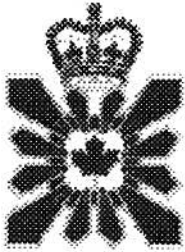


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Intelligence Assessment

SECRET/

**CSIS IA 2009-10/83
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The Role of Dreams in the Justification of Jihad

Summary

Dream interpretation is closely tied to religious belief in Islam.

Islamist extremists often report having dreams about the Prophet Muhammad or fellow mujahideen.

Dreams about religious figures can inspire extremists to act.

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Introduction

1. Dreams play an important role in Islam and are seen as a window into divine will.

This intelligence assessment discusses the role of dreaming in jihad,

Dreams in Islam

2. One religious scholar has described Islam as the "largest dream culture in the world today". Dreams are thought to offer a window to divine knowledge and will and are the source of inspiration and guidance for the dreamer. The Prophet Muhammad received Islam in what could be described as a dream-like state. Furthermore, one of the most symbolic events in his life occurred during his "night flight" to Jerusalem where he met Jesus and other prophets before ascending to heaven. Classic Islamic typology divides dreams into three categories: good (those that come from Allah), bad (those from Shaytan - the Devil) and those from "one's self" (neither from Allah nor Shaytan). Dream interpretation is a very old function in Islam and the role of dreams is discussed in both the Quran and the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad). Muhammad allegedly dreamed before

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the Battle of Badr¹ that the enemy forces were smaller than they were in reality, thus giving the Muslims confidence in victory. Symbols and images have been interpreted by dream scholars: for instance, if one dreams of being addressed by a ruler, this could signify the attainment of a high rank or goal.

Islamist Extremists and Dreams

3. Dreams provide a inspirational component of the world of the jihadist. Jihadists receive divine guidance of future events and see the legitimacy of their actions in their dreams. In addition, dreams connect jihadists with the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the Golden Age of Islamic conquest and the presence of historical figures in dreams is seen as a revelation. Among the Islamist extremists who are reported to have experienced significant dreams of jihad are Al Qaeda leader Osama Binladen, Zacarias Moussaoui (the “20th hijacker”), Richard Reid (the “shoebomber”), Iraqi jihadist Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, and Mullah Omar.

¹ The Battle of Badr was a pivotal clash in 624 between the embryonic Muslim nation and the inhabitants of Mecca in which the Muslim army defeated a much larger host.