

Unconscionable Attacks Underscore Brutality of al Qaeda

As you may have heard, there were two deadly attacks in Baghdad last Friday, claiming dozens of innocent lives. The nature of the attacks-bombs strapped to individuals and detonated at highly-visited markets-immediately suggested that al Qaeda was involved. As our nation saw on September 11, 2001, these jihadists are ruthless and have no respect for innocent human life.

Yet, reports over the weekend suggest that al Qaeda's tactics in Friday's attacks were especially horrendous and shocking. The two bombers were young women with mental health challenges, and they may not have even known that al Qaeda was using them to kill innocent civilians. U.S. Major General Jeffery Hammond, commander of U.S. forces in Baghdad, summarized, "It appears the suicide bombers were not willing martyrs-they were used by al Qaeda in Iraq for these horrific attacks. These two women were likely used because they didn't know what was happening..." Simply put, it appears that cowardly al Qaeda leaders exploited the vulnerable to execute their brutal agenda.

Friday's attacks demonstrated that al Qaeda is both ruthless and increasingly desperate. As one report noted, the use of these mentally-challenged women, along with an overall increase in women involved in suicide missions, suggests that al Qaeda extremists are "struggling to recruit Iraqi men and are finding it difficult to maneuver large bombs past checkpoints." This development indicates that General David Petraeus' counter-insurgency plan has weakened al Qaeda in Iraq. Indeed, these jihadists have lost many key sanctuaries as more Iraqis have united against them. I commend our commanders for responding to al Qaeda's unconscionable tactics with an even greater determination to defeat the jihadists and bring them to justice.