

U.N. finds terror financiers

A new report says that active al-Qaida operatives are funding terrorism through charitable groups

By Ken Dilanian
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ROME — Two years after President Bush announced that he was shutting down a key al-Qaida financing network, the two men at its center continue to live freely and do business in Europe, according to a new United Nations report that urges better international cooperation against terrorism.

The case of the al Taqwa financial empire, which operated in the Middle East, Turkey, Italy, Switzerland, Lichtenstein and the Bahamas, underscores the difficulty of disrupting the shadowy world of terrorist financing. It also suggests global anti-terrorism efforts may not be as effective as officials claim.

U.S. investigators believe that al-

Taqwa, which means "Fear of God," funneled tens of millions of dollars to al-Qaida, Hamas and other terrorist groups through charities and informal banking arrangements. Among al Taqwa's board members was a neo-Nazi who called the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks "counterterror against American-Israeli terror."

After Sept. 11, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution requiring civil action against terrorist funding even in the absence of criminal convictions.

Based on secret intelligence, the two central figures in al Taqwa, Youssef Nada, 73, and Ahmed Idris Nasreddin, 75, were placed on an international list of terrorist financiers, which meant that member nations agreed to seize their assets. They also were banned from traveling internationally. Swiss and Italian investigators raided their offices in November 2001.

Yet neither man is being held, and a Security Council committee report says both are evading the spirit of the

antiterrorism sanctions against them.

Nada has denied allegations that he funded terrorism. Nasreddin, through his Swiss lawyer, said he helped finance the Islamic Cultural Center of Milan, which European investigators say became an al-Qaida recruiting center, only to help poor Muslims.

While countries seized al Taqwa's bank accounts, the report says, "nothing has been done with respect to any of their other physical or business assets." That has allowed the two to continue operating businesses such as a Milan hotel and real estate in Switzerland, U.N. investigators found.

"Could they still be financing terrorism? Yes, they could be," said Victor Comras, a former State Department official who helped write the U.N. report. "There is a black hole of information about some of these companies and how their funds are being used."

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CHEATING

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bring a page of notes to the final, Wood had an easy way to cheat.

"My plan was to just go in with the final all completed with all the answers," she said.

But feelings of guilt writhed in the back of her mind as the date of the final exam approached.

"I kind of convinced myself that I didn't do anything wrong, but underneath it all I think I knew that I did something against my morals and values," Wood said.

So she did something most cheaters wouldn't dream of doing.

"I didn't get caught for cheating — I turned myself in," she said.

According to Student Judicial Affairs Director Chris Loschiavo, this is a very rare occurrence. Only one or two students in the last four years have come forward on their own and admitted to cheating.

Wood's mentor, Daniel Close, director of the Family and Human Services program at the College of Education, was also surprised by Wood's open admission of wrongdoing.

"We've never seen this before," Close said. "We're still baffled. We

don't have experience with this."

But besides the surprise of Wood turning herself in, Close was also surprised that she had cheated at all.

"It just didn't make sense," Close said. "It was sad for me that she allowed herself to be put in that position. I've had her in four classes; she's been a paper grader for me, I know she's an honest person."

Unlike many other students who resort to cheating, Wood wasn't under any extreme circumstances and it wasn't a cheat-or-fail situation. She had studied extensively for the final exam and she said the material it covered wasn't difficult to master, but she was still worried about failing to achieve perfect grades.

"It was my first term in graduate school and I really wanted to do well," Wood said. "I put more pressure on myself than anyone else to get good grades. It's almost like I had to prove to myself I'm just as smart as anyone else."

Wood actually ended up earning an A in the class, but after the investigation it was changed to an F. And as part of her punishment, she had to complete an academic integrity seminar, retake a class that counts for research credits and write a letter of apology to her professor.

"That was probably one of the more difficult consequences, having to face him and admit what I did wrong," Wood said.

Although Wood pegs herself as an honest person, this wasn't the first time she cheated on a test. When she was a senior undergraduate she looked at another student's paper during a test, but just like she did in the other case, she confessed to her professor. The consequences for her transgression were less harsh, however, and she only got an F for the quiz, not the whole class.

Wood said she is very open about her mistakes and has confided in several of her professors, but she hasn't confessed the incident to her parents yet.

"I don't want them to think I've always cheated," she said. "I don't want them to be disappointed in me."

Twice she's cheated, twice she's turned herself in and now Wood said she has definitely learned her lesson and will never cheat again.

"One thing I've learned is grades aren't the most important thing," she said. "When I look back in five years I might remember my GPA but I won't remember what grade I received in a class."

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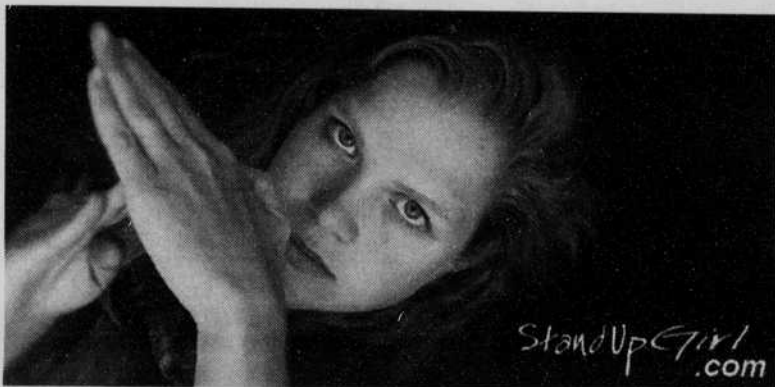
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