

“Interrogation Strategies for an Unconventional Extremist Enemy”;

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# Interrogation Strategies for an Unconventional Extremist Enemy

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Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's comments on Tuesday, 14 June 2005, cut to the chase in the realm of interrogation strategies for the terrorists encountered in Iraq and Afghanistan. "The problem is that, to a large extent, we are in unexplored territory with this unconventional and complex struggle against extremism. Traditional doctrines covering criminals and military prisoners do not apply well enough." (Secretary of Defense, 2005).

While prompted in defense of the usefulness of Guantanamo's "Camp X-Ray," Secretary Rumsfeld's words spoke volumes about the need to broaden our approach to the interrogation of terrorist suspects, particularly Islamic Fundamentalists. At the same time, fallout from alleged interrogation abuses requires tact in the selection and application of aggressive techniques which push, but do not rupture, the envelope of our nation's inherent respect for due process and the rights of the accused. What follows, then, is an overview of strategies for the interrogation of extremist terrorist suspects.

## I. Assessment of the Subject

Oversimplification of any topic is risky. But a framework built upon a basic foundation is appropriate. Interrogations begin with an assessment of the person being questioned, commonly called "sizing up the subject." (Inbau & Reid, 1953).

There are three principal groupings of subjects for purposes of this discussion, on selection and application of strategies for the interrogation of extremist terrorist suspects: a) Common Criminals; b) Nationalists; and c) Islamic Fundamentalists.

Today in Iraq and Afghanistan, whether wittingly or unwittingly, the "Common Criminals" and the "Nationalists" serve at the

pleasure of the "Islamic Fundamentalists." This is true for the most capitalist of reasons: the Fundamentalists have, and control, the money which attracts all other disaffected groups in the name of "Allah." This fact is relevant to the selection of interrogation strategy for each category of offender.

"Common Criminals" aspire to the "terrorist" label for the very same reasons that domestic offenders join street gangs, steal, or commit murder on the streets of any city in the world. To the criminal mind, greed, revenge, empowerment, or the simple desire to belong to a group is just as powerful of a motivation, whether in the name of jihad, drug cartels, or organized crime at any level. (United States Department of Justice, 1994). Unquestionably then, among the "terrorist" population is the Common Criminal element.

But the terrorist encountered in Iraq and Afghanistan (and correspondingly, the terrorist most likely to wind up in Camp X-Ray or at field prisons such as Abu Ghraib) may also be motivated by overwhelming hatred of Westerners for two distinctly different reasons; Nationalism and/or Islam.

Nationalists resent the presence of Western military forces in Muslim countries. They are usually young, educated, inexperienced at violence, and often times manipulated into roles as suicide bombers. (Pape, 2005). They resort to any means, including murder and suicide, out of misdirected political consciousness and nationalistic verve.

Islamic Fundamentalists have as their goal the establishment of Islam worldwide. (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001). From the Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, we see that each of these extremists **"has to be willing to do the work and undergo martyrdom for the purpose of achieving**

<sup>1</sup>Notwithstanding the citations to authority, the information and opinions contained herein are based upon the author's independent research and personal interrogation experiences. Philip A. Mullenix is a Chicago attorney and licensed polygraph examiner who has provided interrogation services and instruction since 1978.

**the goal and establishing the religion of majestic Allah on earth.”** (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001). Commitment to the goal is ultimate and undeterred by any fear of death, discovery, or detention. Martyrdom brings the greatest rewards. Tactically, they realize that a world-wide Islamic government would never be established except through violence, and they are taught that inflicting torture, death, and destruction upon anyone standing in their way is morally justified. (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001).

There are two subsets to consider for interrogation purposes:

1. Fundamentalist Zealot

The zealots do not waver; they follow the Al Qaeda tenets to the end and lead others to strict adherence.

2. Religious Idealist

These individuals derive their strength from following the fundamentalist zealots. They believe in the destructive interpretation of Islam taught by the zealots as moral and social ideology. Some will later deviate from strict obedience and will be coerced by their handlers, upon threat of torture or death to family members, to carry out terrorist acts.

Conventional methods of criminal interrogation delineate subjects into “emotional” and “non-emotional” offenders. (Inbau, Reid & Buckley, 1986). Emotional offenders generally perform their crimes in response to uncontrolled but basic human drives, feel some degree of remorse, seek understanding (if not outright approval) of their criminal conduct, and are vulnerable during interrogations to themes such as minimization of the consequences of their behavior or the laying of blame for the criminal conduct upon others, including the victim. Non-emotional offenders, on the other hand, are generally calculating in their conduct, feel little or no remorse, are ambivalent about empathy from others, and are likely to confess only if they believe the act of confessing can be parlayed into a direct benefit to them. These delineations have application to foreign terrorist suspects, as well.

The process of “sizing up the subject” involves multiple and complex considerations.

Verbal, non-verbal, and vocal behavior symptoms may provide reliable indications of truth or deception from the interrogation subject. The cultural or economic background of each suspect provides insight into the interpretation of their behavioral responses as well as the categorization among the three principal groupings and two subsets discussed above. Each presents its own challenge.

Before beginning an interrogation, as circumstances permit, study the background of the person to be interrogated. Take time to assimilate all known details and compare them to the pool of other subjects for similarities and dissimilarities, distinguishing leaders from followers. Draw inferences about the person to be interrogated, based upon past experience and profiles to which the interrogator has been exposed. Assess the subject's level of confidence, intelligence, education, experience, maturity, and **knowledge of countermeasures** against interrogational techniques. (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001).

## II. Interrogator's Conduct

The interrogator should prepare intellectually for various degrees of initial resistance and the frustration or anger which subjects often attempt to ignite in their interrogator. Patience and a resolve never to underestimate the subject are crucial to maintaining poise and control in the interrogation room. Subjects revel in testing an interrogator's limits. They will read the behavior of an interrogator for fear, uncertainty, and loss of self confidence as assiduously as interrogators attempt to read theirs for truth and deception.

Establish rapport with the subject: gain the subject's respect. This does not mean trying to persuade the subject to like you, trust you, or become your friend. Such a move will be viewed cynically by the subject and be immediately exposed as shallow. It does not mean being overly polite. Perceived weakness invites attack and encourages a subject to attempt to assume control over the interrogation process.

Instead, by all manner of personal appearance, demeanor, and communication,

the interrogator should convey self assurance, self respect, and respect for the subject. Above all, the interrogator should avoid any tactic which demeans the interrogator's own self respect. Subjects instinctively perceive that if an interrogator cannot respect himself, then why should the interrogator be worthy of the subject's respect, rapport, and, ultimately, an admission against the subject's interests. Maintain high standards and self discipline in the interrogation room; and be non-judgmental of the subject's misconduct. Over time, that respect will likely be reciprocated, and the rapport born of mutual respect becomes a welcomed lubricant in the squeeze for valuable information.

Fatigue over the course of a long interrogation, as well as personal animosity that the interrogator might develop internally toward the subject, may erode an interrogator's will to maintain self discipline and to continue to show respect toward the subject. While understandable, that visceral reaction may delay or forever destroy any chance of obtaining useful information. At the very least, an interrogator's display of disrespect toward a subject or his cultural beliefs will be viewed by the subject as a personal victory and a validation of his will to resist.

Anticipate a lengthy interrogation. In the field, the opportunities to question a subject may be brief, so the interrogator adapts. But in a controlled environment, time presents an advantage to the interrogator. Late-night and pre-dawn sessions are effective, because the subject's cognitive ability to resist may be compromised. Accept the fact that interrogations may take days, weeks, or even months to complete. Patience and self control will be rewarded.

### **III. Preliminary Interview**

The preliminary interview presents an opportunity (if the subject is willing to talk) to elicit in a non-accusatory fashion information either about the subject, personally, or about the substantive issues under investigation.

The preliminary interview is not the time to attempt persuasive argument. Instead, it is a time to assess the subject's strengths, vulnerabilities, communication patterns, attitudes, and truthfulness. It is

also the time to elicit whatever personal background information the subject is willing to offer, including lifestyle, education, employment, travel patterns, residency, theology, military experience, ideological commitment, and rank among those of similar ideology. Finally, it is the phase of the interrogation during which the subject is asked to provide substantive information at the most benign level of direct questioning. It should not be expected that a suspect will readily "spill his guts." But the opportunity needs to be given. At the very least, a subject's behavioral responses may belie the verbal answers and thereby provide clues to the most fertile areas for intensive questioning later.

Keep questions short and to the point. Generally, avoid questions which seek "yes" or "no" answers. Instead, ask open ended questions which require the subject to provide a narrative. If distortions, omissions, contradictions, or discrepancies occur, point them out and seek explanations. If the subject weakens, push the subject for an admission to the distortion, omission, contradiction, or discrepancy.

Avoid compound questions, i.e., those which contain more than one inquiry in the same sentence. They provide the subject with a way of avoiding hard questions, and the interrogator may never receive an adequate answer to either component of a compound question. At this stage, avoid leading questions, i.e., questions which suggest the answer. They limit feedback which should be actively sought during the preliminary interview.

Behavior assessment of the subject's communication patterns is a significant element of the preliminary interview. Truth and deception can be accurately assessed through the three principal modes of communication: verbal, vocal, and nonverbal. (United States Army Interrogation Training Manual, 1996). Observe the subject, don't just look. Listen to the subject, don't just hear. Study detail, and draw inferences.

"Verbal" communication is defined by the words we choose and represents an estimated 7% of communication. (United States Army Interrogation Training Manual,

1996). "Vocal" communication is defined by how we say the words we choose, and represents an estimated 38% of communication processes. (United States Army Interrogation Training Manual, 1996). "Non-verbal" communication is defined by posture, gesture, and involuntary physical movements, and represents an estimated 55% of communication processes. (United States Army Interrogation Training Manual, 1996).

The underlying premise is that people under stress show it. Verbal, vocal, and non-verbal behavior symptoms are outward manifestations of anxiety, and they occur involuntarily as the body's defense mechanism to reduce internal anxiety. Symptoms of stress can be accurately read provided they are viewed for timing (i.e., in response to specific inquiries or stimulus during the interrogation), clusters (i.e., no single isolated behavior symptom can be deemed significant), and changes from the subject's personal or cultural norm. Within the context of interrogation, the subject who manifests well-timed clusters of behavior symptoms which are atypical for the subject and his culture is likely deceptive. (United States Army Interrogation Training Manual, 1996).

Which verbal, vocal, and non-verbal behavior symptoms are reliable criteria of deception? Most are involuntarily triggered by the rush of adrenaline through the body in response to threatening stimulus. (Reid & Inbau, 1977). Adrenaline affects the sensory and motor areas of the brain, including vision, perspiration, muscular contractions, respiration, pulse, blood pressure, skin pallor, saliva production, and eye movements. Some symptoms are obvious; some are subtle.

Non-verbal behavior symptoms are most strikingly affected by the onslaught of adrenaline in response to a threatening interview or interrogation tactic. Signs of deception include sweating; dry mouth; hand tremors; involuntary muscular activity (e.g., leg bouncing, arching and swinging of feet, hand wringing); altered physical appearance (e.g., pale skin, thinning lips, rapid and shallow breathing); aversion of eye contact; displacement behavior (e.g., grooming gestures, dusting or pulling lint from clothes, tapping, pacing, rearranging of jewelry or clothing, or manipulation of small objects);

inattentive posture (e.g., crossing/uncrossing arms, leaning away or at an angle rather than frontal alignment, rapid and unnatural posture changes, shifting of position & body movements) and supportive gestures (e.g., placing a hand over the mouth or eyes when speaking, hiding the hands or feet, holding the forehead with hand, or placing hands under or between legs). (Inbau, Reid, Buckley & Jayne, 2001).

Vocal symptoms of deception may include delayed answers, stalling, repeating of questions, answering too quickly as if rehearsed, interrupting a question before it is completed, rephrasing a question, clearing the throat, sniffs, sighs, coughs or yawns, stuttering, nervous laughter, exaggerated facial expressions, mumbling, fragmented or incomplete sentences, and a voice which trails off in volume. (Inbau, Reid, Buckley & Jayne, 2001).

Verbal symptoms of deception are sometimes deliberately induced by a subject and may include qualifiers (e.g., "not that I recall", "at this point in time", "as far as I know", "if I recall correctly", "not really"); selective memory (i.e., uncharacteristic memory gaps at critical times during descriptive narratives); unresponsive answers (i.e., failing to answer a question, changing the subject, answering a question with a question, long winded answers which talk around the point of inquiry); and "explanations of innocence" when an emphatic denial is more appropriate (e.g., "I've never studied chemistry at school, so how would I have learned to handle explosives?" when an emphatic denial of car bombing would be more appropriate to an interrogator's direct accusation; or "I don't even own a gun" when a denial would be more appropriate to an interrogator's direct question whether the suspect fired upon a passing military convoy). (Inbau, Reid, Buckley & Jayne, 2001).

The preliminary interview is a prelude to an intensive interrogation. Inferences about the subject's reasons for associating with Al Qaeda are critical to choosing an interrogation approach compatible with the three principal groupings of suspects described in Part I. Clues to the subject's conduct as a common criminal, a nationalist, or a fundamentalist may well be developed

during the interview as might the subject's ideological standing as either a zealot or an idealist if his motives are Islamic radicalism.

Open ended questions to the subjects about their past, including education, residency, international travel, and political convictions, should probe the level of fundamentalist indoctrination, if any. Absent political consciousness or fervent Islamic beliefs, the suspect may be motivated more by greed, revenge, or simple criminal tendencies. The determination is critical to the choice among alternative interrogation approaches discussed below.

The interview also gives the interrogator a direct look into the window of the willing subject's mind. Probe for vulnerabilities, such as patterns of past failures, whether educational, professional, personal, or relationships. Terrorists are crucibles for psychological frailties which, once identified, are powerful catalysts to confessions.

It is useful, if not necessary, to identify during the interview to which Islamic faction the subject belongs. For example, Sunni and Shiite terrorists are anathema to one another. While they can be united against a common enemy, Western democracy, their hatred for one another is historically confirmed. That schism can be exploited within the interrogation room if the lines are delineated.

Adopt a discipline to aggressively listen and observe the subject during all phases of the interrogation. Aggressive listening includes sharpening recall, so that details of a suspect's statements can be retrieved from memory (the same day or days/weeks later) to contradict an alibi/explanation and thereby erode the subject's confidence in his ability to defeat the interrogator. Aggressively listen for details and nuances in the subject's statements to prompt follow-up questions which inevitably are far more productive than the best scripted questions. Repetition works against the liar, so do not hesitate to throw the same questions hours, days, or weeks after they had been first posed. Aggressively listen for, and point out, discrepancies. At the same time, observe the subject and every aspect of his demeanor for deception and weakness. Time is the interrogator's ally; use

it to identify and probe the subject's vulnerabilities.

If the interrogation is event-specific, allow the subject during the interview to establish a detailed time-line of his alibi before, during, and after the event. Encourage a narrative. Let the subject go until completed, and then utilize your sharpened recall. Ask follow-up questions. Mentally note the subject's selective memory, any time gaps at critical times, or the lack of uniformity of memory throughout the time lapse. Give the subject every opportunity to fill those gaps. If he fails to do so, the likelihood is deception. The subject's selective memory will then become a prime target during the ensuing accusatory interrogation.

#### **IV. The Accusatory Interrogation**

During the accusatory interrogation, the interrogator turns up the pressure on the subject to obtain a confession.

##### **A. Islamic Fundamentalists**

“Islamic Fundamentalists” present two unique challenges to the interrogator's strategy. First, they are schooled in countermeasures to defeat conventional interrogation procedures. (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001). Second, they are inculcated with moral justification for the murder, torture, and destruction which they inflict in pursuit of jihad; hence, they have no remorse for their conduct. (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001).

The Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual provides a deep insight into the mentality of the Islamic Fundamentalist who is fully committed to his cause. The Manual, which has been found in at least six countries, is a combination of political and religious indoctrination as well as a tactical manual on matters ranging from explosives, assassinations, chemical and biological weapons, and poisons. The Manual addresses the topic of interrogation as well.

##### **1. Countermeasures**

The Al Qaeda Training Manual (hereinafter cited within “quotation marks”) provides insight into the interrogation countermeasures likely to be encountered. (Al Qaeda

Jihad Training Manual, 2001). The Manual defines interrogation as “a psychological warfare and intellectual combat between the intelligence agent and the suspect through questions and answers related to one or more topics. The interrogator uses all kinds of physical and psychological techniques to break the will of the suspect and lead him to total collapse.” (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001).

The Manual further describes specific countermeasures for interrogation, including:

a) preparation of disinformation (e.g., “the brother should be careful not to give the enemy any vital information. He should agree with the command on the line of answers to be followed during the interrogation and should answer questions wisely. During the interrogation, say only the things that you agreed upon with your commander.”); (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001);

b) monitoring their own behavior symptoms during an interrogation (e.g., “In the first session, the brother would be studied through his statements and manner of dealing with the interrogator. Then a plan is devised for dealing with the brother. However, if they find that the brother is dodging them, they would resort to psychological torture techniques.”); (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001);

c) noncompliance (e.g., “the brother should disobey the interrogator's orders as much as he can by raising his voice and cursing the interrogator.”) (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001);

d) defiance (e.g., “In the beginning of the interrogation, the interrogator will come to you with fatherly advice, deceitful phrases, and 'crocodile tears' so you might confess and tell him everything. The brother should proudly take a firm and opposing position against the enemy and not obey the orders. The more firm and opposing the reaction, the more beneficial it is. These reactions will not lead to harsher treatment. Do not give the enemy an opportunity or an opening.”) (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001);

e) denial (e.g., “The brother should refuse to supply any information and deny his knowledge of the subject in question. The

brother should not disclose any information, no matter how insignificant he might think it is, in order not to open a door that cannot be closed until he incriminates himself or exposes his organization.”); (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001); and

f) silence (e.g., “Seek Allah's help in doing your affairs in secrecy. The hearts of freemen are the tombs of secrets, and Moslem's secrecy is faithfulness, and talking about it is faithlessness.”) (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001).

## **2. Moral Justification**

From the Al Qaeda manual, each of these individuals “has to be willing to do the work and undergo martyrdom for the purpose of achieving the goal and establishing the religion of majestic Allah on earth.” (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001). The commitment to the goal is unconditional and undeterred by any threat of discovery or detention. There is no fear of the consequence of being caught, instead, the greater fear is the fear of failure.

Acts which are deemed criminal to us are deemed moral by the Islamic fundamentalist terrorist. The goal of “establishing the religion of majestic Allah on earth is fueled by the belief “that governing the peoples' affairs is one of the greatest religious obligations. These young men realize that an Islamic government would never be established except by the bomb and rifle. Islam does not coincide or make a truce with unbelief, but rather confronts it.” (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001).

“The confrontations that Islam calls for with these godless and apostate regimes does not know Socratic debates, Platonic ideals nor Aristotelian diplomacy. But it knows the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing, and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and machine gun.” (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001).

## **3. Relevance of Traditional Interrogation Methods**

Most conventional interrogation methods rely upon sympathetic approaches, including development of themes designed to minimize the moral seriousness of a crime and to place blame for the crime upon

circumstances or persons other than the offender. (Inbau, Reid & Buckley, 1986). The interrogator allows the person being interrogated to save face by opening the door to either a moral justification for the criminal act or a social justification as a result of his own human frailty.

The Islamic fundamentalist, however, is immune to that line of thinking. His hard core attitude drives him not to want to minimize the seriousness of his conduct. (Trial transcript of Zaccarias Moussaoui, 2006). Instead, he thrives on the idea that the more devastating the violence upon the infidel the greater his reward in paradise. Hence, minimization of moral seriousness is the antithesis of his underlying motive, namely to kill or intimidate in the name of Allah. (Mullenix, 2005). To him, the greater morality is achieved through the havoc he wreaks; and for that, he makes no apology.

Similarly, the fundamentalist does not wish to have blame ascribed to anyone other than himself. Only through acceptance of the blame does he achieve his glory as an Islamic warrior fighting for the previously stated goal of “establishing the religion of majestic Allah on earth.” (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001).

The countermeasures noted above from the Al Qaeda manual make it even more difficult to employ sympathetic measures. They recognize that the professional interrogation is a psychological exercise. They know the interrogator will study their behavior symptoms; and they also know that except for denial and disinformation, silence is their mandate.

What strategy does the interrogator choose? First, not every terrorist who pronounces himself an Al Qaeda operative is willing to follow the manual and pay the ultimate price. He might be vulnerable to tactics such as minimization, placing blame upon others, or a sympathetic approach. (Senese, 2005). But if not, don't be surprised; and don't be surprised if you've thereby lost your edge with that suspect. If credibility is lost, either turn the interrogation over to a colleague or change the approach immediately. There are two recommended approaches.

a) Find an argument which appeals to the mentality and beliefs of the Islamic Fundamentalist.

Take his logic to the extreme: argue that to achieve the glory of martyrdom he must acknowledge responsibility for the act. It is the converse of minimization: maximization. (Mullenix, 2005). And instead of placing blame upon circumstances or upon others for inciting the offense, the offender is challenged by the interrogator to willingly accept blame in fulfillment of his highest goal. This theory coincides precisely with the admonition previously cited from the Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual that each of these individuals “has to be willing to do the work and undergo martyrdom for the purpose of achieving the goal and establishing the religion of majestic Allah on earth.” (Al Qaeda Jihad Training Manual, 2001).

The case of Zacarias Moussaoui is illustrative. (Trial transcript of Zaccarias Moussaoui, 2006). Moussaoui is the only U.S. defendant charged as a conspirator along with the September 11 hijackers. You may recall that at the outset of his trial, Moussaoui pronounced his allegiance to Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda's Islamic fundamentalist views. He dismissed his attorneys, entered a guilty plea to all charges, and challenged the United States Government to execute him in fulfillment of his highest sacrifice to Allah: martyrdom.

Moussaoui quickly sought to amend his plea after he discovered that he may not be escorted to paradise courtesy of the U.S. Government, but instead may be allowed merely to live the remainder of his life in solitary confinement in a maximum security federal prison. Nevertheless, before he understood the practical consequences of his guilty plea, Moussaoui was motivated to publicly maximize his role in the offense. In his mind, by willingly accepting blame, he was fulfilling his highest goal and paving his way to the glory of martyrdom in the name of Islam.

For the intelligence agent who has received traditional training in the art of interrogation, this mindset is unique and presents a dilemma in the approach to be taken. The interrogator's every instinct, training, and experience is to try to minimize

the offense, deflect blame, and rationalize the subject's behavior in order to obtain an admission. The anomaly is that the beliefs and emotions of fundamentalists such as Moussaoui reject that approach. Minimization is an impediment to a confession rather than a catalyst.

b) Factual analysis approach to the interrogation.

Concentrate not upon obtaining a comprehensive confession. Instead, aggressively yet methodically question the subject with the goal of developing facts, miniscule and seemingly innocuous standing alone but useful in the aggregate.

Repetition of the same questions on issues of fact, sequence, time line, people, relationships, places, and events will lead to mistakes in the liar. Emphasize inconsistencies developed during the preliminary interview by pointing them out, and commit the subject to specific answers. The objective is to obtain the initial admission or a change in an alibi, thereby leading to additional admissions, one point at a time.

“Baiting” is useful for this purpose. Once the subject is firmly committed (through repetitive questioning on the same topic) to a particular denial or alibi, the introduction of a singular piece of evidence which contradicts the subject can be devastating. Whether in a courtroom or an interrogation room, the effect is the same: the subject knows that his credibility has been destroyed. The interrogator's inference that more such evidence exists has proven in past cases to be key to the floodgates of information from embarrassed and flustered subjects.

As stated during the above discussion of the preliminary interview, the interrogator must be especially quick mentally to recall the subject's statements minutes, hours, or days earlier. The accusatory interrogation is the appropriate time to pointedly draw attention to the subject's use of qualifiers, contradictions, and prior inconsistent statements. Demonstrate that the deceptive subject is lying. Identify inconsistencies of fact and the weakness or absurdity of the subject's explanations and alibis. Shake their confidence in their ability to maintain their

ruse, their composure, and ultimately their belief in their own training.

Challenge every piece of information from the subject as being disinformation. That's what you're going to get if the subject has been taught the principles of the Al Qaeda Jihad Manual. Seek corroboration and details of any information being offered, i.e., how does the subject know what he says he knows. Let the subject see early that you are not naive about his countermeasures. Disregard defiance; and treat denials as inconsequential. Both the defiance and the denials are rehearsed.

If the interrogator's arguments produce high tension in the subject, then either the subject might become so upset as to fail to pay attention to what the interrogator is saying or the interrogator's words and ideas may simply fall on deaf ears. Under those circumstances, be alert to attempting to recondition the subject. Amidst the subject's anger or anxiety, don't use your strongest arguments. The subject won't hear them: defense mechanisms will deflect them. Instead, ease into the stronger arguments. Start with ancillary issues and admissions. Bleed the subject's adrenaline and their "prepared" defenses, explanations, and alibis. Then go back and disarm piecemeal. Don't use all evidence or argumentative ammunition in the opening salvo.

Whereas the “open ended question” is preferred within the preliminary interview as a means of drawing out new information from the subject, “leading questions” (i.e., questions which suggest their answer) are preferred during the accusatory interrogation. New information is no longer the goal. Instead, the leading question is now intended to solidify information which had already been elicited from the subject or to nail the subject's knowledge of information which the interrogator possesses from other sources, such as ballistic, scientific, documentary, or eyewitness evidence.

An especially effective derivation of the leading question is the “dilemma”, i.e., a question which presents as its answer a choice between two incriminating alternatives. The dilemma's roots, including its name, are found in Aristotelian and Socratic theories of

logic, persuasion, and debate. For centuries, it was a rudimentary trial technique taught to lawyers. Its successful application within the context of criminal interrogations is undeniable.

Whereas the simple leading question suggests a single incriminating response (e.g., “You were at the roadside checkpoint in Haditha, weren't you?”), the dilemma contains a choice among two suggested answers, either of which is incriminating (e.g., “Were you at the roadside checkpoint in Haditha to detonate the car bomb or simply to meet with the security officer who was on duty?”). Either way the subject answers the dilemma, the result is an incriminating admission against his own interest: he places himself at the scene of the explosion. Even though the second choice is benign as to its intent, the subject's presence at the scene of the terrorist act is established despite previous denials. The interrogation may now focus upon breaking down details of the subject's reasons for being there and the likely exposure of contradictions or prior inconsistent statements toward an admission of complicity in the terrorist act.

c) Find an argument which appeals to the emotions and personal vulnerabilities of the subject.

There are certain psychological tactics which prey upon the subject's personal frailties. You'll recall the discussion at the outset wherein a delineation was made between “emotional” versus “non-emotional” offenders. Tactics described herein, which otherwise might be deemed harsh, assume legitimacy in the context of attacking the emotional vulnerabilities of cold-blooded and seemingly emotionless terrorists.

Through background information or the preliminary interview, a subject's vulnerabilities may be revealed. For example, patterns of past failures in education, profession, military, personal or family relationships may have been a contributing factor to the subject's attraction to the perceived power and allure of an Al Qaeda cell.

Once identified, that pattern of personal failures can be drawn to the subject's

attention methodically, poignantly, and repeatedly over a period of hours or days. The result is an inexorable degradation of the subject's self esteem and self confidence. The interrogator offers a life-line by continuing to manifest respect toward the subject, even in the face of the subject's personal disgrace. But the life-line is conditional upon the subject's willingness to reciprocate with the “strength of character” to tell the truth about the issues under investigation. That delicate balance of proffered mutual respect becomes a desperate inducement to the disgraced subject to comply and thereby maintain the esteem of his interrogator. This technique has proven to be devastatingly effective, even among the most cocky and resistant subjects. Caution is to be exercised, as severe application may well render the subject suicidal.

Proxemics can be used to the interrogator's advantage. The closer the interrogator is to the subject, the more psychological pressure he will exert on the subject. Generally, we recognize four zones of “personal space.” (United States Army Interrogation Training Manual, 1996).

1. Public Zone (over 12 ft): Intrusions into the public zone are barely noticed.
2. Social Zone (4-12 ft): This is the distance we stand from strangers. Intrusions into the social zone are noticed but tolerated.
3. Personal Zone (1 1/2 - 4 ft): This is the distance reserved for social functions, friends, or regular colleagues. Intrusions are- noticed but tolerated, uncomfortably.
4. Intimate zone (1/2 - 1 1/2 ft): This is the distance reserved for those who are emotionally close. For others, intrusion into this zone creates anxiety, is threatening, causes confusion, and affects clarity of thought.

“Territorial invasion” during interrogation can break down or unnerve the subject. There are three caveats. First, always conduct yourself professionally and respectfully toward the subject no matter how heinous the subject's conduct may be. Second, move in slowly, not abruptly. And third, use caution if the subject is aggressive or resistant. Normally, this tactic is reserved for the latter

stages of an interrogation, but don't be shy about invading the subject's personal space.

Similarly, isolation of the fundamentalist from colleagues after commencement of an interrogation serves a three fold purpose. First it prevents other subjects who have not yet been interrogated from learning the methodologies which await them. Second, it forces the subject to reflect in solitude upon the interrogator's persuasive arguments, thereby multiplying their cumulative effect. Third, and most importantly, isolation denies the subject any opportunity for peer validation which otherwise raises the risk of reinvigorating the subject's will to resist. Self-doubts which may take hours or days to induce in a subject may be immediately reversed by returning the subject to his group, its zealots, and their certain efforts to resurrect Al Qaeda's tenets within the mind of the weakened subject.

## **B. Nationalists**

Many of the tactics discussed with regard to Islamic Fundamentalists are applicable to Nationalists. But there are differences which lie in the Nationalist's motives.

By definition, Nationalists are motivated by a resentment toward the presence of Western military forces in Muslim countries (Pape, 2005). They are often times naively manipulated by Fundamentalists into violence in the name of Jihad, but their real motive is preservation of national or cultural identity. Recent studies suggest that religion is not the most powerful factor in drawing suicide killers to Al Qaeda.

For example, Robert Pape, an associate professor at the University of Chicago and Director of the Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism, after studying 315 completed suicide attacks by 462 suicide terrorists from 1980 to the beginning of 2004, theorizes "suicide terrorist attacks are not primarily an outgrowth of Islamic fundamentalism and are, almost always, part of an organized campaign to compel a modern democracy to withdraw military forces from territory that the terrorists consider home." (Pape, 2005).

Whereas the Fundamentalist needs no moral justification for homicide in the context of killing "non-believers," the Nationalist often does require reassurance that his conduct, while triggered by secular goals of driving out foreign territorial occupiers, was morally justified. Interrogators who recognize this difference may rationalize for a subject that the terrorist activity was morally justified not as random murder but as a means of national or cultural defense. That rationalization appeals to the Nationalist's pride and paves a moral pathway toward confession by expressing the interrogator's empathy, understanding, and appreciation of the "righteousness" of the Nationalist's underlying purpose. It is useful for the interrogator to point out the "sell-out" of the Nationalists by the Fundamentalists, specifically Osama Bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who have preyed upon "good" intentions of national and cultural preservation and wasted their fellow Nationalists by turning them into expendable suicide bombers in service of radical Islam. (Zagorin & Duffy, 2005).

Accordingly, in searching for the argument most likely to appeal to the mentality, emotions, and beliefs of the Nationalists, consideration needs to be given to providing the subject with moral justification for his conduct. Such an approach is pointless with Fundamentalists, but it becomes essential to the successful interrogation of Nationalists.

## **C. Common Criminals**

Despite the fact that their terrorist behavior is committed in the name of Jihad, "Common Criminals" are not much different from the criminal element encountered on domestic streets. They are motivated by ordinary criminal instincts such as greed, revenge, or a simple gang mentality. As a result, these individuals are vulnerable to the least sophisticated and most commonly used criminal interrogation techniques. While they may therefore be the easiest to break during interrogation, the bad news is that they may be the least likely to possess high value intelligence. Nevertheless, interrogation of these subjects must be undertaken. Their commitment is not to jihad, idealism, religion, culture, or nation; it is to themselves. Fear of consequences is their vulnerability. Self

preservation is their goal. They will confess if they believe it will serve their own personal best interests to do so.

In addition to many of the methodologies described above, particularly the factual analysis approach, Common Criminals are likely to confess in response to a sympathetic approach in which the interrogator attempts to minimize the offenses and shift blame for the event upon others. (Senese, 2005).

The interrogator may treat the terrorist event as something less than it actually appears to be, either by interjecting extenuating circumstances, lessening its significance, or mitigating its seriousness. As early as 1907, Hans Gross in his seminal work on the art of interrogation, *Criminal Investigation*, observed, "It is merciless, or rather psychologically wrong, to expect anyone boldly and directly to confess his crime....We must smooth the way, render the task easy."

## **VI. Conclusion**

The interrogation of extremist terrorist suspects is a challenge beyond our

conventional experience. The demands are unique, because the perceptions, sensibilities, and moral compass of the offenders are far removed from Western society.

Despite those challenges and broad ideological gulfs, the fact remains that there are fundamental human characteristics common to us all. Those characteristics include emotional and intellectual vulnerabilities, which are to be exploited to the fullest, with due regard for basic human rights, during the interrogation of terrorists who would destroy the lives and freedoms of honest and innocent people around the world.

Against that background, the interrogator's professionalism need not be compromised -- just sharpened. One caveat is to never engage in a tactic which degrades the interrogator's own self respect in the eyes of the subject. To do so would impede the progress of the interrogation and lower the interrogator to the terrorist's level. Beyond that, we make no apologies for pushing the envelope in developing intelligence through assertive interrogation techniques toward our international defense against terrorism.

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