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Message from DHHS: Terrorist Threat

In an effort to better inform you of various national security related alerts issued by the Office of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice, whenever appropriate, the Department of Health and Human Services' Emergency Command Center will forward relevant information. Below is a notification that was sent out to law enforcement agencies nationwide. Please share this information with your key members of your staff.

Potential al-Qaeda's Threats to Targets in the United States and Abroad

Recent statements, apparently by Al Qaeda leaders, threaten attacks against U.S. economic interests. An audio message from Osama bin Ladin, (taped on an undetermined date), broadcast by al-Jazeera recently, refers to Al Qaeda targeting key sectors of the U.S. economy. Another senior leader (bin Ladin's senior deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri) reiterated the threat in the closing line of a recent audio taped interview.

The sequential release of these statements, coupled with our knowledge of ongoing plotting by Al Qaeda members and threat information described by detainees, strengthens previous assessments that Al Qaeda continues to plan major attacks against U.S. interests. The statements suggest that an attack may have been approved, while the specific timing is left to operatives in the field. Our concerns are heightened by comments from Al Qaeda detainees who are independently interpreting these taped remarks as a sign of attack. In 1998, Al Qaeda issued a fatwa calling for attacks against Americans worldwide, apparently presaging the August East Africa embassy bombings.

The content of these statements and the context surrounding these threats reinforce our view that they may signal an attack. One senior detainee maintains that Al Qaeda would only release such a statement after approving a specific plan for an attack. At this time we have no information on a specific time, date or location of an attack.

Other aspects of the statements reflect what we know of bin Ladin and Al Qaeda strategy. The focus on economic targets is consistent with Al Qaeda's stated ideological goals and longstanding strategy. The September 11 attacks and commentary on these attacks by bin Ladin and others indicate how central economic targets are to this strategy: The group leaders have said that they aim to undermine what they see as the backbone of U.S. power, the economy. Our adversary is trying to portray American influence as based on economic might and therefore seeks to strike an economic target prominent enough for economic and symbolic reasons that it would have immediate resonance around the world.

In addition, other recent appeals in extremist circles, some purporting to be from bin Ladin, urge Muslim youth to strike U.S. forces in Kuwait, Jordan, Qatar, and Bahrain. The Al Qaeda organization, which has lost its safe haven

in Afghanistan and many of its leaders, is attempting to manipulate the broader Islamic extremists' community to attack the U.S. at home and abroad.

In view of the above information, the Federal Bureau of Investigation urges recipients to review and implement additional prudent steps to detect, disrupt, deter, and defend against potential attacks against our nation's critical infrastructure and installations at home and abroad. At this time, we are maintaining the Homeland Security Advisory System Threat Level at Yellow Elevated.

State and local law enforcement are encouraged to discuss appropriate measures for their respective communities with our designated Joint Terrorist Task Force.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protects people's health and safety by preventing and controlling diseases and injuries; enhances health decisions by providing credible information on critical health issues; and promotes healthy living through strong partnerships with local, national and international organizations.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES