

Al-Qaeda 'greatest threat' to US

Al-Qaeda is still the greatest terrorist threat to the US and its allies, according to a report from the US state department.

The department's annual Country Reports on Terrorism also names Iran as the biggest state sponsor of terrorism.

There were 14,499 attacks in 2007, the report says, down from 14,570 in 2006.

Attacks in Iraq were also down, from 6,628 to 6,212, although in Afghanistan the number of incidents rose from 969 in 2006 to 1,127 in 2007.

Although overall attacks were down slightly, the number of terror-related deaths rose by 8% to 22,000 in 2007.

"The ability of [Iraqi] attackers to penetrate large concentrations of people and then detonate their explosives may account for the increase in lethality of bombings in 2007," said the report.

Secret bases

In Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, according to the report, al-Qaeda remains "the greatest terrorist threat to the United States and its partners".

Al-Qaeda "utilises terrorism, as well as subversion, propaganda, and open warfare; it seeks weapons of mass destruction in order to inflict the maximum possible damage on anyone who stands in its way, including other Muslims and/or elders, women and children," the report says.

And the militant group has rebuilt some of its pre-9/11 operational capacity at secret bases in Pakistan, the report's authors warn, with deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri now acting as the group's "strategic and operational planner".

Iran remains the "most active" state sponsor of terrorism, according to the report, and has lent its support to Palestinian militants, as well as insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Elements of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps have provided militants in Iraq with arms, training and money, the report says.

The other state sponsors of terrorism listed in the report are Cuba, North Korea, Sudan and Syria.

A recent report published by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that that the US had "no comprehensive plan" to deal with the threat posed by al-Qaeda.