

FBI warns of terror attack on U.S. soil in near future

Officials say key events during election season may be al-Qaida targets

By Michelle Mittelstadt
The Dallas Morning News (KRT)

WASHINGTON — Al-Qaida is poised to strike the United States within the next few months, top Bush administration officials warned Wednesday, saying the political nominating conventions and other high-profile events could present inviting targets to the terrorists.

"This disturbing intelligence indicates al-Qaida's specific intention to hit the United States hard," Attorney General John Ashcroft said, acknowledging that the terrorist network's operatives may already be in the country.

The stream of intelligence, which

authorities termed credible and corroborated from multiple sources, isn't specific as to date, place or method of attack.

But they believe the chances for a large-scale attack are grave, they said, because of a recent al-Qaida statement that its preparations are "90 percent" complete and a calendar loaded with prominent events: This weekend's World War II Memorial dedication in Washington; next month's G-8 economic summit in Georgia; July's Democratic convention in Boston and the GOP convention in New York in late August.

Perhaps most significantly, U.S. officials fear that al-Qaida has been emboldened by the success of the Madrid train bombings — which prompted the toppling of Spain's ruling party and withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

"Al-Qaida may perceive that a

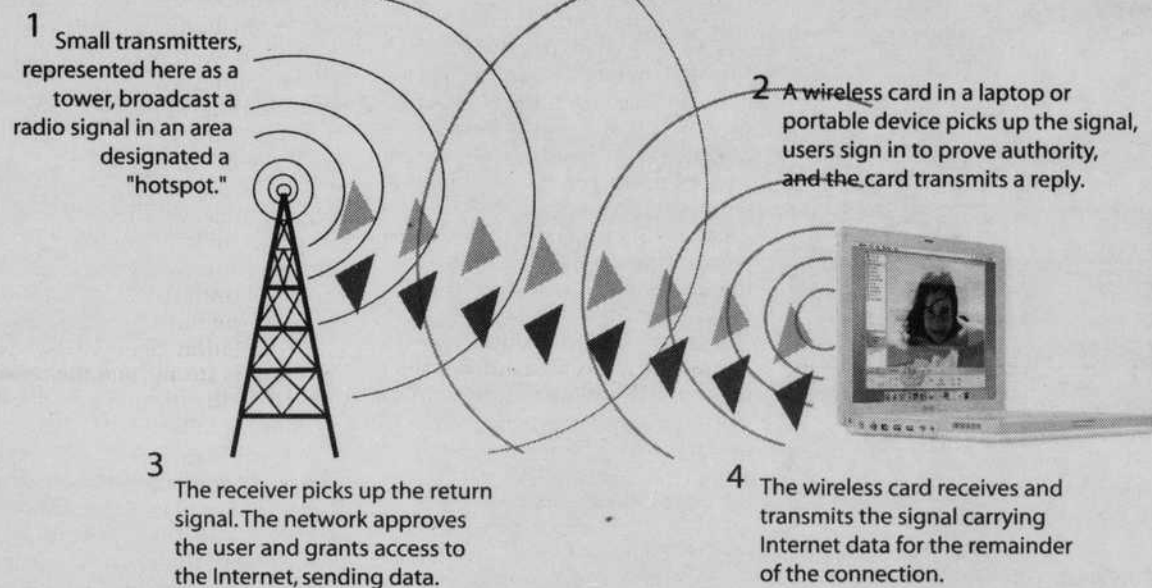
large-scale attack in the United States this summer or fall would lead to similar consequences," Ashcroft told a news conference.

The administration didn't raise the threat alert level from its current "elevated" status, saying authorities are far better prepared to deal with terrorism. "Right now there is no need to put the entire country on a national alert," Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said on NBC's "Today" show, suggesting there was a lack of consensus within the government on the need to raise the alert.

Some Democrats charged that Wednesday's ominous announcement was designed, in part, to change the subject at a time when the administration is under fire for its policies in Iraq and President Bush's favorability ratings are

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How wireless works



SOURCE: UO Network Services

Steven Neuman News Reporter

WI-FI

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logged into the wireless network.

"I just like to be able to pick where I work," said computer science graduate student Eric Purpose while using a wireless connection in the EMU to search the Internet. "I can grab a coffee and be out in public and I don't have to sit in my office all day to use the computer and work."

Wi-Fi networks, a common type of wireless connection, use access points — or "hotspots" — with a transmitter and receiver that broadcast a radio signal. The signal is picked up with a wireless card installed in a portable device, such as a laptop. Once the laptop establishes a connection to the server, usually with a password, the computer connects to the Internet.

Smith encouraged anyone to submit ideas of places that need wireless access. Future plans include boosting service in the University Bookstore and potentially adding service in the restaurants on East 13th Avenue.

Additionally, community businesses such as Cafe Paradiso, Indigo District and Cozmic Pizza have started to offer wireless service as an incentive to

woo laptop-bound scholars, and Starbucks offers a wireless service plan available at most stores. For students, the wireless boom has meant the ability to do work and research anywhere they can find a hotspot.

Steve Massie, who works for Disability Services at the University, has been using wireless connections for three months and said he often uses the hotspot at Indigo District.

"It makes it a lot easier to keep in touch with my boss," Massie said. "I can check my e-mail anywhere and do anything I would normally do on the Internet."

Although Wi-Fi uses mathematical programs to encrypt information sent wirelessly, Network Services Senior Security Engineer John Kemp said privacy issues still exist.

"With the Internet in general there's a lot of scanning and probing," Kemp said. "We expect people to be cautious."

Kemp said that while there are problems with people intercepting wireless data, these instances pale in comparison to the security breaches that come in over the Internet from more remote sources. Users worried about the content of their Web-based e-mail being intercepted over the local wireless network should use a

secure connection, he said.

University mail servers offer a secure connection and users of MSN or Hotmail can ensure better security by typing https:// before a URL instead of the standard http://.

Wireless routers and AirPorts also allow homeowners to set up small networks that blanket a home or apartment with wireless coverage, an advantage that lets users avoid ethernet cables.

Purpose said he first purchased a laptop with wireless capability in 2000 to take advantage of the freedom a home wireless network provides. The wireless connection gave him the ability to work on his laptop throughout his house without dragging cords behind him.

Smith said the popularity of wireless technology is an example of critical mass — a moment when a certain technology ceases to be a gadget and become a necessity.

"It's just like cell phones really," Smith said. "People see someone with wireless and they ask questions, 'You can get the Internet on this?' or 'You don't need a cable?' and it gets them interested."

Contact the business/science/technology reporter at stevenneuman@dailyemerald.com.



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