



Defector: Putin's KGB Trained Top al-Qaeda Terrorists

Ayman al-Zawahiri, the reputed Number 2 chief in al-Qaeda and the man second only to Osama bin Laden on the FBI's "Most Wanted Terrorists" list, was trained by the Russian FSB (formerly known as the KGB). That's the story told by ex-FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko, who fled Russia in 2000. According to Litvinenko, as reported in the Polish newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*, on July 17, "Ayman al-Zawahiri trained at a Federal Security Service (FSB, former KGB) base in Dagestan in 1998." "He was then transferred to Afghanistan," the defector says, "where he became Osama bin Laden's deputy."

Mr. Litvinenko's brief revelation in *Rzeczpospolita* provides confirmation for suspicions many counterterrorism analysts have held concerning al-Zawahiri, whom federal authorities have called the "mastermind of 9/11." As reported in *The New American* in 2001, al-Zawahiri had been very active as the purported top leader of Islamist terrorist operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina during Yugoslavia's civil war. Throughout that period, he operated from a special headquarters in Sofia, the capital of Communist-run Bulgaria, which had been for decades a primary surrogate for Soviet training and sponsorship of terrorism. It was apparent that the Russians were playing both sides in the conflict, openly supporting the Serbs and covertly helping the Iranian-backed Muslims.

After helping establish Iranian control over the Bosnian military, al-Zawahiri embarked on a mysterious trip that took him first through China, where he conducted financial dealings with one of the Communist government's banks. Then it was on to Chechnya. Al-Zawahiri then crossed the border from Chechnya to Russian-controlled Dagestan, where he was arrested and "imprisoned" for six months. More likely, his "detention" was a cover for a period of training, planning, and debriefing. Through some supposed miracle of Allah, he escaped and made his way to Afghanistan, where he hooked up with bin Laden.

Is al-Zawahiri an Islamic fundamentalist or a Russian (Soviet) agent? Litvinenko's disclosures undermine the former and support the latter. After all, why would a devout Muslim do his banking in China, choose Bulgaria for his headquarters, and sojourn in Russia? And why would he be obsessed with jihad against the U.S. when it is Russia that slaughtered hundreds of thousands of his co-religionists in Afghanistan and Chechnya, and when it is Russia and China that continue to oppress and persecute millions of Muslims today?



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