

group from southern Yemen headed by a Yemeni member of Bin Ladin's Islamic Army Shura; some in the group had trained at an al Qaeda camp in Sudan.⁴⁴

Al Qaeda leaders set up a Nairobi cell and used it to send weapons and trainers to the Somali warlords battling U.S. forces, an operation directly supervised by al Qaeda's military leader.⁴⁵ Scores of trainers flowed to Somalia over the ensuing months, including most of the senior members and weapons training experts of al Qaeda's military committee. These trainers were later heard boasting that their assistance led to the October 1993 shootdown of two U.S. Black Hawk helicopters by members of a Somali militia group and to the subsequent withdrawal of U.S. forces in early 1994.⁴⁶

In November 1995, a car bomb exploded outside a Saudi-U.S. joint facility in Riyadh for training the Saudi National Guard. Five Americans and two officials from India were killed. The Saudi government arrested four perpetrators, who admitted being inspired by Bin Ladin. They were promptly executed. Though nothing proves that Bin Ladin ordered this attack, U.S. intelligence subsequently learned that al Qaeda leaders had decided a year earlier to attack a U.S. target in Saudi Arabia, and had shipped explosives to the peninsula for this purpose. Some of Bin Ladin's associates later took credit.⁴⁷

In June 1996, an enormous truck bomb detonated in the Khobar Towers residential complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, that housed U.S. Air Force personnel. Nineteen Americans were killed, and 372 were wounded. The operation was carried out principally, perhaps exclusively, by Saudi Hezbollah, an organization that had received support from the government of Iran. While the evidence of Iranian involvement is strong, there are also signs that al Qaeda played some role, as yet unknown.⁴⁸

In this period, other prominent attacks in which Bin Ladin's involvement is at best cloudy are the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, a plot that same year to destroy landmarks in New York, and the 1995 Manila air plot to blow up a dozen U.S. airliners over the Pacific. Details on these plots appear in chapter 3.

Another scheme revealed that Bin Ladin sought the capability to kill on a mass scale. His business aides received word that a Sudanese military officer who had been a member of the previous government cabinet was offering to sell weapons-grade uranium. After a number of contacts were made through intermediaries, the officer set the price at \$1.5 million, which did not deter Bin Ladin. Al Qaeda representatives asked to inspect the uranium and were shown a cylinder about 3 feet long, and one thought he could pronounce it genuine. Al Qaeda apparently purchased the cylinder, then discovered it to be bogus.⁴⁹ But while the effort failed, it shows what Bin Ladin and his associates hoped to do. One of the al Qaeda representatives explained his mission: "it's easy to kill more people with uranium."⁵⁰

Bin Ladin seemed willing to include in the confederation terrorists from