

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

## Al-Qa'ida: Railways a High Priority Target (U//FOUO)

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A comprehensive review of reporting has shed light on al-Qa'ida's strategic doctrine and its possible targets and methods for attacks inside the United States. A key theme that drives the group's operational doctrine is selecting targets that will have a psychological and economic ripple effect in the United States. (U//FOUO)

Reporting points to attacks on railways and subways as a means to hurt the US economy and incite mass hysteria. Al-Qa'ida reportedly considered planning attacks against US railways after observing the economic impact of the 11 September attacks on the US airline industry.

- Rail or subway terminals present many of the same attractions as airport terminals—large crowds and the ability to move about freely and inconspicuously. Large terminals—such as Union Station in Washington, D.C., and Grand Central Station in New York City—often are in key downtown locations, magnifying the potential disruptive effects of an attack.
- Trains and subways may also be attractive to al-Qa'ida because so many businesses in major urban areas, especially in the northeast, depend on these systems to help their employees commute to work each day. (U//FOUO)

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This report was prepared by the DCI Counterterrorist Center's Office of Terrorism Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Plans and Organization Group, OTA, on (703) 874-1571. (U//FOUO)

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