

identity and freed with Bin Ladin's help, as we also mentioned earlier. Local al Qaeda coordinators included Jamal al Badawi and Fahd al Quso, who was supposed to film the attack from a nearby apartment. The two suicide operatives chosen were Hassan al Khamri and Ibrahim al Thawar, also known as Nibras. Nibras and Quso delivered money to Khallad in Bangkok during Khalad's January 2000 trip to Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok.¹²²

In September 2000, Bin Ladin reportedly told Nashiri that he wanted to replace Khamri and Nibras. Nashiri was angry and disagreed, telling others he would go to Afghanistan and explain to Bin Ladin that the new operatives were already trained and ready to conduct the attack. Prior to departing, Nashiri gave Nibras and Khamri instructions to execute the attack on the next U.S. warship that entered the port of Aden.¹²³

While Nashiri was in Afghanistan, Nibras and Khamri saw their chance. They piloted the explosives-laden boat alongside the USS *Cole*, made friendly gestures to crew members, and detonated the bomb. Quso did not arrive at the apartment in time to film the attack.¹²⁴

Back in Afghanistan, Bin Ladin anticipated U.S. military retaliation. He ordered the evacuation of al Qaeda's Kandahar airport compound and fled—first to the desert area near Kabul, then to Khowst and Jalalabad, and eventually back to Kandahar. In Kandahar, he rotated between five to six residences, spending one night at each residence. In addition, he sent his senior advisor, Mohammed Atef, to a different part of Kandahar and his deputy, Ayman al Zawahiri, to Kabul so that all three could not be killed in one attack.¹²⁵

There was no American strike. In February 2001, a source reported that an individual whom he identified as the big instructor (probably a reference to Bin Ladin) complained frequently that the United States had not yet attacked. According to the source, Bin Ladin wanted the United States to attack, and if it did not he would launch something bigger.¹²⁶

The attack on the USS *Cole* galvanized al Qaeda's recruitment efforts. Following the attack, Bin Ladin instructed the media committee, then headed by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, to produce a propaganda video that included a reenactment of the attack along with images of the al Qaeda training camps and training methods; it also highlighted Muslim suffering in Palestine, Kashmir, Indonesia, and Chechnya. Al Qaeda's image was very important to Bin Ladin, and the video was widely disseminated. Portions were aired on Al Jazeera, CNN, and other television outlets. It was also disseminated among many young men in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and caused many extremists to travel to Afghanistan for training and jihad. Al Qaeda members considered the video an effective tool in their struggle for preeminence among other Islamist and jihadist movements.¹²⁷