Countering Terrorism from the Second Foreign Fighter Glut

Clint Watts

Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, which ended in early 1989, created a glut of foreign fighters, who found themselves unwanted by their home/source countries and restless for another Jihadi campaign. This "First Foreign Fighter Glut" spawned al-Qa'ida (AQ) and a decade of increasingly lethal terrorist attacks leading up to September 11, 2001.

Today, Western nations face a smaller, more lethal threat resulting from the "Second Foreign Fighter Glut." As major conflicts in Iraq and later Afghanistan diminish in scale, a new generation of former foreign fighters will sit idle in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The future success of AQ hinges on its recruitment process in which former foreign fighters from Iraq and Afghanistan guide the recruitment and production of future foreign fighters who will conduct regional and global terrorist attacks. Left unchecked, the Second Foreign Fighter Glut will produce the next generation of terrorist organizations and attacks much as the First Foreign Fighter Glut fueled AQ.

Current Western counterterrorism (CT) strategies, largely overshadowed by counterinsurgencies (COIN) in Iraq and Afghanistan, place great emphasis on eliminating the supply of foreign fighters at their intended targets. These strategies fail to adequately mitigate the demand for jihad by young recruits in foreign fighter source countries.

The key to success for future CT strategies will be the disruption of terrorist recruitment in foreign fighter source countries using a mixture of cost effective, soft power tactics to engage local, social-familial-religious networks in flashpoint cities – cities that produce a disproportionately high number of foreign fighters with respect to their overall population. Engagement with these recruiting grounds should 1) mitigate the underlying conditions catalyzing the recruitment of male youth populations and 2) separate former foreign fighters from their base of local support. In addition, long-run CT strategies should be clearly divested from COIN efforts and focused on former foreign fighters from the Second Foreign Fighter Glut. This next generation of former foreign fighters will empower regional terrorist groups that will likely be based in Pakistan, Yemen, and the Algerian border areas (Sahel Region).
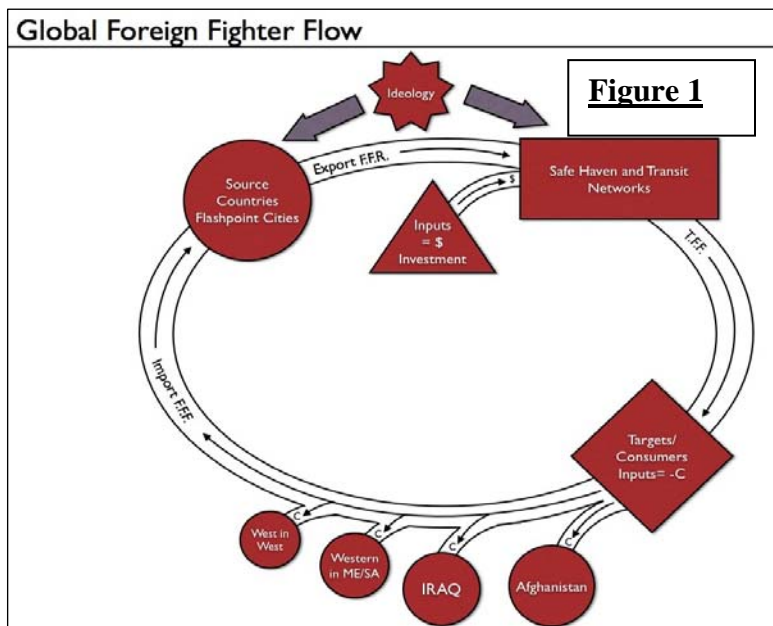
Global Foreign Fighter Pipeline

Designing holistic strategies to stem foreign fighter flow requires examination of AQ's recruitment and integration process. Whether going to Pakistan in 1985 or 2005, foreign fighters

follow a similar production pipeline consisting of three phases: 1) Source Country-Flashpoint City; 2) Safe Haven & Transit Networks; and 3) Target Locations.

As detailed in Figure 1, Phase 1 begins with flashpoint cities[i] in source countries with large pools of at-risk males ranging in age from 16- to 28-years-old. These males are ripe for radicalization due to socio-economic conditions that include, but are not limited to, a lack of civil liberties and political rights (as identified by Krueger[ii]), limited employment opportunities and economic mobility and perceived government repression towards their segment of the population. Social and family networks within flashpoint cities accentuate recruitment by associating local plight with a broader political agenda focused on perceived Western economic and political oppression, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the advance of Western values, which they perceive as a detriment to their own local beliefs. Local extremist ideologues profess AQ's Jihadi ideology and former foreign fighters, imbedded in local social-family-religious networks, facilitate the integration of recruits into current conflicts. Young males, seeing few legitimate alternatives, depart from these flashpoint cities as foreign fighter recruits (Fig. 1-FFR) and enter the terrorism pipeline.

The second phase of global foreign fighter flow commences when the recruit departs his hometown.[iii] Most times these young men enter a safe haven located within a weak state such as

Figure 1

Global Foreign Fighter Flow

Pakistan, Yemen or Syria. There, foreign fighter recruits integrate into larger AQ where they receive additional ideological indoctrination, military training, and guidance from AQ leaders regarding their roles (martyr, fighter, other) and intended targets.

Depending on the safe haven and the country of origin, foreign fighter recruits may give money to AQ (as in the case of Saudi recruits passing through Syria to Iraq) or they may receive money from AQ (as in the case of recruits in Pakistan planning attacks on Westerners in the Middle East, North Africa, or the West). AQ strongholds in safe havens also receive investment from wealthy financiers that are sympathetic to AQ's cause. This investment helps AQ maintain its small infrastructure in safe havens, sustain low cost media productions, and, to a limited extent, fund global attacks. Integration, training and allocation of these new recruits might take less than a week in the case of Syria or several months in the case of Pakistan.

During Phase III, trained foreign fighters (Fig.1- TFF) travel to attack targets. Today, the foreign fighter targets in sequence are likely: 1) Afghanistan; 2) Iraq; 3) Western targets in Middle East and North African (MENA) countries; and 4) Western targets in Western countries. Trained

foreign fighters act as conventional fighters and suicide bombers and many are consumed (Fig.1-C) in these targets. Those fighters not killed in battle are imported back into their source countries as former foreign fighters (Fig. 1- FFF) and then further the radicalization of new foreign fighter recruits and/or build AQ-affiliated local terrorist cells.

Policy Implication: Focus not on what can be done, but what needs to be done.

Western CT efforts predominately focus on Phase 2 and 3 of the Global Foreign Fighter Flow using military and intelligence assets to target foreign fighters in transit to safe havens and target locations. However, consuming every foreign fighter prior to an attack will remain nearly impossible. This leads to a recurring strategic wrinkle. A foreign fighter suicide bombing is both a tactical and strategic CT failure. The elimination of a foreign fighter en route to a terrorist attack is a tactical CT success but still is a strategic CT failure. The tipping point for defeating AQ lies in the elimination of foreign fighters at a rate equal to or greater than the rate at which foreign fighters are recruited. Despite the increased success of Western military and intelligence efforts in eliminating foreign fighters, AQ continues to recruit at a sufficient pace to perpetuate terrorism.
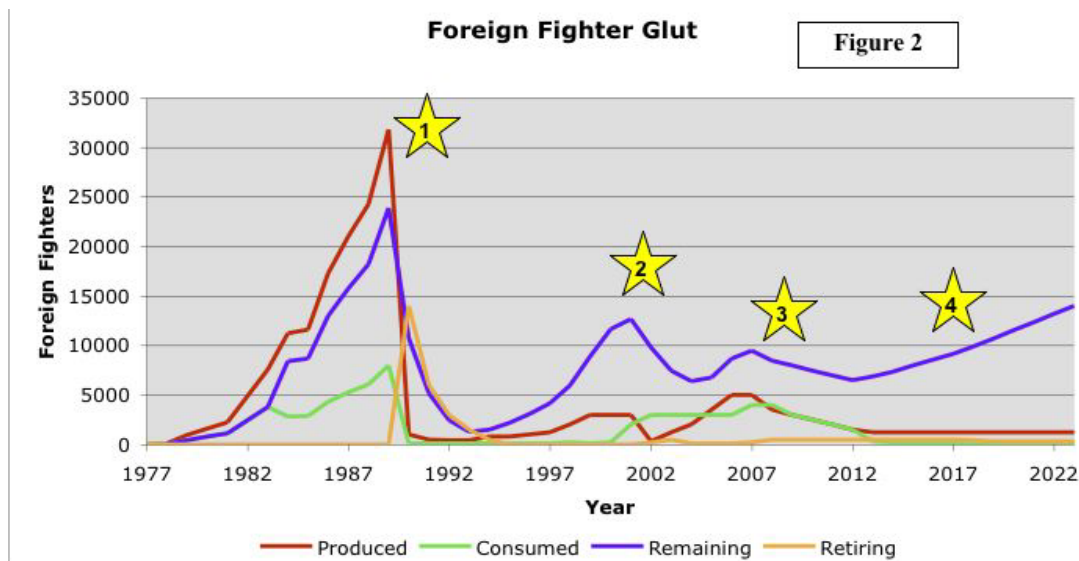
Future CT strategy must focus on the tipping point for defeating AQ: Phase 1 recruitment in flashpoint cities within source countries. The military and intelligence communities are not equipped nor designed to accomplish this task.

Thus, the main effort for future CT strategy must shift to other elements of national power: diplomacy and information. The Department of State is the only organization positioned to lead efforts to squelch recruitment in foreign fighter source countries. A corresponding reallocation of CT resources must also be made to support this shift in strategy. The military, intelligence and law enforcement community will always play a critical supporting role in CT but victory lies in Phase 1 during the recruitment process – not in Phase 3 when terrorist operations are already underway.

Preparing for the Second Foreign Fighter Glut

The Global Foreign Fighter Flow described in Figure 1 developed during the 1980s when flashpoint cities first began sending foreign fighter recruits to Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of Soviet forces in the late 1980s (Fig. 2- Point 1), many trained foreign fighters returned home. Some of these trained foreign fighters retired from their Jihadi days and integrated back into their local society, assuming traditional work and familial roles. However, many others returned home to find limited employment opportunities or outright rejection by their source country. These unemployed foreign fighters, left with few legitimate alternatives, sought methods to continue their previous endeavors in Afghanistan.

The First Foreign Fighter Glut of the 1990s left veteran foreign fighters pooling in safe havens, which led to the creation of AQ (Fig. 2- Point 2). During this glut, AQ gained time to spread its ideology, recruit, provide training support to conventional fighting in Somalia and conduct attacks of increasing complexity on U.S. targets in Kenya, Tanzania, Yemen, and later directly on U.S. soil.

Foreign Fighter Glut — Figure 2

The U.S.'s response to 9/11 decimated the First Foreign Fighter Glut and spread the remnants of AQ to remote locations. This significantly lowered AQ's ability to conduct collective terrorist operations, train and recruit. Unfortunately, Iraq became the recruitment boom for AQ this decade that the Afghan jihad of the 1980s provided for the organization in its inception. From 2003 through 2007, Iraq and Afghanistan became training grounds for newly recruited foreign fighters (Fig. 2- Point 3). Today, recruitment numbers appear to be decreasing. However, the boom of foreign fighter recruits since 2003 creates a long-run terrorism problem (Fig. 2- Point 4).[iv]

Policy Implication: Beginning of a Second Foreign Fighter Glut

The Second Foreign Fighter Glut has begun. Despite recent CT successes, the world now has a second pool of former foreign fighters returning to source countries and flashpoint cities. The same underlying conditions that make young men in the flashpoint cities identified in Parts I & II[v] of this study ripe for recruitment will result in a failure for these returning foreign fighters to retire from their Jihadi activities. The Second Glut is not likely to happen on the same scale as the first (Fig. 2- Point 4). There are fewer fighters in Iraq and Afghanistan this decade compared to the Afghan jihad of the 1980s. However, by the time the modern foreign fighters cycle off the battlefield, they have learned skills that far outweigh those of the original Jihadis. Their understanding and employment of urban tactics, weaponry and advanced technology make them far more lethal than their predecessors. Essentially, fighters of the Second Foreign Fighter Glut can accomplish as much or more per capita for AQ and affiliated groups than their first-generation predecessors.

Squelching Source Country Recruitment: The Tipping Point

The twenty-country data set from Parts I & II of this study[vi] provide a method by which economic, development, and governance factors can be used to analyze source country foreign fighter production rates[vii] providing insight to recruitment trends. This study built two models for analyzing source country recruitment. The first model attempted to replicate the findings of

Dr. Alan Krueger, author of *What Makes a Terrorist.* Krueger's model utilized measures of GDP per capita, literacy rates, infant mortality rates, civil liberties, political rights, and economic freedoms to evaluate the home countries of foreign nationals found in Iraq. Krueger found the three strongest associations were infant mortality, civil liberties, and political rights, all of which were strong negative associations.[viii] As infant mortality, civil liberties and political rights increase, foreign fighter rates tended to decrease. Using the same factors as Krueger, this study found similar results.[ix]

A combination of Krueger's groundwork and improved foreign fighter data allowed for the creation of a second model for analyzing a country's foreign fighter production rates. The second model began with a diverse set of economic, political, and developmental variables including GDP per capita, literacy rates, military expenditures as a percentage of GDP, Human Development Index scores (HDI), unemployment rates, corruption index, youth population under the age of 14, internet users, infant mortality rates, and levels of civil liberties and political rights. Using the source country foreign fighter production rates from the PJ Sage Foreign Fighter Database, this model found an increase in HDI, unemployment rates, and youth population correlated with increased foreign fighter production rates. Again, a decrease in political rights correlated with higher foreign fighter production. In conclusion, a lack of political rights, few employment opportunities, and plenty of time for radicalization make the militant youth with no meaningful use of his time ripe for recruitment.

The results of this model may not be so counterintuitive when put in the cultural context of foreign fighter recruits in source countries. A young, MENA male completes school provided in part by the government and in part by his local community religious center. The educated recruit is not in a particularly desperate position (higher HDI), but cannot find gainful employment locally (high unemployment) nor campaign for greater economic and social access (lower political rights). Surrounded by other underemployed recruits (high youth population) and former foreign fighters, the recruit sees jihad as not just a potential option but also his only purpose.

The above models are only the beginning of the analysis that needs to be done to understand what produces foreign fighters from source countries. Nevertheless, the two analyzed models illustrate several factors that must be mitigated in disrupting source country recruitment patterns.

First, vast pools of unemployed MENA youth with little to do will be a problem if not given legitimate opportunities. The positive relationship between unemployment rates and foreign fighter production mirrors the Sinjar record entries for 'previous occupation.' Sixty-six of 133 Sinjar respondents stated they were a student before coming to Iraq and seventeen of the respondents said they were unemployed or free-lance workers. Combined, the unemployed and students accounted for roughly 60% of Sinjar respondents to 'previous occupation'.[x] As seen by the insignificance of GDP per capita, high unemployment rate and high youth population likely represent the absence of opportunity rather than wealth for MENA recruits.

Second, decreased political rights remained significant in both models. Current Western policies are supportive of political rights but have not significantly changed the internal political landscape of source countries. Third, the significance of higher levels of HDI suggests that

potential recruits have time for jihad because they have sufficient wealth, education, and health. Essentially, potential recruits are not occupied with much of anything and generally lack a sense of purpose or an avenue to achieve any particular goal. Those youth simply trying to survive may not be as susceptible to recruitment as previously thought since they are far too busy achieving basic human needs to pursue ideological Jihadi endeavors.

Policy Implications: Achieving the tipping point in Flashpoint Cities-Source Countries

1) Fight the demand for violent jihad by engaging local social-family-religious networks. Reducing foreign fighter recruits' demand for jihad in source countries will result in greater long-run success against AQ than simply destroying the supply of committed foreign fighters in safe havens and target locations. The demand for jihad locally is fueled by local social-family-religious networks and catalyzed by former foreign fighters.[xi] Cracking the local base of support for jihad necessitates innovative grass roots communication strategies delivered in low-tech delivery methods. When it comes to dissuading foreign fighter recruitment, local communication is strategic communication.

For example, Muslim-on-Muslim violence consistently ranks as a top divisive issue between AQ and their base of popular support.[xii] Would local Muslims in flashpoint cities approve of Muslim-on-Muslim violence perpetrated by foreign fighters from their town? Many would not approve of this behavior but are unaware of its occurrence. An effective communication technique might be the following:

Objective: Reduce the stature of former foreign fighters in flashpoint cities-source countries in order to disrupt their ability to recruit future foreign fighters in local networks.

Concept: Bring information of local foreign fighter violence against Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan to flashpoint city audiences.

Method: One, trace the martyrdom operation of a foreign fighter in Iraq back to his hometown of origin. Two, create a journalist exchange program with foreign fighter source countries that enables local journalists from flashpoint cities to travel to Iraq and Afghanistan. Three, take local journalists to locations where their local foreign fighters have conducted suicide attacks and killed innocent Muslims. Four, return the journalists to their flashpoint city and allow them to write whatever they like. Five, assess the impact of the reporting of local foreign fighter atrocities. If the reporters write of the atrocities and it erodes local support for jihad, repeat the process. If the reporters ignore what they saw and stick to mainstream Jihadi themes, discontinue the program.

Cost: A few plane tickets, a little planning and some coordination.

Caveats: The U.S. might support such a program through funding but allow surrogates to conduct it in order to avoid the appearance of generating propaganda.

Goal: Have local voices provide their own counter-narrative to the glorified image of local foreign fighters rather than force a culturally inappropriate, Western message on an unreceptive population.

I pose this as only a way to think about breaking local messaging in high recruitment areas and of course realize there are problems with doing this. But resources are tight, options are limited, and innovative techniques are likely the only way we will be able to disrupt the recruitment cycle in source countries.

2) Pursue a diverse set of CT strategies focused on flashpoint cities. CT aid to source countries should use a combination of programs that equally support source country counterterrorism and local socioeconomic development. Every CT training and equipment program the West conducts should be complemented with a targeted development effort in flashpoint cities. The first program I might fund is financial support for MENA males seeking marriage. Financial and subsequent cultural barriers to marriage frustrate potential MENA recruits. While there are married foreign fighter anomalies, the vast majority of recruits are unmarried. In most societies, married males have children, seek employment, spend less time with other unmarried male youths, and are far more likely to pursue peaceful, legitimate alternatives to violent jihad.

3) Look inward for solutions to curb youth recruitment. Many scholars have gone to great lengths to elucidate the ideological differences between AQ and the West. Despite these differences, potential AQ recruits and Western boys are enticed to join in conflict in strikingly similar ways. The West should examine how they recruit youth into the military. Those conditions which make U.S. military recruitment challenging should be examined and replicated in flashpoint cities.[xiii] Why is it easy for the U.S. military to recruit in Texas and difficult in Vermont?[xiv] (see "State Military Recruitment Rates" at www.nationalpriorities.org for more details.) Young military-age recruits enlist when parental support, nationalism, and unemployment are high while opportunities remain low. Foreign fighter recruits respond to similar forces. Western marketing should be applied to flashpoint cities to erode parental and ideological support for jihad, increase the prestige of legitimate opportunities, and separate former foreign fighters from their family and friends. Essentially, the goal should be to create the culturally appropriate, MENA equivalent of Northeastern U.S. military recruitment conditions in foreign fighter source countries.

Perpetual Networks and Everlasting Safe Havens

Between source countries and terrorist targets lie entrenched networks and safe havens that provide training, guidance and finance to foreign fighter recruits. Whether in Syria, Pakistan, the Horn of Africa, or the Western Sahara, safe havens have and will continue to support terrorists and complicate Western CT efforts. Recent Western gains in Syria have slowed foreign fighter flow in Iraq only to see the flow increase into Pakistan where Western efforts to dominate a 30-year safe haven are unlikely to ever fully eliminate AQ's original operational base. Excessive focus on eliminating terrorist safe havens and supporting networks may be less productive in the long run as these networks are: 1) a symptom of demand for jihad rather than supply; 2) highly regenerative and unlikely to go away permanently; and 3) more expensive and less productive to

deter overtime. Recent history suggests it may be better to own networks supporting terrorists than to destroy them.

The Sinjar records provide excellent insight into the smuggling networks and safe havens facilitating foreign fighter flow into Iraq.[xv] The Syrian smuggling network resembles the confluence of three elements: 1) Iraqi refugees supporting insurgency in their homeland; 2) foreign fighters pushing new recruits into the martyrdom pipeline; and 3) opportunistic, Syrian smugglers. Analysis of the coordinators and people whom foreign fighters met in Syria shows that the network into Sinjar was and likely remains relatively concentrated. Each source country's recruits tended to utilize one coordinator more than the others. Saudis preferred Abu Abdallah, while Libyans utilized Abu Omar (a Libyan) and Bashar. The records also demonstrate how a host country facilitator and a source country facilitator can synchronize fighter flow into Syria, creating a "pitch and catch" integration system.[xvi]

Analyzing the money data from the Sinjar records illustrates how smuggling networks are an economic problem, not a terrorism problem. [xvii] A crude assessment of the Syrian human smuggling network suggests that it is a profitable industry.[xviii] Assuming that the 39 Syrian contacts cited in the Sinjar records (this is probably high since many are likely duplicates or not equal members of the network) received an equal cut from the fighters in Syria (an amount which is likely low due to non-reports), each Syrian contact would get more than $3,000 throughout the year.

However, contacts in Syria appear to focus on roughly ten central individuals. Assuming these ten took an equal cut from the fighters, each major Syrian contact potentially received more than $10,000 from those that reported contributions. Considering the GDP per capita of Syria is less than $5,000, the $3,000 and $10,000 estimates are between half and two times what the average Syrian might expect to earn in a year.[xix] Additionally, the Sinjar recruits do not represent the entire take for a smuggler in a given year of moving foreign fighters or other contraband. While the above calculation is limited, the result suggests that Syrian smuggling networks are not likely to go away despite efforts to thwart them. The profit gained by smuggling the high demand foreign fighter commodity, or any commodity for that matter, will always attract new smugglers into the marketplace as long as foreign fighter recruits' demand for jihad remains high.[xx] (See endnote for comparison to countering drug and human smuggling networks in the U.S.)

While the West might be able to counter smuggling networks temporarily, the high demand for foreign fighters and the foreign fighters' high demand for martyrdom mean that new smuggling networks will constantly replace those that are shutdown. Strategies focused on eliminating smuggling networks may be ill advised for several other reasons as well. First, eliminating smuggling networks will be extremely resource intensive and require massive interagency and international cooperation. Second, if Western elements already monitor the network, eliminating it will only blind them to foreign fighter flow. This will result in intelligence assets constantly working to identify and penetrate emerging smuggling networks.[xxi] Third, destroying the foreign fighter network might force committed Jihadis along other routes toward Western targets and Western allies in the MENA. Once the foreign fighter has committed to martyrdom and foreign travel to attack the West, it is too late. If the radicalized foreign fighter is committed to the point

of leaving his home country, he will find a target and network to support it, either in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere.[xxii]

Policy Implication: Long-Run vs. Short-Run- Better to own networks than destroy them.

Destroying smuggling networks in the short-run has short-run benefits and is needed at times. But, new smuggling networks are likely to emerge and replace those that are destroyed. Instead, CT efforts could own networks and use them to control and reduce the supply of foreign fighters (Own-and-Exploit) or use them to reduce the demand for jihad in source countries and flashpoint cities (Own-and-Taint). Owning networks will also be beneficial in the long run as the same networks that support foreign fighter flow often support other nefarious activities that can be penetrated through successful monitoring.

> *a) Own-and-Exploit:* This strategy focuses on the fighter in the network and not the network itself. If there is clarity on the foreign fighter flow through a smuggling network, then Western efforts could monitor foreign fighters to a place and time of their choosing where they can use military and law enforcement assets to eliminate them from the foreign fighter pool. This process will likely generate better intelligence about the sources of foreign fighters, allowing further refinement of counter radicalization strategies in flashpoint cities.

> *b) Own-and-Taint:* A second advantage to network ownership is the ability to influence its quality. Diminishing the reception of new recruits may be one of the best methods for reducing the demand for jihad in source countries. By 2006, foreign fighter recruits were crossing the Iraqi border to find no mission waiting for them. They were also given suicide operations designed to settle local Iraqi disputes rather than achieve AQ's global agenda.[xxiii] The disappointment found by these new foreign fighter recruits was communicated back to flashpoint cities, which likely hurt recruitment.

Reducing the demand for jihad can also occur as recruits migrate through the network. The best example in the Sinjar records comes from the contact in Syria known as 'Loua'aie'. While only mentioned eight times as a contact in Syria, Loua'aie appears less an ideological terrorist and more a pragmatic smuggler. Recruits describe him as "weak," "not good," and say he "took all the money and we are not happy".[xxiv] Recruits that encountered 'Loua'aie' "found difficulties" and likely relayed negative feelings back to their recruiting grounds. When Western CT efforts own networks, they can flood them with 'Loua'aie'(s) that undermine AQ ideology and sour otherwise fertile recruiting grounds.

Both of these strategies are more challenging to implement than destroying the network, but they focus on the main effort for future CT strategies: curbing recruitment in source countries.

The Next Generation of Targets

The negative externality of military success in Iraq and eventually Afghanistan is increased former foreign fighter targeting of Westerners in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, followed by Europe and North America. Recent attacks on the U.S. Embassy in Yemen

demonstrate the effects of the Second Foreign Fighter Glut. Foreign fighter veterans from Sanaa, Yemen, one of the flashpoint cities identified in Part I of this study[xxv], executed the attack using techniques learned in Iraq. As Nabil al-Sofee, a former spokesman for a Yemeni Islamist political party, stated, "the quieter it is in Iraq, the more inflamed it is here." [xxvi]

Foreign fighter work descriptions from the Sinjar records provide another data point for predicting where the next attack may emerge. While many foreign fighters did not declare their desired role upon arrival in Iraq, those who did suggest a future propensity to conduct attacks outside of Iraq.

Figure 3 provides a breakdown of those foreign fighters by source country declaring their desired work as either 'fighter' or 'martyr.' 'Fighters' are likely less motivated to die than 'Martyrs' (a.k.a. suicide bombers). While we don't know the fate of each individual, 'Fighters' presumably migrate back to their source country at higher rates than 'Martyrs.' Algerian, Yemeni and Tunisian recruits preferred fighting to martyrdom. Therefore, these countries are likely to have a larger pool of former foreign fighters now planning terrorist attacks in and around source countries. This may already be coming to fruition. Analysis of 54 AQ-related attacks conducted outside of Iraq and Afghanistan since January 2008 shows that 64% occurred in Algeria and 16% occurred in Yemen.[xxvii] Thus, the capacity for regional and local attacks in these countries may be more significant than other source countries.

Figure 3: Breakdown of Martyrs & Fighters

Country	% Martyrs	% Fighters	Rank
Algeria	16	81	1
Libya	85	15	6
Morocco	91	9	7
Saudi Arabia	53	46	4
Syria	61	39	5
Tunisia	43	57	3
Yemen	39	61	2

Policy Implication: Fight the next terrorist threat, not the last one.

Western CT efforts should avoid the tendency to protect against the last terrorist attack rather than preventing the next one. While protecting mass transit systems and thwarting WMD proliferation remains important, the more probable next generation of attacks will be against Westerners in MENA and South Asia. Former foreign fighters from the Second Foreign Fighter Glut will lead future attacks, and they may maintain only minimal connections to core AQ. As targets and access diminish in Iraq and Afghanistan, former foreign fighters will continue to recruit locally in flashpoint cities and then create their own safe havens regionally. The end result will be upstart regional groups that share some of AQ's ideology, try to pull from larger AQ resources, and then use former foreign fighter knowledge to spearhead attacks closer to home. With limited operational space, resources and size, the scope of terrorist operations will temporarily decrease. Instead of massive, high tech, large-scale 9/11 operations, one may expect smaller scale, conventional attacks perpetrated by smaller Jihadi groups. These smaller Jihadi elements will begin with attacks on local Western targets and MENA governments in an attempt to build their popular support, gain resources and grow their capacity to execute more spectacular attacks in Europe and the United States.

Analysts might consider altering their focus to concentrate on regional nodes rather than working to link all actions back to core AQ. The North African node may be led by former foreign fighters from Algeria, recruiting from North African flashpoint cities in Tunisia and new militant enclaves in Mauritania, seeking safe haven in the trans-Sahara (Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Algeria, Libya) and conducting attacks on Westerners in Tunis, Casablanca or Niamey. The Middle Eastern node might consist of new cells led by Yemeni and Saudi former foreign fighters finding operational space in Yemen and Palestinian camps in Lebanon and attacking Western and Israeli economic and diplomatic targets. South Asia (not supported by data in this study but extremely significant) would likely see a host of Pakistani and Central Asian militant groups, holed up in tribal areas and Central Asian safe havens and conducting attacks throughout Asia.

Countering Terrorism Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan

Recent CT strategy has been enmeshed in counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, AQ currently maintains a minute presence in these countries. Today's AQ threat lies in Pakistan, Yemen, Lebanon and the trans-Sahara; all places with little to no Western military presence. Future CT strategy must be clearly separated from counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Future strategy must still address all three phases of Global Foreign Fighter Flow, but the main effort moving forward should be dismantling the terrorist recruitment mechanisms of flashpoint cities in source countries throughout MENA. Essentially, future CT strategy must do *'what needs to be done'* rather than *'what can be done.'* It must focus on disrupting terrorist recruitment using appropriate 'smart power' techniques in key locations in MENA. These techniques require that underutilized assets outside of the military and intelligence community take the lead in CT. It also requires a redistribution of CT resources focused not on counterinsurgency but on counterterrorism.[xxviii]

Clint Watts is a former US Army Infantry Officer, former FBI Special Agent and former Executive Officer of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point.

ⁱ Part I of this study entitled *Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan: What Foreign Fighter Data Reveals About the Future of Terrorism* provides a more in depth discussion of flashpoint cities and source countries.
See http://smallwarsjournal.com/mag/2008/04/beyond-iraq-and-afghanistan.php.

ⁱⁱAlan Krueger. *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism.* (Princeton University, 2007).

ⁱⁱⁱ Thank you to Alexandre Dafoe De Aguiar of Lincoln Group, LLC for converting my graphic depiction of Global Foreign Fighter Flow in Figure 1 into something presentable.

^{iv} The numbers of foreign fighters estimated in Figure 2 are not based on any specific data. They are essentially hypothesis numbers used to demonstrate the effects of production and consumption of foreign fighters over time.

^v This is the third of a three-part discussion on AQ foreign fighters published via Small Wars Journal. This final installment builds on the discussion from Part I, *Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan*, 17 April 2008 [http://smallwarsjournal.com/mag/2008/04/beyond-iraq-and-afghanistan.php] and Part II, *Foreign Fighters: How Are They Being Recruited?*, 22 June 2008 [http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/06/foreign-fighters-how-are-they/])

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} See Appendix D, Regression and Part II Analyses at http://www.pjsage.com/products.htm for more detailed statistical explanation and further information on data utilized for this project. Three production rates were utilized for modeling. The first was the Sinjar, Gitmo, and 9/11 production rate from Part One of this study. The second was the addition of Camp Bucca detention data to the Combined Foreign Fighter Production rate from Part I of this study resulting in a total of 1119 foreign fighters. See the PJ Sage Foreign Fighter Database for this data at http://www.pjsage.com/products.htm. The third looked at only those from Iraq utilizing the Sinjar and Camp Bucca data only. The Sinjar and Camp Bucca data are at risk for double counting. Please see Appendix D for a more robust discussion of the weaknesses of foreign fighter data and their subsequent production rates.

^{viii} Krueger, p. 83-104.

^{ix} See Appendix D for the regression output. While the relationship is slightly more complicated in this study's results, the conclusion is the same; increased infant mortality rates and an increase in political rights correlates with lower foreign fighter production rates.

^x See PJ Sage Foreign Fighter Database at http://www.pjsage.com/products.htm.

^{xi} Recent pronouncements by Muslim leaders against al-Qa'ida will begin eroding local ideological support for jihad but are only the beginning of what needs to be done. See the discussion of Sayyid Imam's "Denudation of the Exoneration" at www.jihadica.com.

^{xii} Dr. Will McCants work on the *Militant Ideology Atlas* provides a concise summary of the most divisive issues that erode Jihadi popular support.

^{xiii} Ann Scott Tyson, "Youths in Rural U.S. Are Drawn to Military," Washington Post, November 4, 2005, A01, [accessed on November 21, 2008].

^{xiv} See "State Military Recruitment Rates", from the National Priorities Project at http://www.nationalpriorities.org/State+Military+Recruitment+Rates. This provides a study of 2004 military recruitment trends in the U.S.

^{xv} Direct Syrian government support of these smuggling networks remains a topic of intense debate. The Sinjar records only provide one demonstrated case of Syrian support: Muhammad Shariff (page 263, case 309 from the PJ Sage Foreign Fighter Database) from Algeria clearly received assistance from Syrian intelligence by "storing his valuables" in their office.

^{xvi} Sixty-seven times recruits reported meeting Abu Omar, Abu Omar al Tunisi, Abu Omar al Iraqi or Abu Omar al Ansari. Abu Uthman also appears to be a central figure in Syria for the infiltration of foreign fighters. The Omar contacts in Syria probably consist of two or three Omar's with at least one being an Iraqi and one being a Tunisian. The high instance of contact with Abu Omar al Tunisi may explain why there were large numbers of North Africans on the Sinjar route. Abu Omar al Tunisi likely possessed local contacts in Tunisia and could more rapidly in-process fighters from his home country and region. Although we do not know the nationality of Abu Uthman, the "Abu Omars" demonstrate how a host country facilitator and a source country facilitator can synchronize and accelerate fighter flow in Syria.

^{xvii} A quick disclaimer: Sinjar financial data is fraught with danger. The three monetary categories (money contributed, money on hand, and money taken in Syria) overlap since different foreign fighters and their administrators each interpreted the question differently. Some answered numerically, while others answered in narrative. Some responded with the same figures for contributions and money on hand. Others did not report at all.

There is likely considerable error in this data but it is the best available financial data on foreign fighters to date. In my coding, each of the three money categories were analyzed independently and not combined in an attempt to minimize reporting error between the categories. However, this likely does not eliminate data overlap completely.

[xviii] Those foreign fighters who reported contributions gave roughly $225,000 through the course of a year. Saudis gave vastly more than others, donating more than $1000 per contributing fighter. Libyans, Tunisians, and Kuwaitis also gave significantly more than other countries. Saudis also surrendered the most cash to Syrian middlemen, accounting for more than 92% of the reported Syrian smuggler take. See Appendix D for analysis.

[xix] See Appendix A, http://www.pjsage.com/products.htm, for a discussion of data categories and sources. One GDP per capita metric came from the United Nations Human Development Program and the other GDP (PPP) from CIA World Factbook.

[xx] The U.S. experience with drug and human smuggling networks should serve as a reminder to those wanting to counter similar networks in the Middle East. During the 1980's, the U.S. fought a resource intensive campaign against drug smuggling networks. While these battles often eliminated certain smuggling networks and disrupted the drug supply in the short run, the campaign made little difference in diminishing long run drug supply for several reasons. First, the elimination of smuggling networks reduced the supply of drugs but did not reduce the demand for drugs (or the production). This caused prices for drugs inside the U.S. to rise as a result of a supply shortage. Seeing an opportunity for a high payout, new smuggling networks quickly sprouted to replace the gap created by counter narcotic successes. The same phenomenon occurs today with human smuggling networks along the U.S.-Mexican border where demand for higher wage jobs creates a nearly endless supply of immigrant laborers seeking entry into the country.

[xxi] It's many times easier to keep tabs on the network you know than it is to discover the network you are not aware of.

[xxii] See www.jihadica.com post entitled, "Walking the Talk, Forum Members Travel to Afghanistan and Iraq" for a detailed description of the travels and tribulations of some Kuwaiti foreign fighters.

[xxiii] See Amit Paley, "Shift in Tactics Aims to Revive Struggling Insurgency", Washington Post, February 8, 2008, A13. The last section on "Disheartened Foreign Fighters" provides an excellent overview of the effects when AQ fails to integrate new recruits.

[xxiv] See cases 11, 306, 317, 352, 569, 602, 622, 645 of the PJ Sage Foreign Fighter Database for mentions of "loua'aie". Not all are negative, but cases, 317, 352, and 602 provide detail on his actions in the smuggling network.

[xxv] See Part I of this study entitled *Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan: What Foreign Fighter Data Reveals about the Future of Terrorism"* at
http://smallwarsjournal.com/mag/2008/04/beyond-iraq-and-afghanistan.php

[xxvi] Ellen Knickmeyer, "Attack Against U.S. Embassy in Yemen Blamed on Al-Qaeda," Washington Post, September 18, 2008, A01.

[xxvii] Data for this calculation was taken from the NCTC Worldwide Incidents tracking system. It analyzed AQ affiliated attacks outside of Iraq and Afghanistan occurring in 2008.

[xxviii] I'd like to thank Dr. Will McCants, Dr. Amy H. Erickson, Dr. Jacob Schapiro and Usha Sutliff for their critiques and improvement of my arguments and prose. They all suffered from my writing hobby over the past two years and helped me focus my research and reach a finish line.