Zeitschrift: ASMZ : Sicherheit Schweiz : Allgemeine schweizerische Militärzeitschrift

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Offiziersgesellschaft

Band: 168 (2002)

Heft: 12

Artikel: Al-Kaida : Strategie des geringsten Widerstandes

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-68050

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Al-Kaida: Strategie des geringsten Widerstands

Der Autor argumentiert, dass sich nach den Anschlägen auf die Zwillingstürme vom 11. September das Umfeld für die Al-Kaida drastisch verändert habe. Dies lasse vermuten, dass die Al-Kaida ihre Strategie nach dem Strategem des geringsten Widerstands (Sun Tzu) ausgerichtet habe. Wie der Fluss des Wassers konzentrierten sich auch die Aktivitäten der Al-Kaida auf jene Objekte, die einen Misserfolg aus technischen, logistischen und sicherheitstechnischen Gründen minimierten. Die Simulation sollte deshalb entsprechende Variablen miteinbeziehen. Dabei fördere die Simulation, so der Autor, Ergebnisse zu Tage, die sowohl für Rot als auch für Blau mögliche Lösungsstrategien darstellten. ag

Gordon Woo

When, in the aftermath of September 11, the President of the United States declared global war on terrorism, he must have pondered how this asymmetric war would be waged and won. The attack was a brazen assault on US power; one that added insult to injury – likened by al-Qaeda to having one's own finger forcibly poked into one's own eye. The attack was like no other, and any al-Qaeda war game can be like no other. In past Pentagon war games[1], the concept has emerged of a **Redline:** a level of attack on the USA which makes a severe impact, but which falls short of triggering a determined US response to achieve a total victory, as happened at Pearl Harbor. Wherever the Redline might be hypothetically drawn, the al-Qaeda kamikaze pilots deliberately flew their hijacked planes well passed it on 9/11.

In the context of powerful global networks of organized crime, the police have remarked that *«they seek the highest profit for the least risk of detection»*. If payoff, in terms of target symbolic value and loss potential, is substituted for profit, one may wonder whether al-Qaeda seeks the highest payoff for the least risk of detection? Prior to 9/11, al-Qaeda could indeed plan maximal impact strategic attacks in a comparatively benign international counter-terrorism environment. Such complex attack planning is much harder than before, and, for as long as the crackdown on support cells continues around the world, al-Qaeda will be forced to consider more opportunistic methods.

Way of least resistance

«Now an army may be likened to water, for just as flowing water avoids the heights and hastens to the lowlands, so an army avoids strength and strikes weakness», wrote the master strategist Sun Tzu, in «the Art of War». Avoiding strength, and attacking weakness is a fundamental precept for asymmetric warfare. For al-Qaeda, this may be expressed in the succinct language of physical science as: *following the path of least resistance.* In hydrology, the principle of minimum energy expenditure governs the pattern of river drainage networks. In a similar way to the flow of water, the flow of al-Qaeda terrorism activity is towards weapon modes and targets, against which the technical, logistical and security barriers to mission success are least.

Compared with home-made explosive devices, off-the-shelf weapons (such as SAM missiles, hijacked aircraft, gas tankers etc.), are attractive for their reliability, and for their past record of successful terrorist use; adaptive learning from past experience is an al-Qaeda trait. Following the path of least resistance in target selection means avoiding hard secure targets, and using remote media and internet sources to identify potential weak targets. Television publicity in the Middle East exposing US defensive weaknesses simplifies and shortens the target search and surveillance process.

Which target?

Ruthlessness in causing destruction and casualties; fearlessness of death as martyrs; resolution in following the path of least resistance – these are simple basic rules by which the offensive Red Team should play an al-Qaeda war game. Compared with conventional war games, these rules are more absolute, more robotic, indeed more mathematical. Notions of self-constraint, such as the Redline, have blunted the military application of mathematical techniques, such as game theory, which assume hard-headed intelligence and cold-blooded rationality, and an ordered sense of preferences. Given the choice of two equally-protected targets, one of which offers the prospect of far more casualties than the other, which would a terrorist choose? This is a quandary for terrorist groups with a collective sense of conscience and guilt – but not for al-Qaeda.

A mathematician might play a war game like chess: being cold-blooded enough to dispose mercilessly of any opposing forces; and being hard-headed enough to sacrifice one's own forces if this was the optimal move. Just three days before the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, the leader of the Afghan opposition to the Taliban regime, was assassinated whilst being interviewed by two North Africans. When their booby-trapped camera exploded, these two killers died with their victim: the dead cannot be interrogated by the security services. Through this act of callous but calculating violence, al-Qaeda had left its special calling card.

It is well known that al-Qaeda is extremely watchful and patient in target probing and attack selection. Osama bin Laden himself has stressed the prerequisites of reconnaissance, surveillance and rehearsal for an attack by its professional cadre. Al-Qaeda is careful to observe signs of target hardening, which might thwart an attack. In playing the al-Qaeda war game, the offensive Red Team should seek to identify and play the best theoretical move allowed by the defensive Blue Team of Homeland Security. Pre-emptive counter-terrorist action restricts the choice of moves. The available moves may involve taking targets of opportunity, rather than targets of maximum impact.

Which strategy?

The al-Qaeda War Game is rich in decision optimality. One such decision involves the strategy of launching multiple attacks using the same weapon. This is clearly optimal, given the tightening of security against any specific attack mode, once a strike has been attempted. Another area of optimal decision-making is the timing of a major attack using a specific weapon. For a terrorist embarking on a martyrdom mission, there is the infinite payoff of paradise if the mission is successful. At any given moment in the planning process, the terrorist has to decide whether the time is right to launch his attack. If he delays a little longer, there will be more time to improve the weapon effectiveness, so that the chance of achieving the mission objectives is slightly improved; the penalty is the extra time for counter-terrorism forces to foil the attack.

Even with extensive reconnaissance and surveillance, some uncertainty will exist over the deployment of Blue Team defensive forces. From the perspective of homeland security, it is not feasible to defend targets to a level of utter impregnability. The strength of the defence of a potential target will vary according to the prevailing level of alert. An example is the US homeland location of Patriot missile launchers. To make an optimal decision in the face of uncertainty over Blue Team action, game theory suggests a mixed strategy for the Red Team, whereby a range of alternative

[1] Brennan R. (2002) Protecting the Homeland: Insights from Army Wargames, RAND publication.

Erster Weltbericht über Gewalt und Gesundheit der World Health Organization (WHO)

Am 3. Oktober 2002 wurde in Genf der erste Weltbericht über Gewalt und Gesundheit (World Report on Violence and Health) von der World Health Organisation (WHO) veröffentlicht. Die enorme Anzahl von Todesopfern und Opfern mit bleibenden Schäden von Gewaltakten macht «Gewalt» zu einem der wichtigsten Gesundheitsthemen zurzeit.

«Violence kills more than 1,6 million people every year. Public health experts say these statistics are just the tip of the iceberg with the majority of violent acts being committed behind closed doors and going largely unreported. This report aims to shed light on these acts. In addition to the deaths, millions of people are left injured as a result of violence and suffer from physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health problems, says the first comprehensive World report on violence and health released today by the World Health Organization (WHO).» ... «The death and disability caused by violence make it one of the leading public health issues of our time, says the report. Violence is among the leading causes of death for people aged 15 to 44 years of age, accounting for 14% of deaths among males and 7% of deaths among females. On an average day, 1424 people are killed in acts of homicide – almost one person every minute. Roughly one person commits suicide every 40 seconds. About 35 people are killed every hour as a direct result of armed conflict. In the 20th century, an estimated 191 million people lost their lives directly or indirectly as a result of conflict, and well over half of them were civilians. Studies have shown that in some countries, health care expenditures due to violence account for up to 5% of GDP.»

Dieser aussergewöhnliche Report demonstriert, dass Gewalt voraussehbar ist und dass dieses Gesundheitsrisiko mit einem gezielten Massnahmenkatalog vermindert, resp. verhindert werden kann, bevor es in irgendeiner Weise zur Eskalation von Gewalt kommt.

Quelle: *http://www.who.int/mediacentre/releases/pr73/en/*

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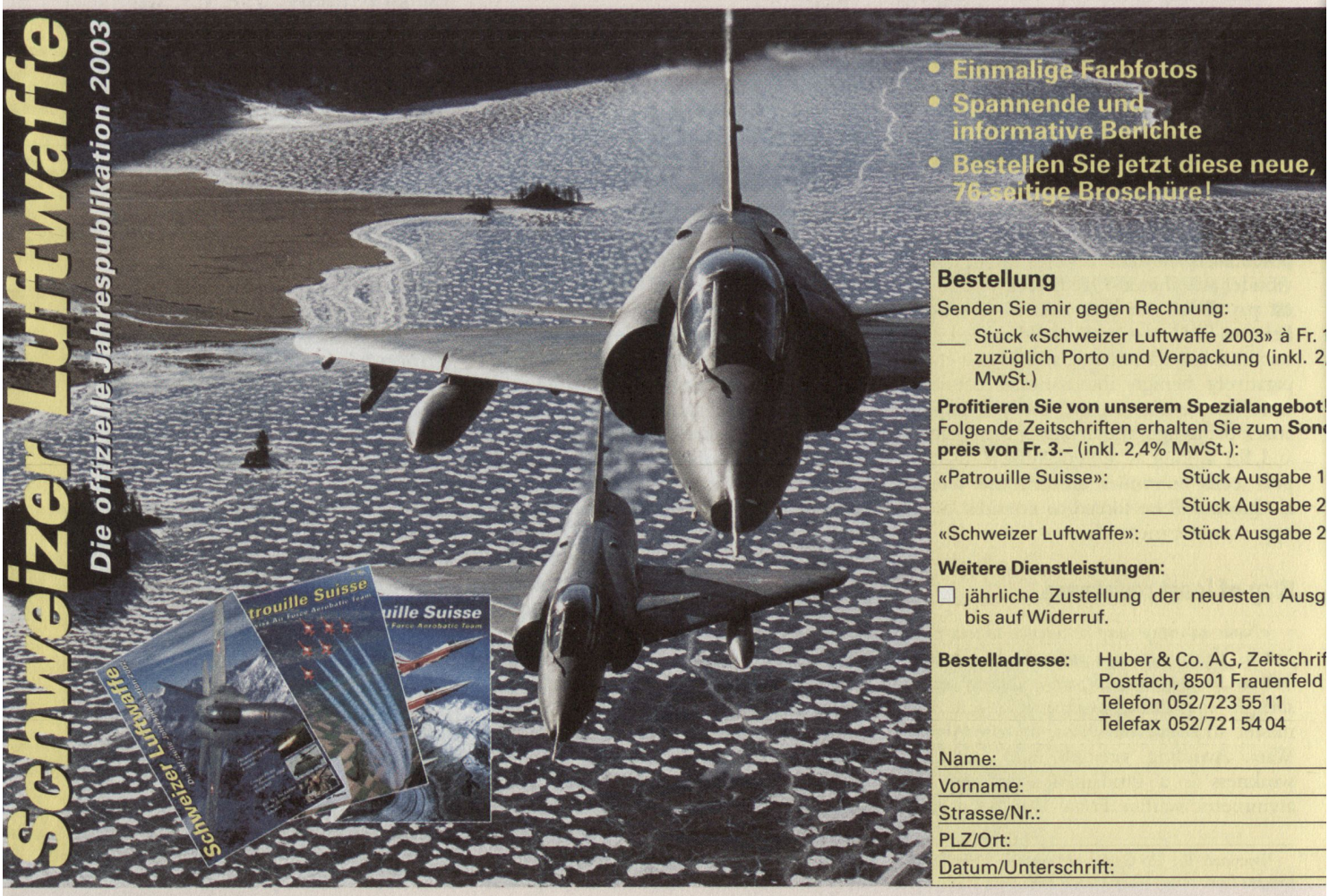
sites are targeted, with a degree of randomness in selection among them. It is known that there are significant random, partly serendipitous, elements in an al-Qaeda attack. For example, there is some randomness in the way in which targets come to the attention of terrorists via the media or internet; there is some randomness in the order in which targets are put under surveillance; and there is some randomness in the way in which individual terrorists emerge from different countries (even continents) to form an attack cluster. The larger the random component the more stretched the security forces would be, and the greater the al-Qaeda conviction that a successful strike was the inevitable will of Allah. ■

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