



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

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## About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

# Somalia's New Government and the Challenge of Al-Shabab

By David H. Shinn



Al-Shabab fighters participate in a military drill on the outskirts of Mogadishu. - Photo by Mustafa Abdi/AFP/Getty Images

**A**FTER THE SEPTEMBER 11 attacks, the Bush administration's foreign policy toward Somalia focused primarily on counterterrorism.<sup>1</sup> This focus was a result of Somalia's proximity to the Middle East, U.S. concern that al-Qa`ida might relocate to the country, a history of terrorist bombings targeting Western interests in nearby Kenya and Tanzania and early contact between al-Qa`ida and individuals in Somalia. Although ties exist between al-Qa`ida and Somalia's al-Shabab militant group, the overwhelming objective of U.S. policy in Somalia should not be confronting international terrorist activity. Instead, the United States should contribute to creating a moderate government of

national unity in Somalia, which offers the best hope of minimizing Somali links to international terrorism. Long-term U.S. interests in the Horn of Africa will not be served by a policy that is consumed with military action to the detriment of supporting economic development and a broad based Somali government.

This article outlines al-Qa`ida's early activity in Somalia, provides background and current information on al-Shabab including its recruitment of Americans and Europeans, and finally offers some policy suggestions on how best to stabilize Somalia.

### Early Al-Qa`ida Activity in Somalia

Al-Qa`ida links to Somalia date back to 1992. At that time, the United States prepared to send troops to the country to open humanitarian corridors to feed starving Somalis in an operation known as the Unified Task Force. Declassified

1 The United States provided modest amounts of humanitarian assistance to Somalia each year since U.S. troops left the country in 1994. Moreover, in 2008 the United States began to actively support the political reconciliation process.

documents made available through the Harmony Project at West Point's Combating Terrorism Center show that the Africa regional al-Qa`ida leader, Abu Hafs, made multiple trips to Somalia from the al-Qa`ida base in Khartoum in 1992.<sup>2</sup> The first al-Qa`ida operatives arrived in Somalia in February 1993 and, working closely with an extremist Somali group known as al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI), established three training camps. The evidence concerning al-Qa`ida's role in attacks against U.S. and subsequent UN forces in Somalia during 1993 is conflicting. It appears, however, that al-Qa`ida claimed more involvement than it deserved. Al-Qa`ida underestimated the cost of its Somalia operation and overestimated the degree to which Somalis would become jihadists. It especially failed to appreciate the strength of traditional Sufi doctrine in Somali Islam.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, al-Qa`ida did manage to recruit a number of young Somalis who probably formed the core structure of subsequent radical Islamist groups that adopted terrorist tactics.<sup>4</sup>

The United States believed that three al-Qa`ida operatives—Fazul Abdullah Muhammad of the Comoro Islands, Abu Taha al-Sudani of Sudan and Salah Ali Salah Nabhan of Kenya—who took part in the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania benefited from AIAI protection in Somalia.<sup>5</sup> Although AIAI eventually disappeared as an identifiable organization in Somalia, a number of Somali groups professed to carry on its radical agenda, the most important of which is now known as al-Shabab (The Youth). In the meantime, al-Qa`ida continued to call on Somalis to wage a jihad against Ethiopian forces in Somalia and their U.S. allies. The United States pursued a policy focused

primarily on capturing the three persons linked to the embassy bombings and Somali support for international terrorism.<sup>6</sup> In 2007, an Ethiopian air attack against fleeing Islamists near the Somali-Kenyan border resulted in the death of one of the three, Abu Taha al-Sudani.

#### The Rise of Shabab

Aden Hashi "Ayro," a former military chief of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) who had previously received training with al-Qa`ida and the Taliban in Afghanistan, established al-Shabab as early as 2004.<sup>7</sup> Ayro attracted disaffected young Somalis by combining Somali nationalism, reverence for Islam and after 2006 a clarion call to expel Ethiopian military forces that had moved deep into Somalia at the request of the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Al-Shabab became a highly disciplined force.<sup>8</sup> Many of its followers were probably driven more by Somali nationalism than religious fanaticism. A subset of the organization, however, committed itself to creating an Islamic caliphate in Somalia. This select group reportedly received training in Eritrea for making roadside bombs, car bombs and suicide vests.<sup>9</sup> From the beginning, al-Shabab has been a decentralized organization and increasingly subject to clan and regional fissures. There are persistent reports that Sudanese, Saudis, Egyptians, Pakistanis and Yemenis have joined al-Shabab and that most of its funding comes from the Somali diaspora and foreign Islamist supporters.<sup>10</sup> Together with other organized groups in Somalia, al-Shabab likely obtains a residual cut from some of the piracy ransom funds.

In May 2008, a U.S. cruise missile attack killed al-Shabab's founder in the town of Dusa Mareb in the Galguduud region of

central Somalia. The primary al-Shabab spokesperson since Ayro's death has been Muktar Robow, his former deputy. Although factions continue to hamper the organization, al-Shabab became even stronger after Ayro's death.<sup>11</sup> His killing underscored outside involvement in Somalia and bolstered the resolve of al-Shabab's supporters to oppose all foreign elements.<sup>12</sup> After his death, al-Shabab stepped up its attacks on the TFG and Ethiopians and demonstrated increasing military success.

#### Shabab's Leadership and Ties to Al-Qa`ida

Al-Shabab's leadership is decentralized, and some sub-clan militia units may just be calling themselves al-Shabab as a matter of convenience.<sup>13</sup> Ibrahim Haji Jama "al-Afghani" operates in the area where Somaliland, Puntland and Ethiopia converge.<sup>14</sup> His group consists mainly of Isaaq and Harti clan members and reportedly carried out attacks against foreigners in Somaliland during 2003 and 2004.<sup>15</sup> Shaykh Fuad Mohamed "Shongole" heads a group of fighters in the ports of Marka and Brava south of Mogadishu.<sup>16</sup> Muktar Robow of the Rahanwayn clan runs the al-Shabab unit in Bay and Bakool regions of central Somalia and is affiliated with the mainly Hawiye/Habir Gidir/Ayr sub-sub-clan unit in southern Mogadishu. He received support in late 2008 from Shaykh Hassan "Turki," who has long been in charge of a militant training camp in Ras Kamboni along the coast at the southern tip of Somalia. Ayro controlled an al-Shabab unit around Dusa Mareb, but this group may now be under the direction of Muktar Robow if it still exists at all.<sup>17</sup>

The strength of al-Shabab's ties to al-Qa`ida are open to debate. Muktar Robow stated in August 2008, "We will

2 *Al-Qa`ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006).

3 Salafist movements arose in Africa and other regions to counter the "innovative" customs and traditions of Muslims who adhered to Sufi Islam. Al-Qa`ida largely pursues a Salafist ideology.

4 David H. Shinn, "Al-Qaeda in East Africa and the Horn," *The Journal of Conflict Studies* 27:1 (2007): pp. 56-58.

5 "Target of U.S. Strike Wanted for Multiple Attacks," Associated Press, January 9, 2007; "Senior U.S. Official Calls on Islamic Militia in Somalia to Turn Over al-Qaeda Suspects," Associated Press, June 21, 2006.

6 Shinn, pp. 59-64.

7 For an excellent analysis of al-Shabab as of early 2008, see Anonymous, "Somalia's al-Shabab Reconstitutes Fighting Force," *CTC Sentinel* 1:3 (2008). In addition, see Stig Jarle Hansen, "Misspent Youth - Somalia's Shabab Insurgents," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 1, 2008.

8 Al-Shabab does not take instruction from one hierarchical structure. Each splinter group or fighting unit, however, is disciplined and effective militarily.

9 Ibid.

10 This information is based on the author's own confidential interviews.

11 Anonymous; Hansen.

12 Ibid.

13 Ken Menkhaus, "Somalia: A Country in Peril, a Policy Nightmare," *Enough Strategy Paper*, September 2008, p. 6.

14 Personal interview, expatriate NGO representative who has spent considerable time in Somalia, November 9, 2008.

15 "Two Brutal Stalemates," *Africa Confidential* 49:22 (2008): pp. 6-7.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid. This unit may no longer exist, as al-Shabab's forces were largely defeated around Dusa Mareb by rival forces from Ahlu-Sunna wal-Jama.

take our orders from Shaykh Usama bin Ladin because we are his students.”<sup>18</sup> He added, “Most of our leaders were trained in al-Qa`ida camps. We get our tactics and guidelines from them. Many have spent time with Usama bin Ladin.”<sup>19</sup> Radical Somali groups, including al-Shabab, have a history of exaggerating their terrorist credentials. Muktar Robow’s statement that al-Shabab takes orders from Bin Ladin may well demonstrate more anger at the United States for killing Ayro than a command and control association with al-Qa`ida.<sup>20</sup> For al-Qa`ida’s part, leaders Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi make frequent references to Somalia in their internet pronouncements. In September 2008, al-Qa`ida operative Salah Ali Salah Nabhan appeared in a propaganda video with Muktar Robow.<sup>21</sup> Nabhan reportedly knows Bin Ladin personally and declared an oath of loyalty on behalf of al-Shabab to Bin Ladin and al-Qa`ida. He has encouraged training in al-Shabab camps and urged fighters to oppose the TFG, Ethiopian forces and African Union peacekeepers.<sup>22</sup> In a mid-February 2009 video, Abu Yahya called on Somalis to oppose the new Somali government and attack African Union peacekeepers.<sup>23</sup> At a March 10 hearing held by the Senate Armed Services Committee, military intelligence chief Lt. Gen. Michael D. Maples suggested that a “formal merger announcement” between al-Qa`ida and al-Shabab is

forthcoming.<sup>24</sup> While there are clearly ties between the two organizations, it is important not to overstate their significance. Indeed, if the merger does occur, it will only further alienate al-Shabab from the vast majority of moderate Somalis.

#### **Shabab Recruiting Americans and Europeans**

A particularly disturbing turn of events occurred when the FBI reported that during the past 18 months as many as 20 young Somali-Americans may have left their homes in Minneapolis and St. Paul in Minnesota, the largest Somali diaspora in the United States, under suspicious circumstances.<sup>25</sup> A few young Somalis were also recruited in Boston; San Diego; Seattle; Columbus, Ohio; and Portland, Maine.<sup>26</sup> It has been confirmed that several of them found their way to al-Shabab in Somalia. Shirwa Ahmed, a naturalized U.S. citizen, blew himself up in Somalia in October 2008, killing dozens of al-Shabab’s opponents.<sup>27</sup> Hassan Burhan and two Somali-American colleagues left Minneapolis in November and made their way to Kismayo, a fundamentalist stronghold.<sup>28</sup> FBI Associate Director Philip Mudd recently stated that the internet encouraged these recruits to go to Somalia, but individuals inside the United States had to help them purchase the airline tickets.<sup>29</sup>

There is also at least one reported case of a Somali who was studying in the United Kingdom returning to Somalia

and becoming a suicide bomber.<sup>30</sup> British security officials reported that dozens of extremists have returned to the United Kingdom from terrorist training camps in Somalia.<sup>31</sup> There are also numerous reports that Somalis from the large diasporas in Canada and the Scandinavian countries have joined al-Shabab in Somalia.<sup>32</sup>

Most of these cases occurred in 2008. It remains to be seen if al-Shabab can continue to attract young Somalis in the West now that Ethiopian forces have left and the political situation has changed in the country. Although it is not clear why these young Somalis joined al-Shabab, it may have been out of a sense of pursuing Somali nationalism or simply seeking adventure. At this point, there is no evidence to suggest that they went to express anti-American or anti-Western feelings. The deputy director for intelligence at the National Counterterrorism Center, Andrew Liepman, told the Senate that these recruits “are going to Somalia to fight for their homeland, not to join al-Qaeda’s jihad against the United States, so far.”<sup>33</sup>

#### **Shabab Confronts Challenging Situation**

Al-Shabab received much of its support inside Somalia because it vigorously opposed the Ethiopian military presence. Somalis rallied to this nationalist cause. At the same time, al-Shabab’s tactics of political assassinations, roadside bombings and suicide bombings have alienated many Somalis. For example, al-Shabab took responsibility for the suicide bomb attack on February 22, 2009 that killed 11 African Union peacekeepers from Burundi.<sup>34</sup> Now that Ethiopian forces have left Mogadishu and are confining their military activity to the part of Somalia immediately

18 Edmund Sanders, “Conditions May Be Ripe for Al Qaeda in Somalia,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 2008.

19 Ibid.

20 Somali expert Ken Menkhaus argues that al-Shabab’s attacks against aid workers are a direct response to the U.S. designation of al-Shabab as a terrorist organization in March 2008 and the missile attack that killed Ayro. For more, see Menkhaus, pp. 5, 12, 15-16. Peter Cole of Exclusive Analysis believes that U.S. military intervention in Somalia has actually strengthened al-Shabab. For more, see Royal United Services Institute, “Crisis in the Horn of Africa,” conference proceedings, October 23, 2008, p. 17.

21 Nick Grace, “Shabaab Reaches Out to al Qaeda Senior Leaders, Announces Death of al Sudani,” *The Long War Journal*, September 2, 2008.

22 Nick Grace, “Shabaab Leader Sanctioned as Zawahiri Responds to Group’s Oath of Loyalty,” *The Long War Journal*, November 21, 2008.

23 “Al-Qa`ida’s Al-Libi Urges Mujahidin in Somalia to Remain Steadfast, Defend Muslim Land,” compiled from jihadist websites by NTIS, U.S. Department of Commerce, February 13, 2009.

24 Maples did not provide the source for this conclusion. See “Haunted by Somalia,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 2009.

25 Dan Ephron and Mark Hosenball, “Recruited for Jihad?” *Newsweek*, February 2, 2009; Kevin Diaz, “FBI Tracks Somali Terror Links in Minneapolis, Elsewhere,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 12, 2009; Spencer S. Hsu and Carrie Johnson, “Somali Americans Recruited by Extremists,” *Washington Post*, March 11, 2009.

26 Ibid.

27 “One of Five Suspected Somali Suicide Bomber Laid to Rest,” Fox News Minneapolis, December 3, 2008.

28 Ephron et al.; James Brandon, “Islamist Movements Recruiting in the West for the Somali Jihad,” *Terrorism Monitor* 17:1 (2009); Abdi Hassan, “US-Somali Youth Join Jihad in Somalia,” *Jerusalem Post*, February 17, 2009.

29 Dina Temple-Raston, “FBI Believes Missing Men Joined Somali Terrorists,” National Public Radio, March 12, 2009. Also see Laura Yuen and Sasha Aslanian, “Online Tools May Have Been Used to Recruit Young Somalis,” Minnesota Public Radio, March 6, 2009.

30 Jonathan Rugman, “Somali Radicals ‘Importing Terror to UK’ say Intelligence Analysts,” *The Times*, February 16, 2009.

31 Ibid.

32 Brandon.

33 Randall Mikkelsen, “Somali-Americans Recruited as ‘Cannon Fodder,’” Reuters, March 11, 2009.

34 “Somali Insurgents Kill 11 African Peacekeepers,” *Sudan Tribune*, February 22, 2009; “Bombs Kill Somalia Peacekeepers,” BBC, February 22, 2009. A Somali-language web site, www.kataaib.info, subsequently posted photos of two young men it said were the suicide bombers responsible for the attack. Many Somalis see the African Union troops as a neutral force.



across the Ethiopian border, al-Shabab's strongest argument has dissolved and it is left with a tactical record that should worry many Somalis. The recent resignation of TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf and his replacement with Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad further undercut al-Shabab.

Shaykh Sharif is a Hawiye/Abgal sub-clan member and was one of the two principal leaders of the ICU that the TFG and Ethiopians deposed late in 2006. Shaykh Sharif recently announced that he will impose Shari'a, neutralizing one of al-Shabab's key demands.<sup>35</sup> Shaykh Sharif has ties to some of the al-Shabab members who once served as part of the ICU militia. Consequently, he is in a position to peel away some of the more moderate or opportunistic members from al-Shabab and convince them to join the new government of national unity. For example, Shaykh Abdirahman Janaqow, a deputy to Shaykh Sharif, publicly attacked al-Shabab during a sermon in Mogadishu in January. He blamed al-Shabab for the collapse of the Islamic Courts and accused it of killing anyone who disagreed with its methods.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, Shaykh Sharif is driven by a desire to achieve power and must overcome earlier policies that favored shutting down a free press and calling for jihad against Ethiopia.

The other principal ICU leader, Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys, remains in exile in Asmara, Eritrea. He opposes Shaykh Sharif and his recent alliance with the TFG. Shaykh Hassan also appears to have close connections with the radical elements of al-Shabab. It is doubtful, however, that Shaykh Hassan has any command and control over al-Shabab. The organization is too decentralized, and the fact that he resides in Eritrea would make any effective control over units in Somalia exceedingly difficult.

Although it remains well financed and is seemingly led by committed jihadists, al-Shabab has become increasingly subject

<sup>35</sup> Shaykh Sharif said he would not institute a strict interpretation of Shari'a. For more, see "Somali Cabinet Votes to Implement Sharia Law," Reuters, March 10, 2009; Mohamed Amiin Adow, "Somali President Bends to Rebel Demand for Sharia Law," CNN, February 28, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> "Senior ARS Official Blasts Al-Shabab," Mareeg English News, undated.

to fissures along sub-clan and regional group lines. Furthermore, by the end of 2008, rival Islamist militia groups began to confront al-Shabab. Ahlu-Sunna wal-Jama, a Sufi brotherhood of moderate Islamists, called in late December for a government of national unity and attacked al-Shabab militias in Mogadishu.<sup>37</sup> The desecration of grave markers by al-Shabab followers may have contributed to this conflict.<sup>38</sup> Ahlu-Sunna wal-Jama also took control of two towns in central Somalia controlled by al-Shabab, including Ayro's stronghold of Dusa Mareb.<sup>39</sup>

In mid-February 2009, the Somali parliament selected a new prime minister, Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke. From the large Darod/Majerteen sub-clan and the son of an early Somali president, his selection bodes well for building international support for Shaykh Sharif's new government.<sup>40</sup> To its credit, the new government has begun to return to Mogadishu. Shaykh Sharif, Prime Minister Sharmarke and most of his cabinet and nearly 200 members of the enlarged parliament are now back in the capital. Sharmarke has also set as his major priority reconciliation with opposition groups.<sup>41</sup> All of these developments could work to limit al-Shabab's appeal, at least in some areas of Somalia.

### The Way Forward

The situation on the ground in Somalia is extremely fluid. Al-Shabab remains a significant force but has been undercut by the departure of the Ethiopians and al-Shabab's unpopular tactics and ideology.<sup>42</sup> It is up to the Shaykh Sharif

<sup>37</sup> For more on the organization, see Alisha Ryu, "Tensions Mounting between Somali Islamist Groups," Voice of America, March 6, 2009; Abdullahi Hassan, "Inside Look at the Fighting Between Al-Shabab and Ahlu-Sunna wal-Jama," *CTC Sentinel* 2:3 (2009).

<sup>38</sup> Sufi custom reveres head stones while the absolutist views of al-Shabab oppose the practice. See "Sufi Group Accuses Al-Shabaab of Using Foreigners to Destroy Graves," Garowe Online, December 26, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, "Islamist Militants in Somalia Begin to Fight One Another," *New York Times*, December 29, 2008; Radio Shabelle, January 29-30, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, he has no base of political support and may find it difficult to stand up to Shaykh Sharif.

<sup>41</sup> "Somali PM Sets Reconciliation, Security Top Priorities," Xinhua, February 26, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> For a good analysis of al-Shabab's position, see Ken Menkhaus, "Somalia after the Ethiopian Occupation:

government to prove that it can rally most Somalis to its more moderate agenda. The first priority is the difficult task of reestablishing security. Contrary to popular belief in the West, an enlarged African Union force is not the answer, although it can continue to play a useful role by keeping the port and airport in Mogadishu out of al-Shabab's hands. The African Union does not have the capacity, funding, experience or willingness to implement a task of this complexity. A UN peacekeeping force would be somewhat more effective, but only if there is a peace to keep that all Somali sides endorse.<sup>43</sup> The international community should continue to help Somalia train a professional, community-based police force that draws its recruits from all regions of Somalia.<sup>44</sup> The UN special envoy to Somalia, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, recently commented that efforts to create a police force have progressed slowly because donors have attached too many conditions to paying them.<sup>45</sup> Financing the building of this force would be a good project for the Arab countries, which have a stake in a stable Somalia. Initially, security would be messy as the new government uses its own militia to deal with al-Shabab and freelancing militias. If it is possible to neutralize al-Shabab and independent

First Steps to End the Conflict and Combat Extremism," *Enough Strategy Paper*, February 9, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is clearly in no hurry to launch a UN peacekeeping operation in Somalia. He said on February 27, 2009 that the United Nations may start planning in June to set up a peacekeeping operation in Somalia if the security and political conditions are conducive. It would take months to actually send such a mission to Somalia. For more, see Sarah McGregor, "Ban Says UN May Establish Peacekeeping Operation in Somalia," Bloomberg, February 27, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> This is an idea supported by Abdi Ismail Samatar, professor of geography and global studies at the University of Minnesota. At a Voice of America seminar on Somalia on February 18, 2009 in Washington, D.C., he called on the international community to help establish a Somali police force of 15,000. Samatar has been involved in the last three Somali peace processes. The Somali-language website, AllPuntland.com, reported on February 23, 2009 that the French minister of foreign affairs, during a meeting with Shaykh Sharif, is prepared to train 10,000 Somali soldiers. Although the French minister did have a meeting with Shaykh Sharif, there is no confirmation he offered to train 10,000 soldiers.

<sup>45</sup> Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, comments made at a conference on Somalia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., March 10, 2009.

militias, a Somali police force, which has a long tradition of professionalism in the country, should be able to ensure security until Somalia creates a national army.

The United States should continue to support the new government of national unity in spite of its imperfections, while remaining in the political background. It is important to give the Somali government an opportunity to build a functioning coalition, neutralize support for al-Shabab and co-opt organizations such as the newly-formed Islamic party Hisbul Islamiyya.<sup>46</sup> Prime Minister Sharmarke has already announced that he is prepared to sit down with al-Shabab, although its leaders continue to oppose the Shaykh Sharif government.<sup>47</sup> As much as the United States opposes al-Shabab, it is necessary to let Somalis work through their differences in their own way. This is also the time for the United States to eschew military activity in Somalia. It should continue to provide humanitarian assistance, help to establish a police force and be prepared to step in quickly with development aid as soon as the security situation permits.

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46 Hisbul Islamiyya is a new Islamic party composed of four factions opposed to Shaykh Sharif's new government: the hard-line Asmara wing of the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia led by Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys; Harakat Ras Kamboni, a southern Somali Islamist group affiliated with Shaykh Hassan "Turki," who has had ties with al-Shabab; the Islamic Front of Jabhatul Islamiyya, an insurgent group formed in 2007 to oppose Ethiopian troops in Somalia; and a little-known, Harti clan group called Anole and based in Kismayo. Increasingly, it seems to be allying itself with al-Shabab.

47 "Somalia's PM Calls for Talks with al Shabaab as Ethiopia Troops Re-enter," Garowe Online, February 18, 2009; Abdiiaziz Hassan, "Somali Opposition Leader Vows to Fight On," Reuters, March 6, 2009.

## Inside Look at the Fighting Between Al-Shabab and Ahlu-Sunna wal-Jama

By Abdulahi Hassan

SINCE THE FIRST WEEK of November 2008, Somalia's hard line Islamist militant group, al-Shabab, has engaged in fierce fighting with a rival armed group, known as Ahlu-Sunna wal-Jama (ASWJ). The recent fighting occurred when the ASWJ, a Sufi group, reacted violently after al-Shabab challenged their form of worship and assassinated approximately 40 prominent personalities who had questioned the way they were ruling the region.<sup>1</sup> While forces loyal to al-Shabab have received support from the population due to their prior resistance to the Ethiopian occupation, there are signs that Somalis—at least in Galgaduud region and in Mogadishu—have grown weary of their presence. This was manifest in the decision of Galgaduud's clans and traditional Sufi shaykhs to throw their support behind the ASWJ.

The fighting between these two groups is significant because ASWJ defeated al-Shabaab in two strategically important towns, causing the radical group to lose its foothold in one of the main arteries connecting southern and northern Somalia. This article provides background on the rivalry between al-Shabab and the ASWJ, chronicles the recent fighting between the two groups, and explains why al-Shabab is in danger of losing some of its power and control in Somalia.

### The Rivalry Between Shabab and ASWJ

Al-Shabab is a hard line Islamist militant group that was established as early as 2004.<sup>2</sup> It has some ties to al-Qa`ida operatives and is considered the most jihadist-oriented out of Somalia's armed groups.<sup>3</sup> Its fighters

1 Insurgents affiliated with al-Shabab allegedly destroyed the graves of individuals revered by Sufis. This played a role in Ahlu Sunna's violent reaction to al-Shabab. For more, see "Sufi Group Accuses al-Shabaab of Using Foreigners to Destroy Graves," Garowe Online, December 26, 2008.

2 David H. Shinn, "Al-Qaeda in East Africa and the Horn," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 27:1 (2007): pp. 56-58.

3 For detailed background information on al-Shabab, see the following two articles: David H. Shinn, "Soma-

are considered well-trained militarily, as many of them were taught by jihadist leaders who had trained in Afghanistan. Al-Shabab received support from the local population in Somalia when Ethiopian forces occupied the country, as many Somalis saw al-Shabab as a genuine resistance force regardless of its strict jihadist leanings. According to one respected journalist, "The Shabab are not wildly popular, but they are formidable; for the time being they have motivated, disciplined militia with hundreds of hard-core fighters."<sup>4</sup>

Recently, however, the Sufi organization ASWJ picked up arms and began to combat al-Shabab.<sup>5</sup> Sufism has been in Somalia's religious landscape since Islam first came to sub-Saharan Africa centuries ago. Organized Sufi groups in Somalia have rarely been involved in politics, except for the anti-colonial wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century where they played a major role. In modern Somalia, Sufi religious organizations—such as the ASWJ—have been most active carrying out religious affairs within their communities. Only in mid-2008 did the ASWJ begin to constitute as a fighting force. In terms of numbers, ASWJ can call on more armed fighters than al-Shabab, but they are not as disciplined or well-trained. The ASWJ's poor training is a result of its fighters being drawn from clan militias, whose members usually do not have formal military training.<sup>6</sup> ASWJ has come out in support of Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad's new unity government.<sup>7</sup> Shaykh Mohamed Moalin Shaykh Amiir, chairman of the ASWJ in Nairobi, told reporters that

we are congratulating president Sheik Sharif and we are welcoming him to be the head of the unity

lia's New Government and the Challenge of Al-Shabab," *CTC Sentinel* 2:3 (2009) and Anonymous, "Somalia's Al-Shabab Reconstitutes Fighting Force," *CTC Sentinel* 1:3 (2008).

4 Jeffrey Gettleman, "The Most Dangerous Place in the World," *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2009.

5 Galgaduud's clans and traditional Sufi shaykhs have put their support behind the ASWJ. It is thought that one contributing factor for this action was al-Shabab's disregard of Sufi customs.

6 This also explains, however, why the ASWJ was able to pick up arms so quickly.

7 "Islamist Group Supports President Sharif," Shabelle Media Network, February 13, 2009.

government of Somalia. We also bless him to be the Somali president and solve the problems between the Somali people to reach peace and stability.<sup>8</sup>

There are reports that ASWJ forces in central Somalia have received financial support from Shaykh Sharif's new government.

#### Inside Look at the Fighting

From November 1 until December 16, 2008, fighting broke out in the Galgaduud region of central Somalia. In the town of Guraceel, 263 miles north of Mogadishu, al-Shabab engaged in fierce fighting with the ASWJ. After two battles, al-Shabab lost control of the town. On January 25, 2009, the same two groups fought again, this time in the strategic regional capital of Dusa Mareb, about 310 miles north of Mogadishu. Al-Shabab was again defeated in short fighting that lasted a couple of hours. It also lost control of the town.

During the fighting, both groups used small-arms such as AK-47s, PKM machine-guns, RPGs, anti-tank weapons, and 60mm mortars.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the use of "technicals,"<sup>10</sup> the ASWJ also utilized armored personnel carriers (APC) during the fight in Dusa Mareb, which it acquired from the Somali national army after it collapsed.<sup>11</sup> Al-Shabab had more PKMs and 60mm mortars at its disposal, but the group lacked mobility and resiliency, which contributed to its losses. Furthermore, relying on the use of mortars in populated areas in both Dusa Mareb and in Guraceel had a negative effect on popular support.

In addition to the use of APCs, ASWJ was able to defeat the better trained and numbered al-Shabab forces through more effective military tactics. During the battle of Guraceel, a force of 140 from ASWJ attacked al-Shabab's

estimated 500 men from three different fronts with groups numbering 30 men each.<sup>12</sup> According to sources in Guraceel, former Somali army officers helped advise and lead the ASWJ forces, which contributed to their victory.<sup>13</sup>

Signs of the fighting are still visible in both towns. One elder in Guraceel, who witnessed the fighting, said that "if al-Shabab had not intervened in people's freedom, their way of worshipping and not exterminated elders who disagree with them...then they would have been here for quite a long time. I hope they never come back."<sup>14</sup> In Dusa Mareb, a resident echoed the comments made

**"This time, however, it may be difficult for al-Shabab to return to Galgaduud since the major clans and sub-clans in the province have thrown their support behind the ASWJ."**

by the elder in Guraceel: "Al-Shabab brought law and order to our town, but took all our freedoms and basic rights away...if they left people alone without imposing so many restrictions, they would still be ruling this town."<sup>15</sup> In both towns, however, residents are concerned that al-Shabab will return. Many towns in Somalia frequently change hands from one armed group to another. This time, however, it may be difficult for al-Shabab to return to Galgaduud since the major clans and sub-clans in the province—Habir Gedir, Dir, and Marehan<sup>16</sup>—have thrown their support behind the ASWJ.<sup>17</sup> An additional factor that may prevent al-Shabab from gaining power in

Galgaduud is that the militant group is putting most of its energy in fighting Somali government and African Union troops in Mogadishu.

#### Shabab's Growing Weaknesses

Despite having better trained forces, al-Shabab was defeated by the ASWJ in Galgaduud. These battles have revealed two weaknesses affecting al-Shabab. The first weakness resulted from the Ethiopian withdrawal from Somalia. Once the unwelcome Ethiopian force largely withdrew from Somalia, al-Shabab has had difficulty securing support across clan lines. When the Ethiopians occupied the country, many civilians threw their support behind the hard line al-Shabab because it was a major part of the resistance. Ethiopia, which is considered a rival country by most Somalis, was welcomed by very few. In fact, al-Shabab has tried to tie ASWJ to the Ethiopians, alleging that the Sufi group has been armed and supported by Ethiopia to fight a proxy war on its behalf; there is some evidence of this support.<sup>18</sup>

The second weakness is that it appears the general population in Somalia has grown tired of al-Shabab's indiscriminate violence that has caused many civilian deaths. As stated by one man in Mogadishu's airport, "Al-Shabab brought peace to Kismayo...They banned all sorts of music, and no radio can play music. At night they carry foot patrol in the neighborhoods, and if they hear any music coming out of your house you will disappear." The man continued, "I like the fact that they have brought peace back to Kismayo, but I do not like them when they destroy our national flag,"<sup>19</sup> demonstrating why many in Somalia disagree with al-Shabab's attempts to eradicate Somali nationalism. Al-

18 Abdurrahman Warsameh, "Counting the Cost After Ethiopia Withdraws," AllAfrica.com, January 31, 2009. Based on the author's own research in Galgaduud, in addition to other reporting sources, some of these allegations can be substantiated. There is evidence that Ethiopia provided some support to the ASWJ forces during the battle in Guraceel. When the ASWJ was running low on ammunition, Ethiopian troops allegedly resupplied them. Also during the battle of Guraceel, Ethiopian troops apparently mobilized near the town but the ASWJ requested that they withdraw due to concern that they would be labeled as an Ethiopian proxy.

19 Personal interview, civilian in Mogadishu airport, February 18, 2009.

12 This information is based on the author's first-hand reporting in Guraceel in February 2009.

13 Ibid.

14 Personal interview, elder in Guraceel, Somalia, February 26, 2009.

15 Personal interview, resident in Dusa Mareb, Somalia, February 23, 2009.

16 Marehan's support for al-Shabab is not universal. In Lower Jubba, for example, some Marehan support al-Shabab.

17 Al-Shabab draws fighters from various clans, including some from Habir Gedir and Dir.

8 Ibid.

9 This information is based on the author's first-hand reporting and research in Guraceel and Dusa Mareb in February 2009.

10 "Technicals" is a term that refers to battlewagons, and they are used by all sides in Somalia's ongoing conflicts. These battlewagons are basically pick-up trucks with mounted anti-aircraft guns.

11 "Ahlu Sunna Takes Control of Provincial Town," Shabelle Media Network, January 29, 2009.



Shabab's ban on stimulants such as Qat, smoking cigarettes and public entertainment will likely continue to further erode their support in some parts of Somalia.

Support for al-Shabab is, however, still strong in certain parts of the country, partially due to the fact that they have set up Islamic courts and brought law and order to areas under their control. Despite al-Shabab's recent losses, the group, along with an Islamist coalition of four factions known as Hisbul Islamiyya that has ties to al-Shabab,<sup>20</sup> still controls

### **“Al-Shabab’s losses to the ASWJ in Galgaduud demonstrate how clan loyalties can shift, and why al-Shabab is in danger of losing some of its power and control in Somalia.”**

significant land in southern Somalia. Clan loyalties help to secure al-Shabab's control of Bay and Bakool regions in the southwest because the group draws significant numbers of fighters from the Rahanwayn clans, which are predominate in those two regions. Al-Shabab also has significant control of Lower Jubba region. Furthermore, when combined with Hisbul Islamiyya's Harakat Ras Kamboni of Shaykh Hassan Turki—which has a strong Ogadeni clan connection and influence in Lower Shabelle<sup>21</sup>—al-Shabab's influence extends from Kismayo all the way to the Somali-Kenyan border.

<sup>20</sup> Hisbul Islamiyya is composed of four factions: the hard-line Asmara wing of the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia led by Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys; Harakat Ras Kamboni, a southern Somali Islamist group affiliated with Shaykh Hassan “Turki,” who has had ties with al-Shabab; the Islamic Front of Jabhatul Islamiyya, an insurgent group formed in 2007 to oppose Ethiopian troops in Somalia; and a little-known, Harti clan group called Anole and based in Kismayo.

<sup>21</sup> The Ogadeni are a sub-clan of the Darod.

#### **Conclusion**

Al-Shabab's losses to the ASWJ in Galgaduud demonstrate how clan loyalties can shift, and why al-Shabab is in danger of losing some of its power and control in Somalia. Furthermore, since January 31, the former chairman of the Islamic Courts Union, Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad, was chosen as the new president of Somalia. With Shaykh Sharif as the head of the Somali state, it has become possible to weaken the appeal of extreme jihadist ideology in the country. The Shaykh Sharif government's decision to apply Shari`a and his past ties to Somali militias may weaken the appeal of hard liners such as al-Shabab. To consolidate these gains, it will require well thought strategic and material support for the Shaykh Sharif regime. This support must be sensitive of Somali social and cultural mores.<sup>22</sup> Whatever help is extended to the new government has to take into account previous shortcomings, such as giving the green light to Somalia's rival, Ethiopia, to invade without considering the possible backlash. Indeed, two years ago, thousands of Ethiopian troops were sent to the Somali capital to both empower the then TFG and eradicate extremist jihadists. That strategy, however, did not cultivate any fruits and produced the opposite effect by creating more jihadists than before. Any future strategy must avoid these previous failures.

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<sup>22</sup> For example, when the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency decided to support warlords in Somalia—with the aim of capturing individuals suspected of international terrorism—it had a negative impact because the warlords had a low standing in society. Many in the Somali public interpreted this support as a war on Islam rather than an operation to catch al-Qa`ida operatives.

## **Pakistan's Continued Failure to Adopt a Counterinsurgency Strategy**

By Ahmed Rashid

IN RECENT MONTHS, the Pakistani Taliban have made unprecedented inroads into the world's second largest Muslim country and the only one armed with nuclear weapons. Pakistan's February concessions to the Taliban in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) are a watershed in the country's steady slide toward anarchy and the growing acceptance of the Taliban's control in northern Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, the Taliban called for a cease-fire in Bajaur, a tribal agency adjacent to Afghanistan where the Pakistani government has been battling Taliban militants since August 2008. While neither the government nor the military seem capable of halting the Taliban's spread, the militants themselves are offering cease-fires to Pakistan so that they can unite and combine their resources to better combat Western forces in Afghanistan in early spring.

The current crisis adds to the already prevalent international concern about Pakistan's will to resist extremist forces and comes just as the United States and NATO decide upon a new joint strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan before the NATO summit on April 2. The political and military failure caps a long running inability of the Pakistan Army and the civilian government to learn, adapt or apply the basic principles of modern counterinsurgency strategy. The army refuses to accept that the biggest threat faced by Pakistan is the Taliban and al-Qa`ida, not the state of India. This article examines the Pakistan Army's failure to prepare for counterinsurgency warfare, the army's unsuccessful counterinsurgency operations in the Bajaur tribal agency and the Swat Valley, and the flaws inherent in arming pro-government tribal militias.

<sup>1</sup> Zahid Hussain, “Taliban Extend Truce, Gain Sway in Swat,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 25, 2009.

## Failure to Prepare for Counterinsurgency Warfare

The U.S. military, and in particular the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, spent much of 2008 trying to persuade Pakistan's military to allow the United States to train anywhere from two brigades to two divisions of Pakistan's regular forces to conduct counterinsurgency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) adjoining Afghanistan. The Pakistan Army rejected the suggestion, insisting that a conventional war with India was the major threat faced by the army and any such defensive war would still be fought on the plains of Punjab and Sind rather than in the mountains of Waziristan. The army also balked at an overwhelming U.S. military presence in the country at a time when there was growing anti-Americanism among the population and in the army. When terrorists struck Mumbai in November 2008, India threatened to launch hot pursuit into Pakistani Kashmir; the incident caused the partial mobilization of the Indian and Pakistani armies, and was used by Pakistan's military to vindicate its position regarding India to the United States.

In the fall of 2008, the army finally agreed to allow approximately 70 U.S. officers train members of the Frontier Corps (FC)—the main paramilitary force in FATA—in counterinsurgency warfare.<sup>2</sup> Pakistan's army chief, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, also ordered the FC to be re-equipped with better equipment, salaries and facilities—initiatives that the Bush administration and the army should have carried out using part of the largely unaccountable \$11.8 billion the United States handed over to the previous military regime of President Pervez Musharraf between 2001 and 2007.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, despite the training, the FC is still only a paramilitary force, and it remains deeply controversial. The FC's manpower is largely Pashtun, drawn from FATA

and the NWFP, while its officers are drawn from the regular army. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the FC was the main operational force used by Pakistan and the United States for their joint covert support to the Afghan mujahidin. Later, it was also on the front line of Pakistan's military aid and

**“Pakistan’s military must achieve the capability and courage to engage in counterinsurgency operations, in addition to the necessary willpower to alter its present course.”**

support to the Taliban regime in its fight against the Northern Alliance. During this conflict, large numbers of the FC were deployed inside Afghanistan in plainclothes to support the Taliban. In the past, the FC has also been deeply involved in training Kashmiri militants to fight in Indian Kashmir.

Today, the FC soldier not only has family members on the Taliban side in the present war in FATA and Swat, but has become thoroughly imbued with jihadist ideas and motivations.<sup>4</sup> For a force that was told for three decades that supporting jihad in Afghanistan and India was part of state policy, it is naturally proving contradictory for them now to be told that the same jihadists are enemies of the state. Therefore, it is not surprising that since 2004, when the army and FC launched operations in FATA, the FC has suffered from large-scale desertions, surrenders and loss of morale. Before the FC can become a legitimate counterinsurgency force, a number of steps need to be taken: it must be reconstituted unit by unit and thoroughly screened for Taliban sympathizers; large-scale retirements should be implemented; and a younger, fresher crop of recruits brought into the ranks.

## Army's Failed Counterinsurgency Practices

Meanwhile, the army's reluctance to train in counterinsurgency has been even more detrimental. The subject is not taught seriously at Pakistan's military colleges except in historical reference, such as to the Vietnam War. Most teaching and training still relates to the conflict with India.

The army's performance alongside the FC in FATA has demonstrated its lack of counterinsurgency training. After months of delay, in August 2008 the army moved into FATA's Bajaur Agency promising a two week campaign to rid the area of Pakistani Taliban, after which it would do the same in the other six tribal agencies. Eight months later, the army is still fighting in Bajaur, unable to clear it of Taliban elements and in addition it has also lost the Swat Valley in the NWFP.<sup>5</sup> In Bajaur, the tactics used were the direct opposite of the new counterinsurgency doctrine of “clear, hold and build.” That doctrine is people-centric in that military force is used to root out the extremists to protect population centers. Once that is complete, the doctrine calls for rebuilding the lives of the population so that locals turn against extremists. The army did the complete opposite. It moved out the population, flattened villages and entire towns with artillery, bombings and bulldozers. This created vast free fire zones, which the Taliban themselves creatively used to retaliate against the army by ambushing soldiers from concealed positions in the rubble. The Taliban also forced locals who remained to spy on government forces and enlisted more support from fleeing, angry refugees. Moreover, the army did not conduct effective counterinsurgency tactics such as constant patrolling, securing and controlling distinct areas. Instead, it set up large camps where it hunkered down while it relied on its heavy and destructive firepower to inflict Taliban casualties. The army became sitting ducks in Bajaur without a population to provide them information as to who was a Taliban member and who was not.<sup>6</sup>

2 Eric Schmitt and Jane Perlez, “U.S. Unit Secretly in Pakistan Lends Ally Support,” *New York Times*, February 22, 2009.

3 Ruben Navarrette, “Who Needs Friends like Musharraf?” CNN, November 6, 2007. For the source of \$11.8 billion, see Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (New York: Viking Press, 2008).

4 For more on the Taliban's influence on the Frontier Corps, see Arthur Keller, “Propaganda and Peace Deals: The Taliban's Information War in Pakistan,” *CTC Sentinel* 1:8 (2008).

5 In March, however, the government signed a new peace deal with the largest tribe in Bajaur, a deal that some speculate will allow the Taliban to concentrate their operations on neighboring Afghanistan.

6 These conclusions are based on the author's personal interviews and ongoing research on army operations in



The operation caused 400,000 people to flee Bajaur, and they are now living in poor conditions as internal refugees barely being looked after by a financially strapped government.<sup>7</sup> These refugees include important tribal elders and chiefs and educated youth—all vehemently anti-Taliban—who would have provided the necessary support for military operations if they had been protected in the first place. The most common accusation among these refugees is that the army was always killing the wrong people—civilians rather than the Taliban.<sup>8</sup>

The army used similar tactics in last year's military offensive against the Pakistani Taliban in the Swat Valley. Swat is a long twisting valley surrounded by high mountains; it is far more heavily populated than areas in FATA. While what should have occurred was securing villages and towns one by one, combined with deep patrols in the mountains to keep the Taliban on the run, the army instead set up camps where it hunkered down, used excessive firepower that killed hundreds of civilians, failed to protect the local anti-Taliban tribal elders who were trying to protect their villages and homes with their own followers and allowed the Taliban to dismantle or kill the local police force and civil administration. The Taliban burned down approximately 200 schools, and teachers were forced to flee. No element of the state machinery or the population was adequately protected or defended.<sup>9</sup>

The army is now negotiating a truce with the Pakistani Taliban in both Swat and in the tribal agencies. In the past, such cease-fires have left the Pakistani Taliban free to consolidate their territorial gains, while at the same time allowing them to concentrate their firepower on U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Once again, this seems to be the aim of the Pakistani Taliban, who are under the influence of Afghan Taliban leaders and al-Qa`ida.

Bajaur.

7 "14 Militants, 3 Women Killed in Bajaur," *Daily Times*, August 21, 2008.

8 This information was drawn from the author's personal interviews with refugees.

9 Amanda Ruggeri, "Taliban Extends Cease-Fire With Pakistan in Troubled Tribal Region," *U.S. News & World Report*, February 24, 2009.

### Flaws in Arming Pro-Government Tribal Militias

The army's latest strategy to create pro-government tribal militias to attack the Taliban has proved unsuccessful because there is no plan to protect such militias once they disband and go home for rest or to care for their families. The Taliban have massacred and then mutilated the bodies of several groups of such militiamen after they had gone home for rest. That has worked as a powerful deterrent against joining the militias.

Most recently, the NWFP provincial government also said that it will distribute 30,000 rifles to local militias to defend their territories against the Taliban.<sup>10</sup> Such experiments, however, are likely to fail in Pakistan's tribal areas because the Taliban have successfully decimated the tribal elite who would be the traditional leaders of such militias. More than 300 tribal chiefs and elders have been killed since 2004.<sup>11</sup> The individuals whom the government is now trying to promote as tribal elders are not the traditional leaders and consequently do not have the full support of their tribes or clans. Similar attempts now being carried out in selective provinces in Afghanistan by the U.S. military are also fraught with the same kind of dangers, as the Taliban have also decimated the tribal elite in that country. In both war zones, the Taliban have deliberately replaced the tribal elite with their own mullahs who act as military commanders, judges of local Shari`a courts and administrative heads.

### Conclusion

Even without receiving training from the U.S. military, the Pakistan Army can learn modern counterinsurgency practices. Professional army officers can study counterinsurgency from books in addition to the vast body of experience that has emerged from recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. By applying that theory to basic military training and doctrine and gaining knowledge of local conditions and the enemy, soldiers and officers can be quickly retrained. For this to occur, however, Pakistan's

10 "Pakistan's NW Govt to Arm People Against Militants," *Agence France-Presse*, February 22, 2009.

11 Aamir Latif, "Masquerading as Taliban," *IslamOnline.net*, June 28, 2008.

military must achieve the capability and courage to engage in counterinsurgency operations, in addition to the necessary willpower to alter its present course.

Until the Pakistan Army is able to re-determine its strategic priorities and its interpretation of the country's security, it will not be able to practice counterinsurgency successfully. The army's current national security doctrine is entirely focused on India. In sharp contrast, the civilian national security doctrine is focused on building the state in terms of improving relations with neighbors, increasing trade, advancing the economy, and providing mass education and development. The contrast between the two in how civilians and the military see the future of Pakistan has remained the principle contradiction that has bedeviled the country since its inception and has constantly pitted the army against civilian political forces.

Practicing successful counterinsurgency relies upon outlining proper strategic priorities and on making national security doctrine relevant to the needs of the population, rather than on the needs or desires of the army. Pakistan's biggest threat today comes from the Pakistani Taliban and their al-Qa`ida and Afghan Taliban allies. It does not come from India.

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## Al-Qa`ida's Involvement in Britain's "Homegrown" Terrorist Plots

By James Brandon

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, the discovery of new terrorist plots generally follows a clear trend. In a blaze of publicity, the would-be terrorists are arrested or, more rarely, succeed in carrying out an attack. Soon afterward, their friends and family are quoted as saying that the suspects are innocent and that they would never be involved in terrorism. Meanwhile, journalists speculate that these men (of whom little is yet known) apparently acted alone and had few if any links to known terrorists or extremist groups. This is often accompanied by learned speculation that this is a sign that more terrorists are becoming "self-starters," operating alone and forming fully independent cells as outlined in Abu Mus`ab al-Suri's *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*. This in turn often triggers further speculation that al-Qa`ida no longer exists as an organization or even as a network, an impression that is often only strengthened by the internet ranting of apparently isolated figures such as Ayman al-Zawahiri.

In the light of 24-hour news, this process is understandable. It ignores, however, the steady stream of information from terrorism trials in the United Kingdom—some of which last for months—that are increasingly bringing the whole concept of "self-starters" and "leaderless jihad" into question. Recent British trials in fact indicate that the majority of major terrorist plots formulated in the United Kingdom in the post-9/11 era were at least partly directed by major al-Qa`ida figures in the Afghanistan and Pakistan border region. Indeed, without the training supplied by al-Qa`ida members, it is likely that few of these plots would ever have become viable. This article shows that each of the major terrorist plots affecting the United Kingdom since the 9/11 attacks in the United States have had ties back to al-Qa`ida's central organization in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

### The 7/7 Bombings

The terrorists who carried out the July 7, 2005 London bombings were initially depicted as "ordinary" British Muslims who had been "brainwashed" by extremist Islamist preachers and radicalized by the war in Iraq.<sup>1</sup> Since then, it has become clear that the 7/7 bombers, and particularly their leader Mohammed Siddique Khan, had been involved in jihadist movements prior to 9/11 and that he and the other bombers had deliberately cultivated relationships with a wide range of pro-jihadist groups and individuals in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Siddique Khan's serious involvement in jihadist groups began in July 2001 when he attended training camps at Mansehra in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) run by Harkat-ul-Mujahidin, a Kashmiri terrorist group with close ties to the Taliban.<sup>2</sup> Khan then traveled to Afghanistan where he hoped to fight against the Northern Alliance. He was taken ill, however, and unable to take part in any fighting. In July 2003, Khan returned to the region to attend training camps run by unspecified jihadist groups at Malakand in northern Pakistan.<sup>3</sup> At these camps, Khan and other volunteers were trained to use light weapons and rocket-propelled grenades (RPG).<sup>4</sup> Zeeshan Siddique, another British Muslim who attended the camps with Siddique Khan, was later arrested by Pakistani police and found to have phone numbers for known al-Qa`ida members in his possession.<sup>5</sup> It is possible, therefore, that Siddique Khan first made contact with al-Qa`ida at this time while at the camp. According to some media reports, Siddique Khan and others in the Malakand camp actually received training from Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, a senior Iraqi member of al-Qa`ida.<sup>6</sup>

1 "Suicide Bombers' 'Ordinary' Lives," BBC, July 18, 2005.

2 Rachel Williams, "July 7 Plot Accused Tell of Times with Taliban," *Guardian*, May 21, 2008.

3 "7/7 Accused 'Joined Weapons Camp,'" BBC, April 18, 2008.

4 Ibid.

5 Mohammed Khan and Carlotta Gall, "Accounts After 2005 London Bombings Point to Al Qaeda Role From Pakistan," *New York Times*, August 13, 2006; Dominic Casciani, "Jihadi Diary: Inside the Mind," BBC, June 14, 2007.

6 Daniel McGrory et al., "Meeting of Murderous Minds

In December 2004, Siddique Khan, along with Shehzad Tanweer who would become one of the 7/7 suicide bombers, traveled to Pakistan for the final time. The two men stayed in the country for six weeks, leaving in February 2005. On this trip, their precise whereabouts are unknown—although it is likely that they received further bomb-making training that was specific to their proposed mission. At some point during the trip, each man also recorded a martyrdom video. Their decision to make the videos indicates that they had not only decided to carry out the

**"Each of the major terrorist plots affecting the United Kingdom since the 9/11 attacks in the United States have had ties back to al-Qa`ida's central organization in Afghanistan and Pakistan."**

London bombing attacks, but also that they had now all received the training and skills necessary to do so. After the bombings, this recording was released exclusively by al-Qa`ida's media wing, al-Sahab. Significantly, the video had been edited to include clips of Ayman al-Zawahiri praising the two Britons. This again probably indicates that there was a clear channel of communication—albeit probably through a number of intermediaries—between these British men and al-Qa`ida's most senior leaders.

### 7/21 Bombings

Initially, the abortive 7/21 bombings carried out on July 21, 2005, two weeks after the 7/7 bombings, were described as a "copycat" attack that had been hastily put together—hence the reason suggested for its failure. In the months following the bombings, however, it became clear that the 7/21 bombers had significant contact with a range of other extremist groups and individuals in Pakistan and the United Kingdom—including with people who were close to

on the Backstreets of Lahore," *The Times*, May 1, 2007; Sean O'Neill et al., "7/7 'Mastermind' is Seized in Iraq," *The Times*, April 28, 2007.

the 7/7 bombers. It is also now known that the bombings were planned well in advance and that Muktar Said Ibrahim, the leader of the 7/21 plot, traveled to Pakistan at approximately the same time as Siddique Khan.<sup>7</sup>

Ibrahim first traveled to Pakistan in late 2004<sup>8</sup> where the Crown Prosecution Service believe he was trained in bomb-making. As in the case of Siddique Khan, how and where this took place is presently unknown. Unlike Khan, Ibrahim, a Somali, had few contacts in Pakistan and no experience in training camps there. Therefore, it is likely that Ibrahim received some assistance and advice before he left the United Kingdom. It has been reported by UK newspapers that MI5 believes that Ibrahim was assisted by Mohammed al-Ghabra, a U.S. Treasury-designated terrorist who lives freely in the United Kingdom.<sup>9</sup> The U.S. Treasury has accused al-Ghabra of organizing “travel to Pakistan for individuals seeking to meet with senior al Qaida individuals and to undertake jihad training. Several of these individuals have returned to the UK to engage in covert activity on behalf of al Qaida.”<sup>10</sup> It also said that al-Ghabra traveled to Pakistan in 2005 to meet Faraj al-Libi who was then “al-Qaeda’s director of operations” and that he had contact with Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami and Harkat-ul-Mujahidin, two Pakistani terrorist groups.<sup>11</sup> If true, this may mean that al-Ghabra could have arranged for Ibrahim to be trained in bomb-making in Pakistan and for him to meet individuals from al-Qa`ida and related organizations—a possibility that some British newspapers have suggested.<sup>12</sup> One fact in support of this thesis is that in December 2004 Ibrahim was driven to Heathrow airport to catch his flight to Pakistan by Rauf Mohammed, an Iraqi taxi driver who is believed to have helped al-Ghabra send British Muslims to fight abroad.<sup>13</sup> Prominent British politicians have

called for al-Ghabra to be prosecuted; however, the police apparently lack the necessary evidence to do so.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, the Bank of England has ordered for al-Ghabra’s assets to be frozen under British measures initiated in 2001 against the Taliban and al-Qa`ida—a highly unusual measure that indicates the suspicion surrounding him.<sup>15</sup>

#### “Crevice” Plotters

Planned and developed in parallel to the 7/7 and 7/21 plots was the so-called “Crevice Plot” to attack unspecified targets in the United Kingdom—potentially including nightclubs and shopping centers. It was led by Omar Khyam, a British Muslim from south London, who had extensive experience of training camps in Pakistan and who was part of the British al-Muhajiroun network led by Omar Bakri. Khyam first attended militant training camps in Pakistan in 1999, at age 18, where he received training in light weaponry and RPGs.<sup>16</sup> In 2001, he traveled to Afghanistan where he was reportedly impressed by the Taliban.

These experiences, however, were apparently not enough to secure him access to the terrorist training that he wanted. Therefore, Khyam possibly turned—like Ibrahim—to British extremists in order to contact al-Qa`ida in Pakistan. Among them may have been Mohammed Quayyum Khan, a British man living in Luton (known as “Q” under British reporting restrictions) who is reported to have been in contact with Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, the Iraqi al-Qa`ida man who may also have trained Siddique Khan. MI5 reportedly said that Abd al-Hadi had “secret meetings” with Khyam on several occasions.<sup>17</sup> In summer 2003, Khyam, perhaps now armed with information about how to contact al-Qa`ida, returned to Pakistan. In Pakistan, he learned to build homemade bombs using ammonium

nitrate and aluminum powder—most probably from Abd al-Hadi or someone similar.<sup>18</sup> At some point in Pakistan, Khyam came into contact with Siddique Khan.<sup>19</sup> Together with other British extremists, Khyam and Siddique Khan conducted test explosions at their rented house in Lahore—eventually attracting the attention of the Pakistani police (who briefly investigated but took no action).<sup>20</sup> Khyam may have already been introduced to Siddique Khan through Quayyum Khan, their mutual contact from Luton. Nine months after their meeting in Lahore, in February 2004 Khyam was recorded by MI5 talking to Siddique Khan a few months before Khan headed to the Malakand training camp. During the call, Khyam gave Khan advice about training camps:

you’ll be with Arab brothers, Chechen brothers. The only thing I will advise you, yeah, is total obedience to whoever your Emir is...whether he is Sunni, Arab, Chechen, Saudi, British—total obedience. I’ll tell you up there you can get your head cut off.<sup>21</sup>

The ethnic diversity that Khyam emphasized is likely to be only found in an al-Qa`ida camp—perhaps the one that Siddique Khan visited in Malakand.

Once back in the United Kingdom, Khyam maintained his contacts with al-Qa`ida members in Pakistan. On one occasion, also in February 2004, Khyam even reportedly contacted Abu Munthir, Abd al-Hadi’s deputy, to double-check a bomb-making recipe.<sup>22</sup> Soon afterward, Khyam and his gang were arrested by police who feared that they were close to completing their own bomb project based on ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

#### Related Cells

In addition to these major bomb attempts, there is further evidence that suggests a range of connections between other UK-based extremists and al-Qa`ida members abroad.

7 “Profile: Muktar Ibrahim,” BBC, July 11, 2007.

8 Ibid.

9 David Leppard, “Fixer for 21/7 Plot Free in London,” *The Times*, July 15, 2007.

10 “Treasury Designates Individual Supporting Al Qaida, Other Terrorist Organizations,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, December 19, 2006.

11 Ibid.

12 Leppard.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 “Financial Sanctions: Terrorist Financing and al-Qaeda and the Taliban,” Bank of England, December 21, 2006.

16 “MI5 Transcript of Bomber’s Conversation,” Channel 4 News [London], May 1, 2007.

17 Shiv Malek, “The Jihadi House Parties of Hate,” *Sunday Times*, May 6, 2007; Ian Cobain and Jeevan Vasagar, “Free - The Man Accused of Being an al-Qaida Leader, aka ‘Q,’” *Guardian*, May 1, 2007; “Questions Over ‘Plot Mastermind,’” BBC, May 1, 2007.

18 McGrory et al.

19 Casciani.

20 McGrory et al.

21 “MI5 Transcript of Bomber’s Conversation.”

22 “Terrorists Planned to Rival 9/11 with UK Bomb Plot,” *Daily Mail*, April 30, 2007; Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, “Al Qaeda-on-Thames: UK Plotters Connected,” *Washington Post*, April 30, 2007.



In December 2008, Rangzieb Ahmed, a Pakistani man living in Manchester, was convicted of being a member of al-Qa`ida. Much of the evidence for the conviction came from analysis of his phone records and from incriminating evidence written in invisible ink in one of his notebooks. Ahmed's contacts include: Abu Hamza Rabia, a leading Egyptian member of al-Qa`ida who was killed in Pakistan in December 2005; Mamoun Darkazanli, a key al-Qa`ida financier of the 2004 Madrid bombings who also knew several of the 9/11 hijackers; and Khalid Habib, a prominent al-Qa`ida fighter who had fought in Chechnya and Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> Ahmed also had connections to Yassin Omar, one of the 7/21 bombers, who had called his cellular phone in March 2005. He additionally worked with Abdul Rahman, a local "recruiting sergeant" in Manchester to locate potential recruits to al-Qa`ida who might be willing to travel to Pakistan or Afghanistan. Additionally, Habib Ahmed, Rangzieb's co-defendant who was also convicted, had numerous close contacts with al-Muhajiroun, the British radical organization. Rangzieb Ahmed's connections both to al-Qa`ida's senior leadership and to British extremists are a clear indication that al-Qa`ida potentially plays a direct role in the recruitment of British Muslims at the street-level in the UK itself—as well as in their training in Pakistan.

Additional recent evidence of close links between British extremists and al-Qa`ida members in Pakistan comes from the trial of the 2006 "airline bombers." Ahmed Abdulla Ali, the leading airline plotter, was in Pakistan frequently during 2002-2005—including in December 2004 when the 7/7 and 7/21 bomb plot leaders were also in the country.<sup>24</sup> Ali was in phone contact with Muktar Ibrahim, the leader of the 7/21 plot, and British officials believe that all these plotters were trained simultaneously or by the same al-Qa`ida operatives—all three plots involved the use of Hydrogen Peroxide-based explosives.<sup>25</sup> Ali and Assad Sarwar, two

other airline plotters, were reportedly first "radicalized" partly during visits in 2002 to a Pakistani camp for Afghan refugees.<sup>26</sup> Such camps are frequently used by the Taliban and other groups to recruit supporters—initial contacts with al-Qa`ida sympathizers may have been made there. Another leading suspect in the airline plot was Rashid Rauf, a British Muslim who was arrested by Pakistani police in 2006, and who reportedly also had contacts with Muktar Ibrahim, the leader of the 7/21 bombers.<sup>27</sup> In December 2007, however, Rauf escaped from police custody shortly before he was due to be extradited to the United Kingdom.<sup>28</sup> Rauf was later reported to have been killed by a U.S. missile strike in November 2008 in Waziristan in northern Pakistan while in the company of Abu Zubair al-Masri, an Egyptian who was an al-Qa`ida explosives expert.<sup>29</sup> Although Rauf's death has not been officially confirmed, his death in the presence of a senior al-Qa`ida member would suggest a further link between the airline plotters and al-Qa`ida's senior members—as well as underscore the links between the 7/21 bombers and al-Qa`ida.

### Conclusion

As more evidence emerges from police and judicial investigations, it is becoming clear that many of the United Kingdom's largest terrorist plots developed as a direct result of the plotters' close involvement with senior members of al-Qa`ida in Pakistan. Indeed, it seems fair to say that without al-Qa`ida's direct involvement, many of these plots would never have become remotely viable. Other bomb plots carried out without al-Qa`ida's guidance have been far more amateurish and ineffective. The July 2007 attempted car bombings in London and Glasgow, for example, involved far cruder "bombs" made of propane gas

cylinders and petrol.<sup>30</sup> The May 2008 attempted restaurant bombing in Exeter was even more amateurish, being built largely according to videos on the YouTube.com website.<sup>31</sup>

Several important questions about the al-Qa`ida-linked plots, however, remain unanswered. For example, it is not yet clear to what extent the leaders of the 7/7 and 7/21 bomb plots proactively sought out al-Qa`ida members and to what extent al-Qa`ida found them and pushed them toward violence. Likewise, it is not yet clear at what stage Siddique Khan, Khyam and others decided to target the United Kingdom. Did they make this decision before they left the United Kingdom and traveled to meet militants in Pakistan? Or did they travel abroad planning to fight in Kashmir or Afghanistan, only to be convinced that they should instead attack targets in Britain?

These cases also make clear that many of the links between British extremists and al-Qa`ida were forged after 9/11 at a time when al-Qa`ida's network in the United Kingdom and Pakistan was supposedly under heavy pressure. The fact that al-Qa`ida could not only survive this pressure but also expand aggressively into the United Kingdom demonstrates both the group's remarkable resilience and also the resourcefulness of its members. Above all, however, these cases indicate that al-Qa`ida remains a potent network of like-minded individuals—if not a formal, centralized organization as it was pre-9/11—whose continuing power and reach should not be underestimated.

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be Sought in Alleged Al Qaeda Plot," *Los Angeles Times*, September 11, 2008; Gordon Corera, "Bomb Plot - The al-Qaeda Connection," BBC, September 9, 2008.

26 Milmo.

27 Duncan Gardham, "Airliner Bomber Plot: The al-Qaeda Connections," *Daily Telegraph*, September 8, 2008.

28 Massoud Ansari and Miles Erwin, "London Airline Bomb Plot Suspect Escapes," *Daily Telegraph*, December 17, 2007.

29 Kevin Dowling, "Missile Strike Kills Suspected UK Mastermind of Airline Bomb Plot," *The Times*, November 22, 2008.

30 Duncan Gardham, "Glasgow Bomb Plot: The Bombs Constructed by Airport Terrorists," *Daily Telegraph*, December 16, 2008.

31 "Muslim Convert Admits Failed Suicide Bomb Attack," *The Scotsman*, October 15, 2008.

23 "Links to Global Terror Network," *Manchester Evening News*, December 18, 2008.

24 Cahal Milmo, "You will be Destroyed: Bombers Convicted of Heathrow Plot," *Independent*, September 9, 2008.

25 Janet Stobart and Sebastian Rotella, "Retrials Will

## Lashkar-i-Tayyiba Remains Committed to Jihad

By Farhana Ali and Mohammad Shehzad

LASHKAR-I-TAYYIBA (LET) is in the spotlight for allegedly masterminding attacks in India's financial capital of Mumbai on November 26, 2008. The event has caused authorities to question the Islamist group's growing strength, as well as its command and control structure. Since the deadly attacks in Mumbai, the Lashkar-i-Tayyiba and Jama'at-ud-Da'wa (JuD) network, the latter of which is allegedly a front for LeT, has been quick to deny involvement. With mounting evidence against them by Indian intelligence officials, Lashkar leaders have made public statements claiming a change in their terrorist policies that have previously justified a number of attacks in India. In January 2009, the Islamist organization appeared to take a new tack in Kashmir by toning down its "violent Kashmir-centric agenda," opting for a peaceful settlement to the decades-old crisis.<sup>1</sup> If LeT is serious about ridding itself of the terrorist label, this could prompt the Pakistani security services to engage local jihadist outfits to seek a solution to the conflict in Kashmir, the main axis of discord between two nuclear-armed neighbors.<sup>2</sup>

Whether the LeT has the capacity for change is questionable, however, and worth further examination. Sensitive sources from within LeT indicate that the group is not ready to alter its position vis-à-vis India. These sources state that Lashkar rejoiced over the November 2008 attacks in Mumbai.<sup>3</sup> They apparently offered *nawafil shukrana*

1 Animesh Roul, "Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Taiba Chooses Between Kashmir and the Global Jihad," *Terrorism Focus* 6:3 (2009).

2 Yaroslav Trofimov, "A New Tack in Kashmir," *Wall Street Journal*, December 15, 2008. It should be noted that Pakistan has a historical record for engaging local militant groups for national security interests; the most recent example of engagement is the government's truce with the Taliban in the Swat Valley (February 2009), a move that has prompted wide debate within the U.S. and Pakistan on the potential consequences of talking to a once hard-battled enemy.

3 Personal interview, JuD insiders, Pakistan, December 2008.

(special prayers) to celebrate their victory.<sup>4</sup> Publicly, however, operational planners have denied a role in the attacks, and in recent weeks the LeT's political wing attempted to distance itself from extremism by allegedly renaming its organization Tehrik-i-Hurmat-i-Rasool.<sup>5</sup>

This article argues that initial claims by LeT/JuD that it will transform its image into that of a peaceful group are noteworthy if the organization withdraws from pitched warfare. Yet a stream of reports indicates that LeT/JuD in Pakistan remains devoted to violent jihad and will continue to galvanize support to transform South Asia into an Islamic-style regime.

### Inside the Network

Formerly known as Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (Army of the Pure), the newly camouflaged extremist organization and armed wing of the JuD has been active since the early 1990s.<sup>6</sup> LeT was the military offshoot of Markaz Dawat-ul-Irshad (Center for Religious Learning and Propagation),<sup>7</sup> the latter of which morphed into Jama'at-ud-Da'wa after 2002.<sup>8</sup> While the LeT and JuD are viewed as separate entities, the two groups are likely the same, enabling the JuD to increase its *da'wa* (missionary) and jihad activities under the LeT framework.<sup>9</sup> The JuD's leader, Hafiz Saeed, has made this point clear in his written work and public statements. In the magazine

4 Ibid.

5 Various reports indicate that the JuD may attempt to change its name, albeit temporarily. See Roul and "JuD Planning Name Change," *Deccan Herald*, January 2, 2009. The name change is also cited in Pakistan's leading English daily, *Dawn*, on January 3, 2009. The name change has not yet been confirmed.

6 For background, see Jayshree Bajoria, "Profile: Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure) (a.k.a. Lashkar e-Tayyiba, Lashkar e-Toiba; Lashkar-i-Taiba)," Council on Foreign Relations, December 2, 2008.

7 The LeT was allegedly created by Pakistani intelligence services to balance India's control over Kashmir. For background, see Christophe Jaffrelot, *Pakistan: Nationalism Without a Nation?* (London: Zed Books, 2002).

8 Qandeel Siddique, "What is Lashkar-e-Taiba?" Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, 2009, p. 4.

9 The statement that the two groups are likely the same is based on the authors' assessment. Additionally, the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center identifies the link between the two groups as follows: "LT Coordinates its Charitable Activities through its Front Organization, Jamaat-ud-Dawa."

*Takbeer*,<sup>10</sup> Saeed wrote, "Islam propounds both *da'wa* (proselytize) and jihad. Both are equally important and inseparable. Since our life revolves around Islam, therefore both *da'wa* and jihad are essential; we cannot prefer one over the other." The symbiosis of education (*da'wa*) with jihad forms the basis of LeT/JuD's political and religious power.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to involvement in Kashmir, LeT/JuD allegedly participated in previous terrorism plots involving the United Kingdom<sup>12</sup> and orchestrated numerous attacks in India, including New Delhi's Laal Qila (Red Fort) on December 22, 2000, Srinagar Airport in Indian-held Kashmir on January 5, 2001, and the Indian Parliament in December 2001. A statement released by LeT after the attack in Srinagar reflects their aspirations today:

Prior to September 11, we were in a position to liberate Kashmir any time, but our target is the whole of India and Israel's turn after that. We only want the destruction of India...we are the ones fighting for the liberation of Kashmir and the future of Pakistan.

The LeT/JuD allegedly subscribes to a hadith that recognizes the importance and relevance of "Ghazwa Hind," a tradition that calls for Muslims to replace Hindu-dominated India with an Islamic style-government through the use of jihad. While the hadith is possibly unauthentic,<sup>13</sup> it serves

10 This document was in Urdu in the JuD's magazine in 1999.

11 For background on the organization, see Muhammad Amir Rana (translated by Saba Ansari), *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal, 2006), pp. 317-342; Mariam Abou Zahab, "I Shall be Waiting for You at the Door of Paradise: the Pakistani Martyrs of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure)," in Aparna Rao, Michael Bollig and Monika Bock, *The Practice of War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), p. 133.

12 Benjamin Sand, "Pakistan Denies Islamic Charity Link to UK Bomb Plot," *Voice of America*, August 15, 2006.

13 Hadith literature varies widely depending on the source of the tradition. Islamic scholars agree that not all hadith is considered a hadith from the Prophet Muhammad, unless a scientific methodology of transmission can be attributed to Muhammad. As long as hadith does not contradict the main schools of Islamic thought and the books of Islam—the Qur'an and sunna—then it is acceptable. Only when a reliable chain of transmission is estab-

as the guiding principle for several jihadist groups in Pakistan, including the LeT/JuD. The idea that militants will “Islamicize” India by force after assumed victory in Afghanistan is not a new concept; it has been previously highlighted in the literature of Maulana Fazul Rahman Khalil<sup>14</sup> and Masood Azhar, the latter the founder of Jaish-i-Muhammad (JeM). Ghazwa Hind and the narrative of restoring Islam in the world is allegedly taught to members at the JuD’s center in Muridke outside of Lahore; these spectacular congregations, attended by hundreds of members, reinforce religious activism to influence the process of an Islamic identity formation.<sup>15</sup>

Connected by a similar religious ideology and strategic goal, the JuD and LeT complement one another. To its members, the two organizations exist on paper only. The distinction is made by the JuD’s vast social services network in Pakistan. The social services provision the organization offers arguably keeps the Islamists alive and attractive to local communities in Pakistan. In recent history, the JuD played a pivotal role in aiding the victims of Pakistan’s 2005 earthquake; the group worked alongside the U.S. military and international aid organizations, such as the United Nations, to provide needed relief. As a result, the JuD is tolerated and welcomed by the Pakistani government for filling an important civic need. The JuD is considered the best organized Islamic charity in South Asia with a social network unmatched by other Islamic groups or militant outfits.

lished can a hadith be considered authentic. The Ghazwa Hind tradition is attributed to the Prophet Muhammad although there is little evidence to support this claim; the tradition is propagated by the late Shaykh Muhammad Akram Awan of the Naqshbandia Owaisiah, a major Sufi Islamic order. Local militant outfits in Pakistan believe that Ghazwa Hind legitimizes “jihad in Kashmir,” thereby justifying attacks against Indian targets. For more information on the Islamic order and application of Ghazwa Hind, see the Urdu-language website, [www.ghazwatulhind.com](http://www.ghazwatulhind.com).

14 For lectures by Rahman, see [www.tauheed-sunnat.com/sunnat/content/ghazwa-uhud-ka-pas-manzar](http://www.tauheed-sunnat.com/sunnat/content/ghazwa-uhud-ka-pas-manzar). Also note that Khalil, Azhar and Hafiz Saeed publish widely in their own publications. Since the crackdown on the LeT, the Pakistani government has banned these publications, although this move will unlikely preclude these organizations from circulating their message.

15 Jaffrelot, p. 133.

By responding to social and economic ills under the platform of Islamic social justice,<sup>16</sup> groups such as the JuD have done exceptionally well to meet the population’s expectations in times of crises or natural disasters, and win their loyalty. Through the provision of social services, the JuD is able to connect with the people in a way that surpasses the state’s ability. Not only does this put pressure on the state, but it disallows external actors, such as neighboring countries and the international

### **“LeT/JuD in Pakistan remains devoted to violent jihad and will continue to galvanize support to transform South Asia into an Islamic-style regime.”**

community, from exploiting the local population to steer them away from the Islamists’ camp. In doing so, the JuD and by extension the LeT are able to grow their organization through social networking. With local support and sympathy from a needy population, these Islamists produce awareness of their activities and promote a particular religious doctrine that guides their associational work. Similar to LeT/JuD, Lebanese Hizb Allah offers a fair comparison. Known for an extensive and transparent social services arm, the Lebanon-based organization is viewed as the champion of the local Shi’a population for rebuilding society in the aftermath of war. Yet, unlike the LeT/JuD network, Hizb Allah’s ambitious political agenda reflects the group’s desire to grow its influence, seek greater

16 The concept of “faith and good works” also has its origins in Christianity and Judaism. The concept of giving is referenced in at least 93 of the 114 verses of the Qur’an and is central to the faith, even though it is not one of its five pillars. Unlike *zakat* (a mandatory alms), charity is voluntary but highly encouraged to attain God’s pleasure. For Islamists, the goal extends beyond developing an Islamic society. Rather, it is the groups’ desire for political power—with the use of Islamic slogans and narratives—that lies at the heart of their strategic objectives. Employing language and themes drawn from the Islamic faith also has helped Islamists identify with the population in need, translating into the public’s admiration for the group’s political platform.

control of Lebanon’s municipalities, and likely use its social services infrastructure to “win the hearts and minds” of the people.<sup>17</sup>

As one of the largest Islamic charity’s in Pakistan, no political campaign or military activity promises the same rate of success as the LeT/JuD network. Granting people their “basic necessities of life,” including the right to (religious) education, employment, water, food, housing, and security, these organizations are viewed as progressive Islamists. As organized structures with personnel working in various capacities, from social workers to protectorates of the population, the LeT/JuD has established a national identity that builds solidarity among its participants. In doing so, they maintain a level of independence, can expand their Islamic agenda, and could qualify as legitimate authorities to a population that increasingly perceives the civilian government as corrupt and conceding to Western demands. All these factors demonstrate why the Pakistani state finds it difficult to eliminate the group.

#### **Lifelong Ambitions**

What accounts for the LeT/JuD’s ongoing effectiveness? It is apparent after the November 2008 attacks that the group proved to the international community its capabilities against India. Given its size and strength, one senior Pakistani journalist said in an interview that “LeT is the new Al-Qaeda.”<sup>18</sup> His statement

17 During and after each conflict, Hizb Allah has quickly distributed aid to those most affected by war and developed plans for reconstruction. In its most recent war with Israel, a Kuwaiti-based journalist told the lead author that “Hizb Allah was quick to place the Iranian flag at the sites of homes it intended to rebuild, with Iranian money of course.” Hizb Allah’s immediate response to help the Lebanese people allowed it to gain popular support for militant retaliation against Israel.

18 Personal interview, Khawar Rizvi, U.S.-based Pakistani journalist, Washington, D.C., December 2008. Former U.S. security officials have also expressed concern over LeT’s global network. On March 8, 2009, Juan Zarate, the deputy national security adviser for counterterrorism in the Bush administration, stated, “We are and should be concerned about the threat LT poses, given its global network. It doesn’t just reside in South Asia. It is an organization that has potential reach all over the world, including the US.” See Josh Meyer, “Militant Threat from Pakistan Alarms U.S.: Officials See Indication of Presence within United States,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 8, 2009.



indicates a heightened awareness of the group's emotional power and a need to indulge in surprising moves to maintain their elevated status. While LeT/JuD is local and al-Qa`ida a transnational movement, arrests of senior al-Qa`ida commanders in LeT safe houses suggest a link between the two groups, although the details of this relationship remain opaque.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, there are similarities between al-Qa`ida and the LeT/JuD. The LeT/JuD appeals to a global audience despite being a local group. Like al-Qa`ida, the LeT/JuD network has an ideological framework that attracts members outside of Pakistan; it is not uncommon to find members from Central Asia and the Arab world with

**“In the short-term, Pakistan appears willing to act against members of the LeT/JuD to prove it has the courage to fight its own creation, but it is probably incapable of shutting down an organization important to its survival.”**

LeT, or to find Lashkar's participation in activities outside of Pakistan.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the LeT/JuD benefits from a support network outside of Pakistan that includes Saudi Arabia, a country with whom JuD leader Hafiz Saeed developed relations in 1985 when he studied in the kingdom, and subsequently received support from during and after the Afghan jihad. Many of the similarities end there, however. The LeT/JuD remains a local organization with local ties to Pakistani militant groups. Despite its shared strategic vision with

al-Qa`ida, Lashkar is focused on attacks against Indian and Western targets inside the subcontinent.

It will be difficult for the Pakistani government to counter the LeT/JuD network. LeT/JuD is one of the largest jihadist outfits in the country. Not only does the organization draw in thousands of members in Pakistan, but recruits from Muslim communities throughout India. The Deccan Mujahidin, the group which claimed responsibility for the Mumbai attacks, is likely a pseudonym for Lashkar.<sup>21</sup> The attacks in Mumbai showed a level of sophistication that reflects the group's coming-of-age. The LeT/JuD's legitimate activities in the name of charity, education, and public service (all under the guise of religious ideological doctrine) provide the organization a cover for its extreme excesses. With a veneer of secrecy, Lashkar can operate under the radar and not raise suspicion from local authorities. Its camouflaged activities—networks of legitimate mosques, schools, media and publications work—help the organization sustain its presence inside Pakistan and abroad.

#### Moving Forward

In response to international pressure, Pakistan has taken a series of steps against the group, such as closing LeT/JuD offices, arresting hundreds of suspected members, including senior leaders, and intending to hold a public trial of key commanders. Additional pressure on Islamabad to delegitimize the JuD's authentic activities (such as charitable work), however, will have long-term consequences that could impact the country negatively. Thus, counterterrorism cooperation between Pakistan, India and the United States is deliberately protracted.

Inside India, officials appear dissatisfied with Pakistan's overall treatment of the dossier<sup>22</sup> that New Delhi insists offers a wealth of evidence against Islamist

group members, all of whom were allegedly recruited, trained, and directed from Pakistan. According to the report, Indian authorities expect Pakistan to hand over the conspirators to face trial in India, dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism and adhere to bilateral and international agreements, such as the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, which requires member states to provide mutual legal assistance to neighboring states in terrorism cases. Naturally, the “need-to-do-more” on an Indian timeline is unlikely to be well received in Pakistan.

A key obstacle for Islamabad is how to eliminate Islamists that once served its foreign policy agenda in Kashmir and Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> According to Pakistani scholar Zahid Hussain, the state had no intention of clamping down on the LeT/JuD's propaganda machinery or its militant infrastructure, even though the group was added to the terrorist watch list in 2003.<sup>24</sup> Whether the government's crackdown on the network is cosmetic or convincing will depend on the final outcome of the Mumbai investigation, which is still pending.

Undoubtedly, the choices facing the United States will not be easy. Pushing Pakistan too far by forcing the shutdown of the LeT/JuD network will likely upset the bilateral relationship. The United States can, however, encourage Pakistan to move quickly to prosecute the suspects—it is the first step to restore faith and confidence with India, whose External Affairs minister recently announced his country's unwillingness to resume the composite dialogue on Kashmir unless Pakistan dismantles its terrorist infrastructure.<sup>25</sup> In truth, Pakistan is being pressed to “do more” by senior U.S. officials and the Indian government to “crush the ultras operating from its [Pakistan] soil,”<sup>26</sup> a statement that will likely arouse resentment inside Islamabad against an important ally and a regional partner for asking what it considers impossible.

<sup>19</sup> Siddique, pp. 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> Personal interview, various Pakistan experts, January-February 2009. A journalist in Pakistan told the authors that LeT/JuD draws on support from members in other Islamic countries. Students worldwide participate in Islamic training at the JuD institution in Muridke and LeT members are suspected of fighting in the Iraq war against U.S.-led forces. See Praveen Swami and Mohammad Shehzad, “Lashkar Raising Islamist Brigades for Iraq,” *The Hindu*, June 13, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Personal interview, Khawar Rizvi, Washington, D.C., December 2008. Rizvi said that Deccan is “an unknown and unfamiliar name to the public, but the name is significant. Deccan is a place in Hyderabad, a state in India with a Muslim majority population. There, LeT has a strong footprint and can manipulate Indian Muslims' anti-Hindu sentiment.”

<sup>22</sup> A scanned copy of the report can be read at [www.thehindu.com/nic/mumbaiaattacksevidence-3.pdf](http://www.thehindu.com/nic/mumbaiaattacksevidence-3.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> “Pakistan Has To Do More to Dismantle Terror Infrastructure: Pranab,” *Times of India*, February 24, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> “Pak Needs To Do More on Combating Terror: John Kerry,” *Times of India*, February 26, 2009.

In the short-term, Pakistan appears willing to act against members of the LeT/JuD to prove it has the courage to fight its own creation, but it is probably incapable of shutting down an organization important to its survival.<sup>27</sup> One senior Pakistani journalist doubts Pakistan's ability or willpower to effectively dismantle the LeT/JuD because the state needs to "protect an important constituency—the jihadi networks."<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, an initial crackdown against LeT/JuD will have little to no impact on the organization's long-term existence. Therefore, the coming weeks are critical for Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan will need to reach a final agreement on the Mumbai investigation or risk further provocation.

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## Deconstructing Ibn Taymiyya's Views on Suicidal Missions

By Rebecca Molloy

JIHADIST IDEOLOGUES REGULARLY advocate the legitimacy of suicide attacks, and some sectors of Muslim society accept the authenticity of this tactic. It is, therefore, critical to examine the more significant primary sources that have been misused by jihadists to formulate and support their arguments.<sup>1</sup> This article sheds light on a lesser known treatise attributed to the Hanbali theologian and scholar Ibn Taymiyya, who is probably the most widely cited medieval scholar by the Salafi-jihadi trend in Islam.<sup>2</sup> The treatise, entitled *Qa`ida fi al-inghimas fi al-`aduww wa-hal yubah fiha? (A Principle Regarding Plunging into the Enemy, and is it Permitted?)* is a short work comprising 48 pages in the original manuscript.<sup>3</sup> Despite the brevity of the work, it demonstrates Ibn Taymiyya's perception of *inghimas* (plunging into). Although his understanding of *inghimas* greatly differs from that of today's jihadists, they exploit his writings and the concept of *inghimas* to justify suicide attacks.

### The Context of Ibn Taymiyya's Writings

Ibn Taymiyya lived in the wake of the Mongol onslaught that culminated in the fall of Baghdad and the destruction of the `Abbasid caliphate in 1258 AD. The murder of the caliph and his family left the Muslim umma without a central authority. Baghdad and other centers of Islamic civilization were seized and destroyed. Unlike his jihadist followers, Ibn Taymiyya coped with an enemy that was initially pagan, but subsequently

accepted Islam. He witnessed the military strength of veteran Muslims crumble at the hands of the newly converted, and he despaired at the sight of soldiers fleeing from the conventional battlefield.<sup>4</sup> Despite these difficult conditions, what was most distressing to him was not an elusive victory in battle or the Mongols' legitimacy once in power, but rather the latter's mismanagement of the Muslim

**“Jihadists’ form of dissent fits Islamic legal definitions of brigands (muharibun) and rebels (bugha) who spread terror and destruction.”**

community's affairs. Underlying Ibn Taymiyya's confrontations with the authorities was "a structural disposition to cooperate with the state, and it is cooperation rather than confrontation that is the keynote of his political thought."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, even when he expressed concern with the prevailing political order, Ibn Taymiyya unfailingly accepted the legitimacy of Sunni Muslim society. He consistently argued that the best response to unjust rulers is forbearance.<sup>6</sup> What is at stake, according to him and other scholars, is lawlessness and "corruption on earth,"<sup>7</sup> or a complete breakdown of governance and social order if certain forms of dissent go unchecked. This occurs if dissenters reject the legitimacy of the

4 Jihadists extend the conventional meaning of battlefield to include civilian populations, even those protected under Islamic law.

5 Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 150.

6 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmu` al-Fatawa* (Madina: Majma` al-Malik Fahd li-Taba`at al-Mushaf al-Sharif, 1995), vol. 35, p. 21 and vol. 4, p. 443; Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhaj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya* (Riyadh: Ibn Sa`ud University, 1986), vol. 2, pp. 241-242; *Al-Siyasa al-Shar`iyya* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2003), p. 39 in Khalid Medhat Abu al-Fadl, *The Islamic Law of Rebellion: The Rise and Development of the Juristic Discourses on Insurrection and Insurgency and Brigandage* (unpublished doctoral dissertation submitted to the faculty of Princeton University, 1999).

7 Accusations of causing corruption were often used between political rivals in Islamic history. See al-Fadl, p. 60.

27 Pakistan relies on groups such as the JuD to balance Indian hegemony in the region. Islamabad also probably understands the leverage and influence that the JuD network enjoys, thereby prohibiting the civilian government from taking too harsh an action against an organization that potentially threatens the state.

28 Personal interview, Khawar Rizvi, Washington, D.C., December 2008.

1 For a detailed account on the proliferation of suicide attacks and popularization of martyrdom, see Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

2 See, for example, William McCants and Jarret Brachman, *Militant Ideology Atlas* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006), pp. 7, 12.

3 This treatise has not been published in the West and is currently available only in Arabic, edited and prepared by Abu Muhammad Ashraf b. `Abd al-Maqsud, *Qa`ida fi al-inghimas fi al-`aduww wa-hal yubah fiha?* (Riyadh: Adwa' al-Salaf, 2002). The only copy of the manuscript (#444) is said to be located at the Egyptian National Library in Cairo.

political order as well as the Sunni Muslim society governed by it. Ibn Taymiyya asserted that even if such people believe that they are commanding good and forbidding evil, when they rebel against authority they are in fact doing more harm than good, and they must be fought and stopped.<sup>8</sup>

Today's jihadists have no such claim to fame; they are not faced with similar historical and geopolitical conditions. They rebel against authority and delegitimize Sunni Muslim society in a manner that in certain regions is contributing to a breakdown of government and social stability (Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan). Jihadists' form of dissent fits Islamic legal definitions of brigands (*muharibun*)<sup>9</sup> and rebels (*bugha*) who spread terror and destruction. Their terror-based methods and pursuit of indiscriminate slaughter and lawlessness are difficult to distinguish from those of bandits, such as their historical counterparts, the Khawarij.<sup>10</sup>

#### Manipulating Ibn Taymiyya's Definition of Inghimas

Jihadist ideologues have manipulated Ibn Taymiyya's use of the term *inghimas* in an attempt to justify suicide bombing tactics.<sup>11</sup> Their interpretation has not been derived in accordance with appropriate Shari'a procedure, and it does not override explicit Qur'anic and legal texts prohibiting suicide.

8 Taymiyya, *Majmu` al-Fatawa*, vol. 4, pp. 440-441, 444, 450-452; *Minhaj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya* (Riyadh: Ibn Sa`ud University, 1986), vol. 2, pp. 233, 244.

9 In a video in 2000, Abu Mus`ab al-Suri called jihadists to commit larceny, murder and arson against non-Muslims in Muslim countries. For more, see Emrullah Uslu, "Al-Qa`ida Robbers Target Jewelry Stores," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 6:25 (2009).

10 During the battle of Siffin (657 AD), some of `Ali b. Abi Talib's supporters (shi'a) rejected arbitration, on the argument that judgment belongs to Allah alone, using the slogan "*la hukma illa lillah*." These dissenters eventually withdrew from `Ali's supporters and were later known as Khawarij. See, for example, Cook, p. 157: "The activist moralist believes it to be his duty to take a stand against political injustice, and to do so by recourse to arms; thus he ends up fighting against Muslims in the manner of the Kharijites."

11 Jihadist lexicon does not use the term "suicide attack," rather one finds phrases such as "carrying out jihad."

In *Qa`ida fi al-inghimas*, Ibn Taymiyya opens the discussion with a number of scenarios that help describe what he means by the term "*inghimas*" and where it would be more appropriate to carry it out. The author introduces the matter of "an individual or group fighting [an enemy] that outnumbers them, on condition there is some benefit to Islam in fighting, even if the (individuals) are likely to be killed." Next, he introduces three scenarios in which *inghimas* applies:

#### First Scenario

"Like [in the case of] a man who storms the ranks of the infidels and penetrates them. Scholars call this 'plunging into the enemy,' since [the man] is swallowed up in them like a thing that gets submersed in something that engulfs it."

#### Second Scenario

"And like a man who kills an infidel officer among his friends, for instance, by pouncing on him publicly, if he [can] get him by deceit, thinking he can kill him and take him unaware like that."

#### Third Scenario

"And [like] a man whose comrades have fled and so he is fighting the enemy alone or with a few others, and yet this is inflicting harm on the enemy, despite the fact they know they are likely to be killed."

The aforementioned scenarios are all "permissible according to most scholars of Islam who belong to the four schools of law and others."

The legitimacy of being outnumbered in battle in the third scenario is further highlighted on page 45 of the document by comparing the notion to the events of the battle of Badr (624 AD).<sup>12</sup> Ibn Taymiyya says:

And know that a group is permitted to fight those who outnumber them despite their weakness, and there is no difference in this between an individual and the very few; thus one person fighting three is like three people fighting ten.

12 Badr was a key battle in early Islam and a turning point in Muhammad's struggle with his Qurayshi opponents in Mecca. It is considered in Islamic history a decisive victory attributable to divine intervention and the genius of Muhammad.

Ibn Taymiyya inextricably ties his notion of *inghimas* with the undesirable situation of confronting a numerically superior army, and the three example scenarios correctly read as cases in which a soldier on the battlefield decides to carry out an attack that will likely result in his death. Such a mission is dangerous and self-destructive, and in this sense may be considered "suicidal."<sup>13</sup> The idea of a "suicidal mission" also appears in Ibn Taymiyya's *Majmu` al-Fatawa* where he mentions the widely-cited Qur'anic story of the Companions of Pit (*ashab al-ukhdud*). He writes:

In the story [of the Companions of the Pit] the young boy is ordered to get himself killed in order to manifest religion's splendor. For this reason the four imams<sup>14</sup> have permitted a Muslim to *plunge into* the ranks of the unbelievers, even if he thinks they will kill him, on condition that this [act] is in the interest of Muslims. We have expanded on this matter elsewhere. Thus, if a person does what he believes will get him killed in the interest of the battle (jihad), even though his death is more powerful than his killing of others, and if what he causes the death of another for the benefit of Islam, which would not occur except through this [act of him losing his life], and if it [constitutes what] staves off the enemy's corrupting damage to religion and earthly possessions which cannot be defended except by this means, then it is *more* appropriate.<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, *inghimas* (plunging into) pertains to an extreme situation, as on the battlefield or elsewhere in the course of a conventional war, involving combatants. The description and language in the passages lend themselves to a restricted context to justify missions that in all likelihood result in Muslim casualties. Since suicide is absolutely forbidden in

13 This is different from other meanings signified by the word "suicidal": causing, intending, or relating to suicide.

14 This refers to the imams of the four Sunni legal schools.

15 Taymiyya, *Majmu` al-Fatawa*, vol. 28, p. 540. Also see "Martyrs of Nejrán" in David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 20.



Islam,<sup>16</sup> there would have to be a clear benefit to the outcome of the war and engagement in jihad, a decisive repulsion of the enemy's damage to Islam, in order to embark on a mission that would surely end with the individual's death. Where it is unmistakably beneficial, then, "it is *more* appropriate." Note Ibn Taymiyya's use of the comparative in the last passage; it is not absolutely appropriate, merely "*more* appropriate"

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than, for example, doing nothing. This places several restrictions even before reaching the statement on the relative appropriateness of employing *inghimas*. In addition, Ibn Taymiyya's repeated use of the phrase "and thus [the soldier] fights until he is killed" connotes an ongoing battle, rather than a single event occurring in a concentration of non-combatants.

Ibn Taymiyya, like other scholars who deal with *inghimas*, is neither implying nor legitimizing "suicide mass-murder" of non-combatant men, women and children. Instead, Ibn Taymiyya offers a limited context within which an almost certainly "suicidal attack" on numerically, or by analogy technologically, superior enemy combatants could be rendered "more appropriate." There is, without a doubt, a difference, as Ibn Taymiyya repeatedly states that Muslim and non-Muslim non-combatants must not be harmed and collateral damage should be avoided.<sup>17</sup>

16 For example, Qur'an 4:29-30 states, "And do not take your own lives for God has mercy on you. And so he who does this in transgression and violation. We shall burn him in Hellfire. This is an easy feat for God."

17 One example of many is Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Qur'an 2:190 and his stance on aggression against non-combatants: "aggression means transgressing/ exceeding a limit, and so (the Qur'anic text) indicates that fighting those who do not fight us constitutes aggression, and God confirms this and indicates that excessiveness

To justify their tactics, jihadist ideologues have attempted to analogize suicide bombings with *inghimas*. In particular, they have attempted to portray the technological superiority of Western countries as justification for suicide-murder. The analogy, however, is invalid. Partial statements by Ibn Taymiyya were isolated, stripped of deliberate restrictions, and elaborated on devoid of syntactic, juridical and historical contexts.<sup>18</sup> Ibn Taymiyya was obviously aware of the notion of inequality, and despite that put several restrictions on the applicability of *inghimas*. Jihadist ideologues did not follow proper Shari`a procedure, because if they did they could not have manipulated the language of *inghimas* to suit their case. With false premises, their improper analogy might take the form of the categorical syllogism:

- a. [All] Endangering oneself to harm the enemy is permissible.
- b. Endangering oneself by *inghimas* includes taking one's own life.
- c. Definition of enemy includes Shari`a-protected groups.
- d. Therefore, taking one's own life to harm Shari`a-protected enemy groups is permissible *inghimas*.

This barely qualifies as weak inductive reasoning. For one, as seen above, endangering oneself to inflict harm on the enemy is permissible on condition there is a benefit to the outcome of the war and a decisive repulsion of the enemy's damage to Islam. Even the worst wave of suicide bombings has not accomplished that. Second, *inghimas* applies to armies in the heat of battle, of which their Shari`a-protected victims are usually not part. Third, in the more acceptable "suicidal missions," one dies at the hands of the enemy, not by one's own doing. In this respect, the jihadists' case for their brand of martyrdom attacks lacks the legal reason (Ar. *`illa*)

is prohibited." See Ibn Taymiyya, *Qa`ida mukhtasara fi qital al-kuffar wa-mubadanatibim wa-tabrim qatlibim li-mujarrad kufribim* (Riyadh: `Abd al-`Aziz b. `Abd Allah b. Ibrahim al-Zayr al-Hamad, 2004), pp. 91-92. Also see *al-Sarim al-maslul `ala sabbim al-rasul* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 1997), vol. 2, p. 513.

18 In fact, Ibn Taymiyya himself criticized those who use partial statements of Ibn Hanbal (d. 855 AD) thereby ignoring the complexity of his juridical opinion. See *al-Sarim al-maslul* (Saudi Arabia: al-Haras al-Watani al-Sa`udi, undated), vol. 2, pp. 483-484.

identified in the case of *inghimas*.<sup>19</sup> On page 36 of the *inghimas* text, Ibn Taymiyya says:

And God, the Sublime, tries the believers in self-devotion to the point of being killed for the sake of God and the love of His messenger. And so, if they are killed, they are martyrs (*shuhada`*), and if they live, they are happy.<sup>20</sup>

Indubitably, Ibn Taymiyya sees the possibility of coming out alive from such a mission even when advocating martyrdom in the cause of God. He neither asserts that the lone fighter will be killed, nor argues that the success of the mission depends on the fighter's death. This is crucial, since the possibility of surviving is absent when considering the state of mind of a suicide terrorist, up to and during the act of taking his or her own life.<sup>21</sup>

On page 37, Ibn Taymiyya comments on the Qur'anic verse 2:54 where he reconstructs ellipses in the Qur'anic text to explain its meaning. He uses the verse to show that it is prohibited to kill sinners among one's own people as it is tantamount to being killed "at one's own hands." It is best and entails greater reward, explains Ibn Taymiyya, "to die for the sake of God at the hands of the enemy, not at the hands of one another."

#### Conclusion

The promotion of suicide-murder as a legitimate case of *inghimas* is an unfortunately successful name-game and an evasive legal device.<sup>22</sup> With false legal reasoning and a manifold decontextualization of a historical term, jihadist ideologues have managed to apply the word *inghimas* to a staple tactic in their strategy book. They have been

19 On the concept of *`illa*, see Nabil Shehaby, "Illa and Qiyas in Early Islamic Legal Theory," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102:1 (1982): pp. 27-46.

20 Ibn Taymiyya, *Qa`ida fi al-inghimas fi al-`aduw wa-hal-yubah fiba?* (Riyadh: Adwa' al-Salaf, 2002), p. 36. This refers to the Qur'an.

21 Dr. Boaz Ganor, "The Rationality of the Islamic Radical Suicide Attack Phenomenon," International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, March 31, 2007.

22 On prohibition of evasive legal devices, see Dr. Ahmad al-Raysuni, *Imam Al-Shatibi's Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2005), pp. 56-57.

spinning Islamic tradition and law to suit their cause. Ibn Taymiyya and other Muslim jurists, however, have expressed their condemnation of those groups pursuing indiscriminate slaughter and lawlessness. Thus, not only have jihadists removed themselves beyond the pale of mainstream Muslim society constituting today's Khawarij, but they have acquired—in pursuing tactics of indiscriminate murder, suicide-murder and banditry—the status of brigands (*mubaribun*), people who disrupt social order, with all the Shari`a consequences of that distinction.<sup>23</sup> Jihadists have blurred the line within Islamic law between expression of bravery and anti-Shari`a, deviant criminal behavior.

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## Muslim Brotherhood Faces Growing Challenges in Egypt

By Steven Brooke

FOR DECADES, THE Muslim Brotherhood has dominated Egypt's ideological landscape. Today, the group is not just the largest organized political opposition to the Egyptian government, but its influence touches nearly all sectors of Egyptian society, including religion, charity and commerce. Probably not coincidentally, the profile of the Brotherhood's mainstream Islamism has grown as jihadist activity in Egypt plummeted following its bloody apex in 1997.

The Brotherhood's surprisingly good showing in Egypt's 2005 parliamentary elections was a high-profile sign of the organization's growth. Since then, however, the movement's organizational cohesion has been stressed by both endogenous and exogenous developments. Egypt's changing religious landscape, the jostling of different tendencies inside the Brotherhood itself, a government crackdown on the group, and the effects of Israel's recent actions in the Gaza Strip challenge an organization whose unofficial slogan, some affirm, is "listen and obey."<sup>1</sup> While this poses a series of dilemmas to the Brotherhood, the implications also stretch widely across Egyptian society.

### A Changing Ideological Landscape

After an absence of seven years, a series of jihadist attacks in the Sinai Peninsula in 2004, 2005 and 2006 killed nearly 150 people, including foreign tourists. The Egyptian press has recently been dotted with periodic reports of the revival of historical jihadist groups, such as Takfir wal-Hijra or Egyptian Islamic Jihad, or the emergence of new groups with names such as The Platoon of Khalid al-Islambuli, Muhammad's Army, or The Abdullah Azzam Brigades. A nascent "al-Qa`ida in Egypt" has even emerged, stirring fears that the country will once again become a jihadist battlefield.

1 Personal interview, Muslim Brotherhood activist, summer 2006. For an excellent analysis of the Brotherhood and the war in Gaza, see Joshua Stacher, "The Brothers and the Wars," *Middle East Report* Spring (2009).

Despite these reports, the (re)emergence of an organized jihadist movement in Egypt remains a remote possibility. Radicalization in the Sinai feeds off the economic deprivation and governmental neglect of the Bedouin population there, conditions that do not transfer well to other parts of Egypt.<sup>2</sup> The vicious jihadist campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s still reverberate among the Egyptian population, and the steadily expanding security and intelligence services have learned from their experiences. There remains no high-profile jihadist figure or group in Egypt to cluster around or from which to receive ideological guidance. Indeed, the recantations and revisions of erstwhile jihadist groups such as Gamaa al-Islamiyya (the Egyptian Islamic Group) and Egyptian Islamic Jihad highlight the weakness of Egypt's domestic Salafi-jihadi milieu.

While welcome, organized Salafi-jihadism's difficulty in gaining a foothold in Egypt addresses only part of a complex situation. As frustration with the government increases and neo-liberal economic reforms exacerbate socio-economic divides, a non-violent but especially stern, politically quietist brand of Salafist Islam has elbowed its way into Egypt's religious landscape.<sup>3</sup> The relationship between this "pietist" Salafism and the Brotherhood is a complex and not necessarily antagonistic one.<sup>4</sup> It is telling, however, that perhaps the main area of disagreement between the pietists and the Brothers is over the legitimacy of political action. Pietist Salafism grants an almost unwavering allegiance to the ruler while strictly avoiding politics and electoral participation, a stance sharply at odds with the mainstream political Islam of

2 International Crisis Group, "Egypt's Sinai Question," January 30, 2007; Scott Anderson, "Under Egypt's Volcano," *Vanity Fair*, October 28, 2006.

3 For a more pessimistic view of the spread of Salafism in Egypt, see Chris Heffelfinger, *Trends in Egyptian Salafi Activism* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007).

4 In describing Salafists, this article relies on the broad categories (jihadist, pietist, and political) used by Samir Amghar, "Le Salafisme en Europe: Le Mouvement Polymorphe d'une Radicalisation," *Politique Etrangere* 1 (2006). Additionally, the author's personal correspondence in 2008-2009 with a Muslim Brotherhood member was particularly helpful to understanding this relationship.

23 Ibn Taymiyya stated his opinion on the legal consequences: "Scholars have disagreed whether or not (the murderer) should be killed by reason of (his) brigandage, but the stronger (argument) is that he should be killed as a punishment for killing because killing for the sake of general corruption is a *hadd* crime, similar to the one who steals money having his hand cut off and like withholding their rights." Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Siyasa al-Shar`iyya* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2003), p. 63.

the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>5</sup> This rivalry has been exploited in Saudi Arabia, for instance, as a way for the government to counter the growing influence of political Islamists. In interviews, some Muslim Brothers have claimed that the same strategy is being used by the Egyptian government today. As they see it, allowing, or even encouraging, the growth of pietist Salafism offers a way to divert the rising religiosity of the Egyptian population into a direction without immediate political ramifications.<sup>6</sup>

The entry of this trend into Egyptian society has been eased by migratory, commercial, and religious links to the Arabian Peninsula. Despite recently being overtaken by Asians, millions of Egyptians have worked as migrant laborers in the Gulf, particularly in Saudi Arabia.<sup>7</sup> As these workers return, some bring a Saudi-style religious conservatism with them.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Saudi Arabian investment in Egypt has increased dramatically, reaching \$1 billion in 2005 and steadily growing since.<sup>9</sup> While the vast majority of this investment is simply routine commerce, there are occasionally religious and cultural repercussions.<sup>10</sup>

5 For more on this strain of Salafism, and particularly on its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, see Stephane Lacroix, "L'apport de Muhammed Nasir al-Din al-Albani au Salafisme Contemporain," in Bernard Rougier ed., *Qu'est-Ce Que Le Salafisme?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires De France/Proche Orient, 2008), pp. 54-57, 62-64.

6 Personal interview, Muslim Brotherhood activists, summer/fall 2008. Some recent news reports have also mentioned this tactic. See Paul Schemm, "Ultraconservative Islam on Rise in Mideast," Associated Press, October 18, 2008; Nabil Sharaf al-Din, "After Years of Supporting Salafism To Counter the Muslim Brothers and the Jihadists, Egyptian Authorities Launch a Campaign To Counter a Salafi Tide Among Youths," *Ilaf.com*, December 12, 2008.

7 Jackline Wahba, "Does International Migration Matter? A Study of Egyptian Return Migrants," draft paper prepared for the conference "Arab Migration in a Globalized World," February 2003.

8 See, for instance, Caryle Murphy, *Passion for Islam*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), pp. 31-34.

9 "Saudi Investment in Egypt Reaches 1 Billion Mark," Saudi Arabian Market Information Resource and Directory, June 5, 2005.

10 See some examples cited in Jack Schenker, "Hyatt and Dry - Saudi Hotel Owner Takes the Fizz Out of Cairo's Tourist Allure," *Guardian*, July 21, 2008; Rod Nordland, "The Last Egyptian Bellydancer," *Newsweek*, June 9, 2008.

Pietist Salafism in Egypt has also expanded due to a number of Saudi-trained and influenced clerics. Largely eschewing formal organizations, popular shaykhs such as Abu Ishaq al-Heweny, Mohamed Hassan, and Mohamed Hussain Yaqob are creating a religious center of gravity that competes with the Muslim Brotherhood's political Islamism. As apparent from their biographies, many are influenced by Abdul Aziz Ibn Baz, Muhammed Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Muhammed Ibn al-Uthaymin, and others from the Saudi Salafist establishment. They, and others linked to this movement, run professional websites, host austere television programs, carve out niches in Egyptian bookstores, and operate increasingly influential charities and religious associations. While this trend is non-violent, their rigid conception of belief, occasionally antagonistic posture toward religious minorities, and tendency to withdrawal from society led the Egyptian scholar of Islamist movements, Khalil al-Anani, to warn of a revival of "social violence" as Egyptian society undergoes a "Salafisation."<sup>11</sup>

#### The Brotherhood Under Pressure

Beyond Egyptian society, these changing religious dynamics influence the Muslim Brotherhood as well. The Brotherhood is a large organization, consisting of a number of competing sources of ideological inspiration. One of these is a Salafist-tinged conservatism, historically stronger among more rural constituencies of the Brotherhood but increasingly making urban inroads. In part, this influence entered the Brotherhood through those members who studied or spent time in Saudi Arabia during the repression of the 1960s and 1970. Its lineage also traces back to the general support Saudi Arabia offered conservative opposition movements throughout the Middle East during the "Arab Cold War" from 1958-1970.<sup>12</sup> The recent growth of Salafism in

11 International Crisis Group, "Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?" June 18, 2008, p. 22. There is also a risk that crude "preventative countermeasures" against some of these conservative, though non-violent, actors may actually provoke the sort of violence the government is seeking to avoid.

12 Saeed Shehabi, "The Role of Religious Ideology in the Expansionist Policies of Saudi Arabia," in Mardawi al-Rasheed ed., *Kingdom without Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 190-191.

Egyptian society has been mirrored by a strengthening of this trend inside the Brotherhood. It is increasingly popular among younger activists.<sup>13</sup>

The influence is somewhat visible in the Brotherhood's internal debates over political participation. While the Brotherhood has been officially committed to the political process since 1984 and shown little outward signs of revisiting that decision, the issue is still a fault line in the group. Among some conservative members, especially those influenced by a traditional Salafist wariness of politics, the group's electoral forays are a distraction from the Brotherhood's core mission of *da`wa* (preaching) and *tarbiyya* (education, upbringing).<sup>14</sup> The other side of the divide is inhabited by "middle generation" Muslim Brotherhood leaders as well as a small but highly vocal younger generation of politically engaged activists.<sup>15</sup>

These divisions have been amplified by the Egyptian government's ongoing crackdown on the Brotherhood. In December 2005, candidates affiliated with the officially banned but tolerated Muslim Brotherhood managed to win 88 out of 454 seats in the Egyptian parliament. This was followed shortly after by Hamas' majority victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections. These unexpected successes spurred the Egyptian government to increase the pressure on the Brotherhood, partly to remind the newly-empowered organization that the traditional "red lines" still applied. In addition to a wave of arrests, a number of legal measures designed to constrict the Brotherhood's participation in Egyptian political life

13 Khalil al-Anani, "Suppressing the Muslim Brotherhood is not a Solution," *Daily Star* [Cairo], March 5, 2008.

14 The debate is partially illustrated in Israel Elad-Altman, "Democracy, Elections, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 3 (2006). For a contemporary account, see Rania Badawi, "Al-Doktor Yusuf al-Qaradawi: Rais al Ittihad al Alami Ulema al Muslimeen (1/2), Qawaneen al-Irhab wal al-Thuwara' Makhalfala Lilsharia," *al-Masry al-Youm*, September 8, 2008. In an interview, one Muslim Brother attributed al-Qaradawi's hard-line stance on Shi'a to influence from Gulf-based Salafists (al-Qaradawi is based in Qatar).

15 For a vivid portrait of this young, politically active cohort, see Marc Lynch, "Young Brothers in Cyberspace," *Middle East Report* Winter (2007).



were also introduced.<sup>16</sup>

According to the Brotherhood's Supreme Guide Muhammed Mahdi Akef, in the last 10 years 25,000 Muslim Brothers have spent time in prison.<sup>17</sup> In 2008 alone, according to other Brotherhood sources, more than 7,500 activists were arrested.<sup>18</sup> Whether intended or not, the Egyptian government's arrests of politically engaged, pragmatic individuals such as Khairat al-Shater and Isam El-Arian have subtly shifted the internal dynamics of the group in a more conservative direction. As conservative influences figure more prominently in the group's issuances, such as the draft party platform, some inside the movement have expressed their frustrations.<sup>19</sup> The Egyptian government's actions also reportedly caused some prominent voices within the Brotherhood to privately question whether or not the benefits of political participation are outweighed by the heavy costs of state repression.<sup>20</sup>

As government pressures exacerbate different tendencies in the Brotherhood and internal tensions stretch the movement's boundaries, external actors are attempting to exploit the turmoil. The internet has become a significant field in this contest.<sup>21</sup> As one Egyptian Muslim Brother stated, "everytime there is a forum or a comment section [of an

article], the Salafis are there."<sup>22</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri in particular has repeatedly appeared on video and audio releases alternatively heckling and enjoining the Brotherhood. For instance, in a March 11, 2007 audiotape, released at the height of the Egyptian government's repression of the Brotherhood, al-Zawahiri offered a carefully crafted message to Brotherhood members and sympathizers, urging them to reject the Brotherhood's peaceful, accommodationist approach that has led to nothing but repression:

I appeal to all my Muslim brothers to set themselves free from the shackles of the organizations leading them into the mazes of politics...The Egyptian government is pouncing on those who recognized the legitimacy of its president, constitution, and laws. It is pouncing on those who accepted the rule of the majority of voters, and renounced the rule of Shari`a. It is pouncing on those who accepted citizenship and abandoned and renounced the brotherhood of Islam.<sup>23</sup>

#### The Effects of the Gaza Crisis

Israel's recent offensive in the Gaza Strip has also affected the Brotherhood. Although Israel may have weakened Hamas, their military action in Gaza also strengthened Islamist movements across the Middle East.<sup>24</sup> Islamists positioned themselves at the center of popular anger and frustration, leading Hossam Tammam, a savvy observer of Islamist politics, to write that "Islamism is now the master of the

moment."<sup>25</sup> In Egypt, Supreme Guide Muhammed Mahdi Akef personally led the Brotherhood's participation in a series of massive protests against Israel's actions. According to Deputy General Guide Muhammed Habib, more than 1,200 Muslim Brotherhood activists were arrested protesting the attacks on Gaza, and hundreds remain in prison.<sup>26</sup> Yet in crafting a response, the Brotherhood's leadership was forced to balance between pressures from the cadres (and society writ large) while preserving the organization's long-term viability. As a conservative organization concerned with ensuring its survival and expanding its reach inside Egyptian society, the Brotherhood must avoid provoking a regime increasingly worried about ongoing socio-economic disturbances and a looming, potentially chaotic transfer of power. As driven home especially hard in the last few years, confrontation with the government carries tremendous consequences.

Fortunately for the Brotherhood, however, direct and drastic confrontation is unnecessary. As dissatisfaction grows (and the very sober International Crisis Group wrote even before the Gaza crisis that "anti-regime sentiment appears to be reaching new heights"), the Brotherhood will benefit from its position as the most prominent opposition to an increasingly unpopular government.<sup>27</sup> Going forward, the Brotherhood will likely continue to avoid hot button issues, such as presidential succession, while staking out positions supported by Egyptian popular opinion, such as stopping natural gas shipments to Israel or reopening the Rafah border crossing with Gaza.<sup>28</sup>

16 "Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?" pp. 12-15.

17 "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Leader Expects 'Nothing Good' From Obama," *al-Arab* [Doha], January 24, 2009.

18 "Egypt Arrests 7588 From the Brotherhood in 2008," *al-Jazira*, January 30, 2008.

19 In the fall of 2007, a number of young activists created [www.ikhwanoffline.com](http://www.ikhwanoffline.com), which paralleled the Brotherhood's official [www.ikhwanonline.com](http://www.ikhwanonline.com) website to register their disappointment with the conservative editorial direction of the official website.

20 Personal interview, Muslim Brotherhood activist, fall 2008. A senior official, however, recently stated that the Brotherhood was planning to contest the 2010 parliamentary elections. For more, see Abdel Moneim Mahmoud, "Habib: Gaza is our Opportunity for Reconciliation and we Will Participate in the 2010 (Parliamentary) Elections," [www.IslamOnline.net](http://www.IslamOnline.net), February 8, 2009.

21 For a pietist Salafist critique of the Muslim Brotherhood, see "The Historical Influences and Effects of the Methodologies of al-Ikhwaan al-Muslimoon Upon the Salaf," Salafi Publications, March 2003, available at [www.thenoblequran.com/sps/sp.cfm?secID=MNJ&subsecID=MNJ18&loadpage=displaysubsection.cfm](http://www.thenoblequran.com/sps/sp.cfm?secID=MNJ&subsecID=MNJ18&loadpage=displaysubsection.cfm).

22 Personal interview, Muslim Brotherhood activist, fall 2008.

23 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Palestine is Our Concern and the Concern of Every Muslim," *al-Sahab*, March 11, 2007.

In a contemporaneous interview with a Brotherhood activist, he conceded that on the group's outer edges and among sympathizers al-Zawahiri's attempt to poach "could be effective."

24 In some instances, however, old fault lines proved hard to overcome. Reflecting longstanding disagreements between the Brotherhood and the Salafists, popular Salafist shaykh Mohamed Yaqob initially criticized Hamas for provoking the conflict. He, in turn, was censured by his compatriot Mohamed Hassan. For more, see Abd al-Muna'im Muneeb, "Mohammed Hasan Yamtadah Hamas wa Suwareekh al-Muqawama radan a'alee Sakhraya Muhammed Hussein Yacoub min al-Haraka," *al-Dustur*, January 14, 2009.

25 Hossam Tammam, "Shifting Sands," *al-Abram Weekly*, February 19-25, 2009.

26 "Al-Raya Interview with Muslim Brotherhood Deputy Chairman over Gaza Crisis," *Ikhwanweb*, February 2, 2009. Importantly, other actors were also subjected to a harsh regime response, including the Islamist-oriented Labor Party leader Magdy Hussein and prominent blogger and activist Philip Rizk.

27 "Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?" p. 3.

28 This should not be taken as an argument that the Brotherhood's popular and respected position in Egyptian society is due to some sort of clever triangulation or exploitation of Egyptian popular opinion. Beyond ideology, many support the group because of its effective delivery of social services at local levels, as well as the re-

A strategy that slowly and peacefully grows and consolidates the Brotherhood's position is in line with the organization's goals as well as its methodology. A potential problem, however, is that the disconnect between the Brotherhood's calculated, Fabian approach and the urgency and emotion unleashed by Israel's war on Gaza will be so jarring that the Brotherhood's non-violent orientation will seem insufficient. While a large-scale cleavage of Muslim Brothers from the broader organization is highly unlikely, the effect on individuals, particularly those already disenchanted and frustrated with developments of the last few years, is less clear. A similar dynamic may echo in broader society, whereby the Brotherhood's studied approach detracts from the organization's ability to draw new members and compete among an increasingly diverse religious landscape.

As individuals spin out of the Brotherhood's orbit, or as the group's ideology and behavior becomes less attractive to a society beset by a series of radicalizing influences, there is a risk of violence. Specifically, the fracturing of Egyptian socio-religious authority opens new opportunity structures, especially for the type of "individualized jihad" as envisioned by al-Qa`ida theorist Abu Mus`ab al-Suri in *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*. For instance, in his January 2009 audiotape, Ayman al-Zawahiri encouraged individualized action, telling Egyptian Muslims specifically "it is your duty to lift the siege, you must take this responsibility."<sup>29</sup> Moreover, while the investigation is ongoing, it appears that February's bombing in Cairo—which killed one and injured dozens—was carried out by individuals operating along these lines. A similar "individualized" stabbing of an American in Cairo's Khan al-Khalili market by an Egyptian motivated by his "hatred for foreigners because of the Israeli offensive in Gaza" took place days later.<sup>30</sup> A few days after that, an

improvised explosive was tossed into a Cairo metro station, although it failed to explode.<sup>31</sup>

#### Conclusion

The Brotherhood's powerful religious message, defined organizational boundaries and demanding criteria for membership ensure that activists remain committed to the group, even during times of stress and confrontation. As such, a Salafist current wary of politics or a cadre of youths frustrated with an out-of-touch leadership are each manageable within the confines of the organization. Likewise, the Brotherhood has an unfortunate familiarity with state repression and competing for ideological hegemony with various other religious elements. Individually, these factors pose little challenge to a movement as storied, adaptable, and inclusive as the Muslim Brotherhood.

Taken in the aggregate, however, increasing disincentives for political action, rising conservatism, and potential frustration with the Brotherhood's calculated approach to domestic and regional crises all exacerbate the normal centrifugal tendencies in an organization as diverse as the Muslim Brotherhood. Just like the Egyptian society it inhabits, the internal dynamics of the Muslim Brotherhood have become increasingly tumultuous and contentious in recent years. Coupled with the way Salafi-jihadis stalk the organization's periphery, creating and expanding ways to express both local and international grievances, the Brotherhood—and Egyptian society—is facing a potent challenge.

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sponsiveness of elected Brotherhood officials on issues of everyday concern. See, for instance, Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher, "The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament," *Middle East Report* Fall (2006).

<sup>29</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, "The Gaza Massacre and the Traitor's Seige," al-Sahab, January 6, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> "American Teacher Knifed in Cairo Bazaar," *Arab Times* [Kuwait City], February 28, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> "Cairo Metro Incendiary Bottle Fails to Explode," Agence France-Presse, March 1, 2009. These attacks resembled other small-scale, "individualized" attacks in Egypt in 2005. See Jailan Halawi, "Racing Against Time," *al-Ahram Weekly*, May 3, 2005.

## The Current State of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group

By Carlos Echeverría Jesús

ON MAY 16, 2003, suicide bombers killed 45 people in Casablanca, the biggest terrorist attack suffered by Morocco to date. Authorities blamed the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) for the attacks.<sup>1</sup> Members of the Salafi-jihadi-oriented GICM were also connected to the al-Qa`ida-inspired group of North Africans who executed the March 11, 2004 terrorist bombings in Madrid that killed 191 people. In addition to these incidents, the GICM has been active in Western Europe, primarily with document forgery, gunrunning and drug trafficking. These European-based cells have alarmed EU counterterrorism authorities, who have launched a number of operations against the GICM partially out of concern that these cells could collaborate with hostile groups such as al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Today, however, the GICM is a shell of its former self. Successive Moroccan and European counterterrorist operations targeting the group have left it fractured. Its remaining members are active in similar terrorist organizations, but no longer conducting attacks under the GICM's name. This article identifies the GICM's known history and past operations, its organizational structure, and its current role in the larger Salafi-jihadi movement.

#### The History of the GICM

Details on the history of the GICM remain obscure. The GICM emerged shortly after 1998 and comprises Moroccan recruits who trained in camps in Afghanistan. A number of leaders, such as Abdelkarim el-Mejjati and Nourredine Nafia, were involved in creating the group. El-Mejjati became a leader in al-Qa`ida in Saudi Arabia, where he was killed by police in 2004. Nafia, a Moroccan convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison for his role in the 2003 Casablanca attacks, was an important contributor in the early

<sup>1</sup> Recent trials, however, have failed to prove undoubtedly that the GICM was behind the Casablanca attacks.

years of the group.<sup>2</sup> When creating the GICM, Nafia supposedly drafted a 33-page GICM doctrinal charter.<sup>3</sup>

When the GICM was founded, it absorbed a number of supporting cells such as the group responsible for assassinating two Spanish tourists at the Atlas Asni Hotel in Marrakech in August 1994.<sup>4</sup> At the end of the 1990s, the GICM and the “Salafiyah-Jihadiya”<sup>5</sup> were the two known major terrorist groups active in Morocco. In 2002, when the Saudi members of a sleeper cell were arrested in Morocco for plotting attacks against naval units in the Strait of Gibraltar, a wave of arrests of Salafijihadi militants began.<sup>6</sup> One year later, the GICM was one of the actors believed involved in planning the 2003 Casablanca suicide bombings. The Casablanca attacks killed 45 people, including 12 suicide bombers. Although the GICM, among other groups, was blamed for the attacks, recent trials have failed to prove this link with certainty.<sup>7</sup> The 2004 bombings in Madrid that killed 191 people were carried out by an al-Qa`ida-inspired group of North Africans, mostly Moroccan residents in Spain. A number of them were connected to the GICM.<sup>8</sup>

2 Sebastian Rotella, “Libyans Advance in Al Qaeda Network,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 2008.

3 Nafia spoke about this charter after he was arrested. See “Moroccan Group ‘Derivative Structure’ of Al-Qaeda,” *Middle East Online*, April 20, 2004.

4 Carlos Jesús Echeverría, “Radical Islam in the Maghreb,” *Orbis* 48:2 (2004): p. 358.

5 The Moroccan government often attributes terrorist incidents or plots to a group it identifies as “Salafiyah-Jihadiya.” As explained by researcher Alison Pargeter, however, “this appears to be a label put upon these militants reflecting the fact that they do not belong to any particular formalized group. As such, ‘Salafiyah-Jihadiya’ would seem to be a label invented by the Moroccan authorities to describe an ideological current.” For more on this, see Alison Pargeter, “Uncovering Extremist Violence in Morocco,” *CTC Sentinel* 1:8 (2008).

6 The Saudis were able to integrate into society because they married Moroccan women through GICM support.

7 Hassan el-Haski, who was condemned in 2007 in Spain for participating in the 2004 Madrid bombings, was extradited to Morocco for six months to face trial for his alleged involvement in the 2003 Casablanca attacks. Although he was acquitted by the terrorist court of Salé on February 5, 2009 of involvement in those attacks, he received a 10 year sentence in the aftermath of the Royal Attorney’s reaction. He will return to Spain to serve a 14 year sentence before returning to Morocco to serve his sentence there. See “Marruecos condena a 10 años a Haski tras el recurso del fiscal,” *El Mundo*, March 3, 2009.

8 El-Haski is a veteran of Afghan training camps and a

### The GICM’s Volatile Structure

GICM members interact with other North African Salafi-jihadis, particularly in Europe, where they have been engaged in transporting falsified documents, gunrunning, and drug trafficking. One example of this interaction is the case of Jamal Ahmidan, one of the authors of the 2004 Madrid bombings who blew himself up on April 3, 2004 in Leganés, Spain; Ahmidan had links to GICM members such as Hassan el-Haski. Criminal activity abroad seems to finance the GICM, and according to a variety of sources the group has sleeper cells in a number of European countries.<sup>9</sup> The GICM’s experience has shown a capacity for recruitment, and it has assisted with the assimilation of al-Qa`ida operatives into Moroccan and European society. One example of this is a 2002 plot in Morocco involving three Saudis who married Moroccan women through GICM support. Another example involved three terrorists involved in the 2004 Madrid train bombings, who traveled to Iraq through Belgium with the support of a cell founded by Abdeladim Okoudad, a GICM coordinator in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

After each terrorist incident or uncovered plot, the Moroccan government has made scores of arrests.<sup>11</sup> The government’s campaign against the GICM and related groups has affected the GICM’s operational ability and has almost destroyed it. It is likely that the remaining members no longer operate on behalf of the GICM. During the current decade, much of the GICM’s leadership in Morocco and Europe has been imprisoned or is awaiting trial. It is not clear if the group currently has a leader. In 2004, the Moroccan expert Mohamed Darif claimed “all the

top leader of the GICM in Europe according to Spanish investigations later confirmed by the judicial process on the Madrid bombings.

9 *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report TE-SAT 2008* (The Hague: European Police Office, 2008), pp. 24-25. Chapter five of this report lists a number of EU states where Moroccan terrorists have been arrested.

10 Jorge A. Rodríguez, “Doce detenidos por ayudar a escapar a autores del 11-M y enviar suicidas a Irak,” *El País*, October 17, 2008.

11 These incidents include the foiled Strait of Gibraltar terrorist plot in 2002, the 2003 Casablanca attacks, the 2004 Madrid bombings, successive domestic counter-terrorist operations since 2005, and the suicide attacks in Casablanca and Meknes in 2007.

signs are that Mohamed el-Guerbouzi, nicknamed Abou Aissa, became the leader of the organisation” after 2002.<sup>12</sup> El-Guerbouzi, however, has repeatedly denied any association with terrorism. He became a British citizen two decades ago and remains living in London. Nevertheless, in 2003 the Interpol office in Rabat issued a warrant for his arrest.<sup>13</sup> On December 19, 2003, he was sentenced to 20 years in prison in absentia by a court in Rabat “for his alleged involvement in the Casablanca bombings.”<sup>14</sup>

The GICM has become marginalized on the physical battlefield. It has suffered a loss of operational control to the extent that it is not even mentioned in analyses on Salafi-jihadi terrorism in Morocco. Demonstrating the GICM’s lack of current capability, factions within the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group have merged with al-Qa`ida, but no such al-Qa`ida merger has been announced with the GICM.

### The GICM’s Role in the Salafi-Jihad

Historically, GICM members have been active in Morocco and Europe. A number of arrests in Belgium, France, and Spain in recent years have disrupted the group’s ability to operate in Europe. On November 13, 2005, for example, members of a suspected Belgian GICM cell led by Abdelkader Hakimi and Lahoussine el-Haski—the latter the brother of GICM member Hassan el-Haski—went on trial in Brussels for allegedly providing material support to the GICM. Hakimi was considered one of the GICM’s leaders in Europe and had been arrested in Brussels on March 19, 2004.

In recent years, a number of recruitment networks for suicide bombers destined for Iraq have been dismantled in Morocco and in Europe.<sup>15</sup> The 27-member Tetouan

12 Mohamed Darif, “The Moroccan Combatant Group,” *Real Instituto Elcano*, March 30, 2004.

13 Anneli Botha, “North African Involvement in Transnational Terror Networks” in “Terrorism in the Maghreb: The Transnationalization of Domestic Terrorism,” *African Institute for Security Studies Monograph #144*, June 2008.

14 *Ibid.*; “Four More Suspects Charged in Madrid Blasts,” *Associated Press*, March 22, 2004.

15 Two GICM-connected networks operating from Catalonia, Spain—the Rabat Group and the Nakcha Group—



cell apprehended in January 2007 had logistical and financial links with AQIM and with the GICM, according to the sentence released on June 10, 2008. Abu Qaswarah, a Moroccan native who was the second-in-command of al-Qa`ida in Iraq, was killed by U.S. forces on October 5, 2008 in Mosul.<sup>16</sup> He was at one point a member of the GICM and was even put in charge of the GICM's magazine, *Sada al-Maghrabi*.<sup>17</sup> More recently, on February 26, 2009, the terrorism court of Salé in Morocco sentenced Saad Houssaini (also known as "The Chemist") to 15 years in jail for his alleged involvement in the 2003 Casablanca bombings. He was arrested in March 2007 for alleged participation in the GICM.<sup>18</sup>

There are a number of other cases in Morocco that have not been linked to the GICM. It is possible that links will develop as the cases proceed. On February 21, 2008, authorities broke up a 36-member cell called the "Belliraj Cell." In May 2008, an 11-member cell connected with networks involved in sending combatants to Iraq and to training camps in Algeria was dismantled in Nador and Fes in Morocco; a large number of light weapons and ammunition were confiscated. The cell was also allegedly planning terrorist attacks in Morocco and Belgium. On July 2, 2008, a 35-member cell, charged with sending combatants to Iraq and to Algeria, was dismantled in a number of Moroccan cities. On August 29, 2008, a 15-member cell called Fatah al-Andalus that plotted terrorist attacks in Morocco was dismantled in a number of cities in the country and important electronic and chemical materials were seized. On December 12, 2008, the Moroccan minister of the interior, Chakib Benmoussa, announced the arrests of a number of suspected terrorists in Fes, Rabat, and Berkane who had links to AQIM.

were dismantled by the Spanish security forces in 2005 and 2006. Both focused their activities on sending combatants to Iraq.

16 "Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity," *CTC Sentinel* 1:12 (2008).

17 Pascale Combelles Siegel, "Coalition Attack Brings an End to the Career of al-Qaeda in Iraq's Second-in-Command," *Terrorism Monitor* 6:21 (2008).

18 "Rabat condena a un terrorista al que Del Olmo interrogó por el 11-M," *El Mundo*, February 27, 2009; "French Court Convicts 8 of Helping 2003 Casablanca Suicide Bombers," *International Herald Tribune*, July 11, 2007.

There is concern that AQIM could tap into dormant or former GICM cells in Europe for the purpose of striking targets in the West. It is believed that GICM elements based in Europe have mutated into a more autonomous phenomenon consisting of groups of alienated, "homegrown" radicals who are using the language of the Salafi-jihad but largely act on their own.<sup>19</sup> A number of Moroccans were connected to the al-Quds Mosque in Hamburg,<sup>20</sup> the Islamic Cultural Centre in Milan, and the Finsbury Park Mosque in London, which all became associated with the propagation of radical Islamism.

### Conclusion

Years of investigation, several trials and numerous court convictions do not provide a complete picture of the GICM. In Morocco and in Europe, the GICM is today defined by the fragmentation of different cells. It appears that former members of the group have been absorbed by other jihadist organizations, or are operating on an independent basis. Government prosecutors have tried with difficulty to persuade juries that alleged terrorists connected to the GICM have conspired against the Moroccan government and society. The sheer number of plots with ties to the GICM raises concern that the group could recover if authorities give it breathing space.

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19 In fact, this trend is applicable to most of the jihadist cells acting in Europe. For more, see Peter R. Neumann: *Joining Al-Qaeda. Jihadist Recruitment in Europe* (London: Routledge-IISS, 2008), p. 17.

20 Mohamed Fizazi, who was sentenced to 30 years in prison in Morocco for his involvement in the 2003 Casablanca attacks, preached at the same al-Quds Mosque as the leader of the 9/11 terrorists, Muhammad `Atta.

## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

February 1, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A Taliban suicide car bomber attacked a convoy of foreign troops in Kabul, injuring two civilians and a French soldier. - *Reuters, February 1*

February 1, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Suspected Abu Sayyaf Group-linked militants kidnapped a nine-year-old boy on Basilan Island in the southern Philippines. - *AFP, February 1*

February 2, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A Taliban suicide bomber in a police uniform killed 21 police in Tirin Kot, Uruzgan Province. The bomber entered the police compound before detonating his explosives. - *Reuters, February 2*

February 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): John Solecki, an American and the head of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, was abducted by unidentified gunmen while on his way to his office in Quetta, Balochistan Province. The assailants shot and killed his driver during the kidnapping. It was not immediately clear whether the abductors were Islamist militants, criminals, or Baloch separatists. - *Guardian, February 3*

February 2, 2009 (SAUDI ARABIA): The Saudi government issued a list of 85 wanted militants based outside of the country. Authorities said the men had "adopted the straying ideology," which signifies that they are suspected of al-Qa`ida involvement. The government called on the men to turn themselves in overseas to "return to a normal life." Out of the group, 83 are Saudis and two are Yemenis. Saudi officials also announced that 11 Saudis who were released from Guantanamo Bay and subsequently passed through the Saudi rehabilitation program for former jihadists have left the country and joined terrorist groups abroad. - *Reuters, February 2; New York Times, February 3*

February 2, 2009 (SOMALIA): A roadside bomb exploded next to an African Union peacekeeping vehicle in Mogadishu. The blast, and the subsequent return gunfire from African Union soldiers, left at least 18 people dead. - *New York Times, February 2; Voice of America, February 2*

February 2, 2009 (THAILAND): Suspected Muslim separatists killed and then beheaded two Thai paramilitary rangers in southern Thailand. – *Reuters, February 2*

February 3, 2009 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new audio message, in which he condemned Israel for its recent actions in the Gaza Strip. Al-Zawahiri called on Muslims around the world to target U.S. interests to avenge American support for Israel's offensive in Gaza. The message referenced President Barack Obama's inaugural speech. – *CNN, February 3; AP, February 3*

February 3, 2009 (SPAIN): Spanish officials arrested 13 people in the cities of Barcelona and Valencia for allegedly forging passports and other documents for criminal and terrorist groups. The detainees include 11 Pakistanis, one Nigerian and one Indian. – *RTTNews, February 3; AP, February 3*

February 3, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants blew up a highway bridge in the Khyber Pass region, halting the transportation of supplies to NATO forces in Afghanistan. Approximately 80% of supplies for U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan pass through Pakistan. – *New York Times, February 3*

February 4, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb ripped through a vehicle carrying the guards for Mullah Salam, the district chief of Musa Qala in Helmand Province. Six of his guards were killed. – *AP, February 5*

February 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants set fire to 10 supply trucks returning from Afghanistan to Pakistan. – *Los Angeles Times, February 5*

February 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani Taliban released 29 paramilitary soldiers and policemen in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province. Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan said that the men were released on the promise that they would quit their jobs and not act against the Taliban. The men were initially captured only 24-hours earlier. – *Reuters, February 4*

February 4, 2009 (SOMALIA): The director of Horn Afrik radio in Mogadishu, Said Tahlil Ahmed, was

assassinated in that city by unknown gunmen. He was killed in Mogadishu's Bakara Market. Al-Shabab spokesman Shaykh Ali Mohamed Hussein denied that the group was behind the assassination. – *Shabelle Media Network, February 4*

February 5, 2009 (FRANCE): A French court sentenced Christian Ganczarski to 18 years in jail for his role in a 2002 attack that killed 21 people at a Tunisian synagogue in Djerba. Ganczarski, a German convert to Islam, was arrested in France in 2003. Walid Nouar, the brother of the suicide bomber, was also sentenced by the court to 12 years in jail. The Djerba bombing—which was claimed by al-Qa`ida—killed 14 German tourists, five Tunisians and two French nationals. – *BBC, February 5*

February 5, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed 16 people at a crowded restaurant in Khanaqin, Diyala Province. – *Los Angeles Times, February 6*

February 5, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed 30 people after detonating his explosives outside a Shi`a mosque in Dera Ghazi Khan district of Punjab Province. – *Bloomberg, February 5*

February 6, 2009 (GERMANY): A 30-year-old German citizen was arrested at Stuttgart airport on charges of being an al-Qa`ida member. Authorities also allege that the man supplied range finders, night vision equipment and cash to al-Qa`ida. – *AP, February 7*

February 6, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber wounded six people at a checkpoint on the Khyber Pass in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *BBC, February 6*

February 7, 2009 (PAKISTAN): The Taliban said that it had killed and beheaded Polish engineer Piotr Stanczak who was kidnapped in Pakistan on September 28, 2008. On February 8, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan released a videotape showing Stanczak's beheading. The authenticity of the videotape was later confirmed. – *AFP, February 7; AFP, February 9*

February 7, 2009 (SOMALIA): New Somali President Shaykh Sharif

Shaykh Ahmad arrived in Mogadishu to hold consultations to form a broad coalition government. On January 31, Shaykh Sharif was elected Somalia's new president by lawmakers in nearby Djibouti. – *AFP, February 7*

February 8, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Speaking at a security conference in Munich, Afghan President Hamid Karzai said, "We will invite all those Taliban, who are not part of al-Qaida, who are not part of terrorist networks, who want to return to their country, who want to live by the constitution of Afghanistan, and who want to have peace in the country and live a normal life to participate, to come back to their country." – *Voice of America, February 8*

February 8, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A bomb killed two U.S. nationals, an Afghan interpreter and a policeman in Helmand Province. – *Sydney Morning Herald, February 8*

February 8, 2009 (YEMEN): A Yemeni security official told reporters that authorities have decided to release 176 people suspected of having ties to al-Qa`ida. Of the group, 95 were freed on February 6. According to the BBC, "The ruling excludes those convicted of terrorism, unless they have completed their sentence." – *AFP, February 8; BBC, February 8*

February 9, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber detonated his explosives near a U.S. Army patrol in Mosul, Ninawa Province, killing four U.S. soldiers and their Iraqi interpreter. – *Los Angeles Times, February 10*

February 9, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber attacked a police and Frontier Corps checkpoint in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Five policemen were killed. – *AFP, February 8*

February 9, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani Taliban commander Noor Syed Mehsud was injured when a remote-controlled bomb exploded near his vehicle in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. His driver was killed in the blast. Noor Syed Mehsud is a key aide to Taliban commander Baitullah Mehsud. – *AFP, February 9*

February 9, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Al-Qa`ida's commander for Afghanistan, Shaykh Sa`id Mustafa Abu'l-Yazid, appeared in a new video warning India against attacking Pakistan. "India should know that it will have to pay a heavy price if it attacks Pakistan," he said. "The mujahidin will sunder your armies into the ground, like they did to the Russians in Afghanistan." Al-Yazid also called on Pakistanis to overthrow their government and president. - *BBC, February 9*

February 10, 2009 (GLOBAL): Interpol issued a rare "orange" global security alert for 85 suspected al-Qa`ida-linked terrorists wanted by Saudi Arabia. On February 2, the Saudi government issued a list of 85 wanted militants based outside of the country. - *CNN, February 11*

February 10, 2009 (YEMEN): The Yemeni Embassy in Washington, D.C., released a statement denying a February 8 report which claimed it released more than 170 al-Qa`ida suspects from its prisons. The new statement said that authorities have released 108 prisoners, but they were "not affiliated in any way to al Qaeda." - *CNN, February 10*

February 11, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants attacked three government buildings in Kabul, killing at least 20 people. The near-simultaneous attacks targeted the prisons directorate, the Justice Ministry and the Education Ministry. The attack involved multiple suicide bombers and gunmen. A total of at least seven militants were killed. - *Daily Telegraph, February 11; Canberra Times, February 12; New York Times, February 11*

February 11, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A provincial minister, Alam Zeb, was killed in a bomb attack in the North-West Frontier Province. - *CNN, February 11*

February 12, 2009 (IRAQ): Abdul-Karim al-Sharabi, a high level Mosul official with the Sunni Arab National Dialogue Front, was assassinated by gunmen as he drove to his office in the morning. He was killed in Mosul, Ninawa Province. - *New York Times, February 12*

February 12, 2009 (IRAQ): A bomb exploded amidst a crowd of Shi`a pilgrims in Karbala, killing at least eight

people. - *New York Times, February 12*

February 12, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside the entrance to the provincial security headquarters in Paktika Province, killing one police officer. - *Reuters, February 12*

February 13, 2009 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber dressed in a black abaya killed at least 30 Shi`a pilgrims as they traveled on foot along the route from Baghdad to the holy city of Karbala. Most of the dead were women and children. - *Sydney Morning Herald, February 14*

February 13, 2009 (SOMALIA): Al-Qa`ida leader Abu Yahya al-Libi released a new video statement in which he called on Somali militants to increase their attacks against the country's new government. "Aim your arrows towards them...direct your battles against them and intensify your campaign against them," he said. "Prepare to fight against the campaign of conspiracies illustrated by the recent farcical presidential election [in Somalia]...which America—the world leader of infidels—was the first to welcome." - *Reuters, February 13*

February 13, 2009 (MALAYSIA): According to a Malaysian newspaper, authorities in the country released from jail three men suspected of ties to Jemaah Islamiya. One of the men allegedly released, Zaini Zakaria, was suspected of involvement in the so-called "second wave" of attacks on the United States following September 11, 2001. According to Reuters, "The U.S. government had said Zaini was one of three potential pilots recruited by the al Qaeda to carry out a Sept.11-style attack on the U.S. west coast in 2002." - *Reuters, February 14*

February 14, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants assassinated the chief of Nadir Shah Kot district in Khost Province. He was killed by a roadside bomb. - *AFP, February 14*

February 14, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. missile strike by an aerial drone killed at least 25 alleged al-Qa`ida-linked militants in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. A Taliban official claimed that most of the dead were Uzbek fighters. Three separate

compounds were targeted in the attacks. - *Reuters, February 14; New York Times, February 14*

February 14, 2009 (PAKISTAN): The Taliban in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province released a Chinese engineer, Long Xiaowei, who had been held captive since August 29, 2008. Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan said he was released as a goodwill gesture. - *AP, February 15*

February 15, 2009 (IRAQ): Mosul politician Talib Muhsen, a member of the al-Hadbaa electoral list, was injured after a bomb attached to his vehicle exploded. - *CNN, February 15*

February 15, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A coalition airstrike killed Ghulam Dastagir, a powerful Taliban commander, in Badghis Province. Eight other militants were also killed in the strike. According to the former police chief of the province, Dastagir "was like the shadow governor of Badghis." - *AP, February 16*

February 15, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan announced a 10-day cease-fire with the government in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province. - *AP, February 15*

February 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani officials announced that they had struck a peace deal with the Taliban in the Swat region of the North-West Frontier Province. In exchange for peace, the government said that they would accept a legal system compatible with Shari`a law. According to the *New York Times*, "Government officials said on Monday that the agreement was struck with Maulana Sufi Mohammad, who has long pressed for Shariah law to be restored in Swat and who had pledged to persuade Taliban fighters in Swat to lay down their arms." The government will apparently recognize Shari`a for the entire Malakand Division, which includes Swat District of the NWFP. - *New York Times, February 16; CNN, February 18*

February 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. aerial drone fired missiles at a building in Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing approximately 30 people. If verified, the attack would mark the "first suspected drone attack



in Kurram.” – *Voice of America, February 16*;  
*Reuters, February 16*

February 17, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): U.S. President Barack Obama announced that he will send 17,000 more troops to Afghanistan in the spring and summer. Currently, approximately 36,000 U.S. troops are deployed to the country. – *New York Times, February 17*

February 17, 2009 (SAUDI ARABIA): Muhammad al-Awfi, a former detainee at Guantanamo Bay who became an al-Qa`ida commander after his release, turned himself in to Saudi authorities. Last month, al-Awfi appeared in an al-Qa`ida video claiming that he had joined al-Qa`ida in Yemen. He allegedly turned himself in to Yemeni authorities after securing his repatriation to Saudi Arabia. – *Reuters, February 17*

February 18, 2009 (UNITED KINGDOM): Britain’s highest court ruled that Abu Qatada, an extremist Muslim preacher accused of having links to al-Qa`ida, could be deported to Jordan despite fears that he could face torture there. His deportation will not occur, however, until the European Court of Human Rights hears his expected appeal. British Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said, “I am keen to deport this dangerous individual as soon as I can.” – *AP, February 18*

February 18, 2009 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Jazira broadcast an audiotape from a purported member of al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) who claimed to be holding captive two Canadian diplomats and four European tourists who were kidnapped from Niger on December 14 and January 22, respectively. The two Canadian diplomats include the UN envoy to Niger, Robert Fowler, and his colleague, Louis Guay. In the statement, the purported AQIM member said, “We announce to the general public that the mujahidin reserve the right to deal with the six kidnapped according to Islamic Shari`a law.” – *BBC, February 18*; *AP, February 18*

February 18, 2009 (SOMALIA): Sufi clerics in Somalia declared their support for the new government of Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad. The country’s Sufi clerics have thrown their support behind a newly armed Sufi group known as Ahlu-Sunna wal-Jama, which

recently scored military successes against al-Shabab in central Galgaduud region. – *Voice of America, February 18*

February 19, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a Shi`a funeral procession in Dera Ismail Khan of the North-West Frontier Province. At least 20 people were killed. – *AFP, February 19*

February 19, 2009 (SAUDI ARABIA): Alleged al-Qa`ida operative and Saudi national Ahmed Owaidan al-Harbi was handed over to Saudi authorities after he was arrested in eastern Yemen. – *AP, February 19*

February 19, 2009 (YEMEN): Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula leader Nasir al-Wahayshi released a new audio message urging Yemenis to rise up against the government. – *AP, February 19*

February 20, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Federal agents arrested Ahmadullah Sais Niazi, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Afghanistan, at his home in Tustin, California. Authorities allege that Niazi lied about his ties to terrorist groups on citizenship and passport papers. According to CBS News, the indictment reads that Niazi lied about his ties to al-Qa`ida, the Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami. The news report states that Niazi “faces charges of perjury, naturalization fraud, procuring a passport by fraud and making a false statement,” charges that could carry a sentence of up to 35 years. – *CBS News, February 20*

February 20, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Authorities announced that Guantanamo Bay inmate Binyam Mohamed will soon be released and sent back to the United Kingdom. Mohamed is a former UK resident who was accused of conspiring to participate in a dirty bomb attack. He was also accused of training in al-Qa`ida camps in Afghanistan. Charges against him, however, were dropped in October 2008. – *AP, February 20*

February 20, 2009 (KYRGYZSTAN): Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev signed a bill to close a key U.S. airbase used to stage military operations in neighboring Afghanistan. The signing of the bill marked the final step before authorities issue a 180-day eviction notice. According to the Associated Press, Manas airbase is “a transit point for 15,000 troops and 500 tons of cargo

each month to and from Afghanistan.” – *AP, February 20*

February 20, 2009 (THAILAND): Suspected Muslim separatist fighters killed and then beheaded two Thai soldiers in Yala Province in southern Thailand. – *Reuters, February 20*

February 21, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A senior government official told reporters that Taliban fighters have agreed to a “permanent cease-fire” in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province. – *Reuters, February 21*

February 22, 2009 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new audiotape on Islamist web forums, titled “From Kabul to Mogadishu.” During the message, al-Zawahiri spoke about Somalia, Yemen, Gaza, Afghanistan and Pakistan. – *CNN, February 23*

February 22, 2009 (EGYPT): A bomb exploded in the popular Khan al-Khalili bazaar in Cairo, killing a Frenchwoman and wounding 17 people. Police quickly discovered a second bomb, but managed to detonate it safely. The bazaar is popular among tourists. – *AP, February 22*

February 22, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants abducted Khushal Khan, a senior Pakistani official, and six of his guards in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province. The Taliban spokesman for Swat, Muslim Khan, said that the official “is our guest. We have to discuss some issues with him. We will serve him with tea and then free him.” – *Reuters, February 22*

February 22, 2009 (PAKISTAN): In a new statement, Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province government announced that it will provide 30,000 rifles to rural area residents in an attempt to counter Taliban militants. The initiative is called the “Village Defense Rifle” program. – *AFP, February 22*

February 22, 2009 (SOMALIA): Al-Shabab took responsibility for a suicide car bomb attack in Mogadishu that killed 11 African Union peacekeepers from Burundi. Al-Shabab leader Muktar Robow warned AU troops after the attack to “go home, otherwise you will

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

meet our hell.” – *Los Angeles Times*, February 23

February 23, 2009 (UNITED STATES): FBI Director Robert Mueller said that a Somali-American man from Minnesota, Shirwa Ahmed, became the first known suicide bomber with U.S. citizenship. Ahmed, who was recruited into Somalia's al-Shabab militant group, blew up an explosives-laden vehicle in northern Somalia in October 2008. According to Mueller, “It appears that this individual was radicalized in his hometown in Minnesota.” – *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 24

February 23, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Two suicide bombers targeted an anti-drug police station in Zaranj, Nimroz Province. One police officer was killed. – *AP*, February 23

February 23, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Tehrik-i-Taliban deputy chief Maulvi Faqir Muhammad declared a unilateral cease-fire in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AFP*, February 23

February 24, 2009 (IRAQ): Two Iraqi policemen opened fire on U.S. troops at a police outpost in Mosul. One U.S. soldier and an interpreter were killed. According to the Associated Press, “It was the fourth attack in the region since late 2007 with suspected links to Iraqi security units.” – *AP*, February 24

February 26, 2009 (UNITED STATES): U.S.-born Christopher Paul was sentenced to 20 years in prison for a terrorism conspiracy in which he joined al-Qa`ida to help plan bombings in the United States and abroad. Paul, who also went by the names Abdul Malek and Paul Kenyatta Laws, was accused by the Justice Department of discussing terrorist attacks during an August 2002 meeting with two other men at a suburban coffee shop. According to acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, Paul's sentencing ended “the long, militant career of Christopher Paul, an Ohio native who joined Al-Qaeda in the early 1990s, fought in Afghanistan and Bosnia and conspired with others to target Americans both at home and abroad.” – *Fox News*, February 26; *AFP*, February 26

February 27, 2009 (UNITED STATES): The indictment against Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri was unsealed, one day after being filed. A federal grand jury in Peoria, Illinois has charged al-Marri with two counts of providing material support to al-Qa`ida. Al-Marri, the last enemy combatant held on U.S. soil, will now be released from military custody and transferred into the criminal justice system. The U.S. government alleges that al-Marri was a “sleeper agent” waiting to take part in a second wave of September 11-style attacks on the United States. He was arrested in the United States in December 2001. – *ABC News*, February 27

February 28, 2009 (IRAQ): Authorities announced the arrest of al-Qa`ida's so-called “Oil Minister” for Iraq. The minister was identified as Ali Mahmud Mohammed. According to the AFP, “Mohammed was known for his involvement in hijacking tanker shipments of crude oil and petrol for Al-Qaeda and abducting the drivers.” He was detained north of Ba`quba, Diyala Province. – *AFP*, February 28

February 28, 2009 (PAKISTAN): The Pakistani military claimed that it had forced Taliban militants out of Bajaur Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). “We think that we have secured this agency,” said Major General Tariq Khan, the commander of military forces in Bajaur. “They have lost. They have lost their cohesion out here.” Separately, Colonel Saif Ullah, a commander in Mohmand Agency of FATA, told reporters that Pakistani forces repelled the insurgency in his agency and that it is now “under the control of law enforcement agencies.” – *AFP*, February 28

February 28, 2009 (SOMALIA): Somali President Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad agreed to a truce with his clan opponents—which have influence over al-Shabab—in exchange for the introduction of Shari`a in Somalia. “The mediators asked me to introduce Islamic Sharia in the country and I agreed,” Shaykh Sharif told reporters. Despite the statement, it is not expected that clan militias and factions from al-Shabab will stop fighting his government. – *BBC*, February 28