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# 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.

## Al-Qa`ida's Pakistan Strategy

By Don Rassler



The aftermath of a bombing that struck the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad in September 2008. - Photo by Pedro Ugarte/AFP/Getty Images

**A**L-QA`IDA'S STRATEGY IN Pakistan remains intentionally opaque, but has demonstrably shifted in recent years to promote increased confrontation with the Pakistani state. Al-Qa`ida's fighters originally used Pakistan as a key logistics base and facilitation point for the Afghan and Arab mujahidin during the 1980s, but since 2001 Pakistan has served primarily as an operational safe haven where al-Qa`ida and its affiliates can plan local, regional and international terrorist attacks. Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and smaller parts of Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) comprise al-Qa`ida's physical center of gravity. Increasingly, however, al-Qa`ida has utilized its media prowess and ideological authority to discredit the Pakistani state and promote cooperation among a variety of Pakistani militants to challenge the state's authority and undermine its support for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan.

A review of al-Qa`ida's statements pertaining to Pakistan, militant activity in the country, and the alliances al-Qa`ida has fostered among Pakistani factions reveals that the group is acting to shape Pakistan's militant environment and foster jihad against the Pakistani government, even while taking a secondary role in the organization and operationalization of violence. Al-Qa`ida accomplishes this in three primary ways: 1) by providing religious "justification" and rallying support for anti-government militancy; 2) acting as a force multiplier for violent activities by providing specific expertise; and 3) serving as a mediator and coalition builder for militant groups within Pakistan to further al-Qa`ida's aims.

Western counterterrorism analysts assessing al-Qa`ida's operations in Pakistan typically focus their attention on al-Qa`ida's "external" activities, primarily its support for terrorist

attacks and plots in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the United States. Although this perspective is important, the focus on al-Qa`ida's direct role in the conduct of violence has obscured the critical, but largely behind-the-scenes, role that al-Qa`ida is playing to foster militancy in Pakistan. The Pakistan example is important not only because it threatens a critical U.S. ally, but because it illustrates the dangerous role that al-Qa`ida can play even when it is not primarily responsible for violent operations.

#### **Calls for Action: Justifying and Rallying Support for the Pakistan Jihad**

Since 9/11, al-Qa`ida's attention in South Asia has mainly focused on facilitating and supporting the jihad in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, al-Qa`ida's messages directed at Pakistani audiences focused on Pakistan's role in supporting U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. Al-Qa`ida devoted significant energy attempting to portray former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf as an apostate, the Pakistani government as an un-Islamic regime, and the Pakistani Army as a servant of the United States' campaign in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> A review of statements made by senior al-Qa`ida leaders from 2001 to September 2008 reveals that the group's calls for Musharraf's ouster were fairly consistent and continued with great regularity from 2003 until his departure from office in 2008.

Al-Qa`ida has targeted these messages to a variety of Pakistani audiences depending on current events and has pressed three basic themes: the need to target Pakistan, the Pakistani government's "un-Islamic" character, and the need for unified opposition to the state. As part of that campaign, al-Qa`ida's communications have attempted to divide state resources by urging soldiers of the Pakistani Army to revolt against the entity they committed to protect.<sup>3</sup> Al-Qa`ida's calls for violent

action against the Pakistani government were limited in scope until the *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque) conflict erupted in July 2007. Recognizing an opportunity to broaden its support, al-Qa`ida seized upon the event and used it to renew calls for jihad in Pakistan. In a statement issued in response to the *Lal Masjid* event, Usama bin Ladin publicly acknowledged al-Qa`ida's failure to prioritize the jihad in Pakistan, noting: "the obligation on us [al-Qa`ida] remains, and we have been extremely late in carrying it [jihad] out, six years having passed, so we should make up for lost time."<sup>4</sup> Appeals urging jihad against the Pakistani government have become more frequent and direct since the *Lal Masjid* incident.<sup>5</sup>

Al-Qa`ida's post-*Lal Masjid* statements have been more religiously focused than those made beforehand. One important statement made in September 2007 attempted to nullify targeting distinctions between "near" and "far" enemies, which in the past have served as a point of disagreement among jihadist groups in Pakistan. As notable al-Qa`ida figure Abu Yahya al-Libi argued:

There is no doubt that the original, confirmed ruling laid down by the nobles and attested by the biography of the Prophet, peace and prayers be upon Him...is that we begin fighting the nearest [enemy], then the next nearest [enemy]. But this is when the situation is uniform and regular.<sup>6</sup>

Further contextualizing his distinction, al-Libi added that

the question of special nearness and farness in our modern age does not have the same significance it once had...The relations which tie the major infidel states to the statelets [sic] and their apostate governments are close, overlapping relations.

Therefore, he concluded, "they [the United States, Pakistan, Afghanistan] are a single entity, a single enemy, and a single army."<sup>7</sup> Al-Qa`ida's conflation of the near and far enemy target sets is an attempt to re-frame the jihad in Pakistan as one that is both local and

### **"Al-Qa`ida aims to destabilize the Pakistani government, divert U.S. attention from the fight in Afghanistan, and undermine Islamabad's alliance with the United States."**

global. In doing so, al-Qa`ida is trying to obviate the differences among Pakistani militant groups that vary widely in their commitment to global jihad, the war in Afghanistan, sectarianism, and the fight against India in Kashmir. This reflects an important ideational shift within al-Qa`ida that has significant implications for its strategic goals and tactical objectives.

#### **Force Multiplier: Facilitating Attacks Against Pakistan**

Many observers expect al-Qa`ida to take a leadership role in regions where it develops a major presence, but the Pakistani example belies that expectation. Perhaps counterintuitively, al-Qa`ida has chosen to remain in the background in Pakistan while fostering support for attacks against the Pakistani state and supporting Pakistani militants by providing technical expertise and capabilities.<sup>8</sup> Since its return to the tribal areas of Pakistan in late 2001, al-Qa`ida has been "lying low" within Pakistan and deferring leadership roles to local militant leaders. Given the U.S. focus on al-Qa`ida in Pakistan, the group might not have any other choice. Working in the background not only protects al-Qa`ida's leadership, but it also helps to protect its safe haven in the Pakistani tribal areas by not offending the multitude of jihadist and Taliban

1 The jihad in Afghanistan has primarily been led by Mullah Omar and the now Baluchistan-based Quetta *shura* council. There are, however, multiple actors involved in the insurgency, each responsible for different areas.

2 See, for example, OSC, "Second Round of 'Open Interview' with al-Zawahiri Released," April 22, 2008; "Al-Zawahiri Attacks Pakistani President, Urges Army to Topple Him," al-Jazeera, March 25, 2004.

3 "Al-Zawahiri Praises Iraq's Al-Qa`ida, Urges Paki-

stani Soldiers to Disobey Orders," al-Sahab, April 29, 2006.

4 Usama bin Ladin, "Remove the Apostate," posted on the al-Buraq Islamic Network website, September 20, 2007.

5 The author identifies at least four such statements released since the *Lal Masjid* event.

6 OSC, "Abu Yahya al-Libi, 'No Room' for International Legitimacy," September 10, 2007.

7 Ibid.

8 Dr. Bruce Hoffman, discussion at the Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy, March 4, 2009.

groups sheltering al-Qa`ida's activities. A less overt presence in Pakistan also makes it easier for al-Qa`ida to manage local perceptions and deny involvement in controversial terrorist attacks within the country.

Although al-Qa`ida has only claimed responsibility for a small number of attacks in Pakistan, it is suspected of working with and through local groups to actively fight the Pakistani government. Al-Qa`ida has a deep history with many local Pakistan-based groups, including its primary partner in the fight, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its associated elements. While the precise nature of al-Qa`ida's operational relationships with groups such as Lashkar-i-Jhangvi or elements of the TTP are less than clear, these groups share a similar cause.<sup>9</sup> In 2003, for example, al-Qa`ida operative Abu Faraj al-Libi allegedly ordered an assassination attempt (one of two attempted during December 2003) against Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistani president at the time.<sup>10</sup> The double suicide attack that was executed on December 25, 2003 was reportedly planned by al-Qa`ida but executed by the Kashmiri group Jaysh-i-Muhammad.<sup>11</sup> More recently, in June 2009 a "major terrorist cell" with plans to target Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and a number of provincial chief ministers was disrupted in Karachi.<sup>12</sup> According to analyst Bruce Riedel, the group was led by a troika comprised of "one member of the Pakistani Taliban, one member of Lashkar-e-Taiba, and one member of al Qaeda."<sup>13</sup> Other

attacks, such as the September 2008 Marriott Hotel bombing in Islamabad, went unclaimed by al-Qa`ida, but have hallmarks of an al-Qa`ida attack.<sup>14</sup> These instances suggest that al-Qa`ida is operating under a model distinct from that expected by most analysts, who seem to assume that al-Qa`ida will attempt to seize operational and political control of a militant environment, as its franchise did in Iraq. Such an assumption is misguided. Al-Qa`ida does not need to conduct bombings itself in order to be dangerous; in fact, al-Qa`ida is more likely to produce successful revolutionary movements when it defers to local groups to do the bulk of the fighting.

#### **Al-Qa`ida as Mediator and Coalition Builder**

To further its strategic aims, al-Qa`ida has assumed a role as mediator and coalition builder among various Pakistani militant group factions by promoting the unification of entities that have opposed one another or had conflicting ideas about whether to target the Pakistani state. For example, from December 2007 to mid-2008 Pakistani Taliban groups led by Mullah Nazir Ahmed and Hafiz Gul Bahadur were in violent conflict with Baitullah Mehsud's anti-government TTP.<sup>15</sup> The hostilities between the two rival factions threatened to distract them from conducting attacks in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, collectively hindering the efforts of al-Qa`ida, the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban.<sup>16</sup> In an effort to protect his own interests, Mullah Omar reportedly urged both factions to reconcile their differences; he also fostered the creation of the Shura Ittihad-i-Mujahidin, an umbrella group led by Baitullah Mehsud with Gul Bahadur serving as deputy *amir*.<sup>17</sup> Al-Qa`ida served a critical role certifying the new relationship. In early April 2009, al-Qa`ida's media production arm al-Sahab released a 56-minute video interview with Mullah Nazir, in which he was specifically asked about his

cooperation with other Taliban groups in Waziristan.<sup>18</sup> The question was an indirect reference to his conflict with Baitullah Mehsud. Nazir's response is telling: "We [the Pakistani Taliban] have forgotten all of our differences and merged this alliance as one. There shall be no more disputes in the future."<sup>19</sup>

As a mediator, al-Qa`ida is able to exert additional influence upon other groups, foster militant coalitions, and shape Pakistan's militant environment in ways that benefit its strategic vision and goals. Mullah Nazir's own view of the jihad

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waged by the Pakistani Taliban reflects the depth of al-Qa`ida's influence. "Our jihad is not limited to Pakistan or Afghanistan," Nazir explained. "Our jihad is a global jihad."<sup>20</sup> A "united" Pakistani Taliban waging a three-front global war against Pakistan, the Afghan government, and the United States and its allies in Afghanistan is undoubtedly in al-Qa`ida's interests.

#### **Conclusion**

Al-Qa`ida recognizes the critical role Pakistan plays for the United States in its efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and the broader region. As Abu Yahya al-Libi noted this past April, "the United States, despite its strength and its developed equipment, cannot go forward or backward without the support of Pakistan in the war against Muslims in Afghanistan and Pakistan."<sup>21</sup> With

9 Christine Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al Qaeda and Other Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27:6 (2004): pp. 489-504.

10 "Attack on Musharraf; 5 Get Capital Punishment," *Pakistan Times*, August 28, 2005; "Arrests Follow Musharraf Attack," BBC, December 27, 2003.

11 B. Raman, "Jihadis Strike at Pak Army and ISI Again," South Asia Analysis Group, November 25, 2007.

12 "Seven Qaida Commanders Enter Pakistan," *Daily Times*, June 4, 2009; "ISI is Not a Rogue Agency: Riedel," *Dawn*, June 6, 2009. The Long War Journal claims that Prime Minister Gilani and General Kiyani were also targets. For more, see Bill Roggio, "Al Qaeda Operatives Targeting Pakistani Leaders," The Long War Journal, June 4, 2009.

13 Ibid. It should also be noted that significant disagreements exist among academics and counterterrorism professionals about the strength of the links between al-Qa`ida and Lashkar-i-Tayyiba.

14 An unknown Pakistani group, Fidayin-i-Islam, claimed responsibility for the attack. See "'Fedayeen' Claims Responsibility," *Dawn*, September 23, 2008.

15 The author thanks Vahid Brown for this point. Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Plot To Divide the Taliban Foiled," *Asia Times Online*, July 22, 2008.

16 Ibid.

17 Carlotta Gal, "Afghan and Pakistan Taliban Close Ranks," *New York Times*, March 26, 2009.

18 "Interview with the Amir of Mujihadeen in South Waziristan / Mullah Nazir Ahmed," *Jamia Hafsa Forum*, April 7, 2009.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Abu Yahya al-Libi, "Sharpening the Blades of Battle Against the Government and Army of Pakistan," al-Fajr



that in mind, al-Qa`ida has redirected substantial energy toward promoting the cooperation and effectiveness of local Pakistani groups opposed to the Pakistani state. Al-Qa`ida has recognized that by promoting violence against this “near” enemy, it can inflict severe pain on U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. Al-Qa`ida aims to destabilize the Pakistani government, divert U.S. attention from the fight in Afghanistan, and undermine Islamabad’s alliance with the United States. By rallying support for jihad in Pakistan, helping to facilitate attacks against the Pakistani state, and serving as a mediator, al-Qa`ida has positioned itself to play an important role within Pakistan in the future. The U.S. and international community’s focus on al-Qa`ida’s “external” posture must therefore be accompanied by an increased focus on the group’s “internal” posture and the implications of al-Qa`ida’s willingness to take a supporting rather than primary role in the anti-government insurgency in Pakistan. Such techniques are more subtle and sophisticated than the activities generally expected of al-Qa`ida, and thus the U.S. policy response will have to be similarly nuanced.

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## Preventing Another Mumbai: Building a Police Operational Art

By John P. Sullivan and Adam Elkus

HALF A YEAR after the devastating Mumbai attack in November 2008, its lessons have yet to be learned. Many have commented on the disorganization of the Indian police and security forces’ response, but fail to address the problem’s root cause. The Mumbai police’s command and control failures, slowness and disorganization of tactical response, and inability to prevent the terrorists from entrenching are rooted in a central doctrinal flaw: the lack of police operational art. Police operational art is defined as the capacity to go beyond managing single tactical incidents to influencing the effects of multiple incidents in multiple locations over time. Current police practice, for example, conceives response as a series of tactical engagements, rather than a campaign with many different elements that must be intricately coordinated to achieve a larger aim. Operational myopia is not exclusive to Mumbai—even the best American police units do not effectively recognize or utilize the operational level of maneuver.

A piecemeal, tactic-focused response will work in isolated tactical engagements, but it founders against an opponent utilizing multiple forces and resources to achieve an operational aim. When such a foe emerges, police command and control breaks down and the adversary achieves success. To defend against future urban sieges, police forces must generate an operational—instead of purely tactical—response to paramilitary terrorism. This approach must integrate operational swarming, maneuver tactics, and real-time intelligence support across the entire urban operation or battlespace.

### A Modern Massacre

Mumbai, like many modern “global cities,” is a commercial and cultural megapolis rich with symbolic and “soft” targets. The complexity of the urban battlespace makes command and control difficult to maintain when defending against swarming attacks.<sup>1</sup> The *fidayin*

(high-risk commandos) carrying out the Mumbai assault were willing to risk everything for the cause, and exercised enough security to hide their pre-operational planning.

The Mumbai attackers achieved high levels of mobility through tight coordination, synchronicity, and unit autonomy. This was enabled by real-time digital communications networked via handheld devices.<sup>2</sup> The terrorists also exploited a remote command and control node that provided a common operating picture.<sup>3</sup> Using these tools, the terrorists were able to greatly increase their mobility and lethality. In short, they “swarmed”:<sup>4</sup>

The attack was sequential and highly mobile. Multiple teams attacked several locations at once—combining armed assaults, carjackings, drive-by shootings, prefabricated IEDs, targeted killings (policemen and selected foreigners), building takeovers, and barricade and hostage situations...By dispersing into separate teams and moving from target to target, the terrorists were able to sow confusion and create the impression of a greater number of attackers. The explosive devices that would go off after the terrorists departed heightened the confusion.<sup>5</sup>

The attackers arrived in Mumbai at multiple locations. After leaving Karachi on a Pakistani vessel, the terrorists hijacked an Indian trawler mid-route to Mumbai, adding a maritime

battlespace in an earlier paper published in *Small Wars Journal*. See John P. Sullivan and Adam Elkus, “Postcard from Mumbai: Modern Urban Siege,” *Small Wars Journal*, February 18, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Angel Rabasa et al., *The Lessons of Mumbai* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), pp., 5, 7.

<sup>3</sup> According to case documents released by the Mumbai police, the attackers allegedly spoke to a Pakistani colonel during the entire incident. The cell phone calls were made using Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and the call was traced to an IP address created with a New Jersey-based VoIP provider. See C. Unnikrishnan, S. Ahmed Ali and Kartikeya, “26/11 Calls Traced to Pak Serving Colonel,” *Times of India*, February 26, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Swarming and the Future of Conflict* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Rabasa, p. 5.

Media Center, April 30, 2009.

<sup>1</sup> The authors elaborated on the urban operations or

piracy dimension to the attack.<sup>6</sup> Once the terrorists landed in Mumbai, they maintained the advantage of surprise and complicated the Indian police's response by attacking in several locations simultaneously. Attackers generated operational shock through the combination of heavy weapons and speed.<sup>7</sup> They were armed with Chinese assault rifles, MP-5 submachine guns, multiple hand grenades, and a host of improvised explosive devices.<sup>8</sup> Indian police were outgunned and unprepared to deal with the well-armed adversaries.

Another lethal element of the attack was "pulsing." In swarming theory, pulsing is when the attacking units change the point of attack, often rapidly. The Mumbai terrorists exploited the freedom of action generated by their operational maneuver to rapidly pulse in response to the situation's changing conditions. During the attack, assault elements repeatedly switched the point of engagement, further confusing police response.

Without an effective police response, attackers continued to rampage at will throughout the city until they settled into an entrenchment pattern and took hostages. The hostages were soon killed and police faced a daunting room-to-room fight, with the terrorists often moving through previously secured areas as police command and control weakened within the confines of the buildings. Police observers noted after the attack that they were intimately aware of the buildings' layouts, suggesting that the attackers intended to reach the buildings once their relative advantage had eroded to finish their assault with a Beslan-style siege.

The attack was not spontaneous—it took a high degree of preparation, training, and some reflexive control by superiors in the rear during combat. Precise planning may have started in mid-2007, and pre-operational reconnaissance was detected in February 2008.<sup>9</sup> The attackers' preparation enabled the

flexibility and mobility of the assault inherent in their swarm-pulse approach.<sup>10</sup>

Police failures during the Mumbai response can be characterized broadly as deficiencies in intelligence, prevention, command and control, and counterterrorism capability. When terrorist groups, nominally dispersed and hidden, wish to launch an attack, they slowly assemble a "kill chain"<sup>11</sup> that can be seen and targeted. Indications and warning missed the emergence of this "kill chain" due to gaps in coastal surveillance and processing of information.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, security at many of the chief targets such as the Oberoi Hotel was minimal at best. Yet while poor synthesis of intelligence and poor protection of "soft" targets created the opportunity for the attack, it was inadequate command and control and counterterrorism capability that allowed it to succeed.

Fire and emergency first responders were unable to contain the damage and operate effectively in combat conditions. There was no plan for dealing with the media, whose 24-hour coverage increased the chaos and allowed the attackers' handlers to give them real-time tactical intelligence and advice.<sup>13</sup> Hostage rescue response and tactical planning were not up to the task of fighting through the entrenchments terrorists created. Command, control, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance were not integrated and provided in real time.<sup>14</sup> There was no immediate action to stop the attackers' momentum—and ordinary Indian police were simply unprepared to deal with the militants' operational shock. These problems arise from a lack of operational doctrine and capabilities and are not unique to the Indian police.

#### Thinking About the Operational Level

As British Lieutenant General Sir John Kisely noted in the *Royal United Services Journal*, the operational level refers to the theater level of engagement where campaigns and major operations

are used to accomplish strategic objectives. While campaigns consist of battles, operational victory is not an accumulation of tactical victories; rather, operational art is defined as "the skillful orchestration of military resources and activities."<sup>15</sup> Operational art is the meeting point between the strategic accomplishment of grand objectives and the tactical winning of battles.

Current U.S. police practice and informal doctrine concerns itself with tactics. Police drill endlessly for tactical response with Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) units, and programs for specialized emergency responder mobilization and "active shooter" response are becoming more common. The problem, however, is that few law enforcement agencies and police tacticians consider the "operational dimension of maneuver" involved in complex responses, instead focusing on excellence in tactical operations.

Police often operate in limited time and space, responding reactively to "calls" for service. This results in an organizational framework built from the bottom up that is tailored from tactical engagements. The bulk of routine police activity is also focused on a "beat" or neighborhood, which results in an emphasis on a much smaller scale than a traditional theater of war.

Large operations, especially those involving an opposing force with multiple fronts and points of contact, require sophisticated coordination, harnessing of police and civil resources, real time intelligence support, and excellent command and control. Operational planning is necessary to delegate objectives to subordinates, deal with the fog and friction generated in conflict, and react to the adversary's plan in its entirety instead of simply responding tactically without an overall common operating picture or concept of operations.

Translating operational thought to police operations is difficult, but it can be accomplished. In traditional military thought, the operational level primarily

6 Ibid., p. 3.

7 Robert Leonhard, *The Art of Maneuver: Maneuver Warfare Theory and AirLand Battle* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), p. 31.

8 Rabasa, p. 4.

9 Ibid., p. 3.

10 Ibid.

11 A "kill chain" is a sequence of events that must occur for a threat to successfully engage and kill its target.

12 Ibid., p. 9.

13 Ibid., p. 17.

14 Ibid., p. 11.

15 Lt. Gen. Sir John Kisely, "Thinking About the Operational level," *Royal United Services Journal*, December 2005, p. 38.

concerns itself with the winning of campaigns. The operational commander uses individual battles and maneuver to implement the strategic objective. Obviously, many routine police operations occur on a much smaller scale than a traditional military campaign. A raid, for example, constitutes a police “battle,” something that would barely rise to the level of a skirmish in a traditional force-and-force maneuver warfare campaign.

The operational level for Los Angeles County, for example, is the usage of police forces in a combination of operational-level strategies for accomplishing a strategic aim such as community policing, tactical urban response, and countergang raids. Intelligence Preparation for Operations (IPO) is the primary tool for creating operational plans for usage of police and paramilitary forces in urban environments. IPO helps not only properly define the parameters of the operational space, but creates courses of action (COA) for combined response from different types of security forces.<sup>16</sup> Like its military analog Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB), IPO systematically identifies all elements of the operational space and creates COA for forces in the field. Most importantly, IPO stresses a holistic “geosocial” approach to building operational plans.

The concept of “full spectrum policing” is also important to create the tactical and operational capability for police response. Full spectrum policing units have the ability to transition between traditional policing tasks such as community policing, investigations, countergang operations, and “high-intensity” tasks such as riot control, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency. In Europe and Israel, gendarme-type units and “formed” paramilitary policing units are capable of carrying out full-spectrum policing and frequently deploy abroad in peacekeeping missions.<sup>17</sup>

16 John P. Sullivan and Alain Bauer eds., *Terrorism Early Warning: 10 Years of Achievement in Fighting Terrorism and Crime* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, 2008).

17 For a discussion of expeditionary police (Expol) for stability policing, see John P. Sullivan and Adam Elkus, “Expeditionary Law Enforcement,” *Small Wars Journal*, July 2, 2008. The authors also introduced the concept

Lastly, real-time intelligence support in the operational space, especially in the midst of a chaotic battle such as the Mumbai incident, is needed to coordinate police response. This can be accomplished through the use of command and control visualization technologies and a competent command staff monitoring the engagement.

#### Operational Art and Tactics

When translated to the tactical realm, police operational art is distilled into active shooter response and swarming. Modern urban terrorists thrive on the unimpeded use of kinetic energy to drive force. Police must immediately act to fix the attackers in place and halt their momentum. Once stalled, terrorists are disrupted and vulnerable to well-equipped reinforcements that can arrive and neutralize the threat. Non-tactical units must form active shooter response teams and quickly counterattack the terrorists' lead assault elements. Opposing forces' lines of operations are thin, dispersed, and will not hold up once their movement has ceased. The very qualities that enable criminal-terrorist operational swarming to be successful present an inherent weakness that can be exploited by police and military forces. Once fixed in time and place they can be captured or neutralized with the successful and surgical usage of special operations forces, SWAT teams, or hostage rescue-level tactical response forces.

To conceptualize what is required for such operational fixing, one can examine Sun Tzu's concept of the “ordinary” and “extraordinary force.” An “ordinary” force holds the adversary in place while the “extraordinary” force loops around to assault them at the weak point.<sup>18</sup> Transposed to an urban setting, the “ordinary” forces are “full spectrum” patrol units capable of standing up to operational shock. Ordinary police must fix the threat in place. Otherwise, command and control fragments, public panic ensues, the enemy maintains and enhances his relative advantage, and deaths accumulate.

of “full spectrum policing” in the essay “Postcard from Mumbai: Modern Urban Siege.”

18 Leonhard, p. 31.

The “extraordinary” force will require the creation of more regional high-quality SWAT units capable of deploying at a moment's notice. If and when another Mumbai or Beslan attack happens, local police cannot afford to wait for a national tactical team to activate and deploy. In fact, one of the key problems of the Mumbai response was the long deployment time of high-quality special operations forces into the urban conflict zone. The “extraordinary” force, however, does not inherently have to be a designated tactical team, as the purpose is merely to neutralize the terrorist group fixed in place by the “ordinary” force. This can be achieved with well-trained local police prepared to form into flexible immediate action, rapid deployment teams built from “beat” patrol officers, as well as local SWAT teams.

Swarming is also an integral part of police response. Since building mass in urban environments is extremely difficult, slows down response, and makes police vulnerable, small teams must quickly move through the city in a semi-autonomous manner to reach the zone of engagement and fix the adversary or engage criminals. In urban counterterrorism or counterinsurgency, this will require real-time distributed situational awareness and active intelligence support.

Streets, roads, subways, and other access roads that police know intimately can be used to rapidly swarm adversaries. Police forces should practice mobilization, especially along alternate routes that could be used in case of a disruption of traffic during an urban assault. The key to tactical success is refusing to move along traditional lines of urban maneuver and utilizing the various lines of the city to fix and destroy urban assailants spread around dispersed lines of operations.

#### Conclusion

The Mumbai attack was essentially a virtual urban siege. It combined swarming and pulsing with tactical urban sieges to generate mass casualties to further the terrorists' strategic goals and message. In their adept blend of these tactical approaches, they were able to dominate the urban operational space. Police response was compromised by its inability to rapidly adapt to the swarm



and follow-on pulses and sieges. Most importantly, the attack demonstrates the need to develop operational art as a key component of “full spectrum” police practice that addresses the full range of crime control and public order issues facing contemporary cities and their public spaces.

The contemporary police service—in Mumbai and elsewhere—lacks the doctrinal foundation to recognize and exploit the operational level of maneuver. Operational art needs to be fully developed within police practice, a necessary step toward developing police doctrine for addressing terrorism and high intensity crime. Mumbai is neither the first nor the last paramilitary urban siege in a “global” city.<sup>19</sup> Paramilitary terrorism and urban siege in major cities is more likely to occur than the use of weapons of mass destruction, and if tactical excellence continues to be confused with operational virtuosity, another tragedy is inevitable.

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## The Indian Mujahidin and Lashkar-i-Tayyiba's Transnational Networks

By Praveen Swami

IN 2006, THE LIVES of a rich Omani businessman and an Indian computer professional crossed at a mosque in Muscat, the capital of Oman.<sup>1</sup> Kerala-born Sarfaraz Nawaz and Muscat-based entrepreneur Ali Abdul Aziz al-Hooti—apparently improbable recruits to the jihadist movement—became key players in building a complex Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LeT) network that gave the jihadist group a new reach, resilience and lethality. Both men allegedly operated an LeT logistical hub that supported the terrorist group's operations in India, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh and even the Maldives. Ever since the two men were detained by authorities in December 2008, investigators in India have developed significant new insights into the almost invisible threads linking together three apparently distinct jihadist enterprises: the urban bombing campaign that has claimed hundreds of lives across India since 2005; the November 2008 assault on Mumbai; and a wider jihadist apparatus stretching across the Indian Ocean from the Persian Gulf to Bangladesh. Tadiyantavide Nasir,<sup>2</sup> Ali Abdul Aziz al-Hooti and other key operatives helped recruit and train dozens of LeT militants from outside Pakistan, provided the platform for the organization to stage offensive operations across the Indian Ocean, and raised the resources needed to grow a new affiliate, the Indian Mujahidin.<sup>3</sup>

From its origins in Pakistan's Punjab Province, the LeT has grown into a transnational organization.<sup>4</sup> This development is of concern to authorities

across the region for three reasons. First, the evolutionary trajectory of the LeT will make it increasingly resistant to counterterrorism action in any one country or decapitation attempts targeting its leadership. Second, the LeT's ability to recruit from a pool of well-educated, affluent sympathizers in multiple countries gives it dramatically-enhanced reach and lethality. Third, the LeT could spawn and sustain the growth of quasi-independent jihadist movements outside of Pakistan.

This article provides an overview of the LeT's transnational infrastructure, explaining how the terrorist group has helped support other violent networks in India, such as the Indian Mujahidin. It first examines the lives of LeT operatives Sarfaraz Nawaz and Ali Abdul Aziz al-Hooti, and then profiles the formation and progression of the Lashkar-linked Indian Mujahidin.

### The LeT's Role in Inciting Jihadist Violence

Sarfaraz Nawaz's jihadist journey began in 1995 when he was 18-years-old. He joined the now-proscribed Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), an Islamist political formation from which the Indian jihadist movement has drawn much of its cadre.<sup>5</sup> Five years later, Nawaz was elected to SIMI's New Delhi-based central committee. His contemporaries included many who later played critical roles in building India's jihadist movement—among them, key SIMI ideologue Safdar Nagori, and Peedical Abdul Shibly and Yahya Kamakutty, both successful computer professionals who are now being tried for plotting jihadist operations in southern India.<sup>6</sup> Yet like the overwhelming majority of SIMI members, Nawaz chose a life of middle-class respectability. He received a computer networking degree from an

5 For more information, see the South Asia Terrorism Portal file on the Students Islamic Movement of India, located at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org). For a full account of the origins and growth of SIMI, see Yoginder Sikand, *Islamist Assertion in Contemporary India: The Students Islamic Movement of India* (New Delhi: Islam Interfaith, 2005). For a sympathetic Urdu-language account, see Sayyed Abdul Bari, *Azad Hindustan Mai Muslim Tanzimey* (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 2001).

6 For an overview of Indian Mujahidin membership, see B. Raman, “Terror's New Faces,” *Rediff.com*, August 19, 2008. For details of Shibly and Kamakutty, see Praveen Swami, “White-Collar Jihadists a Cause for Growing Concern,” *Hindu*, October 7, 2008.

19 John Robb, “The Coming Urban Terror,” *City Journal*, Summer 2007.

institute in Kochi, married and found a job in Oman.<sup>7</sup>

Nawaz, however, was drawn back into the world from where he appeared to have escaped. During a visit home in early 2006, he heard Tadiyantavide Nasir—an Islamist political activist who, improbably enough, also served as a preacher with the Noorisha order of Sufi mystics—deliver a speech casting jihad as an imperative part in the practice of Islam.<sup>8</sup> Inspired, Nawaz made contacts with jihadists in Muscat. Friends from his days in SIMI put him in touch with al-Hooti, a successful automobile components dealer who also owned a number of internet cafés. Nawaz then played a key facilitation role by connecting an Indian Mujahidin cell leader with al-Hooti, the LeT financier.

Born to an Indian mother, al-Hooti's radicalization had been driven by stories of atrocities against Muslims he heard on visits home to Miraj, near Mumbai. Before he turned 30, Indian investigators allege, al-Hooti had twice trained at LeT camps in Pakistan. By 2006, al-Hooti had emerged as one of LeT's key organizers in the Gulf.<sup>9</sup> Working with LeT intelligence operative Mohammad Jassem, also known by the code-name "Tehsin," al-Hooti helped send dozens of jihadists to Lashkar's camps in Pakistan for training.<sup>10</sup>

Many of these men proved themselves to be valuable LeT assets. Early in 2007, al-Hooti and Jassem dispatched Dubai-based, Indian-origin printing-press mechanic Fahim Arshad Ansari to an LeT camp in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>11</sup> Having finished

a *Daura Ribat*<sup>12</sup> covert tradecraft course, Ansari was tasked with carrying out surveillance at several important locations in Mumbai. Footage he generated, Indian prosecutors have said, helped facilitate the training of the LeT assault team that targeted Mumbai in November 2008.<sup>13</sup>

Funds generated by al-Hooti are thought to have helped LeT commander Faisal Haroun, also known by the code-name "Naim," set up Indian Ocean networks that eventually enabled the group to target India's western seaboard. Haroun is suspected of crafting the 2006 delivery of assault rifles intended

### **“From its origins in Pakistan’s Punjab Province, the LeT has grown into a transnational organization.”**

for use in a terrorist attack in Gujarat, as well as an aborted 2007 effort to land eight Lashkar *fidayin* (high-risk commandos) off Mumbai.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, al-Hooti and Jassem recruited widely across the India Ocean region. Maldives investigators, for example, have learned that the men facilitated the training of Ali Assham, a Malé resident who was forced to suspend his jihadist career after losing an eye in a bomb-making accident.<sup>15</sup>

erations, see Praveen Swami, “How the Lashkar Planned Mumbai Massacre,” *Hindu*, February 28, 2009. Also see Praveen Swami, “Abortive Lashkar Plot Holds Clues to Mumbai Massacre,” *Hindu*, December 8, 2008.

12 *Daura Ribat* is an intelligence course.

13 Ashok Duraphe, “Final Form / Report (Under Section 173 Cr.P.C.) in the Court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, 37<sup>th</sup> Court, Esplanade, Mumbai,” Mumbai Police Headquarters, February 25, 2009, pp. 6-7.

14 For details of the Aurangabad case, see Stavan Desai, Anuradha Nagaraj and Sagnik Chowdhury, “Cops Follow Aurangabad Arms Trail,” *Indian Express* [New Delhi], July 16, 2006. For an account of Lashkar's use of sea routes into Mumbai, see Praveen Swami, “Signs of Another Kind of Line of Control,” *Hindu*, May 14, 2007.

15 For background details on Faisal Haroun's Indian Ocean network, see Praveen Swami, “Mumbai: The Road to Maximum Terror,” *South Asia Intelligence Review*, December 15, 2008. For a review of jihadist operations in the Maldives, see Praveen Swami, “The Jihad in Paradise,” *South Asia Intelligence Review*, November 19, 2007.

According to Omani authorities, by 2007 the pro-Western emirate itself had begun to figure on al-Hooti's list of targets. In June that year, al-Hooti held discussions with LeT sympathizers in Oman on the prospect of targeting prominent landmarks in Muscat—among them the Golden Tulip Hotel, a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) office, and a spa in the upmarket Nizwa area.<sup>16</sup> Although no final operational plans were made, Omani authorities found enough evidence to secure a conviction earlier this year.<sup>17</sup>

Most important to the Indian investigators, al-Hooti also provided an interface between the LeT to deal with the Indian Mujahidin: a loose cluster of semi-autonomous SIMI-linked cells responsible for bombings in a dozen Indian cities since 2005. Last year, Tadiyantavide Nasir turned to Sarfaraz Nawaz to secure funding for the training of a new group of Indian Mujahidin volunteers he had raised from the Indian state of Kerala.<sup>18</sup> Nasir also said he needed cash to pay for a planned bomb attack in the city of Bangalore.<sup>19</sup> Nawaz then facilitated contact between Nasir and al-Hooti. Between March and May 2008, police allege that al-Hooti transferred an estimated \$2,500 for Nasir's use to a Kerala-based *hawala* dealer.<sup>20</sup> LeT commander “Rehan,” one of al-Hooti's associates, also arranged for Nasir's recruits—all Indian Mujahidin members—to train with a jihadist unit operating near the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>21</sup>

Beginning in July 2008, however, the plan unraveled.<sup>22</sup> First, the bombs planted in Bangalore failed to work properly; just one person was killed by the 10 improvised explosive devices planted. Then, in October, five of

16 Personal interview, senior Mumbai police official, Mumbai, May 27, 2009. Also see Raman. For details of Shibly and Kamakutty, see Swami, “White-Collar Jihadists a Cause for Growing Concern.”

17 *Ibid.*; Personal interview, senior Indian government official, New Delhi, May 19, 2009.

18 B. Srijan, “LeT Trained its Terror Brigade in Kerala,” *Indian Express*, March 19, 2009.

19 Personal interview, Bangalore police investigator, Bangalore, May 25, 2009.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 Johnson TA, “Nine Held in Bangalore Blasts Case,” *Indian Express*, February 8, 2008.

7 Material on the background of Nawaz and al-Hooti was gathered during personal interviews with Indian police personnel in Hyderabad, Mumbai and Bangalore, conducted during research for Praveen Swami, “Mumbai Terror Trail Leads to Muscat.”

8 The Noorisha Sufis purport to oppose terrorism. See “Terrorists Giving a Bad Name for Jihad: Tariqa Chief,” Expressbuzz.com, February 3, 2009. For details on Nasir, see Praveen Swami, “The Sufi with the Kalashnikov,” *Hindu*, February 16, 2009.

9 Personal interview, senior Mumbai police official, Mumbai, May 27, 2009. For an overview of Indian Mujahidin membership, see Raman. For details of Shibly and Kamakutty, see Swami, “White-Collar Jihadists a Cause for Growing Concern.”

10 *Ibid.*

11 For details on Fahim Ansari's background and op-



Nasir's volunteers were identified by a Jammu and Kashmir police informer in northern Kashmir. Four were killed in subsequent fighting with the Indian Army; the fifth man, Kerala resident Abdul Jabbar, was arrested.<sup>23</sup> Even as the police closed in on Nasir and other members of his Indian Mujahidin cell, al-Hooti and "Rehan" helped arrange his escape with the help of Lashkar's top resident agent in Bangladesh, Mubashir Shahid.<sup>24</sup>

Like Nasir, most key Indian Mujahidin commanders are now fugitives. India's intelligence services believe they are most likely hiding in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Yet, by questioning dozens of mid-level Indian Mujahidin operatives held last year, investigators believe they now have a reasonable understanding of the organization's story and its affiliations with the larger Lashkar project in India.

#### The Indian Mujahidin is Born

One of the main founders of the Indian Mujahidin is Sadiq Israr Sheikh, who was arrested in September 2008. Sheikh had no conception of that jihadist project when he began attending SIMI's Sunday study meetings at a friend's apartment in 1996. Yet it was at these meetings that the Indian Mujahidin idea was born.<sup>25</sup>

At around the same time, the LeT was preparing to initiate a new phase of operations directed at India. At a February 2000 rally in Islamabad, LeT chief Hafiz Mohammad Saeed explained the organization's plans.<sup>26</sup> He said that Kargil, where India and Pakistan had gone to war in 1999, had been the first component of this new campaign; the wave of *fidayin* suicide-squad attacks the organization had unleashed in Jammu and Kashmir thereafter was the second. "Very soon," Saeed promised, "we will be launching a third round."<sup>27</sup> More

<sup>23</sup> Srijan.

<sup>24</sup> Personal interview, Bangalore police investigator, Bangalore, May 25, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Praveen Swami, "Indian Mujahideen Chief Sadiq Sheikh's Slumdog Story," *Hindu*, March 6, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> For a full account of the genesis and course of Lashkar's operations in India, see Praveen Swami, "The Well-Tempered Jihad: The Politics and Practice of Post-2002 Islamist Terrorism in India," *Contemporary South Asia* 16:3 (2008): pp. 303-322.

<sup>27</sup> Amit Baruah, "Militant Chiefs Warn Musharraf," *Hindu*, February 6, 2000.

likely than not, Sadiq Israr Sheikh knew nothing of that speech—but the organization he would help build would be a core part of this "third round."

From Sheikh's testimony to Mumbai police investigators, it appears he was drawn to SIMI's political Islamism by resentments common to millions of lower middle class Mumbai residents.<sup>28</sup> Born in 1978 to working-class parents from the north Indian town of Azamgarh, Sheikh grew up in the Cheeta Camp housing project. Home to thousands of slum residents who had been evicted to make way for the

### **"Al-Hooti also provided an interface between the LeT to deal with the Indian Mujahidin: a loose cluster of semi-autonomous SIMI-linked cells responsible for bombings in a dozen Indian cities since 2005."**

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Cheeta Camp provided the foundations for tens of thousands of families to make the journey to the fringes of India's middle class.<sup>29</sup> Sheikh's parents were able to give their children a decent home and an education.

Yet Sheikh's story did not quite run according to his parent's script. Having dropped out of high school, he obtained certification as an air conditioning mechanic. Sheikh could only find ill-paid freelance work, not a regular job. Like many of his contemporaries, he felt cheated by the growing economic opportunities emerging around him and came to believe he was a victim of religious discrimination. Hundreds

<sup>28</sup> Personal interview, family members of Sadiq Israr Sheikh, Mumbai, March 2 and March 3, 2009. The family members requested anonymity, as their testimony might otherwise be admissible as evidence in ongoing criminal proceedings against Sheikh. Also see Swami, "Indian Mujahideen Chief Sadiq Sheikh's Slumdog Story."

<sup>29</sup> For an account of Cheeta Camp's background and demographic profile, see Fred W. Clothey, *Ritualizing on the Boundaries* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), p. 141.

of Muslims were killed in communal riots that tore the city apart in 1993, and SIMI gave voice to Sheikh's rage.<sup>30</sup> As the scholar Yoginder Sikand has perceptively noted, SIMI's aggressive polemic gave "its supporters a sense of power and agency which they were denied in their actual lives."<sup>31</sup>

SIMI's language turned increasingly violent over the years. At rallies held in 1999 and 2001, it eulogized Usama bin Ladin and called for Indian Muslims to launch a jihad aimed at the establishment of an Islamic caliphate.<sup>32</sup> Even this, however, was not enough for Sheikh. Early in 2001, he stormed out of a SIMI meeting, complaining that the organization did nothing other than "talk."<sup>33</sup>

In April 2001, Sheikh ran into a distant relative who helped turn his dreams into reality. Salim Islahi—later killed in a shootout with police—put Sheikh in touch with Aftab Ansari, a ganglord reputed to have discovered Islamist radicalism while serving prison time in New Delhi along with Jaysh-i-Muhammad terrorist Syed Omar Sheikh. Sheikh's lieutenant, Asif Reza Khan, arranged for Sheikh to travel to Pakistan in September 2001 to train with the LeT.<sup>34</sup> Later, Sheikh would learn that two of the men who used to attend SIMI's study meetings had already traveled the same route. Altaf Subhan Qureshi and

<sup>30</sup> For an account of the violence, see Kalpana Sharma, "Chronicle of a Riot Foretold," in Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner eds., *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 268-286.

<sup>31</sup> Yoginder Sikand, "Islamist Assertion in Contemporary India: The Case of the Students Islamic Movement of India," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23:2 (2003): pp. 335-345.

<sup>32</sup> Javed Anand, "Suspect SIMI? Of Course," *Indian Express*, August 16, 2008. In one pre-9/11 interview, SIMI chief Safdar Nagori said Usama bin Ladin "has shown great character in standing up to the Americans, the greatest terrorists in the world." See Sayantan Chakravarty, "Interview: Safdar Nagori 'I am very bitter about being Indian,'" *India Today* [New Delhi], April 2, 2001. For other significant accounts of SIMI's activities, see Javed Anand, "Suspect SIMI?" and Javed Anand, "Why Be Shy About SIMI?" *Communalism Combat* [Mumbai], October 2001 and Sutapa Mukherjee, "A Fatwa in Reverse," *Outlook* [New Delhi], October 8, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Personal interview, family members of Sadiq Israr Sheikh, Mumbai, March 2 and March 3, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Praveen Swami, "The Arrest of Aftab Ansari," *Frontline* [Chennai], March 1, 2009.

Riyaz Ismail Shahbandri would, along with Sheikh, help found the terrorist cells that later called themselves the Indian Mujahidin.<sup>35</sup>

Qureshi, like Sheikh, was the son of working-class migrants from north India. Qureshi, however, received an elite education—ironically, at the Catholic-run Antonio D’Souza High School.<sup>36</sup> In 1996, he had begun working as a software engineer, specializing in network solutions. Qureshi joined SIMI around the same time. Later, he edited the SIMI-affiliated journal *Islamic Movement*. In 2001, Qureshi submitted a letter of resignation to his employers, saying he intended to “devote one complete year to pursue religious and spiritual matters.” Like Sheikh, he left India to train at an LeT camp in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir.

Shahbandri, too, was the son of migrants. His father, Ismail Shahbandri, had moved from coastal Karnataka to establish a leather-tanning works in Mumbai’s Kurla area.<sup>37</sup> Like Sheikh, though, Shahbandri dropped out of high school and became a full-time SIMI activist. By the autumn of 2002, spurred on by anti-Muslim violence that claimed hundreds of lives in the state of Gujarat, dozens of volunteers were joining the Indian Mujahidin network—although the group did not yet have a name. Many were from Hyderabad and wanted training in the wake of the Gujarat pogrom, among them Abdul Khwaja, who using the alias Amjad now heads a Lashkar-linked, Lahore-based cell operating against India.<sup>38</sup> Others came from Maharashtra. By 2003, Sheikh was himself regularly dispatching volunteers from the Azamgarh area to training at LeT camps.

Within months of their departure, the new recruits executed their first successful strikes. Ghulam Asad

Yazdani, a resident of Hyderabad’s Toli Chowki area, helped execute the assassination of the former Gujarat home minister, Haren Pandya.<sup>39</sup> Pandya, India’s Central Bureau of Investigations later determined, was killed in a reprisal for his role in pogrom.<sup>40</sup> In 2005, the network was ready to carry out their first bombings: an attack on a Hindu temple in the north Indian city of Varanasi. During the coming years, the

**“The LeT serves as a provider of logistical and ideological infrastructure to the regional jihadist movement.”**

Indian Mujahidin succeeded in staging attacks of ever-increasing intensity, among them the July 2006 strikes on Mumbai’s suburban train system that claimed at least 183 lives.<sup>41</sup> Finally, in November 2007, the networks began using the Indian Mujahidin name in e-mail manifestos released to the media.

**One Principal Lesson and One Key Challenge Lie Ahead**

The LeT has ceased to be only an armed organization—although, as November’s attacks in Mumbai show, its capabilities are still considerable. Instead, the LeT serves as a provider of logistical and ideological infrastructure to the regional jihadist movement. Groups such as the Indian Mujahidin are, of course, a particularly spectacular example of the kinds of autonomous jihadist enterprises that have emerged from the LeT. Similar outgrowths, however, have been observed in locations as unlikely as the Maldives and Singapore.

Countering these fluid transnational networks will need international cooperation of an order higher than anything seen so far. In the Hooti-Nawaz case, Omani authorities demonstrated an exemplary willingness to cooperate with India.<sup>42</sup> Nawaz was deported to India post-haste, and is now awaiting trial. Al-Hooti has been sentenced to life imprisonment in Oman. Some signs of progress are evident. Bangladesh, for example, is believed to be cracking down hard on Lashkar-linked elements within its territory. Key organizers, such as Sharif-ul-Haq and Mubashir Shahid, have disappeared; some suspect they are being held by the authorities. In Pakistan and much of the Gulf region, however, action against the Lashkar’s networks is still poor or non-existent. As a result, the LeT and its affiliates such as the Indian Mujahidin will likely continue to expand their reach and lethality.

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35 Personal interview, Mumbai police official, Mumbai, March 1, 2009.

36 For this and all further material on Qureshi, see Praveen Swami, “The Hunt for the Indian Mujahideen’s ‘al-Arbi,’” *Hindu*, September 13, 2008.

37 For this and all further material on Shahbandri, see Praveen Swami, “Politics of Hate Gave Birth to Top Terror Commander,” *Hindu*, February 23, 2009.

38 Praveen Swami, “Nasir Can Help Unravel HuJI Network: Sleuths,” *Hindu*, January 29, 2008.

39 Praveen Swami, “Harvest of Hate,” *Frontline*, March 14, 2009.

40 “Life for Nine in Haren Pandya Murder Case,” *Times of India*, June 26, 2007.

41 Sadiq Sheikh’s own role in these bombings remains a source of debate. For an overview of the contention, see “IM’s Sadiq Sheikh Let Off in 7/11 Case,” *Indian Express*, May 12, 2009; Praveen Swami, “Maharashtra ATS Moves to Resolve 7/11 Mystery,” *Hindu*, February 22, 2009.

42 Johnson TA, “Bangalore Blasts Financier Flown in from Oman,” *Indian Express*, March 8, 2009.

## Taming Iranian-backed Special Groups in Maysan Province

By Michael Knights

ON MAY 6, 2009, Iraqi Army and police auxiliary units supported by U.S. advisers discovered a cache of weapons hidden along the banks of the Tigris River in Amara, the capital of the majority Shi'a Maysan Province. The hoard included 150 copper plates for use in Explosively-Formed Projectile (EFP) roadside bombs, which have the highest per-incident lethality rate of any explosive device used in Iraq. Along with the professionally milled copper cones were 70 passive infrared firing switches used to precisely detonate EFP devices as vehicles enter the killing zone. Fifty rocket launching rails were also located, composed of modified carjacks designed to elevate 107mm and 122mm rockets for relatively accurate long-range attacks.<sup>1</sup>

The May 6 incident underlines the ongoing sophistication and scale of so-called "Special Groups" in Maysan Province. The Special Groups consist of Shi'a Arab militants that draw on Iranian cross-border logistical support, training, shelter and funding to continue the struggle against U.S. and Iraqi government security forces. Maysan's long and largely unguarded border with Iran, its ungovernable marshlands and the province's historic record of militancy and disorder have turned the governorate into the central front in the proxy war between the U.S.-Iraqi coalition and Iranian-backed militants. Moreover, the difficulties of rural counterinsurgency are often overlooked in favor of the counterinsurgency challenges in Iraq's urban areas. For these reasons, the United States may face one of its longest mentoring challenges in Maysan.

This article will examine Maysan's historical record of resistance, show how insurgents have reacted to the increased U.S. military presence in the province, and finally outline Maysan's prospects for enhanced stability.

<sup>1</sup> "Large Cache Uncovered, More Than 300 Munitions Found Multi-National Division - South," Multinational Force Iraq, press release, May 7, 2009.

### Maysan's Record of Resistance

Maysan is Iraq's "wild east," notorious throughout the country as an unruly bastion of poverty and banditry. The province's population is approximately 900,000, including nearly 300,000 living in the capital, Amara.<sup>2</sup> The population is young (with 50% under the age of 16) and extremely poor.<sup>3</sup> Alongside a small population of long-term city-dwellers, the vast majority of Maysan is comprised of ex-farmers and Marsh Arabs who left or were forced off the province's large farming estates and marshes.<sup>4</sup>

The province is suffering major shortfalls in electricity, potable water, sanitation and fuels. It will take considerable assistance from the federal government and international donors to fix its economy. As the province's state-owned industries (sugar cane, vegetable oils, paper and plastics) cannot compete with foreign imports, the Maysan Provincial Development Strategy stresses the importance of agriculture. Regardless, a return to an agrarian society will be difficult. Anecdotal evidence from development workers suggests that most young Marsh Arabs want a government job in a city or in the local security forces.<sup>5</sup>

The scars of war and rebellion are apparent across the province. Even during Saddam Hussein's era, Maysan's tribes were difficult to control, resulting in serious uprisings in 1991 and 1999, and an ongoing campaign to clear the marshes of rebels and bandits during the 1980s and 1990s. From 1983-1988, major battles in the Iran-Iraq war were fought along the Tigris south of Amara and in the oilfields in the northeastern arc of the city. Enormous amounts of unexploded ordnance, abandoned munitions and minefields are present

<sup>2</sup> "Maysan Provincial Development Strategy, 2006-2008," Maysan Provincial Development and Reconstruction Committee, 2006, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> This process started in the 1950s, when the farming industry slowly collapsed and the workforce migrated to find jobs in industrial centers such as Baghdad and Basra. During the 1980s, the Iran-Iraq war and subsequent Shi'a uprisings saw the marshes destroyed and many farmers and Marsh Arabs were forced to live in semi-urban shantytowns along the Tigris River.

<sup>5</sup> Personal interview, non-governmental organization worker, Basra Province, January 2009.

east of the Tigris, particularly to the southeast of Amara. From 1991 onwards, the regime continued to seed rural areas with landmines, and in 2003 during the U.S.-led invasion the Iraqi Army IV Corps abandoned thousands of tons

**"The Special Groups' reaction to the extension of the U.S. military presence in Maysan has highlighted the problems posed by rural counterinsurgency in Iraq, a topic that is easy to overlook in favor of the more visible challenges of urban counterinsurgency in Mosul, Baghdad, Ba`quba and other inner-city settings."**

of munitions throughout the province when it dissolved without a fight. These conditions led to nearly unlimited quantities of military explosives.

### Crackdown on Militias

These factors made Maysan difficult to administer following the fall of Saddam's regime. In June 2003, barely two months into the occupation, six British military policemen were killed in a brutal mob attack in the southern Maysan city of Majar al-Kabir. Repeated cycles of anti-occupation violence spiraled upwards throughout 2004 and 2005, culminating in an apparent victory for the Sadrist militias and Iranian-backed networks when the British largely withdrew from the province in the summer of 2006. When provincial governor Adil Radhi Mohader, a member of Moqtada al-Sadr's political movement, was elected in 2005, militia influence quickly spread throughout the security forces and local government technical directorates.

Original research undertaken by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point and The Long War Journal shows that Amara was the central hub in the network that sent Shi'a militants to Iran (and Lebanon via Iran) for training, as well as a distribution point for weapons



and returned fighters.<sup>6</sup> Advanced insurgent capabilities are apparent in a range of incidents witnessed in Maysan. In 2005, a British patrol in Kumayt (in northern Maysan) was engaged with a “daisy-chain” of 15 EFP devices that used previously unseen telemetry to trigger the array at the optimal moment.<sup>7</sup> In February 2007, a British Hercules airplane was destroyed by a sophisticated EFP array as it landed at a remote northern Maysan airstrip, the first use of such a device against a fixed-wing aircraft.<sup>8</sup>

Coordination of attacks has often been impressive. In August 2007, a 13-vehicle logistical convoy protected by a multi-vehicle private security detail was split up by three sequential ambushes in northern Amara, causing the loss of all vehicles, and the deaths of multiple U.S. contractors.<sup>9</sup> As recently as the summer of 2008, Multinational Force Iraq (MNF-I) issued a special fragmentary order warning against the risk of kidnap attempts against Western personnel.<sup>10</sup>

In June 2008, the strengthening of Iraqi security forces began the process of rebuilding central government authority within the province. The government security offensive, called Operation Promise of Peace, exposed the Special Groups to the loss of major arms caches, denial of transshipment infrastructure (e.g., safe houses and travel agencies) and the capture and scattering of leadership figures and financiers. Perhaps most importantly, many sympathetic figures at the head of the provincial government were

removed in June 2008. These included the provincial council chairman, the provincial police chief and the mayor of Amara, plus advisers to the provincial council and senior representatives of branch ministries. The young Sadrist governor of Maysan, Adel Mahdoor Radhi al-Maliki, was unseated in the subsequent January 31, 2009 provincial elections, which ushered in a more balanced council split between the major mainstream Shi`a political factions. Strong recruitment to nine new Emergency Battalions (police auxiliaries) and a new Maysan-based 15-battalion Iraqi Army division has had significant impact on security forces' capabilities as well as the numbers of unemployed young men available to undertake paid-for insurgent attacks. Even more significantly, MNF-I committed the bulk of three U.S. Army battalions to mentor the Iraqi security forces in the province from the summer of 2008 onwards.

#### Reaction to U.S. Presence

The Special Groups' reaction to the extension of the U.S. military presence in Maysan has highlighted the problems posed by rural counterinsurgency in Iraq, a topic that is easy to overlook in favor of the more visible challenges of urban counterinsurgency in Mosul, Baghdad, Ba`quba and other inner-city settings. Beginning in the early summer of 2008, militants began to target remote U.S. Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) whenever they have been extended into rural areas. Utilizing selective and often highly-sophisticated attacks, militants have sought to re-create “no-go” zones around their logistical lifelines to the Iranian border as well as the “rear areas” within Maysan where Special Groups' caches and personnel are hidden and moved.

The militants now active in Maysan represent a blend of foreign-trained and financed professional insurgents alongside financially-motivated criminals. High-Value Individuals (HVI) are slowly re-emerging after almost a year of self-imposed exile in Iran in rural parts of Maysan and in other parts of Iraq.<sup>11</sup> In some cases, individuals have long records; for instance, individuals directly connected to the murder of

British military policemen in 2003 have been firmly linked to lethal roadside bombing attacks on U.S. servicemen in Maysan in October 2008.<sup>12</sup> Special Group cells in Maysan confirm to the broad types outlined in the Combating Terrorism Center's research.<sup>13</sup> Caches and arrest patterns suggest that the three categories of Special Groups identified roughly correspond to operational groupings. First, there are highly-specialized “engineers” whose use of EFP munitions appears to be strongly influenced by Lebanese Hizb Allah techniques. Second, there are the “commandos” trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Lebanese Hizb Allah to undertake advanced rocket, sniping and kidnapping missions. Finally, there are the rank-and-file mujahidin, which can be classified as non-specialized combatants with rudimentary training in personal fitness, small-arms, countersurveillance and small unit tactics. Units of three to six men of each type tend to combine to undertake missions.<sup>14</sup> These groups work with drug smugglers, “normal” commercial smugglers and bandit groups (carjackers and kidnappers) to move people and goods and even to undertake simple types of paid-for attacks.

A good example of the reaction of militants to the deployment of new U.S. FOBs was seen in the remote Buzurgan area, a northeastern Maysan location that is now of high interest to the international oil industry. According to the geolocated incident archives of private security provider Olive Group, the establishment of a new U.S. and Iraqi FOB on the Iranian border has resulted in three waves of attacks in an area that was formerly devoid of incidents.<sup>15</sup> In June 2008 and October 2008, the FOB was probed by multiple small-arms attacks and an escalating pattern of roadside bombs on access roads. In

6 Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, *Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and “Other Means”* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008). The report includes three sets of appendices that comprise declassified translated Ba`athist-era and post-2003 intelligence materials on Iranian-backed groups in Iraq. Also see Bill Roggio's pioneering work on Special Groups at “Iran's Ramazan Corps and the Ratlines into Iraq,” *The Long War Journal*, December 5, 2007. The *Long War Journal's* articles described the logistical structure of the Special Groups as early as December 2007.

7 Personal correspondence, UK intelligence officer, February 2008.

8 Ibid.

9 Personal correspondence, U.S. intelligence officer, March 2009.

10 Personal correspondence, U.S. intelligence officer, August 2008.

11 Personal correspondence, U.S. intelligence officer, March 2009.

12 Ibid.

13 “Appendix A: Intelligence Summaries,” in Felter and Fishman.

14 This rough average figure is derived from Olive Group's database of captures reported by the Iraqi security forces in Maysan Province.

15 Olive Group was the first private security company to be licensed in 2003 and has been collecting geolocated incident data for 2,000 days of consecutive operations in Iraq. All geolocated data used in this article is drawn from Olive Group's dataset of 120,000 incidents.

the most recent sequence of attacks on the FOB in April 2009, the FOB was struck by a roadside bomb and a 107mm rocket attack. The incident occurred in the same district as the February 2007 EFP attack on a British aircraft at a Buzurgan dirt airstrip, itself a reaction by Special Groups to UK long-range patrolling of the Iranian border.<sup>16</sup> This part of the border is increasingly the scene of U.S. and Iranian countermoves to support their proxies and patrol the frontier; Iranian intelligence gathering takes place using National Iranian Oil Company helicopters and border guards,<sup>17</sup> while U.S.-Iraqi helicopter-borne joint patrols provide moral and material support to isolated Iraqi border posts and local communities.

The Hawr al-Howeiza marshes further to the south offer another clear example of insurgent groups seeking to defend their lines of communication and supply to sanctuaries and logistical networks in Iran. The Hawr al-Howeiza has long been a major smuggling route between Iran and Iraq due to the difficulties of policing the maze of waterways that permeate the border. U.S. and Iraqi Army forces have strung a line of border forts across the Hawr al-Howeiza, supported by FOBs north and south of the marshes at Musharrah and Qalit Salih, respectively. U.S. forces met resistance as soon as the process began in the autumn of 2008. Large Iranian-made 240mm rockets were used to attack U.S. FOBs around Qalit Salih, and the frequency of mortar and rocket attacks increased against the U.S. FOB in Majar al-Kabir.<sup>18</sup> Each month since September 2008, two to four EFPs have been laid on U.S. access routes to the marshes.<sup>19</sup> These attacks have borne the classic hallmarks of Lebanese Hizb Allah training in terms of configuration of passive-infrared telemetry, remote-control arming switches and encasement in molded insulation foam "rocks."<sup>20</sup> Other roadside bombs included 10 well-concealed daisy-chained 155mm

artillery shells on the access roads between the FOB in Qalit Salih and the Hawr al-Howeiza field.<sup>21</sup> These attacks confirmed to patterns previously noted by UK explosives ordnance technicians when British forces last patrolled the areas in 2005.<sup>22</sup>

In Amara, the Special Groups have focused on indirect fire attacks on the main U.S. base at Butaira airport, west of the city. Escalating rocket fire against MNF-I bases is a familiar part of the Iraqi Shi'a insurgent playbook, as seen in Basra, Baghdad and Amara during 2004-2006. The new rocket campaign began on October 30, 2008 with the disrupted launch of two Iranian-made 240mm rockets against the airbase. During January, security provider Olive Group identified 17 rocket and mortar rounds launched at the airbase, mostly Iranian-made 107mm rockets. Twenty-three 107mm rockets were launched against the FOB in February 2009. Following aggressive U.S.-Iraqi reactions and a consequent slackening of fire in March, insurgents sought to regain the initiative in April by using heavier 122mm and 240mm rockets from more distant firing points north of the Tigris River and on the far side of Amara city.<sup>23</sup> Although inaccurate at present, such long-range attacks allow Special Groups to avoid coalition counterbattery fire. Additionally, the distance between point-of-origin and point-of-impact slows reaction and can even channel MNF-I forces into associated roadside bombing attacks. No injuries or deaths were caused by the April attacks, but it is likely that casualties will rise as insurgents successfully adjust the aim of their long-range rocket fire.

#### Future Prospects

Many parts of Maysan are stabilizing quickly as a result of the surge of forces into the province that began in June 2008. Even as U.S. forces thinned out in other parts of Iraq during 2008, MNF-I decided to allocate first a U.S. Army battalion and later most of a brigade combat team to Maysan. At least one U.S. battalion and probably two will still be in Maysan in one year's time,

according to U.S. officers.<sup>24</sup> In that period, the Iraqi garrison in the province will expand significantly. At present, there are eight battalions of Iraqi Army forces, eight battalions of paramilitary police auxiliaries, six battalions of border guards, specialized SWAT-type forces and around 15,000 traffic and patrol policemen.<sup>25</sup> Tip-offs, closed-circuit television surveillance and government intelligence capabilities are also developing quickly. Within a year, a new 15-battalion Iraqi Army division will be raised in Amara for service along the border. Oilfield police forces will also be established to patrol border oilfields such as Halfaya, Buzurgan, Abu Ghurab and Jabal Fauqi. In tandem with ongoing U.S. mentoring, growing Iraqi forces will further constrain the operating environment of Special Groups along the border.<sup>26</sup>

In the interim, the Special Groups will likely escalate activity in a desperate effort to maintain their logistical, rest and recruitment areas. Reconciliation efforts with Special Group movements such as Asaib Ahl Haq and smaller local splinters such as al-Qadiyah and Abwat Aasiq<sup>27</sup> have been complicated by the political upheaval of the provincial elections and the extension of central government control throughout the province. Money is also flowing to militant recruits from Iran via mosques such as the al-Sadr Mosque in Amara and *bussainiyyas* further south in Majar al-Kabir.<sup>28</sup> The ability of insurgents to bring large 122mm and 240mm rockets into Amara via boats and trucks reflects similar trends in Basra, where the Basra Air Station has once again been brought under indirect fire attack since March

16 Personal correspondence, UK intelligence officer, February 2008.

17 Personal correspondence, U.S. intelligence officer, March 2009.

18 All data points were derived from interviews with U.S. and UK intelligence officers and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians in 2007-2008.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Olive Group data, provided by permission of Olive Group's Analysis and Assessments cell, May 15, 2009.

24 Personal correspondence, U.S. Army planners, April 2009.

25 Personal correspondence, U.S. intelligence officer, March 2009. Also see DJ Elliott's reporting for *The Long War Journal*.

26 DJ Elliott of *The Long War Journal* is the foremost source on Iraqi order of battle. For U.S. deployments down to battalion level, see Wesley Morgan's page on the issue at the Institute for Studying War.

27 More granular information on these active sub-groups was deemed too sensitive to be discussed and could not be developed in recent interviews.

28 Personal correspondence, U.S. intelligence officer, March 2009. For the best open source overview of Asaib Ahl Haq and other Sadrist splinters, see Marisa Cochrane, "The Fragmentation of the Sadrist Movement," *Institute for the Study of War*, January 2009.

2009. Likewise, there will continue to be highly-sophisticated EFP attacks in Amara, just as there are in Basra and Baghdad, including new EFP tactics to skirt MNF-I countermeasures.<sup>29</sup> Maysan remains the heart of the Special Groups' efforts in Iraq, pumping the lifeblood of the movement—men, arms and money—to the various operational limbs in Baghdad, Basra and beyond.

It is within sparsely populated rural areas such as Maysan that the Iraqi insurgent community will last the longest. In such areas, insurgents will exploit cross-border sanctuaries, lurking in areas of weak government control and seeking to perpetuate such weakness. Even committed insurgents will eventually dissolve into the general criminal population in time, but it may take longer than expected and the United States may face one of its most difficult mentoring challenges in Maysan. Although cities present particular challenges in counterinsurgency, their population density becomes a distinct advantage once the people begin to swing behind the counterinsurgency campaign; every person becomes a potential sensor and the operational space of insurgents contracts dramatically. In isolated and sparsely settled rural areas—particularly those with a history of cross-border crime, limited alternative employment and weak rule of law—the local community is more exposed to intimidation and cooption by militants. This makes rural counterinsurgency potentially much slower and characterized by fewer dramatic tipping-points such as those that appear to have occurred in many of Iraq's cities.

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<sup>29</sup> Discussion of enemy tactics, techniques and procedures for circumventing U.S. countermeasures is a sensitive issue. In general, insurgents have sought to place passive infrared firing switches in positions that would prevent their premature initiation by countermeasures carried on U.S. vehicles. All data points derived from interviews with U.S. and UK intelligence officers in January-May 2009.

## Invoking Zarqawi: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's Jihad Deficit

By Joas Wagemakers

ABU MUHAMMAD AL-MAQDISI has been described as “the key contemporary ideologue in the jihadi intellectual universe.”<sup>1</sup> He is known to most people as the former mentor of the Jordanian leader of al-Qa`ida in Iraq, Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi. His numerous writings criticizing the rulers of the Muslim world,<sup>2</sup> the enormous jihadist library on his website ([www.tawhed.ws](http://www.tawhed.ws)) and the influence he has had on radicals across the world<sup>3</sup> show that al-Maqdisi is indeed a major Salafi-jihadi ideologue.

As a result of al-Maqdisi's radicalism and influence, it is interesting that since his release from prison in March 2008, he has come under criticism from fellow Salafi-jihadis in Jordan and on the internet for not being radical enough. Although this criticism takes on various forms,<sup>4</sup> it is mostly expressed in the claim that al-Maqdisi does not have actual combat experience. Interestingly, both his opponents and al-Maqdisi himself when defending his record against this criticism use al-Zarqawi to make their point. This article provides a short overview of past relations between al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi, followed by an account of the recent conflict about al-Maqdisi's alleged “jihad deficit.” It will then demonstrate how both parties try to invoke al-Zarqawi to support their own case.

<sup>1</sup> William McCants and Jarret Brachman, *Militant Ideology Atlas* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *Al-Kawashif al-Jaliyya fi Kufr al-Dawla al-Sa`udiyya, Kashf al-Niqab `an Shari`at al-Ghab* and *Mukhtasar Kashf al-Niqab `an Shari`at al-Ghab – Al-Dustur al-Urdunni*, in which al-Maqdisi excommunicates the Saudi, Kuwaiti and Jordanian regimes respectively. All are available on [www.tawhed.ws](http://www.tawhed.ws).

<sup>3</sup> Although his influence has been strongest and clearest in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, his best-known writings are read by radical Muslims across the world and have been translated into various languages.

<sup>4</sup> Other accusations against al-Maqdisi are that he was weak and opportunistic when he was in prison in the 1990s and that he has revised and moderated his ideas. For a discussion of the latter issue, see Joas Wagemakers, “Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi: A Counter-Terrorism Asset?” *CTC Sentinel* 1:6 (2008): pp. 7-9.

### Criticizing Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi

Al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi met around 1990, when both men were in Pakistan and Afghanistan as part of the large Arab contingent who went to fight the Soviet Union after its invasion of Afghanistan. Although al-Zarqawi arrived too late to fight the Soviet Union, which had just left Afghanistan, he is said to have participated in the fighting against Afghan communists that followed in the early 1990s.<sup>5</sup> Al-Maqdisi, significantly, did not participate in any of the fighting.<sup>6</sup>

The two men returned to Jordan in the early 1990s and, at one point, became involved in preparing an attack against Israel in 1994. Since al-Maqdisi wanted to focus on Jordan and missionary activities (*da`wa*), he was not in favor of the attack but considered it legitimate and therefore gave it his blessing.<sup>7</sup> The Jordanian police thwarted their efforts, however, which landed the group in prison. They remained in prison until 1999 when a royal amnesty set them free. Al-Zarqawi went to Afghanistan and later Iraq, a decision with which al-Maqdisi, who stayed in Jordan, disagreed. Al-Maqdisi believed al-Zarqawi was not knowledgeable enough to wage a proper jihad and thought his efforts were too unorganized to be successful.<sup>8</sup>

In the years that followed, al-Zarqawi would—under the spiritual guidance of fellow Jordanian Abu Anas al-Shami—become infamous as the leader of al-Qa`ida in Iraq and was responsible for suicide bombings against Shi`a and coalition soldiers. Al-Maqdisi subsequently wrote a book called *Waqafat ma`a Thamrat al-Jihad* (Positions on the Fruits of Jihad),<sup>9</sup> which was critical of certain jihadist practices in general. He also wrote a letter to al-Zarqawi

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Charles Brisard, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda* (New York: Other Press, 2005), p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> “Khalaya l-Irhab fi l-Sa`udiyya Tuwazzi`u Mudhakiratahu wa-Kutubahu `ala A`da`iha,” *al-Watan*, July 5, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> “Liqa` min khalaf Qadban al-Murtaddin `Sana 1418,” [www.tawhed.ws](http://www.tawhed.ws), 1997, pp. 4-5, 10-11. All subsequent jihadist writings have been downloaded from al-Maqdisi's website, [www.tawhed.ws](http://www.tawhed.ws), unless stated otherwise.

<sup>8</sup> Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, “Al-Zarqawi – Munasaha wa-Munasara,” pp. 3-5.

<sup>9</sup> Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, *Waqafat ma`a Thamrat al-Jihad*, 2004.



in which he specifically criticized his former pupil's indiscriminate attacks against civilians and Shi'a in Iraq as being contrary to Islamic law and detrimental to the image of Islam.<sup>10</sup> This criticism was confirmed by al-Maqdisi in several media appearances in which he voiced his concerns again.<sup>11</sup> Al-Maqdisi's criticism of al-Zarqawi prompted the latter to write a rebuttal of his former teacher's arguments. One of al-Zarqawi's points was that al-Maqdisi was not well-informed about the situation in Iraq and al-Qa'ida's actions in the country.<sup>12</sup>

The argument that al-Maqdisi lacks "jihad experience" lowered al-Maqdisi's stature in the eyes of some Jordanian jihadists. Moreover, several people were clearly offended that such a man had shown only lukewarm support for jihadist missions and had even criticized al-Zarqawi, who embodied their image of a tough and fearless fighter, particularly after his death as a "martyr" in Iraq in 2006. When al-Maqdisi was once again released from prison in March 2008, criticism of his jihad deficit quickly returned.

#### Criticizing Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi

Since al-Maqdisi's release from jail, several pamphlets and booklets began circulating in Jordan criticizing him for his lack of jihadist credentials. The authors of these writings often do not attack al-Maqdisi directly but mostly concentrate on a fellow Jordanian Salafi-jihadi, Nur al-Din Bayram. The latter is

10 Ibid.; Al-Maqdisi, "Al-Zarqawi - Munasaha wa-Munasara," pp. 8-12.

11 See, for example, Muwaffaq Kamal, "Al-Maqdisi li-l-Ghad: Ana Ibn al-Tayyar al-Salafi al-Jihadi wa-la Atabarra'u minhu," *al-Ghad*, July 5, 2005; Luqman Iskandar, "Al-Murshid al-Ruhi al-Sabiq li-'Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi' Yantaqidu A' malahu fi-l- 'Iraq," *al-'Arab al-Yaum*, July 5, 2005; Yasir Abu Hilal, "Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi: Al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya," *al-Jazira*, July 6, 2005. For more comprehensive accounts of the conflict between al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi in 2005, see Steven Brooke, "The Preacher and the Jihadi," in Hillel Fradkin, Husain Haqqani and Eric Brown eds., *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 3 (2006): pp. 52-66; Nibras Kazimi, "A Virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi Upstages Maqdisi," in Fradkin, Haqqani and Brown eds., *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 2 (2005): pp. 59-73.

12 Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, "Bayan wa-Tawdih lamma Atharahu l-Shaykh al-Maqdisi fi Liqa'ih ma'a Qanat al-Jazira," undated. This communiqué began appearing on the internet in early July 2005.

described as someone who traveled to Iraq to participate in the fighting but returned without having fought.<sup>13</sup> One of the authors of these critical writings addresses him sarcastically as "the hero Nur" and attacks him by mentioning religious texts stating that it is forbidden to flee from the battlefield.<sup>14</sup> Bayram further incurred the wrath of his critics by writing a book—to which al-Maqdisi wrote the introduction—in which he accused certain people of deviance in excommunicating other Muslims (*takfir*).<sup>15</sup> Interpreting this book as an attack on them, al-Maqdisi's critics challenged Bayram to come up with the names of "deviant" people and stated that al-Maqdisi fled away from jihad "with false arguments and lies."<sup>16</sup>

Aware of these accusations, al-Maqdisi, together with more than 20 other Jordanian Salafi-jihadis (including Bayram), published a communiqué in which they specifically mentioned the writings cited above and distanced themselves from this "small group of extremists" whose "false ideas are in accordance with the creed of the Kharijites."<sup>17</sup> Although the critical writings mostly concentrate on accusing Bayram and al-Maqdisi of detracting jihadists in spite of their own lack of jihad experience, their response does

13 Muntadayat Bayt al-Maqdis al-Jihadiyya, "Haqiqat Nur Bayram (Abu 'Abd al-Rahman) al-Farar min al-Jihad," [www.al-amanh.net](http://www.al-amanh.net), undated; Abu l-Qa`qa` al-Shami, "Kalimat `Itab," undated, p. 2.

14 Al-Yaman `Abd al-Karim b. `Isa al-Madani, "Al-Ijtihad fi Hukm al-Farar min al-Sahat al-Jihad," available at Shabakat Midad al-Suyuf, "Hamal Kutub al-Ijtihad fi Hukm al-Farar min Sahat al-Jihad," [www.almedad.com](http://www.almedad.com), undated.

15 Nur al-Din Bayram, *Fasl al-Maqal fi Hajjar Abl al-Bida` wa-l-Dalal*, 2008.

16 Abu l-Qa`qa` al-Shami, "Kalimat `Itab"; Abu l-Qasim al-Muhajir, "Al-Maqdisi Yataqaddamu li-l-Wara'," undated, available on Shabakat Ana Muslim li-l-Hiwar al-Islami, "Kitab al-Maqdisi Yataqaddamu li-l-Wara'," [www.muslm.net](http://www.muslm.net), undated.

17 "Bara'a min Fi'at al-Dalal Ghulat al-Takfir wa-Mu`taqidatihim al-Za'igha," 2008. The communiqué was posted on various webforums, such as [www.al-hesbah.info](http://www.al-hesbah.info), but also on [www.tawhed.ws](http://www.tawhed.ws). The "Kharijites" label refers to a group of early-Islamic dissenters who disagreed with the fourth caliph `Ali and left (*kharaja*, hence the name Kharijites) the community of Muslims. Due to their strict views on what constitutes unbelief and willingness to support their claims with intra-Islamic violence, the Kharijites are often seen as Islam's first group of extremists.

not address this accusation. It focuses solely on the issue of extremism in *takfir*.

In early 2009, the conflict started again, this time on internet forums. A user by the name of "al-Mihdar" accused al-Maqdisi of using an article on his website without naming its source. Although the discussion that followed briefly concentrated on this relatively minor issue,<sup>18</sup> it quickly returned to the more contentious question of al-Maqdisi's jihadist credentials. This was expressed most specifically in a book posted on a forum entitled *The Truth of the Conflict between al-Maqdisi and the Heirs of al-Zarqawi is Jihad for the Cause of God*. In this book and the reactions to it by other participants on the forum, al-Maqdisi is repeatedly criticized for refusing to endorse certain jihadist operations, for not participating in any armed combat and for criticizing others who do.<sup>19</sup>

While the criticisms sometimes misrepresent al-Maqdisi's ideology,<sup>20</sup> they do point to the fact that al-Maqdisi does indeed have a jihad deficit and assert that the only people who can speak authoritatively about jihad are those who have taken part in it, a growing sentiment also heard among other jihadists.<sup>21</sup> The person

18 Muntadayat al-Buraq al-Islamiyya, "Al-Sayf al-Battar fi l-Tahdhir min al-Mihdar," [www.alboraqforum.info](http://www.alboraqforum.info), accessed on May 27, 2009; Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "Radd al-Shaykh al-Maqdisi `ala Su'alat Muntada Midad al-Suyuf," 2009; Muntadayyat al-Falluja al-Islamiyya, "Ikhwani: Irju al-Tawaqquf wa-l-Tahadduth `an ayy Shay' Yata`allaqu bi-Midad al-Suyuf," [www.al-falloja.info](http://www.al-falloja.info), accessed on May 27, 2009; Shabakat Midad al-Suyuf, "Nida' ila l-Shaykhayn al-Maqdisi wa-l-Mihdar min Ibnikuma Ibn al-Zubayr," [www.almedad.com](http://www.almedad.com), accessed on April 21, 2009.

19 Shabakat Midad al-Suyuf, "Haqiqat al-Khilaf bayna l-Maqdisi wa-Warathat al-Zarqawi huwa l-Jihad fi Sabil Allah," [www.almedad.com](http://www.almedad.com), accessed on March 3, 2009. The author of the book is Abu Qudama Salih al-Hami.

20 One post wrongly states, for example, that al-Maqdisi believes jihad to be the solution for all the Muslim community's problems. For a more detailed treatment of al-Maqdisi's ideology, see Joas Wagemakers, "A Purist Jihadi-Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36:2 (2009): pp. 283-299.

21 See Reuven Paz, "The Youth are Older: The Iraqization of the Somali Mujahidin Youth Movement," PRISM Occasional Papers, December 2008, pp. 8-9; Eli Alshech, "The Emergence of the 'Infallible Jihad Fighter' - The Salafi Jihadists' Quest for Religious Legitimacy," Middle East Media Research Institute, June 2008.

most responsible for emphasizing this point is Abu Qudama Salih al-Hami, a Jordanian journalist and al-Zarqawi's brother-in-law. Abu Qudama has written several books in which he attacks al-Maqdisi, mostly for his lack of jihadist credentials.<sup>22</sup> One of these books is actually a "critical and methodological study" of al-Maqdisi's *Waqafat ma`a Thamrat al-Jihad*, the book in which the latter scolded jihadists for their mistakes. Abu Qudama repeatedly states that al-Maqdisi has never waged jihad himself and has never belonged to the mujahidin and consequently knows little about them. In spite of this, Abu Qudama asserts, al-Maqdisi treats mujahidin with disdain and looks down upon their actions and views.<sup>23</sup>

When al-Maqdisi tried to refute these critics, he once again failed to address the issue most prominent in the writings of his opponents: his jihad deficit. He again refers to his critics as extremists in *takfir* and equates their attacks on him with accusations of ideological revisionism, despite the fact that their writings deal with more than just these issues.<sup>24</sup> He accuses his critics of misunderstanding his writings and falsely claiming that he has changed his views.<sup>25</sup> It seems obvious why al-Maqdisi uses this tactic: knowing that he has not revised his views and that some of his critics do indeed misrepresent his writings,<sup>26</sup> he

clearly feels confident addressing those accusations because they are easily refuted. The much more damaging charge that he has never actually fought in a jihad himself, however, is far more difficult to parry, simply because it is true. Although al-Maqdisi is a scholar who considers himself only responsible for *da`wa* and therefore does not see a contradiction between his calls for jihad and his own absence from the battlefield, he does seem to feel the need to address his jihad deficit somehow. To accomplish this, al-Maqdisi—just as his critics do to underline their attacks against him—invokes the person whom his opponents consider as their jihadist hero: Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi.

#### Invoking Zarqawi

Al-Maqdisi's critics underscore their attack on his jihad deficit by juxtaposing him with his former pupil. Knowing that al-Zarqawi represents exactly what al-Maqdisi lacks, they use the former as a symbol of heroic jihadism. One author remarked that al-Maqdisi, instead of giving al-Zarqawi "help and

**“It confirms the worrying trend among jihadists to see themselves as capable of deciding what is legitimate in combat, irrespective of what their scholars think.”**

advice” (*munasara wa-munasaba*, the title of al-Maqdisi's letter to al-Zarqawi), he caused him “humiliation and disclosure” (*mufadaha wa-mukashafa*). The author further stated that al-Zarqawi “was a true man of jihad” while “his old friend al-Maqdisi” spoke ill of him, “and that was a huge difference between the two personalities.”<sup>27</sup> Nobody invokes al-Zarqawi more than his brother-in-law Abu Qudama, whose writings are often cited on internet forums to attack al-Maqdisi. He dedicated his critical study

views. See Abu Qudama Salih al-Hami, *Waqafat ma`a Thamrat al-Jihad – Dirasa Manhajiyaya wa-Naqdiyya*, p. 224.

27 Shabakat Midad al-Suyuf, “Haqiqat al-Khilaf bayna l-Maqdisi wa-Warathat al-Zarqawi huwa l-Jihad fi Sabil Allah,” www.almedad.com, accessed on March 3, 2009.

of al-Maqdisi's *Waqafat ma`a Thamrat al-Jihad* to “the martyr and sole leader Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, through whom God raised the banner of Islam high.”<sup>28</sup> He further turned al-Maqdisi's call to let knowledgeable people decide on how to wage jihad against him by stating that al-Maqdisi does not know the reality of jihad and should therefore leave this to others, first and foremost to al-Zarqawi.<sup>29</sup> He even criticized al-Maqdisi for spending so much time in Pakistan writing and printing one of his books, stating that if al-Maqdisi had waged jihad instead, he would have remembered “the names of the martyrs,” just as al-Zarqawi did.<sup>30</sup>

Probably realizing that al-Zarqawi possessed what he himself lacked, al-Maqdisi seems to portray himself as having been close to al-Zarqawi. He stresses that he was in prison with him and that the people who signed the communiqué criticizing the so-called Kharijites are actually the people who knew al-Zarqawi better than anyone. Al-Maqdisi even goes so far as to say that if al-Zarqawi had been alive, he would have disavowed these critics.<sup>31</sup> He also states that his criticism of al-Zarqawi's actions in Iraq does not mean that he is against jihad as a whole; on the contrary, he fully supports it.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from invoking the memory of al-Zarqawi to support his case, al-Maqdisi has also recently written the introductions to two books by al-Zarqawi's former spiritual guide in Iraq, Abu Anas al-Shami. Al-Maqdisi, however, usually only writes introductions to books about subjects that are close to his own ideas.<sup>33</sup> While it may be a coincidence, the timing of these introductions as well as the fact that he chose al-Shami's books on

28 Abu Qudama Salih al-Hami, “Waqafat ma`a Thamrat al-Jihad – Dirasa Manhajiyaya wa-Naqdiyya,” p. 1.

29 Ibid., pp. 25-26.

30 Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, *Al-Jil al-Thani li-l-Qa`ida – Dirasa Manhajiyaya wa-Naqdiyya*, p. 170.

31 Al-Maqdisi, “As`ila hawl Iftira`at Mansuba li-l-Shaykh Abi Muhammad al-Maqdisi.”

32 Al-Maqdisi, “(Al-Lughu fi l-Din) min Asalib al-Kuffar fi l-Kayd li-l-Da`wa wa-l-Du`at Yusharikuhum fihī Kathir min al-Hamqa wa-l-Mughfalīn,” pp. 5-7.

33 Examples include his introduction to Nur al-Din Bayram's book mentioned earlier and Abu Qatada al-Filastini, *Ju`nat al-Mutayyibin*, 2000.

22 These books include *Fursan al-Farida al-Gha`iba – Al-Zarqawi wa-l-Jihad al-Afghan*, 2007, and *Al-Zarqawi: Al-Jil al-Thani li-l-Qa`ida – Dirasa Manhajiyaya wa-Naqdiyya*, 2008.

23 Abu Qudama Salih al-Hami, *Waqafat ma`a Thamrat al-Jihad – Dirasa Manhajiyaya wa-Naqdiyya*, 2009, pp. 6, 8.

24 Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, “As`ila Hawl Iftira`at Mansuba li-l-Shaykh Abi Muhammad al-Maqdisi,” 2008.

25 Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, “(Al-Lughu fi l-Din) min Asalib al-Kuffar fi l-Kayd li-l-Da`wa wa-l-Du`at Yusharikuhum fihī Kathir min al-Hamqa wa-l-Mughfalīn,” 2009, pp. 4-7. Others have also defended al-Maqdisi. See, for example, Shabakat Midad al-Suyuf, “Bayan min Abu Majid Muhammad b. `Abdallah al-Mas`ari,” www.almedad.com, accessed on April 21, 2009; Abu Hammam Bakr b. `Abd al-`Aziz al-Athari, “Al-Sayf al-Muhannad fi Munasarat Abi Muhammad,” 2008; Abu Hammam Bakr b. `Abd al-`Aziz al-Athari, *Al-Qawl al-Narjisi bi-`Idalat Shaykhina al-Maqdisi*, www.ansar-jihad.net, 2009.

26 Abu Qudama, for example, states that al-Maqdisi considers jihad to be “a danger (*mahlaka*),” which is clearly a superficial reading of al-Maqdisi's much more nuanced

Sufism and the Shi`a<sup>34</sup>—subjects on which al-Maqdisi has written virtually nothing—could suggest that he has consciously made the decision to connect his name to that of al-Zarqawi's mufti in Iraq, perhaps hoping to strengthen the now much-needed ties with his former pupil.

### Conclusion

The conflict between al-Maqdisi and the admirers of al-Zarqawi shows that radical religious scholars are not necessarily beyond criticism and that invoking a dead jihadist can be a powerful tool in criticizing others. This is significant for several reasons. First, it shows that religious authority is not the only important credential in the eyes of jihadists. Given the right conditions, it can apparently be trumped by what one might call “jihadist authority.” Second, it confirms the worrying trend among jihadists to see themselves as capable of deciding what is legitimate in combat, irrespective of what their scholars think. This is not to suggest that radical ideologues such as al-Maqdisi are soft on their “infidel” enemies, but they at least take the rulings of Islamic law into account, which keeps them from supporting a no-holds-barred type of warfare. The fighters themselves seem to have less patience for such legal niceties, potentially leading to greater bloodshed. It is this prospect, which goes beyond invocations of al-Zarqawi, that should most worry policymakers.

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## Terrorist Financing on the Internet

By Michael Jacobson

SINCE THE SEPTEMBER 11 attacks on the United States, al-Qa`ida has come under growing international pressure. In response, the terrorist organization has increasingly relied on the internet to spread its message and gain support throughout the world. While its use of the internet for propaganda and recruiting purposes has received wide publicity, al-Qa`ida has also utilized the internet for a variety of other purposes, including terrorist financing. Al-Qa`ida is far from alone among terrorist organizations in exploiting the internet for financing. A wide range of other terrorist groups—including Hamas, Lashkar-i-Tayyiba and Hizb Allah—have also used the internet to raise and transfer needed funds to support their activities.

The internet offers broad reach, timely efficiency, as well as a certain degree of anonymity and security for both donors and recipients. Although governments throughout the world now recognize that the internet is an increasingly valuable tool for terrorist organizations, the response has been inconsistent. For the United States and its allies to effectively counter this dangerous trend, they will have to prioritize their efforts in this area in the years to come. This article provides an example of early terrorist use of the internet, explains how and why terrorists launder and raise funds through websites, and examines the challenges of countering this problem effectively.

### Early Terrorist Financing on the Internet

While terrorists' use of the internet for finance-related activities dramatically increased after 9/11, it began well before. The most prominent example was Babar Ahmad, a young British citizen from South London who put his computer expertise to use early on in support of the jihadist cause until his arrest in 2004.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in 1997, Babar ran an

entity called “Azzam Publications” and a number of associated websites that were primarily focused on supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan and the mujahidin in Chechnya. On these sites, Babar solicited funds, attempted to recruit fighters, and even provided detailed instructions on how individuals could move both themselves and money to conflict zones.<sup>2</sup> The website was explicit in its purpose.<sup>3</sup>

To persuade individuals to donate, Babar used a familiar argument: supporting jihad in some fashion was an obligation incumbent upon every Muslim. Babar noted that even if one could not fight in the jihad, they nonetheless had a religious obligation to contribute funds. He argued that the

first and most important thing that Muslims can do in the West is to donate money and to raise it amongst their families, friends and others...for someone who is not able to fight at this moment in time due to a valid excuse they can start by the collection and donation of funds.<sup>4</sup>

Babar's case is just one example of early terrorist use of the internet for financing purposes.

### Financing Earned through Online Criminal Activity

One of the primary ways that terrorist groups use the internet to raise funds is through criminal activity. Younis Tsouli, a young British man better known by his internet code-name “Irhabi 007,”<sup>5</sup> may today be the best known virtual terrorist. Tsouli began his “career” by posting videos depicting terrorist activity on various websites. He came to the attention of al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI),

Ahmad,” September 2004 and indictment of Ahmad in *U.S.A. v. Babar Ahmad*, District Court of Connecticut, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> “Affadavit in Support of Request for Extradition of Babar Ahmad.”

<sup>3</sup> On a question and answer page, Babar wrote that “Azzam Publications has been set up to propagate the call for jihad among the Muslims who are sitting down, ignorant of this vital duty...Thus the purpose of Azzam Publications is to ‘incite the believers’ and secondly to raise some money for the brothers.”

<sup>4</sup> “Affadavit in Support of Request for Extradition of Babar Ahmad.”

<sup>5</sup> “Irhabi 007” means “Terrorist 007.”

<sup>34</sup> The books are Abu Anas al-Shami, *Al-Sufiyya*, 2009 and Abu Anas al-Shami, *Al-Shi`a*, 2009.

<sup>1</sup> Babar was arrested in 2004 by the United Kingdom on the basis of an extradition request by the United States. Babar's appeals of the extradition request are still currently pending. For more, see *U.S.A. v. Babar Ahmad*, “Affadavit in Support of Request for Extradition of Babar



whose leaders were impressed by his computer knowledge and ambition. He quickly developed close ties to the organization.<sup>6</sup> AQI began feeding videos directly to Tsouli for him to post.<sup>7</sup> At the outset, Tsouli uploaded these videos to free webhosting services, and at this point he had few expenses and little need for funds. These free sites, however, had limited bandwidth and soon came to slow Tsouli down as he ramped up his activities. Tsouli then turned to sites with better technical capabilities, but that forced him to raise money.<sup>8</sup>

Not surprisingly, given his expertise, Tsouli turned to the internet to raise the funds to pay for these sites. Tsouli and his partner, Tariq al-Daour, began acquiring stolen credit card numbers on the web, purchasing them through various online forums, such as Cardplanet.<sup>9</sup> By the time Tsouli and his partner were arrested, al-Daour had accumulated 37,000 stolen credit card numbers on his computer, which they had used to make more than \$3.5 million in charges.<sup>10</sup> Tsouli laundered money through a number of online gambling sites, such as absolutepoker.com and paradisepoker.com, using the stolen credit card information. They conducted hundreds of transactions at 43 different websites in total. Any winnings were cashed in and transferred electronically to bank accounts specifically established for this purpose. In this way, the money would now appear legitimately won, and thus successfully laundered.<sup>11</sup> In total, Tsouli used 72 of these credit cards to register 180 websites, hosted by 95 different companies.<sup>12</sup>

6 Gordon Corera, "The World's Most Wanted Cyber-Jihadist," BBC News, January 16, 2008.

7 Ibid.

8 "Cyber Operative Charged in Real World Terror Plot," Anti-Defamation League, March 1, 2006.

9 "U.S. Secret Service's Operation Firewall Nets 28 Arrests," U.S. Secret Service, press release, October 28, 2004. These forums obtained the credit cards through various online scams and e-mail viruses. See Brian Krebs, "Terrorism's Hook into Your Inbox," *Washington Post*, July 5, 2007.

10 For example, one New Jersey woman described how she received an e-mail asking her to verify eBay account information, which she completed, including sensitive financial information. Al-Daour ended up with her credit card information. For more, see Krebs.

11 Krebs.

12 Written statement from Andy Cochran at "Do the Payment Card Industry Data Standards Reduce Cyber-

### Charities

Charities and non-governmental organizations (NGO) remain a major problem in the terrorist financing arena, and their activities on the internet are no exception to this troublesome trend. According to the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force, "the misuse of non-profit organizations for the financing of terrorism is coming to be recognized as a crucial weak point in the global struggle to stop such funding at its source."<sup>13</sup> Charities are especially susceptible to abuse by terrorists and their supporters for whom charitable or humanitarian organizations are particularly attractive front organizations. Some charities are founded with the express purpose of financing terror, while others are existing entities that are infiltrated by terrorist operatives and supporters and co-opted from within. It is a significant challenge for law enforcement, intelligence officials, and charity headquarters personnel to effectively monitor funds distributed in conflict zones, which can be easily diverted away from the intended cause. Another challenge for governments that makes charities an attractive vehicle for terrorist groups is that banned or exposed charities tied to terrorism can shut down one day, and reopen the next under a new name—a tactic often used successfully by terrorist organizations.<sup>14</sup>

Charities and NGOs that are tied to terrorist organizations are often open about their fundraising activities since it is all ostensibly for humanitarian purposes. Therefore, many of the terrorist-linked charities have had websites openly advertising their activities and soliciting funds. This includes the Global Relief Foundation

crime?" Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technology Hearing, March 31, 2009. Tsouli also used these credit cards to purchase equipment for the mujahidin. The equipment was sent to locations or premises that he and his associate would rent on a short-term basis.

13 "Terrorist Financing," Financial Action Task Force, February 29, 2008.

14 The Treasury Department, for example, noted that the Bosnian branch of the al-Haramain Foundation "reconstituted" itself after its designation by the U.S. government in 2002, reopening under the name "Vazir." More recently, Treasury added new aliases for al-Rashid Trust and al-Akhtar Trust International, years after their designations by the U.S. and UN.

(GRF), an organization designated in 2002 by the U.S. Treasury Department for its ties to al-Qa`ida and the Taliban.<sup>15</sup> On its website, the GRF said that the charity was "organized exclusively for charitable, religious, education and scientific purposes including to establish, promote, and carry out relief and charitable activities, projects, organizations, institutions and funds." GRF's mission statement focused on its work in emergency relief, medical aid, advancement of education and

**"Online gambling sites and other similar entities have also made it easier to launder money on the internet than it was in the past—a practice that terrorist groups have taken advantage of in recent years."**

development of social welfare, noting that it will "act with goodwill towards all people." GRF accepted donations through its website, with donors able to pay through credit and debit cards, and wire transfers, among other means.<sup>16</sup> In reality, the charity was set up and run for years by Rabih Haddad, who was allegedly a previous member of *Maktab al-Khidmat* (Services Bureau), the "precursor organization to al Qaeda."<sup>17</sup>

Another al-Qa`ida-linked NGO, the al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, a Saudi-based NGO that was designated by the U.S. Treasury Department in November 2008 for its ties to al-Qa`ida, also had a website that encouraged donations.<sup>18</sup>

15 "Treasury Department Statement Regarding the Designation of the Global Relief Foundation," U.S. Treasury Department, press release, October 18, 2002.

16 "Jihad Online: Islamic Terrorists and the Internet," Anti-Defamation League, 2002.

17 The GRF also received funding from individuals linked to al-Qa`ida, and GRF officials had "extensive contacts" with Wadiah el-Hage, a close associate of Usama bin Ladin, who was convicted by a U.S. jury for his role in the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings. See U.S. Treasury Department, press release, October 18, 2002.

18 "Treasury Designates Al Haramain Islamic Foundation," U.S. Treasury Department, press release, June 19,

### Why the Internet?

Terrorists' increasing use of the internet for financing purposes is being driven by a number of different underlying factors. The use of the internet has expanded exponentially and globally during the past decade, and terrorists' and other illicit actors' use has risen alongside this growth.<sup>19</sup> Terrorists' use of the internet to raise and transfer funds is also part of a broader global shift toward the use of technology in international commerce. There have been dramatic shifts in how funds can be transferred from one destination to another, with new technological developments. Transferring funds electronically—using the internet to initiate transactions—has become

**“The internet crosses all geographic boundaries, and if the United States cracks down on what is taking place within its borders, terrorists can easily relocate to other jurisdictions that are less vigilant about monitoring and countering this type of illicit activity.”**

increasingly common through services such as PayPal. Transactions can also be conducted through cell phones in what are now better known as “M-payments.” In countries where the formal financial sector is less than robust—such as in many African countries—using the internet or cell phones to facilitate transfers is a far more attractive and readily available option. Online gambling sites and other similar entities have also made it

2008. A number of al-Haramain's branches had been blacklisted by the United States and by Saudi Arabia years earlier. See U.S. Treasury Department, press release, June 2, 2004.

19 Terrorists are also far from alone in using the internet for illicit purposes. In fact, crime on the internet has been growing rapidly, with the FBI estimating losses from internet crime in 2008 at approximately \$264 million. “Internet Crime,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, press release, March 30, 2009.

easier to launder money on the internet than it was in the past—a practice that terrorist groups have taken advantage of in recent years. While this type of activity could potentially expose them to detection, terrorists attempt to mask their identities on the internet when using these sites. Another factor that is likely fueling the increase in terrorists' criminal activity on the internet is that key terrorist leaders and operatives have specifically encouraged their followers to pursue this path.

### Anonymity

Perhaps the most obvious reason why terrorist groups, cells and operatives have increasingly turned to the internet is for the security it offers. As the United States and the international community crack down on al-Qa`ida and affiliated terrorist organizations, terrorists have tried to find new ways to avoid detection. The Tsouli case again provides a good example of the ways in which terrorists are able to exploit security gaps and opportunities for anonymity. Even while he was engaging in extensive criminal activity on the internet, Tsouli was able to cover his tracks, paying for transactions with stolen credit cards and identification information, and never using his real identity.<sup>20</sup> Tsouli also used a variety of techniques to hide his computer's Internet Protocol (IP) address, including anonymizing software and proxy servers.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, at one point, authorities suspected that Tsouli was in the United States because he hacked into and uploaded data to an Arkansas State website and a George Washington University site.<sup>22</sup> Illustrating how seriously Tsouli generally took security matters, he had never even met Tariq al-Daour, his co-conspirator in the

20 Written statement from Andy Cochran at “Do the Payment Card Industry Data Standards Reduce Cyber-crime?” Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technology Hearing, March 31, 2009.

21 Nadya Labi, “Jihad 2.0,” *Atlantic Monthly*, July/August 2006. Tsouli apparently learned this early in his internet career. When he first began visiting a particular jihadist site, one of the members of the forum warned Tsouli not to access the site from his own IP address, a lesson Tsouli appears to have heeded.

22 Rita Katz and Michael Kern, “Terrorist 007, Exposed,” *Washington Post*, March 26, 2006.

effort.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, in the end Tsouli was not apprehended through cyber-investigation, but through traditional detective work.<sup>24</sup>

Babar was also careful in his tradecraft, using aliases and post office boxes to conceal the fact that he was the one operating these extremist websites, and often paying the fees through cash and money orders. Babar used encryption for his e-mail communications as well as to protect data stored in his computer.<sup>25</sup>

In fact, terrorists appear so confident about the security that the internet provides that some terrorist websites are actually hosted by companies in the United States. The U.S. sites are appealing, experts say, because of the high quality and low costs. There are numerous examples of websites linked to terrorist groups being hosted by U.S. companies. For example, a site tied to the Taliban was hosted by a company in Texas, on which the terrorist group bragged about attacks in Afghanistan on U.S. forces. Perhaps even more disturbingly, in the 2008 attack in Mumbai, which the Pakistani-based group Lashkar-i-Tayyiba is suspected of perpetrating, the cell members communicated through internet telephone calls, which were routed through a Texas server.<sup>26</sup>

### Increased Caution for Electronic Payments

Nevertheless, while terrorist groups have increasingly turned to the internet to spread their extremist message, they are at the same time growing more weary about the risks of electronic payments specifically, as governments have begun to crack down on the practice. A

23 Tsouli, however, was extremely careless on several occasions, failing to anonymize his transactions, which led one private cyber-investigator to conclude that Tsouli was located in Ealing, England, a short distance from his actual home. For more, see Corera and Labi.

24 In October 2005, Bosnian police arrested two men whom they suspected were involved in a terrorist attack. During the search of their phone and e-mail records, they uncovered Tsouli and his colleagues. See “Cyber Operative Charged in Real World Terror Plot.”

25 *U.S.A. v. Babar Ahmad*, “Affidavit in Support of Request for Extradition of Babar Ahmad,” September 2004 and indictment of Ahmad in *U.S.A. v. Babar Ahmad*, District Court of Connecticut, 2004.

26 Joby Warrick and Candace Rondeauz, “Extremist Web Sites are Using US Hosts,” *Washington Post*, April 9, 2009.

participant in an early 2009 discussion on al-Fallujah, a well-known extremist forum, cautioned others about how to pay for online services. Governments, this extremist warned, are carefully tracking and monitoring electronic payment services, and through this have been able to identify jihadists and eventually unravel entire networks.<sup>27</sup> The extremist noted that even “if your use of the electronic payments has not brought you woes, then that does not mean it is safe.” He recommended that when using the internet for payment that the brothers use “circumvented ways and methods” to make it more difficult to trace.<sup>28</sup>

Hamas has also instructed potential donors on what steps to take to avoid apprehension by security forces. For example, on its Qassam Brigades website, Hamas told donors to use “fake” names when sending e-mails about contributions. Hamas also reassured donors that they will use “secure handling” for the donations to the fighters. Hizb Allah, likewise, has bragged about its sophistication using the internet, particularly in utilizing encryption to protect communications from detection. Hizb Allah spokesman Ahmed Jabril said that with this “brilliant” encryption it was possible to “send a verse from the Koran, an appeal for charity and even a call for jihad and know it will not be seen by anyone hostile to our faith, like the Americans.”<sup>29</sup>

### The Way Forward

Terrorists will continue to exploit the internet for all aspects of their operations, including raising and moving funds. This trend is only likely to increase as the scope and scale of the internet expands, and with other related technological developments. There is widespread agreement at this point among governments that the internet creates serious counterterrorism vulnerabilities and that action is needed to counter this growing threat. There is far less agreement, however, on what steps need to be taken. The United States has taken aggressive actions unilaterally

in this area, specifically designed to address the use of the internet for terrorist financing purposes. This has included a number of prosecutions of suspected terrorists for their internet-related activity. The United States has also used its law enforcement tools more broadly, targeting money remitters without adequate anti-money laundering/counterterrorist financing internal compliance systems. The United States has even pursued money remitters based outside of the country that were marketing online to U.S. citizens, charging them with failing to register in the United States as required by law.<sup>30</sup> It has complemented this with a softer approach, reaching out to individual web service providers who are hosting troublesome sites, asking the providers to voluntarily shut them down.

Not all countries have been as aggressive as the United States on this front. First, many countries lack the technical capabilities necessary to investigate online terrorist activity.<sup>31</sup> Second, there is still a debate about how far governments should go in cracking down on internet-related activities. Some governments are concerned that taking these steps will abridge the right to free speech. There is also an active debate about what works best from a counterterrorism perspective—particularly whether it is more valuable to monitor terrorists’ activities on the internet for intelligence purposes, or to shut their websites down. Third, the laws in this area have not kept up with the technological changes, and there is not agreement about what changes should be made to move forward. At present, there is no consistency at the national level in what laws are on the books.<sup>32</sup> For example, in Italy cyber cafés are required to ask for identification; Rome is alone in the European Union in imposing this regulation. In India, some states mandate this, but others

do not.<sup>33</sup> The United States has also interpreted its responsibilities and laws more expansively than many other countries, targeting entities outside its borders for prosecution; others are hesitant to give their law enforcement agencies this broad reach. Finally, while some countries favor the establishment of an international legal instrument that would govern this area, not all governments regard this as a necessary or helpful step forward.<sup>34</sup>

There are limits, however, to what the United States or any one country can accomplish on its own in this area. The internet crosses all geographic boundaries, and if the United States cracks down on what is taking place within its borders, terrorists can easily relocate to other jurisdictions that are less vigilant about monitoring and countering this type of illicit activity. Only when there is more of a collective and coherent global response will a dent be made in terrorists’ ability to use the internet so easily to further their nefarious goals. The U.S. actions are a step in the right direction, but without broader international focus and cooperation on this issue, there are limits to what is likely to be accomplished.

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27 “Jihadi Discussion Forum Posting on Safely Financing Jihad-Related Websites,” translated by the NEFA Foundation, April 7, 2009.

28 Ibid.

29 “Jihad Online: Islamic Terrorists and the Internet.”

30 See, for example, the U.S. Justice Department prosecutions of MENAEXCHANGE.com, a money remitter that transferred funds between the United States, the Middle East and North Africa.

31 Raphael Perl, “Terrorist Use of the Internet: Threat, Issues, and Options for International Cooperation,” Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, April 7-10, 2008.

32 Ibid.

33 “Indian States Make Cyber-Users Sign In,” Associated Press, January 10, 2006.

34 For example, at an April 2009 conference in Spain organized by the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States that the author attended, the Russian Federation was pressing for an international treaty to govern this area, but the United States and others pushed back against the Russian proposals.



## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

May 1, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber attempted to blow himself up near a mosque in Kirkuk, yet was wrestled to the ground before he could detonate his explosives. Authorities identified the Syrian man as Ammar Afif Hamada, and they believe he is close to Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi, the head of the Islamic State of Iraq, who Iraqi police claim is already in their custody. – *AFP, May 2*

May 2, 2009 (IRAQ): An Iraqi Army soldier opened fire on U.S. soldiers at a combat outpost near Mosul, Ninawa Province, killing two of them. U.S. soldiers returned fire and killed the assailant. At the same time, another militant opened fire on other U.S. soldiers at the same outpost, although the second assailant managed to flee. – *Washington Post, May 3*

May 2, 2009 (IRAQ): U.S. and Iraqi forces arrested Nadhim al-Jabouri, the leader of a government-backed Sunni Arab militia group. Al-Jabouri, along with two of his brothers, were arrested “under the charge of terrorism.” According to Reuters, “As an Awakening leader, Jubouri was a key U.S. ally in the fight against al Qaeda in the largely Sunni [Salah al-Din] Province, where Saddam Hussein’s hometown is located.” The Iraqi government accuses al-Jabouri of involvement in al-Qa`ida-supported killings in the largely Shi`a town of Dujail during 2006-2007. – *Reuters, May 3*

May 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants kidnapped and beheaded two government officials near Mingora in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province. Pakistani Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan said that the attack was in response to government security forces killing two insurgent commanders earlier in the day. – *Reuters, May 3*

May 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): The government for the North-West Frontier Province announced the creation of an Islamic appellate court in Malakand as part of a peace deal reached in February with Pakistani Taliban militants. Pakistani Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan, however, quickly rejected the court’s legitimacy. – *AFP, May 2*

May 4, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A teenage suicide bomber detonated his explosives at the gate of a municipal administration building in Lagham Province, killing seven people. The mayor of the province, Muhammad Rahim, was killed in the attack. – *Reuters, May 4*

May 5, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber rammed his vehicle into a police checkpoint just outside Peshawar on the border with Khyber Agency, killing six members of the security forces. – *CNN, May 5*

May 6, 2009 (IRAQ): A car bomb exploded in the crowded Alwat al-Rashid market in Baghdad, killing at least 10 people. – *UPI, May 6*

May 7, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber driving a motorbike attacked a convoy of British troops in Helmand Province, killing 21 people. Two British soldiers were among the dead. – *Reuters, May 7; Sky News, May 8; New York Times, May 10*

May 7, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani government officials renounced a peace deal with Pakistani Taliban factions and said that they will begin more aggressive military operations in the Swat Valley. – *UPI, May 7*

May 7, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Suspected Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) militants ambushed police forces in Sulu Province in the southern Philippines, killing four police officers. Among the dead was Sulu Province’s police chief, Julasirim Kasim. Four ASG members were also killed during the clash, which occurred in the town of Maimbung. – *Philippine Inquirer, May 7*

May 8, 2009 (MALAYSIA): A spokesman for Singapore’s embassy in Malaysia said that Malaysian authorities had apprehended a top Islamic terrorism suspect who escaped a high security Singaporean jail in February 2008. The Jemaah Islamiya suspect, Mas Selamat Kastari, is accused of involvement in a plot to crash a hijacked plane in Singapore. – *AP, May 7*

May 9, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Missiles fired from a suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed approximately eight people in South Waziristan Agency

of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *The Nation, May 9*

May 10, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A coordinated double suicide attack targeted Afghan security forces on patrol in Gereshk, Helmand Province. The two bombers killed seven people. The first suicide bomber was riding a motorbike and blew himself up next to the patrol, while the second bomber detonated his explosives minutes later after a crowd formed around authorities tending to the casualties. Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmedzai claimed credit for the attack. – *New York Times, May 10*

May 10, 2009 (LIBYA): A Libyan newspaper reported that accused al-Qa`ida operative Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi committed suicide in a Libyan prison. – *CNN, May 12*

May 11, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated a vehicle filled with explosives at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Peshawar, killing two paramilitary soldiers and eight civilians. – *Reuters, May 11*

May 11, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine police told reporters that they had killed more than 20 Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) militants in retaliatory attacks since the killing of Sulu Province’s chief of police on May 7. The police chief, Julasirim Kasim, was ambushed and killed by suspected ASG militants. – *AFP, May 11*

May 12, 2009 (UNITED STATES): A federal jury in New York convicted Oussama Kassir on charges of plotting to help al-Qa`ida recruit militants by establishing a weapons training camp in Oregon in 1999 and of distributing terrorist training manuals on the internet. Kassir was found guilty of all 12 charges. He was arrested in Prague in 2005. – *UPI, May 13*

May 12, 2009 (UNITED STATES): A federal jury in Miami convicted five men of plotting with al-Qa`ida to blow up Chicago’s Sears Tower and bomb FBI offices with the goal of causing an anti-government insurrection. A sixth man was acquitted. The convicted defendants include: Narseal Batiste, Patrick Abraham, Rothschild Augustin, Burson Augustin, and Stanley Grant Phanor. Sentencing is scheduled for July 26. – *Los Angeles Times, May 13*

May 12, 2009 (ITALY): Italian police announced that two French nationals they arrested on immigration offenses in November are now suspected of being key al-Qa`ida figures. The men—identified as Bassam Ayachi, a 63-year-old Syrian-born imam, and Raphael Gendron, a French citizen and convert to Islam—have been served with arrest warrants for planning “terrorist attacks and guerrilla actions.” One of the alleged targets was Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris. The men previously lived in Belgium. – *BBC, May 12*

May 12, 2009 (IRAQ): A new audiotape from the Islamic State of Iraq appeared on Islamist web forums, in which a voice claiming to be Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi denied his capture by Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi government claimed they captured al-Baghdadi in April, although the U.S. government has cast doubt on the assertion. – *Reuters, May 12*

May 12, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants attacked government buildings in a complex, coordinated operation in Khost. The fighters, who were disguised in burqas and military uniforms, held out for nearly six hours. The attack involved at least four suicide bombers, one of whom detonated a vehicle laden with explosives. Militants barricaded themselves inside a building with hostages for hours until they were finally killed by Afghan and Western soldiers. At least four Afghan Army soldiers were killed, along with two civilians. Approximately 11 insurgents were also killed. – *Reuters, May 12; AFP, May 12*

May 12, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone fired missiles at targets in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing at least eight people. – *Reuters, May 12*

May 13, 2009 (IRAQ): A bomb placed underneath the vehicle of an anti-al-Qa`ida Sunni Arab militia leader exploded in Abu Ghurayb, on the outskirts of Baghdad. The leader, Abu Ahmed al-Zobaie, died in the explosion, along with his young son. – *AFP, May 13*

May 13, 2009 (SOMALIA): The top UN envoy for Somalia, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, accused Islamist opposition leader Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys

of trying to “take power and topple a legitimate government.” He also blamed Aweys for recent fighting in Mogadishu, saying it was part of a coup attempt. – *AFP, May 13*

May 13, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): A roadside bomb targeted the governor of Sulu Province, Abdusakur Tan. The governor survived the attack, although five of his security guards were injured. – *Reuters, May 13*

May 13, 2009 (MALI): A Malian senior military officer who was investigating an al-Qa`ida-affiliated group was assassinated in his home in Timbuktu. The officer, Lieutenant Colonel Lamana Ould Bou, was shot to death. – *Voice of America, June 11*

May 14, 2009 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. Treasury Department announced that it was freezing the assets of Sa`ad Uwayyid `Ubayd Mu`jil al-Shammari, identified as a senior leader of al-Qa`ida who allegedly helped transport militants from Syria to Iraq. Al-Shammari, who is known as Abu Khalaf, also helped recruit young North Africans for al-Qa`ida. – *Dow Jones Newswires, May 14*

May 14, 2009 (SOMALIA): Hardline opposition leader Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys accused the top UN envoy to Somalia, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, of “destroying” Somalia. Aweys said that Abdallah “consistently defends the government policies as if he is the president of this country, and he is not playing his role of engaging every side of the conflict.” He also spoke about claims that foreign fighters were supporting opposition militants: “It is possible that young, excited Muslim men had arrived in Somalia individually, but it is unfortunate to exaggerate this as a hideout for foreign fighters. As Somalis, we reach our own decisions, and we had not requested any organization or governments to come and fight along with us.” – *Reuters, May 14*

May 15, 2009 (RUSSIA): A suicide bomber killed three people in Grozny after an alleged attempt to blow up the Interior Ministry. The bomber, along with one other assailant, was stopped outside of the ministry by police, at which point he detonated his explosives. – *Reuters, May 15*

May 15, 2009 (SOMALIA): The top UN envoy to Somalia, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, said that an estimated 280 to 300 foreigners were fighting with opposition militias in Somalia, primarily with al-Shabab. “I have seen figures from UN Security Council documents submitted by the U.S. where they are estimated to be between 280 and 300,” he said. – *Reuters, May 15*

May 16, 2009 (IRAQ): Three alleged members of a Syrian-based al-Qa`ida cell were apprehended near Mosul in Iraq. The men are accused of sneaking weapons from Syria into northern Iraq. They are suspected of being part of an al-Qa`ida cell led by Abu Khalaf, who had his assets frozen by the U.S. Treasury Department on May 14. – *Voice of America, May 16*

May 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected car bomb ripped through Peshawar, killing at least 10 people in the city’s Kashkal area. – *Voice of America, May 16*

May 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone strike destroyed an Islamic school and a nearby vehicle in Mir Ali, North Waziristan Agency, in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Approximately 12 people were killed, including two suspected foreign militants. – *AP, May 15*

May 17, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants attacked a police post in Helmand Province, killing six officers. – *Voice of America, May 18*

May 17, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Speaking with London’s *Sunday Times*, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari pledged to go “into Waziristan, all these regions, with army operations. Swat is just the start. It’s a larger war to fight.” Zardari, however, said that his country would need billions of dollars more in foreign aid to defeat al-Qa`ida and the Taliban. – *UPI, May 17*

May 17, 2009 (SOMALIA): Opposition Islamic insurgents affiliated with al-Shabab took control of the strategic southeastern town of Jowhar, the capital of Middle Shabelle Region. – *AP, May 17*

May 18, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Director of the Central Intelligence Agency Leon Panetta defended the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV)

to target al-Qa`ida militants. When asked about the effectiveness of UAVs, Panetta said that “these operations have been very effective.” UAV strikes, he said, are “very precise” and “very limited in terms of collateral damage and very frankly, it’s the only game in town in terms of confronting and trying to disrupt the al-Qa`ida leadership.” – *AFP, May 18*

May 18, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan President Hamid Karzai’s brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai, was ambushed in Sarobi district, Paktika Province. He managed to escape unharmed, although one of his bodyguards was killed. – *Reuters, May 18*

May 18, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Police arrested four suspected al-Qa`ida militants following a shootout in Karachi. Police allege that the suspects were planning to attack politicians. The men also reportedly had links to the Baitullah Mehsud-led Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and to Lashkar-i-Tayyiba. – *Dawn, May 18*

May 18, 2009 (SOMALIA): Opposition Islamic insurgents affiliated with al-Shabab took control of Mahaday, a strategic town approximately 13 miles north of Jowhar, which is also in the hands of al-Shabab fighters. Al-Shabab now has control of three of the four districts of Middle Shabelle region. – *Shabelle Media Network, May 18*

May 19, 2009 (SOMALIA): Reports surfaced that Ethiopian troops reentered Somalia, although the Ethiopian government denied any incursion. – *Australian Broadcasting Corporation, May 20; CNN, May 19*

May 20, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Mohammed Abdullah Warsame pleaded guilty in the United States of conspiring to provide support and resources to al-Qa`ida. He has been in U.S. custody since December 8, 2003, and authorities allege that he once dined with Usama bin Ladin, fought with the Taliban and attended training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Warsame is a Canadian of Somali descent. – *AP, May 20*

May 20, 2009 (UNITED STATES): An Obama administration official announced that a top al-Qa`ida suspect held at Guantanamo Bay will be sent to

New York to face trial, making it the first Guantanamo detainee to face trial in a civilian criminal court. The suspect, Ahmed Ghailani, is Tanzanian and was captured in Pakistan in 2004. – *AP, May 20*

May 20, 2009 (SPAIN): Spanish police announced that they arrested 14 people suspected of financing Islamic extremists. Spanish media said that those arrested consisted of Algerians and Moroccans and were involved with al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. – *AFP, May 20*

May 20, 2009 (IRAQ): A car bomb ripped through a predominately Shi`a area of Baghdad, killing approximately 41 civilians. – *Reuters, May 21; AP, May 21*

May 20, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Two Americans were killed in a roadside bomb attack on a U.S. military convoy on the outskirts of Kabul. – *Reuters, May 20*

May 20, 2009 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) released a new statement that gave the United Kingdom a further 15 days to release Jordanian cleric Abu Qatada from prison in exchange for the release of a British hostage. AQIM had previously said it would execute the hostage unless the British government released Abu Qatada by May 15. – *Reuters, May 21*

May 20, 2009 (SOMALIA): Al-Shabab told reporters that they have established a new Islamic administration in Jowhar, a town they seized control of on May 17. – *Shabelle Media Network, May 20*

May 21, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed seven people in Kirkuk, in an attack that targeted Sunni anti-al-Qa`ida militia members who were standing in line to receive their pay. – *Reuters, May 21; AP, May 21*

May 21, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber detonated his explosives near a military fort in Jandola, a town in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Four civilians were killed in the attack. – *AFP, May 21*

May 21, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistan’s information minister told reporters that fighters from Uzbekistan and Chechnya were among foreign forces helping

Pakistani Taliban fighters in the Swat Valley. “There is no doubt that some Uzbeks, Chechens and people of other nationalities were found involved with their designs to create an insurgency in Swat,” he said. – *Bloomberg, May 22*

May 22, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A car bomb exploded outside a movie theater in Peshawar, killing six people. – *Los Angeles Times, May 23*

May 23, 2009 (EGYPT): Egyptian authorities announced that they arrested seven members of an alleged al-Qa`ida-affiliated cell that bombed a Cairo bazaar on February 22, an attack that left a teenage French tourist dead. Those arrested include a French woman of Albanian origin, a British man of Egyptian descent, two Palestinians, a Belgian man of Tunisian descent and two Egyptians. – *AFP, May 23*

May 24, 2009 (SOMALIA): A suicide bomber exploded a vehicle loaded with explosives in front of a base for government soldiers in Mogadishu. The blast killed six security officers and a civilian. Al-Shabab later claimed credit for the attack. – *Shabelle Media Network, May 24; Voice of America, May 24; UPI, May 25*

May 25, 2009 (IRAQ): A roadside bomb killed three Americans near Falluja in Anbar Province. The dead included a soldier, a defense contractor and a civilian State Department employee. – *Los Angeles Times, May 27*

May 26, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into a military convoy in Kapisa Province, killing three U.S. soldiers and three Afghan civilians. – *AP, May 26*

May 26, 2009 (UZBEKISTAN): Uzbek state television announced that a suicide bomber killed a police officer in the eastern city of Andijan. – *BBC, May 26*

May 26, 2009 (SOMALIA): The UN Security Council extended the mandate of African Union peacekeepers in Somalia. The mandate has been extended to December 31, 2009. – *Voice of America, May 26*

May 27, 2009 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. Defense Department confirmed that five percent of former Guantanamo Bay detainees have returned to the fight



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against the United States and its allies.  
– *AFP, May 27*

May 27, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants assassinated the governor of Omna district in Paktika Province. The governor, Mohammad Nader, was killed along with his adult sons. – *AP, May 27*

May 27, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A group of suspected Taliban militants shot at police officers in Lahore, and then detonated a powerful car bomb that killed at least 23 people and damaged buildings belonging to the police and the country's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate. Approximately 16 policemen were among the dead. A group calling itself Tehrik-i-Taliban Punjab claimed credit for the attack. – *BBC, May 28; Dawn, May 28*

May 27, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine soldiers stormed a jungle base of Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) affiliated militants, killing at least two rebel commanders and eight gunmen. At least one military officer was killed in the assault. The operation, which occurred on Basilan Island in the southern Philippines, targeted militants involved in a wave of kidnappings. – *GMA News.tv, May 27*

May 27, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): The U.S. State Department announced a reward totaling \$2.5 million to anyone who could help authorities capture three Abu Sayyaf Group militants, identified as: Radullan Sahiron, Abdul Basit Usman, and Kahir Mundos. – *GMA News.tv, May 27*

May 28, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): U.S.-led coalition troops raided a heavily guarded suspected training camp for foreign militants in Paktika Province. Approximately 34 militants were killed in the firefight, including 22 Arabs and Pakistanis. Six of the militants detonated their suicide vests during the battle. – *AP, May 28*

May 28, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Two bombs hidden on motorcycles exploded at the busy Qissa Khawani market in Peshawar, killing at least six people. When police arrived on the scene, gunmen opened fire on them from rooftops. – *AP, May 28*

May 28, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A car bomb exploded in Dera Ismail Khan in the North-West Frontier Province, killing four people. The car may have been driven by a suicide bomber. – *Reuters, May 28; Bloomberg, May 29*

May 28, 2009 (IRAN): A bomb exploded in a crowded Shi'a mosque in Zahedan in Sistan-Baluchistan Province, killing 25 people. The Sunni opposition group Jundallah later claimed credit for the bombing. – *Reuters, May 29*

May 29, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed 50 people at a mosque in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The mosque was used by paramilitary soldiers stationed at a nearby post. – *McClatchy Newspapers, June 2*

May 30, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Militants attacked a police checkpoint and killed four policemen in Farah Province. – *AP, May 31*

May 30, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb injured Mohammad Omar, the governor of Kunduz Province. – *CNN, May 30*

May 30, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants attacked a paramilitary camp in South Waziristan Agency near the border with Afghanistan. During the eight-hour gun battle, at least 40 Taliban fighters and four Pakistani security officers were killed. – *UPI, May 31*

May 30, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistan's military claimed that its forces regained control of Mingora, the main town in the Swat Valley. "Mingora is now under full control of the army," a Pakistani spokesman said. "We were expecting an intense fight between security forces and militants in Mingora but it did not happen." – *AFP, May 30*

May 31, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Suspected Taliban insurgents attacked a joint patrol of Afghan and NATO troops in Farah Province. Afghan and NATO forces, however, repelled the attack and killed 18 militants. – *AP, May 31*