking the Eagle, the US landmark.

³ Cerdán Blond, Manuel: "La investigación: los tentáculos de Bin Laden en España" ["The Investigation: The Tentacles of Bin Laden in Spain"], *El Mundo*, Spain, January 24, 2003.



Seven months apart, Mohommad Atta, the 9-11 field commander made two trips to Spain, first in January and then in July 2001. In addition to Ramzi bin Al Shibh, the 9-11 logistics coordinator, Marwan Al Shehhi, the UAE born pilot and others met in Spain to finalise the attack plans for 9-11.⁴ As holders of residence permits from Germany, a Schengen country, they could travel freely within the European Union. Ramzi arrived in Reus airport in Barcelona on a weekly charter from Germany on July 9, 2001 and Atta arrived in Madrid from Tampa via Miami on July 7. During a stop over at the Zurich airport, he purchased a Swiss army knife from an airport shop the next day morning. He spent up to five hours in the airport, then checked into a hotel in Barajas, a town by the airport, and was accompanied by Iqbal Afzal Admat, a 41-year old man, most likely an Al Qaeda member on a false passport. From the hotel, he made lengthy phone calls including to Hamburg. After paying his room bill by credit card, he took a hotel shuttle to the airport. From Madrid, Atta hired a car, drove halfway, and checked into Hotel Sant Jordi in Tarragona, five miles north of Salou on the Mediterranean, an area popular with Arab holidaymakers. Atta drove 1,190 miles during his 12 days in Spain.

After meeting at La Junquera, near the French frontier, they left Hotel Mónica in Cambrils to meet with Abu Khaled, an Al Qaeda leader, who arrived for the meeting in Catalonia. Ramzi had checked in under his own name. At the beginning of the operation in 1997, Abu Khaled was in Castellón, where he discussed the operation. After the meeting, the participants took the keys to the operation in coded emails. While Atta flew back to Miami on July 19, Ramzi left for Germany. On August 1, Ramzi took a train from Hamburg to Düsseldorf, where from the train station in Düsseldorf he transferred Al Qaeda funds to Zacariaya Moussaoui, a suicide hijacker. The Al Qaeda Spanish link to Hamburg cell included provision of support and operatives. When Said Bahaji, Ramzi bin Al Shibh, and Zacariyar Essabar, Al Qaeda members that provided logistical support to the 9-11 team, left Hamburg for Pakistan, they were accompanied by Mohammed Belfatmi, an Algerian from Tarragona province in Spain. Belfatmi arranged the three-day meeting between Atta and Ramzi in Spain in July 2001.

The Al Qaeda Spanish cell also played a pivotal role in the decentralisation of the Al Qaeda network. With the difficulty of moving recruits and funds into Afghanistan through Pakistan, Al Qaeda in Spain supported the establishment and operation of an Al Qaeda camp in Poso, Sulawesi, in Indonesia. Parlindungan Siregar, alias Parlin, an Indonesian who studied aeronautical engineering in Madrid in the 1990s was the physical training instructor of the camp. The Spanish authorities monitored telephone call from Parlin to Abu Dahdah on July 7, 2001. In addition to visiting the camp and firing weapons at a shooting range, Abu Dahdah dispatched several members including Luis José Galán González, alias Yusuf Galan, a native Spanish convert to Islam in July 2001. Although the Spanish authorities traced connections between him and Herri Batasuna, the political wing of ETA, it is likely that they were insignificant links. When Galán was arrested in Madrid in November 2001, police also seized a .22 pistol, a .22 rifle, pump action shotgun, a bullet proof vest, and training photos as well as machetes and forged identity documents. The camp trained 2-3000 Indonesians and foreigners. Both Abu Dahdah and Galán admitted to Spanish authorities that they visited Indonesia and took money from Parlin.

After seven months of monitoring, Ahmed Brahim, 57, an Algerian member of the financial network of Al Qaeda who lived in Spain for 15 years was arrested in Barcelona on

⁴ Sennott, Charles M.: "Exposing Al Qaeda's European Network," *Boston Globe*, August 4, 2002.



April 13, 2002. Identified as the Chief Financial Officer in Spain and a suspect in the East Africa bombings in August 1998, the Spanish authorities recovered details of accounts containing large sums of funds at banks in Spain and in other European nations. In addition to working together with Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, alias Abu Hajar al Iraqi, the first emir of Al Qaeda and the financial brain of Al Qaeda, Brahim financed operatives in at least nine countries distributing cash worldwide including to the US and German cells. At the time of his arrest the Spanish authorities traced the path of over euro 670,000. Brahim, who lived in Spain for 15 years, had a yachting business where he traded in boats, provided public relations and exported high tech computers to Saudi Arabia.

Also in April, the Spanish arrested Mohammed Galeb Kalaje Zouaydi, alias Abu Talha, a 41-year old Syrian-born businessman who was formerly a member of Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. He was arrested on charges of maintaining two sets of books, a double accounting system, and for raising and laundering money for Al Qaeda cells in eight countries and sending money to Abu Dahdah, the Al Qaeda leader in Spain. Zouaydi who lived in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia from 1996-2001, set up private companies and received donations. He arrived in Madrid in 1998 and established Mushayt for Traditing Establishment, a trading and investment company in Spain. The Spanish officials investigated the transfer of USD 700,000 from the Saudi investment and trading company run by Zouaydi to Spain between 1996 and 2001. Zouaydi contributed USD 15,400 to Mamoun Darkazanli, who “belonged to the most intimate circle of Mohommad Atta.” Operating under the cover of housing construction and sales, Zouaydi’s money web extended from the US to Belgium, Turkey, Palestinian territories, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia and China. Spanish officials claimed that Ghalyoun, Zouaydi’s business partner, also a member of the Syrian Muslim brotherhood, recorded the surveillance videos of World Trade Centre and other targets in 1997 and Zouaydi’s brother-in-law Mohamed Bahaiah, an Al Qaeda courier, collected the surveillance videos for transport.

Although only a few charities were infiltrated by the Islamist groups including by Al Qaeda, the Spanish police identified 10 charities that included organisations engaged in bona fide relief and rehabilitation activity. They were the International Islamic Relief Organisation; Al Haramain Islamic Foundation; Ittehad-e-Islami, based in Afghanistan, the most subsidized charity by the Saudi government; Muslim Aid created in London by Cat Stevens alias Yusuf Islam and was involved in Bosnia; Afghan Support Committee that assisted Arabs expelled from Pakistan after a suicide attack on the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad in 1995; Al Kifah Refugee Center led by Afghan veteran Kamer Eddine Kherbane; Hizb-e-Islami led by Gubbudin Hekmatiyar in Afghanistan; Human Concern International, US based active in Pakistan in support of the Afghan mujahidn; Global Relief Foundation (Foundation Secours Mondial) led by Nabil Sayadi of Belgium; and Maktab-ul-khedamat (Afghan Support Committee), a known Al Qaeda front.

In addition to hosting a large North African network, Spain was also the centre for Al Qaeda Syrian activity. Zouaydi, Syrian born Spanish member of Al Qaeda, sent US\$ 15,240 to Syrian-born German citizen Mahmoun Darkazanli, 44, in Hamburg whose company—Darkazanli Import-Export Company—has been investigated by German, US and other authorities since 1998.⁵ The US government identifies Darkazanli as an associate of Salim, extradited from German to the US, and to Wadih el-Hage, a Lebanese born American who

⁵ Darkazanli Import-Export Company is the first private business to have its assets frozen by President Bush on suspicion of its links to 9-11 attacks. Erlanger, Steven: “German Press Investigation of Al Qaeda-Tied Businessman,” *New York Times*, June 20, 2002.



served as Osama bin Laden's personal secretary in Sudan. Although Germany was reluctant to arrest Darkazanli, his friend and associate Mohamed Heidar Zammar, also of Syrian origin, was arrested while on a visit to Morocco and deported to Spain with American knowledge. Dahdah, Mohammed Haydar Zammer, a 41 year old former locksmith of German citizen and Darkazanli come from Aleppo, Syria, the topic of Atta's thesis.

The arrest of Ghasoub al-Abrah Ghalyoun alias Abu Musab in April 2002 led to the seizure of five tapes during a visit he made to the US in August 1997. A Syrian born Spanish national, Ghasoub was a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. A father of five, he worked renovating houses in Spain. Although his attorney stating that Ghasoub was on a family trip to the US, the form and the time of the recordings of the symbols emblematic of the life and culture of the US exceeded tourist curiosity. For instance, the 110-storey twin towers in New York and Empire State Building was filmed from different angles and varying distances, including an excursion into Manhattan's financial district. In the 88-minute tape, its owner turns into the camera and says in Arabic: "I will knock them down." In a 30-minute segment of the tape containing skyscrapers, structures and landmarks, there is a conversation between the driver and the cameraman, where there is a reference to "Allah" when the video captures a nighttime shot of the twin towers and the Empire State Building. Later from the top of the Empire State Building, the camera pans up to focus on the plane flying over Midtown Manhattan. Most of the off the camera voices heard in the video at the WTC are routine descriptions of the lobby — including the elevators and a security guard — and landmarks such as Statue of Liberty and Brooklyn Bridge seen from the observation deck.⁶ After the camera pans from the sidewalk up to the upper north tower floors, where the first hijacked plane struck on 9-11, it moves toward the Hudson River, the path the pilots took as they flew the aircrafts toward the towers. Similarly, the sustenance pillars of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and Brooklyn Bridge received special attention. Furthermore, he filmed the inner and outer statues of liberty, zones of New York airport, Sears tower in Chicago, Disneyland in California and Universal Studios theme parks in California. Among the other videos found included graphic images of fighting in Chechnya, including suicide attacks and donations to the Islamist cause. Four months after Aghasoub's visit to the US, another member of the cell, Mohamen Khair Saqq, alias Abu Aldarda, also a Syrian born Spanish citizen and formerly of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, was visited by Mohamed Bahaiah, a courier from Osama bin Laden. In September 2002, both Ghasoub and Saqq were released on USD 146, 550 on bails because the Investigative Judge was unable to prove that the videos or copies were seen by Al Qaeda leaders. In a series of raids in Spain, documents and other items seized from homes of Al Qaeda members and supporters in Madrid included airline manuals and airport security in the US.

In addition to wide ranging support activity, Spain was also a centre of operational activity. Spanish arrests led to the recovery of maps of various European cities including Dublin and Milan. The European intelligence community believed that Abu Dahdah travelled to Afghanistan prior to 9-11, met with Osama bin Laden on two occasions and discussed with Mohommad Atef, the then military commander, the timetable for launching both suicide and poison gas attacks in Europe. The Spanish cell worked with German cell building the chemical device and the Italian cell discussing the use of a choking gas. Although the chemical attack in France had to wait until after Al Qaeda launched 9-11, the group was determined to conduct

⁶ Ibid



several suicide attacks—NATO HQ in Brussels, US Embassy and American Cultural Centre in Paris, and the Gothic Cathedral and the central square in Strasbourg, France.

Among the other arrests conducted in the North African immigrant neighborhood of Alicante, Spain, included that of the Algerian Mohammed Bensakhriya, 34, who headed the “Meliani,” an Afghanistan trained Algerian commando cell functioning in Frankfurt with links to the UK, and to Milan and Varesse in Italy. In April 2001, five Tunisians were arrested in Milan, and one suspect in Munich. In January 2000, the US embassy in Rome was closed after the authorities believed that three Algerian were planning to conduct a suicide bombing of the target. When Bensakhriya was arrested in July 2001, he lived in a van maintaining an appearance of being poor so as not to attract the attention of the police. For planning to attack the cathedral in Strasbourg and the market, he was extradited to France. At the time of the arrest, police were also investigating whether he had a role in the planned attack on the European Parliament in Strasbourg.⁷ He was also wanted by INTERPOL and the US government.

3. Response

Spain like the rest of Europe tolerated the Islamist terrorist network until 9-11. As a result, Al Qaeda and other groups deepened their influence by recruiting, dispatching members for training, and transacting businesses. Although the authorities monitored the Al Qaeda network in Spain, they identified the network as dormant and not posing a significant threat at least until 9-11. In the meantime, Al Qaeda network spread throughout Spain including into Granada. For instance, the post 9-11 arrests included, Mohamed Zaher Asade in the Southern city of Granada, the capital of the Moorish Empire of Al Andalus, which fell in 1492. Immediately after 9-11, the Spanish national police launched Operation Date to disrupt the Al Qaeda organisation and operations in Spain. The three-phased operation—November 2001, April 2002, and July 2002,—dismantled the Al Qaeda infrastructure on its soil. In addition to cooperating with law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies worldwide, Spain continues to investigate and analyse documents seized.

Overall, the European response has been weak until 9-11. Between the European law enforcement (police, immigration and customs), security and intelligence agencies there was little cooperation. With no fusion of intelligence and lack of coordination, the pieces of information gathered by various national agencies was not shared and matched to piece together the overall picture until 9-11. For instance, the Italians wire-tapped the phones, homes and cars of suspected Al Qaeda members 13 months preceding 9-11. On August 12, 2001, Abdulsalam Ali Ali Abdulrahman, a Yemeni travelling on a diplomatic passport was driven in a Citroen from the Bologna airport told Abdelkader Mahmoud Es Sayed, the Egyptian Imam of the Milan mosque about a massive strike against the enemies of Islam involving aircraft and the sky, a blow that “will be written about in all the newspapers of the world.” He added: “This will be one of those strikes that will never be forgotten... This is a terrifying thing. This is a thing that will spread from south to north, from east to west. The person who came up with this program is a madman from a madhouse, a madman but a genius. He is fixated on this program. It will leave everyone turned to ice... In the future, listen to the news and remember

⁷ Bright, Martin et al.; “Police Believe up to 30 more spectaculars are planned, The Secret War,” Part II, *Observer*, London, September 2001.



these words. 'Above the head.' Remember well, remember well... The danger in the airports... There are clouds in the sky there in international territory, in that country, the fire has been lit and is awaiting only the wind..."⁸ Stating that the fight against the enemies of Islam would be waged "with any means we can combat them, using ..airplanes. They won't be able to stop us even with the heaviest weapons." Before he departed, Abdulrahman said: "I'm studying airplanes. I hope, God willing, that I can bring you a window or a piece of an airplane the next time we see each other." Also travelling in his Citroen, referring to fraudulent documents, Soltane Adel, a Tunisian, told Es Sayed, on January 24, 2001, "Will these work for the brothers who are going to the United States?" he angrily responded: "Don't ever say those words again, not even joking. If it's necessary... whatever place we may be, come up and talk to my ear, because these are very important things. You must know... that this plan is very, very secret, as if you were protecting the security of the state." Es Sayed, fled to Afghanistan in July 2001, after his accomplices including Soltane Adel were arrested in a Tunisian dominated network planned to strike US targets. He is wanted in Egypt for the 1987 massacre of 58 tourists in Luxor and in Italy for trafficking arms, explosives, chemicals, and human trafficking.

As Europe is a forward operational base for Al Qaeda to strike North America, improving the security of Europe is pivotal in reducing the threat to the US. For instance, the failure of other Al Qaeda members to enter the US from Europe, such as Ramzi bin Al Shibh, forced Al Qaeda to scale down the 9-11 operation. For instance, when Es Sayed called Abdulrahman on February 12, 2001, another man Abdelwahab answered. When Es Sayed asked: "I heard you had entered America," Abdelwahab responded: "I'm sorry, but we weren't able to get in. It's our greatest desire and objective." They also refer to a 10 member highly secretive German group suggesting other Al Qaeda members preparing for similar attacks. Similarly, sharing of intelligence and coordination of disruption operations are imperative towards protecting Europe from Al Qaeda attack. At the Genoa Summit in Italy, where world leaders met in July 2001, Al Qaeda plans to crash a plane was disrupted.

Every terrorist attack leads to the disruption of terrorist cells connected with that attack. Although the Spanish network suffered immediately after 9-11, considering the importance of Spain, Al Qaeda will seek to rebuild it. Despite a series of operations, the Spanish members of Al Qaeda and other associated groups forming a part of the larger European network, are determined to maintain a presence in Spain, an important hub and a transit point. As much as Spain is vulnerable, the country provides an opportunity for the Spanish and other security services to cultivate, recruit and manage terrorist assets, agents and informants. Even before 9-11, Al Qaeda members trained in security took certain security precautions in leading their day-to-day lives and conducting operations. But after 9-11, Al Qaeda members evaded telephone and electronic eves-dropping by using public telephone and fax services. As a learning organisation, Al Qaeda learnt that the European services generated considerable information including evidence to detect, disrupt and prosecute their members by tapping phones and bugging their homes and vehicles, in the future they will become even more security conscious. Therefore, the future success of the fight against terrorism will depend to a large extent on the human penetration of terrorist groups and their support cells throughout Europe including in Spain.

⁸ Ibid