

*This paper is for Government departments and statutory organisations dealing with counter-terrorism. It is intended to help you to respond to any concerns generated in communities as a result of the coverage in the media of the CT issues. It is not intended to provide detailed briefing about Government policies, and explaining these issues to the media is the role of relevant departmental press offices.*

### **Tenth Anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> Attacks**

On September the 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 Al Qa'ida perpetrated a series of attacks that resulted in the deaths of nearly 3000 people, including 67 UK victims. Citizens of over 90 countries perished in the 9/11 attacks.

#### **What is happening to mark the anniversary?**

People around the world will be marking the anniversary to remember the victims of the 9/11 attacks. On the day, there will be services and ceremonies at St Paul's Cathedral, at Grosvenor Square and Westminster Abbey.

We should also remember the victims of the many other terrorist acts that have taken place across the world in the ten years since 9/11. As the recent tragic events in Oslo show us, terrorists continue to carry out attacks against people from all walks of life.

#### **What has been the legacy of 9/11?**

In the decade since 9/11, Al Qa'ida have achieved nothing except the taking of innocent lives and made no effective plans beyond causing more death and destruction. The majority of those killed by Al Qa'ida have been Muslims – for example, of those killed by Al Qa'ida between 2004 and 2008, 85% were from Muslim-majority countries.

Support for terrorism and for Al Qa'ida had been dropping sharply for some time in Muslim-majority countries. This has been shown in a recent international survey which said "There is relatively little support for Al Qa'ida in Arab countries, Turkey and Indonesia... over the last decade, support for suicide terrorism has declined significantly in much of the Muslim world" (Pew Global, May 2011). In the poll, the large majority in each of the countries polled rejected Al Qa'ida.

Recent events across the Middle East and North Africa ('The Arab Spring') have shown that terrorism and its ideology are irrelevant to the real concerns of the majority of people in the region. Al Qa'ida had no role in bringing about the popular changes demanded by the people of these countries – they found a different voice and an effective way to bring about the political change they desired. Al Qa'ida's message - that terror is the only way to achieve change - was thoroughly discredited.

#### **Were the 9/11 attacks really caused by Al Qa'ida?**

Yes, they were. There have been lots of conspiracy theories about 9/11 – just as conspiracy theories circulate about lots of major world events – but the hard evidence has shown these to be false. For example, the evidence refuting five separate conspiracy theories was set out on the BBC News website recently. (BBC News Magazine online, 29 August 2011 – <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-14665953>)

#### **What is the threat from terrorism now?**

Thanks to the action taken by the international community we are now better equipped to deal with the threat posed by terrorism than we were ten years ago. Since 9/11 there have been many Al Qa'ida-directed plots against the UK which have been disrupted by the police and security and intelligence agencies. There have been no successful terrorist attacks in the UK by Al Qa'ida inspired terrorists since 2005. Much of this

is due to the capabilities and programmes that have been brought in under CONTEST, the Government's Counter Terrorism strategy.

But though they are weaker than before, Al Qa'ida are still a serious threat to the UK and other terrorist groups, some affiliated to Al Qa'ida, have become stronger. Increasingly, the threat to Britain comes from organisations affiliated to Al Qa'ida – in places like Yemen and North Africa. The threat from Northern Ireland related terrorism has also increased. The likelihood of an attack without warning is high.