

discuss operations with Bin Ladin or swear allegiance to him, having already given such a pledge of loyalty to Bashir, Sungkar's successor as JI leader. Thus, like any powerful bureaucrat defending his domain, Hambali objected when al Qaeda leadership tried to assign JI members to terrorist projects without notifying him.²⁶

Abd al Rahim al Nashiri

KSM and Hambali both decided to join forces with al Qaeda because their terrorist aspirations required the money and manpower that only a robust organization like al Qaeda could supply. On the other hand, Abd al Rahim al Nashiri—the mastermind of the *Cole* bombing and the eventual head of al Qaeda operations in the Arabian Peninsula—appears to have originally been recruited to his career as a terrorist by Bin Ladin himself.

Having already participated in the Afghan jihad, Nashiri accompanied a group of some 30 mujahideen in pursuit of jihad in Tajikistan in 1996. When serious fighting failed to materialize, the group traveled to Jalalabad and encountered Bin Ladin, who had recently returned from Sudan. Bin Ladin addressed them at length, urging the group to join him in a “jihad against the Americans.” Although all were urged to swear loyalty to Bin Ladin, many, including Nashiri, found the notion distasteful and refused. After several days of indoctrination that included a barrage of news clippings and television documentaries, Nashiri left Afghanistan, first returning to his native Saudi Arabia and then visiting his home in Yemen. There, he says, the idea for his first terrorist operation took shape as he noticed many U.S. and other foreign ships plying the waters along the southwest coast of Yemen.²⁷

Nashiri returned to Afghanistan, probably in 1997, primarily to check on relatives fighting there and also to learn about the Taliban. He again encountered Bin Ladin, still recruiting for “the coming battle with the United States.” Nashiri pursued a more conventional military jihad, joining the Taliban forces in their fight against Ahmed Massoud's Northern Alliance and shuttling back and forth between the front and Kandahar, where he would see Bin Ladin and meet with other mujahideen. During this period, Nashiri also led a plot to smuggle four Russian-made antitank missiles into Saudi Arabia from Yemen in early 1998 and helped an embassy bombing operative obtain a Yemeni passport.²⁸

At some point, Nashiri joined al Qaeda. His cousin, Jihad Mohammad Ali al Makki, also known as Azzam, was a suicide bomber for the Nairobi attack. Nashiri traveled between Yemen and Afghanistan. In late 1998, Nashiri proposed mounting an attack against a U.S. vessel. Bin Ladin approved. He directed Nashiri to start the planning and send operatives to Yemen, and he later provided money.²⁹

Nashiri reported directly to Bin Ladin, the only other person who, according to Nashiri, knew all the details of the operation. When Nashiri had difficulty finding U.S. naval vessels to attack along the western coast of Yemen, Bin