



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

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## About the CTC Sentinel

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

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

# Anwar al-`Awlaqi: Profile of a Jihadi Radicalizer

By Christopher Heffelfinger



**I**MAM ANWAR AL-`AWLAQI was thrust into the media spotlight following news of his involvement with Major Nidal Malik Hasan, the gunman in the November 5, 2009 shootings that killed 12 U.S. soldiers and a doctor at the Fort Hood Army base in Texas.<sup>1</sup> Before the shootings, al-`Awlaqi was only a concern to a select few in the U.S. law enforcement community. Now, however, al-`Awlaqi is an open enemy of the United States. Indeed, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian man who attempted to blow up a Northwest Airlines flight as it landed in Detroit on Christmas Day, was reportedly one of al-`Awlaqi's students.<sup>2</sup> Al-`Awlaqi, currently believed to be in Yemen, is now

the subject of an extensive manhunt. In late December, it was reported that he may have been killed in a missile strike in Yemen's Shabwa Province, but he survived.

Al-`Awlaqi has already served to radicalize a sizable number of young Muslims, including Americans and other English-speaking Muslims who aspired to learn more about jihad and its permissibility according to Shari`a (Islamic law). He has translated and discussed famous Arabic-language tracts on jihad in his lectures and articles, as well as hadith stories and other matters of faith and doctrine. He has been able to connect across cultures; the American-born al-`Awlaqi received his higher education in the United States after spending his formative teenage years in his native Yemen.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, while al-

1 Mark Schone and Rehab el-Buri, "Fort Hood: Hasan Asked Awlaki if it Was Okay to Kill American Soldiers," ABC News, December 23, 2009.

2 "U.S. Preacher Says Backs Failed Plane Bombing: Report," Reuters, February 3, 2010.

3 Tom Sharpe, "Radical Imam Traces Roots to New Mexi-

Awlaqi's online videos have inspired a number of mostly self-formed jihadist groups in the years following 9/11, he was also connected to the well-established Salafist network in the Washington, D.C. area.<sup>4</sup> Al-Awlaqi served as imam at the popular Dar al-Hijrah mosque in Falls Church, Virginia, where, during his tenure, two of the 9/11 hijackers prayed in 2001, as did Major Hasan.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the increased media focus recently, al-Awlaqi's role in furthering the global jihad has not yet been adequately understood. What makes al-Awlaqi unique is his role in the radicalization process, serving as the critical link that takes dedicated students of Salafi-jihadi ideology from an inspirational to an operational mode. Accordingly, al-Awlaqi's greatest significance lies in his ability to function as a motivational speaker for jihad, demonstrating a proven talent to drive believers into action. Far beyond his eventual survival, capture or death, al-Awlaqi will have a lasting impact on jihadist activism. Like many other jihadist ideologues whose output has been hindered by the duress of combat, his videos continue to find a wide audience online. Martyrdom would only amplify his popularity.

co," *New Mexican*, November 14, 2009.

4 Until about 2004, Salafist activism thrived in the northern Virginia suburbs outside Washington. Scores of educational institutions, non-profits and outreach groups provided ideological instruction and spiritual guidance to the area's Muslims, many with ties to universities in Saudi Arabia that have been bastions of Salafist activism. Aside from a small number of other communities, such as those in East Orange, New Jersey, some communities in Michigan and perhaps Richardson, Texas, northern Virginia was the largest of the Salafist communities in the United States. It was the center of national Salafist organizational efforts given its proximity to Washington, D.C.—this network of organizations dated back to the late 1960s.

5 A third 9/11 hijacker attended his lectures in San Diego. U.S. law enforcement officials, however, do not believe that al-Awlaqi played an operational role in his contact with any of those militants. For details, see Philip Sherwell and Alex Spillius, "Fort Hood Shooting: Texas Army Killer Linked to September 11 Terrorists," *Telegraph*, November 7, 2009; Susan Schmidt, "Imam From Va. Mosque Now Thought to Have Aided Al-Qaeda," *Washington Post*, February 27, 2008.

### Background on Anwar al-Awlaqi

Anwar al-Awlaqi was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico in 1971.<sup>6</sup> His father Nasir, who hailed from the Awlaqi tribe that dominated much of Shabwa Province in eastern Yemen, came to the United States to pursue a degree in agricultural economics.<sup>7</sup> He would eventually become agricultural minister in Yemen.<sup>8</sup> Anwar al-Awlaqi spent his early years in the United States, but returned with his father to their native Yemen where he spent his teenage years. In 1991, he returned to the United States to seek an engineering degree at Colorado State University.<sup>9</sup> After graduation, he became a leader at a local mosque in Fort Collins, Colorado, and soon afterward at an Islamic center in San Diego, where he worked toward a master's degree in education.<sup>10</sup>

In 1996, Anwar al-Awlaqi led San Diego's Masjid al-Ribat al-Islami, and served as imam there for four years.<sup>11</sup> In 1998 and 1999, he served as vice president for a charity founded by the influential Yemeni Islamist figure Abd al-Majid al-Zindani, who the U.S. government labeled a "specially designated global terrorist" in 2004.<sup>12</sup> Federal prosecutors have described that charity, the Charitable Society for Social Welfare, Inc., as a front used to finance al-Qa'ida and Usama bin Ladin.<sup>13</sup> During his years in San Diego, al-Awlaqi also came into contact with Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, two of the 9/11 hijackers, when they attended Masjid al-Rabat al-Islami.<sup>14</sup>

6 Michelle Shephard, "The Powerful Online Voice of Jihad," *Toronto Star*, October 18, 2009.

7 Schmidt.

8 Sudarsan Raghavan, "Cleric Linked to Fort Hood Attack Grew More Radicalized in Yemen," *Washington Post*, December 10, 2009.

9 "Profile: Anwar al-Awlaki," BBC, January 3, 2010.

10 Ibid. Despite his lack of formal religious credentials, Anwar al-Awlaqi is considered charismatic, which explains his success in the mosque.

11 "Profile: Anwar al-Awlaki."

12 Al-Zindani is one of the most influential Islamist figures in Yemen. He is president of al-Iman University in Sana'a and has extensive ties to Saudi Salafist institutions and their leaders. Al-Zindani is also a leader of al-Islah, Yemen's largest opposition party. The United States labeled him a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" in 2004.

13 Schmidt.

14 Ibid. While the two did speak to al-Awlaqi and attended his lectures, U.S. law enforcement officials find it

Witnesses told FBI agents investigating al-Awlaqi's ties to the hijackers that he had a close relationship with the two and frequently attended closed door meetings with them.<sup>15</sup> Some of the investigating agents remained suspicious of al-Awlaqi's alleged non-involvement in the 9/11 plot given this relationship, but he was never charged in connection with the attack.<sup>16</sup>

In early 2001, al-Awlaqi moved to northern Virginia, taking a position as imam at the Dar al-Hijrah mosque, one of the largest in the area. The mosque was also a place of worship for al-Hazmi and another 9/11 hijacker, Hani Hanjour (al-Hazmi moved from San Diego to northern Virginia around the same time as al-Awlaqi). Board members of the Dar al-Hijrah mosque said they hired al-Awlaqi because he was popular with Muslim youth. During his time in northern Virginia, al-Awlaqi also served as a Muslim chaplain at George Washington University.<sup>17</sup>

In 2002, al-Awlaqi left the United States for the United Kingdom, where he went on a lecture tour over the course of several months, giving numerous talks that attracted Muslim youth in particular.<sup>18</sup> Before moving to Yemen in early 2004, al-Awlaqi returned briefly to northern Virginia around the end of 2003 where he met with the now-imprisoned radical Ali al-Timimi,<sup>19</sup> and allegedly discussed recruiting young Muslims for jihadist campaigns abroad.<sup>20</sup> Al-Awlaqi also had connections to other prominent militant Salafists, including Umar Abd al-Rahman (the imprisoned "blind shaykh").<sup>21</sup> In mid-2006, al-Awlaqi was

unlikely that al-Awlaqi was aware of the 9/11 plot beforehand.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Brian Handwerk and Zain Habbou, "Attack on America: An Islamic Scholar's Perspective—Part 1," *National Geographic News*, September 28, 2001.

18 Raghavan.

19 Ali al-Timimi was the spiritual mentor of the Virginia Paintball Group, and he is currently serving a life sentence for inciting his followers to jihad.

20 Schmidt.

21 U.S. officials claim that al-Awlaqi met with a close associate of Umar Abd al-Rahman. Al-Rahman is currently imprisoned in the United States for his role in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. For details, see Joseph Rhee and Mark Schone, "How Anwar Awlaki Got

arrested by Yemeni authorities (roughly two years after he resettled in Yemen with his wife and children) and detained for 18 months.<sup>22</sup> Al-`Awlaqi said he was repeatedly interrogated during that time by agents from the FBI regarding his ties to the 9/11 hijackers.<sup>23</sup>

Al-`Awlaqi himself may have been further radicalized by his time in Yemen's prisons. If nothing else, it reinforced his existing jihadist beliefs. Although he previously showed an affinity for Salafi-jihadism and support for Muslim resistance in Palestine, he began making increasingly public calls for violent struggle after his incarceration and interrogations in Yemen.<sup>24</sup> After this period, his popularity continued to increase, as did his calls for jihad against the West.

#### Al-`Awlaqi's Popular Propaganda

The importance of al-`Awlaqi's role in the global jihad lies in his ability to radicalize Muslim youth through his English-language writings and online presence. Until November 2009, Anwar al-`Awlaqi had a Facebook page with 4,800 fans and a popular blog. Both were taken offline after his endorsement of Nidal Hasan as a hero for the Ft. Hood shootings. On these outlets, al-`Awlaqi was presented as a scholar, imam and *da'i* (one who calls people to Islam). He answered questions on various aspects of belief and provided inspirational words on faith, particularly to the youth audience. Many of his teachings reflected that persona; Facebook fans, for example, discussed inspirational points on faith made by al-`Awlaqi in his audio lectures and how he brought Muslim youth closer to Islam, even as their modern environment seemed estranged from it.

In "The Journey of the Soul" audio lecture, for example, al-`Awlaqi discussed the period of waiting (*al-Ihtidhar*) between death and the afterlife. In the eight-minute talk, he provided explanation of various Qur'anic verses dealing with the subject, the processes of the angel of death and what one can expect in this

period of waiting. It is not a discussion of politics, jihad or the "tyranny" of the United States, but a speech typical of an imam at virtually any mosque providing exegesis of scripture on the nature of the soul as described by the Qur'an—what the believer can expect upon death and what will come of the "evildoer."

His more prominent contributions have played an important role in radicalizing Muslims to take part in jihad. In his well-known discussion of "Constants on the Path of Jihad," al-`Awlaqi discussed the issue of "Is tarbiyyah a prerequisite of Jihad Fi Sabilillah?" ("Is education/instruction a prerequisite for waging jihad for the sake of Allah?"). In this talk, he dispelled the conception that extensive religious instruction is necessary before partaking in jihad, and instead made the argument that jihad is required in Islam, as is fasting, prayer and other religious obligations. After invoking the *ayah* (2:216)—"Fighting is prescribed upon you, and you dislike it. But it may happen that you dislike a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you. And Allah knows and you know not"—al-`Awlaqi asked his audience,

If someone starts practicing Islam, or someone reverts to Islam, would we tell them that they have to have *tarbiyya* before they start fasting?...There is no difference in this matter and jihad *fi sabil Allah*. The instruction for *siyam* [fasting] and jihad is no different.

Al-`Awlaqi's discussion of "Constants on the Path of Jihad" and his other contributions provide legal justification for Muslims to join in jihad against the United States.

After hearing al-`Awlaqi's lectures, the fluid interchange between Arabic terms and English discourse is immediately evident. In a consistently calm and measured demeanor, al-`Awlaqi provides many terms, such as *tarbiyya*, in the original Arabic without providing translation, clearly intending his discussions for a Muslim audience educated on key Islamic terms in their original language. This imbues the talks with a feel of authenticity, which has proven a draw for many of his followers.

Many of al-`Awlaqi's lectures, mostly on religion, are available on YouTube. They discuss the importance of Ramadan, the lives of the prophets, paradise, and stories of the Prophet Muhammad's companions. Yet his lectures also veer into the topics of prototypical Salafist discourse. Beginning around 2004-2005, al-`Awlaqi neglected to temper his message against militancy and spoke openly of a war between Muslims

### **"The importance of al-`Awlaqi's role in the global jihad lies in his ability to radicalize Muslim youth through his English-language writings and online presence."**

and the United States, seeing the latter as an oppressor and working against the will of Allah. Among the videos of his lectures posted online are talks on the importance of fulfilling jihad and its legitimacy in Islam, along with examples of the mujahidin and how they lived. One of his most popular lectures is a six-part series explaining the late al-Qa`ida strategist Yusuf al-`Uyayri's "Thawabit `ala Darb al-Jihad" (Constants on the Path of Jihad). That lecture seems to accompany another of al-`Awlaqi's works, "44 Ways of Supporting Jihad," quite well.

Significantly, in both of these popular works on jihad, al-`Awlaqi borrows heavily from the works of well-known jihadist ideologues. This is no doubt part of their popularity. Yusuf al-`Uyayri is considered to have been one of the most effective al-Qa`ida jihadist thinkers and a veteran fighter who died while waging jihad against the Saudi regime. Moreover, "44 Ways of Supporting Jihad" is clearly taken from Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Salim's famous "39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad," with much of it identical or paraphrased. Such deference to earlier Salafist texts is not uncommon in jihadist ideologue circles, but al-`Awlaqi fails to provide any mention of al-Salim's text anywhere in his own, which is indeed surprising considering the text is so clearly inspired by al-Salim's well-known tract.

Away," ABC News, November 30, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> "Profile: Anwar al-Awlaki."

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Raghavan. Many fervent Salafists openly advocate militancy against the West yet do not partake in physical violence.

### Al-`Awlaqi's Role in the Global Jihad

Anwar al-`Awlaqi's threat is not merely as an operational planner or recruiter, as has frequently been mentioned in the storm of Western press coverage, but as a motivational speaker, whereby he can mobilize thousands toward jihad. His strength is to connect with a young audience and impress upon them the necessity of joining the struggle. Indeed, both "44 Ways of Supporting Jihad" and "Constants on the Path of Jihad" are ideological rather than strategic or tactical works that provide evidence from early Islamic sources to legitimize jihad for a devout and studious English-language audience.

Moreover, al-`Awlaqi is a charismatic speaker. He is distinct from most of the other Salafi *da`is* available online in that he received no formal Islamic higher education. To many, this is a clear mark against him (and is perhaps reflected in his heavy borrowing of others' texts), but for his target audience of Western Muslims it seems to have helped forge a common ground and connection. Al-`Awlaqi can relate culturally to a Western audience, while bringing religious authenticity at the same time.

Another strength al-`Awlaqi demonstrates is his ability to speak about international politics with more clarity and authority when compared to Usama bin Ladin or Ayman al-Zawahiri. For example, al-`Awlaqi stated:

Political strength, diplomacy around the world now is revolving around the central idea, which is fighting Islamic terrorism. EU meets to talk about Islamic terrorists, NATO meets to talk about the challenge of Islamic terrorists, the US is mobilizing its political force to fight the Islamic threat. On the political level the world is united in fighting Islam. There is no exception on the political level.<sup>25</sup>

English-speaking al-Qa`ida members do not seem to have nearly the same sway. The American al-Qa`ida spokesman Adam Gadahn, for example, fails to resonate with Western Muslims in the same way, perhaps because he lacks authenticity as a convert to Islam.

Some observers have commented that al-`Awlaqi's popularity among some Western Muslims is his fluency in English. Yet it is not simply his ability to speak English well; instead, it is his adept skill at moving between fluent English and Arabic, quoting the Qur'an and hadith in flawless Arabic. This gives him the credibility needed to influence a serious Muslim audience. Until the last few years, he was able to move seamlessly between the Arab and Western worlds.

Moreover, part of what makes al-`Awlaqi so remarkable is that he served Muslim communities in the United States as a prayer leader and spiritual guide for years. He was part of a large community of Salafist activists in northern Virginia. While U.S. federal law enforcement was unable to build a strong enough case to arrest him in the immediate years after 9/11, they did

**"Al-`Awlaqi can relate culturally to a Western audience, while bringing religious authenticity at the same time."**

against another northern Virginia imam with a similar background and who ran in the same circles, Ali al-Timimi. Al-Timimi, born in Washington, D.C., but educated in his teenage years in Saudi Arabia, was the spiritual mentor of the Virginia Paintball Group, and he is currently serving a life sentence for inciting his followers to jihad. In essence, both he and al-`Awlaqi have committed the same offense, but the latter was never brought to justice.

### Conclusion

Al-`Awlaqi's connections to jihadists are remarkable. Not only was he in contact with some of the 9/11 hijackers, along with Ali al-Timimi, but his propaganda influenced a large number of recent jihadist plots. One of those convicted in the Fort Dix plot in New Jersey, Shain Duka, raved about al-`Awlaqi's talks.<sup>26</sup> Al-`Awlaqi was also a figure in the radicalization of

a Minnesota Somali man, Mohamoud Hassan, who in November 2008 gave up a university education to enlist in al-Shabab training camps in Somalia.<sup>27</sup> He too had listened to audio lectures by Anwar al-`Awlaqi.<sup>28</sup> Al-`Awlaqi was again instrumental in the radicalization of those involved in Canada's largest terrorist plot, the so-called "Toronto 18" who planned a large-scale attack against the Canadian government and targets in Toronto. His videos were played at a training camp the group held six months prior to their arrests.<sup>29</sup>

Al-`Awlaqi has been a critical figure in Salafi-jihadi radicalization, particularly for the audience of English-speaking Muslims. He is one of a number of clerics spreading radical messages on internet forums, through media distribution outlets online, and previously in lectures at Islamic centers. Among this group of Salafist preachers and ideologists there is a circle of militant Salafists advocating violent jihad as the necessary means of establishing an Islamic state and improving the status of Muslims worldwide. Sadly, al-`Awlaqi will certainly not be the last Western cleric to promote such views, and the United States and European governments must come to understand the critical role ideology plays in jihadist militancy before it can be mitigated or reversed.

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<sup>25</sup> See [www.forums.islamicawakening.com/fl8/shaykhanwar-al-awlaki-constants-jihad-693](http://www.forums.islamicawakening.com/fl8/shaykhanwar-al-awlaki-constants-jihad-693).

<sup>26</sup> Scott Shane, "Born in U.S., a Radical Cleric Inspires Terror," *New York Times*, November 18, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Andrea Elliott, "A Call to Jihad, Answered in America," *New York Times*, July 12, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Shephard.

## The Taliban Arrest Wave in Pakistan: Reasserting Strategic Depth?

By Thomas Ruttig

IN LESS THAN a month, Pakistan's authorities have arrested a number of Afghan Taliban leaders. Most of the arrests have taken place in Karachi and in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The first in the chain of arrests was Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Afghan Taliban's second-in-command behind Mullah Omar, who was apprehended on February 11, 2010.<sup>1</sup> Baradar took control as the Afghan Taliban's military leader after the arrest of former Taliban Defense Minister Mullah Obaidullah in early 2007.<sup>2</sup> Before his recent arrest, Baradar also led the Taliban's second-highest authority, the Leadership Council, or *rahbari shura*.

Baradar's arrest was followed by the capture of the Taliban's shadow governors for Afghanistan's Kunduz and Baghlan provinces—Mullah Abdul Salam and Mullah Mir Muhammad—in addition to former Taliban acting Prime Minister Maulawi Kabir<sup>3</sup> and former Zabul Province shadow governor and head of “the commission”<sup>4</sup> Maulawi

Muhammad Yunos. According to media reports, yet denied by sources close to the Taliban, a number of other prominent leaders have also been arrested, including former Kandahar governor Mullah Muhammad Hassan Rahmani, former Herat and Kabul corps commander Mullah Abdul Ra'uf, and former Guantanamo Bay detainee and Taliban commander in southern Afghanistan Mullah Abdul Qayum Zaker. Moreover, on February 28 Pakistani security officials announced that Mullah Omar's close adviser, Seyyed Tayyeb Agha, was arrested in Karachi,<sup>5</sup> and on March 4 Taliban finance minister and reportedly Mullah Omar's son-in-law Agha Jan Mo'tassem was also apprehended in Karachi.<sup>6</sup>

The wave of arrests follows years of meager results in capturing Afghan Taliban leaders in Pakistan. The arrests have been perceived in the United States as a veritable about-face in Pakistan's counterterrorism policy. U.S. Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke, for example, called the arrests “another high-water mark for Pakistani and American collaboration.”<sup>7</sup> Bruce Riedel, who led the Barack Obama administration's policy review on both countries in spring 2009, called the arrest of Baradar a “sea change in Pakistani behavior.”<sup>8</sup>

A closer look, however, reveals that the arrests may not represent a clear change in Pakistan's policy toward the Afghan Taliban. All of those recently arrested were seeking political negotiations with the Afghan government, circumventing

third edition of the code-of-conduct for Taliban fighters issued in the name of Mullah Omar in mid-2009. On the “commission,” also see Thomas Ruttig, “The Other Side: Dimensions of the Afghan Insurgency. Causes, Actors and Approaches to Talks,” The Afghanistan Analysts Network, July 2009.

5 Rezaul H. Laskar, “Afghan Taliban Leader Agha Jan Arrested in Karachi,” *Outlook India*, March 4, 2010.

6 Anand Gopal, “Half of Afghanistan Taliban Leadership Arrested in Pakistan,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 24, 2010; Deb Riechmann and Munir Ahmad, “Pakistani Officials: Nearly 15 Top Taliban Held,” Associated Press, February 25, 2010; “Pakistan: Key Taliban Leader ‘Held in Karachi,’” AKI News Agency, March 4, 2010; Personal interviews, anonymous contacts, Kabul, Afghanistan, March 2010.

7 Chris Allbritton, “Holbrooke Hails Pakistan-U.S. Collaboration on Taliban,” Reuters, February 18, 2010.

8 *Ibid.*; Mazzetti et al.

Pakistan-controlled channels. This article contends that the arrests may be an attempt by the Pakistani government to regain control over the Afghan Taliban's political agenda and, in a broader sense, over the “reconciliation” process announced by Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

### Suspicious Arrests

The string of arrests raises questions on whether they will affect Afghan Taliban operations in the long-term. Without a doubt, Mullah Baradar's arrest is a serious blow to the Afghan Taliban; it hampers their military operations at a time when they are under pressure in Helmand and Kandahar provinces. Nevertheless, the Taliban have proved adept at substituting even high-ranking leaders quickly and without losing much operational effectiveness. Neither the arrest of Obaidullah nor the killings in 2006 and 2007 of Akhtar Muhammad Usmani and Mullah Dadullah have slowed their pace. In contrast, the Taliban movement has grown in strength from year to year, and the organization is operating in more areas than ever before.

The more critical question is why Pakistan's authorities have decided to move against these militants—or publicized previous arrests—at this time. All of the Afghan Taliban militants recently arrested in Pakistan were apprehended under suspicious circumstances. Maulawi Kabir's whereabouts, for example, had been known for some time. A German journalist described how UN officials were easily able to locate Kabir in the Pakistani town of Nowshera in the NWFP last year where he occupied a posh house and was driving a large SUV with diplomatic license plates.<sup>9</sup> The same journalist reported a temporary arrest of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the military leader of the semi-autonomous Haqqani network, in Pakistan.<sup>10</sup>

There are also the cases of Maulawi Muhammad Yunos and Abdul Ahad Jehangirwal, along with Seyyed Tayyeb Agha, Mullah Omar's “aides-de-camp.”

9 Willi Germund, “Rentable Verhaftungen,” *St. Galler Tagblatt*, March 2, 2010; Christoph Reuter, “Some Birds with One Stone,” The Afghanistan Analysts Network, undated.

10 *Ibid.*

1 Mark Mazzetti and Dexter Filkins, “Secret Joint Raid Captures Taliban's Top Commander,” *New York Times*, February 15, 2010. On Mullah Baradar's background, see Ron Moreau, “America's New Nightmare,” *Newsweek*, July 25, 2009; Thomas Ruttig, “How ‘Neo’ Were the ‘Neo-Taliban?’” The Afghanistan Analysts Network, March 5, 2010.

2 Mullah Obaidullah's current status is unclear. He was reported arrested (or put under house arrest) in February-March 2007 and in February 2008 again. Then, he was reportedly exchanged for the abducted designated Pakistani ambassador to Kabul in May 2008. For details, see Shahnawaz Khan, “Security Agencies Arrest Mullah Obaidullah Again,” *Daily Times*, February 25, 2008; Aamer Khan, “Ex-Taliban Minister Swapped for Envoy,” *Pajhwok Afghan News*, May 20, 2008; Jonathan S. Landay, “Why Hasn't the U.S. Gone After Mullah Omar in Pakistan?” *McClatchy Newspapers*, November 16, 2008.

3 Some observers believe that Maulawi Kabir is a member of the *rahbari shura* under the *nom-de-guerre* of Mullah Qaher.

4 “The commission” was a Taliban body that traveled through various provinces to question the Afghan population about the behavior of local Taliban commanders. This happened after the publication of the *layha*, the

Sources close to the Taliban confirm that Yunos has been in Pakistani custody since September or October 2009 and Jehangirwal for almost a year, but their arrests only became known recently.<sup>11</sup>

The timing of the arrests and announcements suggest that Pakistan is detaining Afghan Taliban elements who are seeking political negotiations independent of official Pakistani channels. All of the recently arrested militants fit into this category.

#### Arrested Militants Seeking Peace Deals with Afghan Government

One strong theory of why Pakistan has moved against these militants at the present time is due to what has been dubbed “talk about talks”—the decision over whether the Afghan government and its international supporters should negotiate with the Afghan Taliban. This debate has heated up since the “Mecca talks” in the fall of 2008, when the Saudi government invited an Afghan delegation composed of government members, parliamentarians and former Taliban leaders for a reception to break the fast during the holy month of Ramadan.<sup>12</sup> The latest incident occurred after a press leak about a Dubai meeting between UN Afghanistan Envoy Kai Eide and Taliban “commanders” supposedly sent by Mullah Baradar in January 2010.<sup>13</sup> For the first time, Afghan President Hamid Karzai drafted a policy document for reconciliation and reintegration that found support and funding at the international Afghanistan conference held in London in January 2010. Afghan parliamentarians, some leaders of Hizb-i-Islami and two Islamic scholars close to the Afghan Taliban from Pakistan met in the Maldives at the same time.<sup>14</sup>

11 Personal interview, sources close to the Taliban, March 2010.

12 According to unconfirmed rumors, Mullah Omar’s adviser, Tayyeb Agha, also had attended the meeting.

13 The Afghan Taliban and the United Nations later denied that the meeting had ever taken place. For details, see Dexter Filkins, “U.N. Mission Head in Afghanistan Met With Taliban Envoys,” *New York Times*, January 29, 2010; “Afghan Taliban Deny Peace Talks With UN’s Kai Eide,” BBC, January 30, 2010.

14 Julian Borger, “UN in Secret Peace Talks with Taliban,” *Guardian*, January 28, 2010; John Simpson, “Peace Scheme Mooted for Taliban,” BBC, January 21, 2010; Zubair Babakarkhel, “Delegations Formed to Try Broker Afghan Peace,” *Pajhwok Afghan News*, February 2,

During 2007 and 2008, there was a relatively strong current within the Kandahari mainstream of the Afghan Taliban that recognized they would not be able to achieve victory—defined as reestablishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan—by military means, or that it would at least be too costly in terms of human lives. Similar to the United States and NATO forces in Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban also suffer from a civilian casualty problem that has cost them support from the local population.<sup>15</sup> These elements, labeled “pious Taliban” by some Afghans, consider suicide attacks that cause high numbers of Afghan civilian casualties as “un-Islamic” and reacted to them by issuing the *layha* (code of conduct for Taliban fighters) that provides for care concerning civilians during attacks.<sup>16</sup> These “pious Taliban” also may have had a role—by providing inside information—in the killing of Mullah Dadullah in 2007, who was the most notorious proponent of the Taliban’s hardcore terrorist tendencies. Dadullah copied the methods of Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, and it is believed that the Afghan Taliban’s Quetta *shura* decided that Dadullah was out of control.

This Taliban current also had been discussing the usefulness of a political solution that would involve the Afghan government and possibly its foreign allies. Baradar, Kabir, Yunos and Mo’tassem<sup>17</sup> all belong to the Taliban faction considering talks with the Afghan government. Their arrests suggest that Pakistan’s military wants to resume full control over any future reconciliation talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Although the reports on Saudi, Dubai and Maldives contacts were likely overblown, it appears that Pakistan wanted to put a stop even to the slightest inclination of independent

2010; Personal interviews, participants of the Maldives meeting, Kabul, Afghanistan, March 2010.

15 In general, the United Nations stated that the Taliban accounted for 67% of all civilian deaths in 2009. For details, see “Over 2,400 Civilian Deaths in 2009 – UNAMA,” IRIN, January 13, 2010.

16 Personal interviews, former Taliban members and Afghans close to the insurgency, 2008-2009. Also see Ruttig, “The Other Side.”

17 Mo’tassem headed the Taliban’s political commission, responsible for pursuing talks during the “thaw period” after Mullah Dadullah’s death. Mo’tassem was removed from this position in early 2009.

Taliban actions. Although Pakistan has officially dropped its “strategic depth” policy, a future conflict with India remains its number one security concern. As a result, establishing a friendly or even clientele government in Kabul still ranks high on Pakistan’s agenda, and the Afghan Taliban are considered a core element of this strategy.

Although the Afghan Taliban depend on Pakistani support—in the form of safe havens, logistical and possibly financial support, and the ability to move unhindered in parts of Pakistan and over the border with Afghanistan—their current leaders were never mere puppets in the hands of the ISI. Mullah Baradar—who belongs to the same tribe as President Hamid Karzai, the Popalzai—seems to have circumvented Pakistan-controlled channels by relying on shared “blood links” to establish links to Karzai family members in an effort to discuss “reconciliation.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, according to one of Karzai’s advisers, the president was “very angry” at Baradar’s arrest because the Taliban leader had been “given a green light” to participate in a peace *jirga* that Karzai is hosting in April.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the arrests can be viewed as a warning to Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar himself that “he also can be drawn out of his hiding place” in case his supporters do not follow Pakistan’s agenda.<sup>20</sup>

Separately, the arrests also prove that Afghan Taliban leaders use sanctuaries inside Pakistan, a fact that Islamabad consistently denies. Yet Pakistan’s military chief, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, recently tacitly admitted this fact by offering to NATO that Pakistan would be willing to open communication channels with the Taliban on all levels.<sup>21</sup> A high-ranking official in Islamabad’s foreign office was even blunter: “We have considerable influence on the Taliban and will play our role in securing peace in Afghanistan.”<sup>22</sup> The

18 Personal interviews, former Taliban and Afghan government officials, Kabul, Afghanistan, February-March 2010.

19 “Aide: Karzai ‘Very Angry’ at Taliban Boss’ Arrest,” Associated Press, March 16, 2010.

20 Hamed, “Aya nasl-e jadidi dar rah ast?” *Hasbt-e Sobh* [Kabul], March 6, 2010.

21 Jane Perlez, “Pakistan is Said to Pursue Role in U.S.-Afghan Talks,” *New York Times*, February 9, 2010.

22 Willi Germund, “Pakistan lässt Taliban-Chef

*New York Times* even called the arrests a “strategic coup for Pakistan” because it restores control over the Taliban, draws applause from the United States and even releases U.S. money.<sup>23</sup>

### Conclusion

For Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban remain a card to be played after an expected departure of most Western troops from Afghanistan. The arrests epitomize the ISI’s strategic manipulation of its assets in Afghanistan and might result in the emergence of an entirely new Taliban leadership that would replace the founders’ generation.<sup>24</sup> The new leadership would be composed of unknown and likely younger, more radical newcomers trained in Pakistani *madrasas*. These militants would be less in touch with Afghanistan’s realities than the older Taliban generation that participated in the anti-Soviet war, and they would be more prone to listening to Pakistan’s military and intelligence services. They would, in effect, be the real “neo-Taliban.” Pakistan’s “strategic depth” strategy, which has officially been discarded, is very much alive.

For Afghanistan, however, the arrests have at least temporarily closed the window of opportunity for direct talks with the Afghan Taliban leadership. As a result, the fighting in Afghanistan will continue and President Karzai’s peace *jirga* announced for mid-spring may run aground before it even begins.

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auffliegen,” *Salzburger Nachrichten*, February 17, 2010.

23 Carlotta Gall and Souad Mekhennet, “Arrest of Taliban Chief May Be Crucial for Pakistanis,” *New York Times*, February 16, 2010.

24 Similarly, immediately before the Afghan presidential elections of August 2009, the author received reports that the ISI had pressured Taliban commanders to go fight inside Afghanistan or otherwise be handed over to the United States and sent to the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay.

## Untangling the Punjabi Taliban Network

By Raheel Khan

SINCE 2006, PAKISTAN has been victim to rising terrorist violence from a nexus of militant factions consisting of al-Qa`ida, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and fighters from Punjab-based militant groups.<sup>1</sup> All three entities share a common, violent Islamist ideology, and they have solidified bonds in response to Pakistan limiting its operations against Indian-administered Kashmir, while at the same time expanding operations against Pakistani Taliban factions in its northwest.<sup>2</sup> These factors have caused previously disparate groups to join together against a common enemy, the Pakistani government, which is allied with the United States and NATO in the “war on terrorism.” As a result of these developments, Punjab Province itself is increasingly at risk. Punjabi militants have established cells across the province, and according to security officials are running their own training facilities in southern Punjab.<sup>3</sup> The March 12, 2010 twin suicide blasts that killed at least 45 people in a high security area of Lahore underscored this concern.<sup>4</sup>

Punjab Province is Pakistan’s most critical region. Geographically, it is Pakistan’s heartland and the country’s most populated province.<sup>5</sup> It contains a

number of strategically significant cities, such as the garrison city of Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan and Gujranwala. Moreover, the country’s civil and military recruits are drawn mainly from the province. Any destabilization of Punjab Province would have dire ramifications for Pakistan and would also endanger international coalition operations in Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup>

The threat has become increasingly serious. In September 2008, alleged militants of Punjabi origin were interrogated in the wake of the al-Qa`ida-linked Marriott Hotel bombing in Islamabad that killed more than 50 people.<sup>7</sup> On March 3, 2009, Punjabi militants attacked the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team in the Punjab capital city of Lahore, killing eight people.<sup>8</sup> On March 30, 2009, a police training center just outside Lahore was attacked and eight people killed.<sup>9</sup> The unprecedented assault on the military’s General Headquarters (GHQ) in the garrison city of Rawalpindi on October 10, 2009 displayed the growing sophistication and intent of the network.<sup>10</sup> Finally, on October 15, 2009, three teams of militants launched a coordinated assault in Lahore, attacking the regional headquarters of the Federal Investigation Agency, the Manawan Police Training School, and the Elite Police Academy; the combined assault killed more than 30 people.<sup>11</sup> Attacks have continued into 2010.

This nexus of militants has evolved significantly since it first emerged in 2006-2007. Although the sophistication and intensity of their

million people live in Punjab Province.

6 Sabrina Tavernise, Richard A. Opiel Jr. and Eric Schmitt, “United Militants Threaten Pakistan’s Populous Heart,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2009.

7 The suspected militants were alleged members of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam. For details, see Amir Mir, “South Punjab Threat,” *The News International*, October 25, 2009. For the al-Qa`ida-link, see “Pakistan al-Qaeda Leaders ‘Dead,’” BBC, January 9, 2009.

8 Ibid. Also see “‘Cricket Attacker’ Held in Lahore,” BBC, June 17, 2009.

9 “Siege at Pakistan Police Academy,” BBC, March 30, 2009.

10 “Six Soldiers, Four Assailants Killed in Attack on GHQ,” *Dawn*, October 10, 2009.

11 Jane Perlez, “Pakistan Attacks Show Tighter Militant Links,” *New York Times*, October 15, 2009.

1 The Punjabi Taliban comprise members from a number of Punjab-based groups that were formerly focused on Indian-administered Kashmir or on sectarian attacks against the Shi`a community in Pakistan. The Punjabi Taliban include members from Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Jaysh-i-Muhammad and Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan—fighters from other Punjab-based groups may be involved as well. For more details, see Issam Ahmed, “Why Pakistan’s Old Jihadis Pose New Threat—At Home and in Afghanistan,” *Christian Science Monitor*, December 8, 2009; Kachan Lakshman, “Heartland Trauma,” *Kashmir Herald*, February 7, 2010; Raza Khan and Ayesha Nasir, “Punjabi Taliban Threat is Growing, Pakistan Fears Shift in Control,” *Washington Times*, October 21, 2009.

2 Pakistan’s northwest consists of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and North-West Frontier Province.

3 Alex Rodriguez, “Taliban Taps the Punjab Heartland,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 2009.

4 Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack. For details, see “At Least 37 Killed in Pakistan Bombings,” CNN, March 12, 2010; “TTP Claim Lahore Bombings; 39 Dead,” Geo TV, March 12, 2010.

5 According to 1998 census numbers, approximately 72

operations reached new levels in 2009, the higher frequency of attacks also shed more clarity on the network. This article will revisit the formation of the Punjabi Taliban network and show how its disparate militant groups are coordinating operations.<sup>12</sup>

### Merging the Agendas

From 2001-2006, militancy in Pakistan was largely divided into two different agendas. In the country's northwest region, Taliban factions focused on fighting international and Afghan forces in Afghanistan, and other Western targets in Pakistan. To the east, Punjab-based militant groups such as Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Sipah-i-Sahaba and Jaysh-i-Muhammad focused their attacks on Indian forces in the disputed region of Kashmir or on Shi'a Muslims in Pakistan.<sup>13</sup>

In 2006-2007, however, this dynamic was altered in response to Pakistan ceasing support for militancy in Indian-administered Kashmir.<sup>14</sup> In response, many Kashmir-focused militants joined forces with Taliban factions in Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>15</sup> The two agendas have partly merged, and this became especially evident after the Pakistan government's military operations against Islamic hardliners at the *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque) in Islamabad in mid-2007.<sup>16</sup> The mosque was operated by Maulana Abdul Aziz and Abdul Rashid Ghazi, both strong supporters of the Taliban and allied Islamist movements.<sup>17</sup> The Punjab-based militant groups—particularly Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Jaysh-i-Muhammad—were also associated with *Lal Masjid*, and some of their members turned against the state after the siege.<sup>18</sup>

Based on rough estimates, more than 5,000 individuals from the seminaries in southern and northern Punjab Province joined terrorist training camps in North and South Waziristan in the wake of the military operation against *Lal Masjid*.<sup>19</sup> Fighters now part of this loose collaboration among Taliban factions in Pakistan's northwest and formerly Kashmir- or sectarian-focused militants in the east and northeast are now referred to as the "Punjabi Taliban."<sup>20</sup> Restrained from continuing activities in Indian-held Kashmir, members of Punjab-based militant groups joined forces with the TTP and al-Qa`ida to undertake joint operations in Pakistan. As described by Dr. Ayesha Siddiqi, an Islamabad-based analyst, Punjab has been turned into a "factory where suicide bombers are produced. Punjab has become a major recruiting ground and hub for the planning of terrorist attacks, and it's a human resource for the fighting in Afghanistan."<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, there is evidence that during this period al-Qa`ida operatives escalated efforts to engage Punjabi militants and draw them into their fight against Pakistani security forces. Senior al-Qa`ida stalwarts such as Shaykh `Isa al-Masri reportedly recruited Punjabi and Kashmiri jihadists into the Pakistani Taliban and al-Qa`ida, engaging recruits from Lashkar-i-Tayyiba, Jaysh-i-Muhammad and Harkat-ul-Mujahidin.<sup>22</sup>

The cooperation among the groups has developed to the point that leaders of the Punjabi Taliban network are represented in the TTP's 40-member *shura* (council).<sup>23</sup>

This fact was revealed in October 2009, after Pakistani security forces arrested Iqbal and Gul Muhammad, purportedly two high-ranking Punjabi Taliban members. According to a journalist for Pakistan's *Dawn*,

The two, who were in charge of militancy in Punjab, officials claim, served as the link between Taliban's main leadership in Waziristan and the increasingly threatening Punjabi Taliban network, a grouping of sectarian and Kashmir focused militant groups responsible for the Taliban hits in Punjab and the federal capital.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, "Dr. Usman," the alias of the militant who was arrested during the October 2009 attack on Pakistan's GHQ, was also reportedly a member of the TTP's *shura*.<sup>25</sup>

### Joint Operations

Al-Qa`ida, the TTP and the Punjabi Taliban network have cooperated to strike targets deep inside Punjab Province.<sup>26</sup> U.S. and Pakistani authorities believe that the bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad in September 2008 and the deadly attack on Sri Lanka's cricket team in Lahore in March 2009 were examples of combined operations.<sup>27</sup> The deployment of seasoned operative Dr. Usman, who has links to al-Qa`ida, to lead the attack on the GHQ in Rawalpindi in October 2009 was a demonstration of power by this coalition, which many thought was weakened by military offensives in the Swat Valley.<sup>28</sup>

Rehman Malik, Pakistan's interior minister, warned in the *Financial Times* in June 2009 that a Swat-like situation could emerge in southern Punjab if terrorists fleeing military operations and U.S. drone strikes take shelter in southern Punjab under the protection of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Jaysh-i-Muhammad.<sup>29</sup> In the wake of the latest

tured," *Dawn*, October 23, 2009.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Tavernise et al., "Pakistan al-Qaeda Leaders 'Dead.'" 27 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 "Dr. Usman: Last Desperate Act," *Daily Times*, October 13, 2009.

29 Farhan Bokhari, "Pakistan Puts Southern Provinces on Alert as Taliban Threat Grows," *Financial Times*, June

12 Ibid.

13 Rodriguez, "Taliban Taps the Punjab Heartland."

14 Regardless of whether Pakistan has ceased all support for operations in India or Indian-administered Kashmir, it has certainly reduced its support dramatically.

15 Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Pakistan's Militants Ready for More," *Asia Times Online*, March 5, 2009.

16 Aoun Sahi, "Ulterior Motives," *The News International*, October 25, 2009; Tavernise et al.

17 Bill Roggio, "Red Mosque Leader Abdul Rasheed Ghazi Killed During Assault," *The Long War Journal*, July 10, 2007.

18 Personal interview, Tahir Khan, editor at News Network International and correspondent for BBC, Islamabad, Pakistan, March 12, 2010.

19 Mir, "South Punjab Threat."

20 Alex Rodriguez, "Pakistani Extremists in Punjab Seen as Rising Threat," *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 2009. For one of the first articles that discussed the Punjabi Taliban, see Hassan Abbas, "Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network," *CTC Sentinel* 2:4 (2009).

21 Ibid.

22 Bill Roggio, "Senior Al Qaeda Leader Leaves Pakistan, Directs Iraq Operations from Syria," *The Long War Journal*, August 21, 2009. For an in-depth profile of Shaykh `Isa al-Masri and his role in violence in Pakistan, see Erich Marquardt and Abdul Hameed Bakier, "An Ideological and Operational Threat: Abu `Amr/Shaykh `Isa," *CTC Sentinel* 1:8 (2008).

23 The TTP *shura* is a 40-member umbrella council of top militant commanders that coordinates and supervises TTP operations in Pakistan. For more details, see Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Top Guns of Punjabi Taliban Cap-



military offensive in South Waziristan at the end of 2009, it is believed that some middle and lower rank militants may have shifted to southern Punjab, while the core leadership is strongly believed to be hiding in North Waziristan.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the deadly alliance has increased the number of attacks in Punjab, and it appears that Punjabi militant leaders are exercising control over Taliban fighters who fled the military operations in the northwest.<sup>31</sup>

Following the well-planned attack on the Pakistan Army's GHQ, the army admitted the scale of the threat it faces from this nexus, whose ranks include soldiers from the Pakistan military.<sup>32</sup> Dr. Usman, for example, the sole surviving attacker on the GHQ, was a former army medical corps soldier from Kahuta, a town in the heartland of Punjab Province.<sup>33</sup> After leaving the army, Dr. Usman first joined Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, and then later Jaysh-i-Muhammad.<sup>34</sup> From there, he became a member of the TTP and remained a close associate of Ilyas Kashmiri, the chief of al-Qa`ida's paramilitary operations in Pakistan.<sup>35</sup>

The case of Iqbal and Gul Muhammad also revealed the connections between Punjabi militant groups and Pakistani Taliban fighters in the northwest. Authorities believe that Iqbal and Gul Muhammad, who were captured in October 2009, were in charge of militancy in Punjab, serving as the link between the central TTP leadership in Waziristan and the Punjabi Taliban

responsible for attacks in Punjab.<sup>36</sup> It is also thought that the two had a role in most of the major attacks in Punjab, including the three coordinated attacks in Lahore and the one on the GHQ in October.<sup>37</sup>

These attacks clearly displayed the increased strategic, operational and tactical level of collaboration among the groups.<sup>38</sup> In December 2009, it is believed that the deadly alliance targeted Pakistan's main intelligence agency, the ISI, with a car bomb in Multan, killing 12 people including security personnel.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the busy Moon market in Lahore was targeted by this same network as well, resulting in the deaths of 49 civilians.<sup>40</sup> Militants bombed a high-profile military mosque in Rawalpindi in December 2009, killing senior military officers and their families, including a major-general, brigadier, and many officers; a total of 40 people died in that attack, including 17 children.<sup>41</sup>

Additionally, the nexus has started violent attacks in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. From June 2009 to January 2010, 20 people have been killed and 125 injured—mostly security personnel—in five terrorist attacks in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.<sup>42</sup> The attacks have included suicide bombings. It is ironic that the same militants who previously focused their operations on Indian-administered Kashmir are now targeting their own side of the border.

### Conclusion

Al-Qa`ida, the TTP and the Punjabi Taliban network are driven by a shared Islamist ideology. Nevertheless, authorities believe that the relationship largely remains tactical. The Pashtun Taliban and the Arab-led al-Qa`ida

organization provide money, sanctuary, training facilities and suicide bombers, while Punjabi Taliban factions provide logistical support in Punjabi cities, including target identification and managing and assisting suicide bombers from the northwest.<sup>43</sup>

The nexus reportedly share each others' seminaries, sanctuaries, training facilities and jihadist cadres to conduct terrorist activities across Pakistan.<sup>44</sup> South Asia analyst Bruce Riedel explained, "These groups are fighting for recruits from the same Punjabi families and clans that the Pakistani army recruits from for its officer corps."<sup>45</sup> Military operations in FATA—particularly the October 2009 military offensive in South Waziristan—and drone attacks on Taliban safe houses have dispossessed the militants from their land and destroyed their physical infrastructure. This may be one reason why the battlefield has shifted to Punjab.

As stated by Pakistani defense analyst Lieutenant-General (retired) Talat Masood, "the increasing cooperation among the three groups is a serious threat to Pakistan but the Pakistan army and the intelligence agencies are aware of it."<sup>46</sup> While the political government is playing down the threat, Pakistan's army accepts that these militants have joined forces and claims that the military is fully cognizant of this new development.<sup>47</sup> It remains to be seen, however, whether Pakistan's security forces will be able to turn back the tide of jihadist violence sweeping across the country.

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26, 2009; Tavernise et al.

30 Personal interview, Khan.

31 Perlez; Khan et al., "Punjabi Taliban Threat is Growing, Pakistan Fears Shift in Control."

32 Declan Walsh, "Pakistani Army Facing Threat from Punjabi, al-Qaeda and Taliban Militants," *Guardian*, October 12, 2009.

33 Ibid.

34 Amir Mir, "Punjabi Taliban Avenge Qari Zafar's Death," *The News International*, March 9, 2010.

35 Ilyas Kashmiri was thought to have died in a U.S. drone strike in South Waziristan in September 2009. It appears, however, that he survived the strike and is still active. For other details, see Hassan Abbas, "Deciphering the Attack on Pakistan's Army Headquarters," *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2009; Alex Rodriguez and Zulfikar Ali, "Pakistani Al Qaeda Leader Killed in U.S. Strike," *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 2009; "Ilyas Kashmiri Alive, Lays Out Future Terror Strategy," *Daily Times*, October 15, 2009; Eli Lake, "Dead" al-Qaeda Terrorist Surfaces for Media," *Washington Times*, October 15, 2009.

36 Sajjad Syed.

37 Ibid.

38 Alex Rodriguez, "Militants Attack 3 Police Sites in Lahore, Pakistan," *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 2009.

39 "12 Die in Attack on ISI Offices in Multan," *The News International*, December 9, 2009.

40 Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Taliban Expand Terror Campaign in Pakistan's Punjab," *Thaindian News*, December 9, 2009.

41 Pamela Constable and Shaiq Hussain, "At Least 40 People Killed in Pakistan Attack," *Washington Post*, December 5, 2009.

42 Zafar Iqbal, "Taliban Reach Kashmir," *GroundReport.com*, January 19, 2010.

43 Tavernise et al.

44 Mir, "South Punjab Threat."

45 Khan et al., "Punjabi Taliban Threat is Growing, Pakistan Fears Shift in Control."

46 Rabeel Khan, "Al-Qaeda-TTP and Punjabi Taliban Forge Strong Connections," *CentralAsiaOnline.com*, March 1, 2010.

47 Ibid.

## Insight into a Suicide Bomber Training Camp in Waziristan

By S.H. Tajik

SINCE THE OVERTHROW of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001, Pakistan has been increasingly victim to suicide bombings. In the past three years, attacks have escalated dramatically, especially after the *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque) operation in 2007.<sup>1</sup> Today, suicide bombings are a frequent occurrence in Pakistan's northwest, and they have spread to previously stable parts of the country, including in Punjab Province.

This article provides an in-depth look at how Pakistani Taliban suicide bombers train for their operations at camps in South Waziristan Agency. It draws heavily from information acquired from Pakistani police interrogations and interviews with suspected militants. The article includes information on general camp characteristics, why individuals join the camps, the daily routine of the trainees, the rituals carried out before an attack and finally post-attack activities.

### General Camp Characteristics

Before the ongoing military operations in the Swat Valley and in South Waziristan Agency, suicide bomber training camps were active in various parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and in Malakand Division of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP).<sup>2</sup> In FATA, the camps have been located in North and South Waziristan, Orakzai, Bajaur and Mohmand agencies. The most prominent camps operated in the following areas of South Waziristan: Kotkai, Nawazkot, Deeley, Karama, Kazha Pangha, Barwand, Karikot, Ladha and Tangay. Newer training camps

operated in Charbagh and Peochar in Swat; Galjo and Ferozkhel in Orakzai Agency; and Chinaari and Mohammad Ghat in Mohmand Agency.<sup>3</sup>

The training facilities themselves are usually established in abandoned schools, or in houses offered by locals.<sup>4</sup> In some camps, such as at the Nawazkot facility, paintings depicting paradise are drawn on the walls, such as images of flowing rivers of milk with fairies walking along in lush green valleys.<sup>5</sup>

The training camps are generally located in areas where the government has little oversight or control, which reduces the need for camp security. At night, however, a senior trainee guards the camp, and no one is allowed to leave the camp after night prayers (*isha'*).<sup>6</sup> The locations themselves are switched regularly for security reasons.

Inside the camp, adults and minors are generally segregated and trained in different areas of the facility; however, this is dependent on various conditions.<sup>7</sup> The age of suicide bombers range from seven to 40.<sup>8</sup> Large suicide training camps operate in two categories: junior and senior camps. Senior camps usually accommodate trainees from 16 years of age and older, while the junior camps accommodate trainees from seven years of age to 15.<sup>9</sup> All the camp participants are not necessarily tasked on suicide missions, and they are allowed to quit their training. As is often the case, family members do not approve of their kin's participation, and they occasionally

travel to the camp to retrieve them. Such efforts are not resisted by the camp operators if the children leave at their own volition.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, whether to stay at the camp or return to family largely depends on the will of the suicide bomber. Life at the camp, however, is incredibly absorbing. Trainees who are pulled out of the camp by their families often flee their homes to return to the camp. One would-be suicide bomber admitted, "Yes, I felt attracted to life in the camp as I felt happy over there with my fellows. There was good food, pocket money, good friends and vehicles for driving."<sup>11</sup>

During the winter months, training is minimal due to severe weather in the mountains. The camps are also vacated in response to government military operations, at which time the members melt into the general civilian population.<sup>12</sup> The average number of trainees in a camp ranges from 30-35, but this can vary.<sup>13</sup>

Within the camp, Pashtu is the working language, although Urdu may be spoken. The Taliban leadership provides all expenses associated with the camp. Trainees are occasionally provided 500 to 1,000 rupees for their expenses when they visit their homes.<sup>14</sup> This serves as pocket money on a demand basis.

The first camp to specialize in training suicide bombers was the Kotkai camp. It was closed after Qari Hussain, a senior Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) operative known as the "Trainer of Suicide Bombers," was deposed from his leadership role as the head of the suicide bomber brigade in 2007.<sup>15</sup>

1 The *Lal Masjid* siege occurred in July 2007 when Pakistani security forces engaged jihadist militants holed up in the mosque complex. The operation is viewed as the catalyst that turned formerly Kashmir- and sectarian-focused militants against the Pakistani government.

2 Operation Rah-e-Rast (Path to Righteousness) in Swat began in May 2009. Operation Rah-e-Nijat (Path to Salvation) in South Waziristan began in October 2009. For details, see Sameer Lalwani, "The Pakistan Military's Adaptation to Counterinsurgency in 2009," *CTC Sentinel* 3:1 (2010).

3 Omar Waraich, "Taliban Running School for Suicide Bombers," *Independent*, July 29, 2009.

4 Pakistan Police interrogation report, subject Ishaq Mehsud, Islamabad, Pakistan, June 2008; Pakistan Police interrogation report, subject Abid Mehsud, Islamabad, Pakistan, July 2008; Pakistan Police interrogation report, subject Hameedullah Mehsud, Islamabad, Pakistan, August 2008; Pakistan Police interrogation report, subject Mir Janan, Islamabad, Pakistan, September 2008; Pakistan Police interrogation report, subject Aitezaz Shah, Dera Ismail Khan, Pakistan, January 2008; Pakistan Police interrogation report, subject Hasnain Gul (also known as Ali Punjabi), Rawalpindi, Pakistan, August 2009.

5 This information was drawn from Geo TV news reporting in 2009.

6 Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008.

7 Ibid.

8 Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

9 Ibid.

10 Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008.

11 Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

12 Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008; Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

13 Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

14 Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008.

15 Ibid. Baitullah Mehsud removed him from command when Qari Hussain's followers attacked the residence of Pir Amiruddin Shah, the government's political agent in Khyber Agency, in May 2007. The brazen attack killed seven guests and six family members, a violation of Pashtun ethics since women and guests were among the dead. More importantly, Qari Hussain never sought Baitullah's approval to conduct the attack. Although Qari Hussain was reported killed in January 2010, it appears that he is still alive. For details on Qari Hussain and his 2007 conflict with Baitullah Mehsud, see the following reports: Abid Mehsud, July 2008; Behroz Khan and

Wali Muhammad was put in command of the brigade and the camps were shifted to Deeley and Karama in South Waziristan.<sup>16</sup>

Since the October 2009 Pakistan military operation in South Waziristan, all of the suicide camps in the Mehsud-dominated areas of the agency have been closed.

#### Recruitment Motivations

Statistically, it is estimated that more than 90% of suicide bombers who join the training camps in Waziristan are Pashtun.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, according to an unpublished internal report from Pakistan's Special Investigation Group in 2009, approximately 70% of suicide attacks are conducted by fighters from the Mehsud tribe.<sup>18</sup> Non-Pashtuns also join the camp, such as Aitezaz Shah, who was arrested due to his alleged role in the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.<sup>19</sup> According to would-be suicide bomber Ishaq, the main explanation for the high prevalence of suicide terrorism among the Mehsud is because the training camps are located in areas inhabited by the tribe.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, pockets of civilians in Mehsud-dominated areas of Waziristan eulogize the bombers for their courage, which incites more youth to join the camps.

Most suicide bombers are recruited from kinship or friendship networks.<sup>21</sup> Other factors that draw individuals to the camps include: curiosity, proximity of the camps to civilian residential communities, unemployment or under-employment, poor academic options, boredom and lack of entertainment. Abid, a 16-year-old Mehsud from South Waziristan, identified boredom and his uncle's behavior for his reason in joining a suicide bomber training camp: "I was working with my uncle in his shop at

Landa Bazaar Hyderabad. I was sick of life and wanted to get rid of it. I escaped Hyderabad in 2006 and went straight to Qari Hussain instead of home."<sup>22</sup> Ishaq, an 18-year-old would-be suicide bomber belonging to the Mehsud tribe in South Waziristan, dropped out of school early and was lured into a suicide training camp because it operated in his village of Kotkai.<sup>23</sup>

There are a number of motivations that cause individuals to join suicide bomber training camps. Recruits are primarily motivated by atrocities against Muslims. The main theme in the camp lectures is revenge. Ishaq explained that instructors call attention to the helplessness of Muslims whose daughters and sisters are dishonored by non-Muslims in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>24</sup> According to Abid, the camp leaders incite the audience when they narrate stories about Muslim women languishing in the prisons of infidels.<sup>25</sup>

Instructors consistently emphasize the religious permissibility of suicide attacks against non-Muslims and even their Muslim allies. According to this logic, Pakistan's security forces are working for the United States and they hinder jihadist activities; therefore, suicide bombings against them are permissible. As stated by one would-be suicide bomber, "The instructor, Maulvi Rahimullah used to tell us that suicide attacks on the army, security forces and even all government employees was permissible under the injunctions of Islam."<sup>26</sup>

Qari Hussain, known for his anti-Shi'a beliefs, also motivated camp members by arguing that the Shi'a are *kafrs* (infidels) and therefore can be killed. According to the camp instructors, innocent civilians killed in suicide attacks are martyrs, and therefore there is no need to be concerned about their fate. Instructors justify these teachings with references to the Qur'an and hadith. They use decrees by religious scholars, and cite the precedent of the famous commander and companion of the Prophet Muhammad, Khalid bin

Walid, whose outnumbered army fought bravely against the enemies of Islam.

Instructors tell stories of past suicide bombers who have appeared in dreams saying that they are now in paradise.<sup>27</sup> Camp members are also shown videos of previous bombers planning their operations; they are not, however, shown the scene after a suicide blast, likely due to fear that the images of carnage will demoralize the recruits.<sup>28</sup>

The bombers are radicalized to such an extent that they compete over the chance to launch an attack. One would-be bomber admitted, "Yes, the suicide bombers ask the *amir* persistently to give them an opportunity as soon as possible. They are always anxious to be launched."<sup>29</sup> The more a trainee pushes to conduct an attack, the sooner they are provided with an opportunity. One example is suicide bomber Ismail, who was sent to attack the police training school at Sargodha in 2007 only two weeks after his induction at the camp.<sup>30</sup> Some recruits prefer to carry out attacks in Afghanistan. This was the case with Abid, who wanted to carry out a suicide attack against Americans at Birmal, Afghanistan.

Camp trainees are told that a suicide bomber wins paradise for giving up his life for Allah, and enters the afterlife the moment the explosives detonate. Once in paradise, the suicide bomber has the opportunity to recommend 70 people for paradise and Allah honors that recommendation. The bombers are told that they are superior to other jihadists because they have no worldly ambitions such as status, money and esteem. While other jihadists can survive after an attack on the enemy, the *fidai* (suicide bomber) faces certain death—the supreme sacrifice for Allah. As a result, there is a sense of pride among the bombers as they refer to non-suicide bombers as "common mujahids," and they are not allowed to interact or socialize with them.<sup>31</sup>

David Montero, "Pakistan's Taliban Fight Each Other," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 2, 2007.

16 Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008.

17 Ibid.; Abid Mehsud, July 2008; Mir Janan, September 2008; Hameedullah Mehsud, August 2008.

18 The Mehsud are a Pashtun tribe.

19 Aitezaz Shah, January 2008.

20 Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008.

21 Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Scott Atran, "Who Becomes a Terrorist Today?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2:5 (2008).

22 Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

23 Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

27 Aitezaz Shah, January 2008; Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008; Abid Mehsud, July 2008; Mir Janan, September 2008; Hameedullah Mehsud, August 2008.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

31 Aitezaz Shah, January 2008; Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008; Abid Mehsud, July 2008; Mir Janan, September

### The Camp Schedule

Information on the daily schedule within the training camps has been acquired from interviews with multiple detainees. The camp members wake before sunrise to offer special night vigils (*tahajjud*) followed by the recitation of the Qur'an until morning prayers (*fajr*).<sup>32</sup> After breakfast, most trainees receive driver's education, and they practice vehicle maneuvers. Experienced driving instructors teach them how to handle motorcycles and cars in preparation for vehicle-borne (VBIED) suicide attacks.<sup>33</sup> At the Kotkai training camp, six station wagons were available for this purpose.<sup>34</sup>

During the morning session, some trainees stay at the camp for services that include cleaning the camp, preparing lunch and buying utilities. Lunch is typically served around mid-day followed by the noon prayers (*zuhr*). Afterward, the trainees split into two groups and study the Qur'an. A new recruit is typically paired with a more senior member to help teach him the prayers. The trainees then depart again for outdoor driving lessons after having tea with cookies.<sup>35</sup> In the summer months, they usually take a nap after lunch before assembling for afternoon prayers (*asar*), which are usually followed by lessons from Maulana Masood Azhar's *Fazail-e-Jihad* (The Virtues of Jihad) for more than an hour. The evening prayers (*maghrib*) are offered together followed by a *wazifa* during which the trainees recite *Astaghfirullah*, *Alhamdulillah*, *Allah o Akbar* and *Allah Allah* 100 times each.<sup>36</sup> The *wazifa* is followed by dinner where the trainees have informal conversations with each other. During the training routine, they are shown jihadist videos on a DVD player.<sup>37</sup> Afterward, they go straight to sleep after night prayers (*isha'*) and no activity is allowed after the final prayers.

Throughout the training period, the instructors make emotional speeches designed to influence the trainees. Qari Hussain, in particular, apparently mesmerized his listeners and was able to bring them to tears.<sup>38</sup> The same emotional ambience is repeated during the concluding prayers (*du`a*). The two most famous books used at the camps for religious lessons are *Islam aur fidai hamlay* (Islam and Suicide Attacks), written by Mufti Abdul Bashar Qasmi, and *Fazail-e-Jihad* (Virtues of Jihad), written by Maulana Masood Azhar. The religious instructors are all local, and local guest speakers also deliver lectures. The *amir* of the camp hires a local *maulvi* (religious leader) for translation of the Qur'an and other lessons.

### Rituals and Preparation Before an Attack

Before an attack is executed, only the head of the Pakistani Taliban, the head of the training camp, the *rabbar* (guide) and the *fidai* know the target. The other members of the training camp are not informed about the target beforehand. Some suicide bombers leave behind notes that are delivered to their families upon their deaths. Some record "video wills" before their departure, which are released by the Taliban after the mission is accomplished. Usually, suicide bombers visit their families for one final meeting before departing on their mission.<sup>39</sup> Abid, for example, met his family before his failed attack on President Pervez Musharraf, but did not tell them about the operation.

When a suicide bomber begins on the mission, his campmates say farewell by embracing him and requesting that he recommend them for paradise. The bomber is instructed to bathe and wear clean new clothes, and he shaves his pubic hair. The purpose of the bomber wearing new or clean clothes is to avoid suspicion and to have uninterrupted access to the target location. The bomber recites Qur'anic verses, and continues the recitation until the actual blast. The *rabbar* instructs the bomber on the proper timing of the blast in advance, and the bomber begins preparations ahead of time.

The *rabbar's* duty is to take the bomber to a predetermined target either a few days before the attack, or on the actual day. He helps the bomber become acquainted with the area and remains in contact with the high command directly to inform them about the success or failure of the attack. On the day of the attack, the *rabbar* decides the most opportune time for the bombing. Due to the *rabbar's* crucial role in the operation, obedience and loyalty to the *rabbar* is inculcated in the camp. A suicide bomber, however, reserves the right to disobey the *rabbar* if he changes the venue of the attack, attempts to hand him over to another handler, or asks him to attack an impossible target or one that will result in too few casualties. A normal target should result in the deaths of at least 10 people, with the exception of VIP targets when the number of dead is irrelevant.<sup>40</sup>

The *rabbar* does not strictly monitor the suicide bomber in the days before the attack. The bomber can roam around with the hosts (who provide a safe house) in the target city until the moment he leaves for the attack. The bomber is provided with a code word for the final attack time. While the code word can change, until recently it has been "marriage."<sup>41</sup> In the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the code word was "the meal is ready."<sup>42</sup>

To boost the morale of the bombers before an attack, they are instructed to recite Ayat-ul-Kursi or a verse from Surah e Yaseen (chapter from the Qur'an).<sup>43</sup> The verse is *Wa jaalna mim baina aideebim saddan wa min kbhfabum saddan fa aghsbainabum fabum la ubsaroon* (And we have put a barrier before them, and a barrier behind them, and we have covered them up, so that they cannot see). By reciting this verse, the bombers believe they are invulnerable to law enforcement detection. They receive explicit directions from the *amir* of the camp and *rabbar* not to surrender at any cost and to trigger the explosives if arrest is imminent or if they are about to be intercepted.

When conducting the attack, the suicide vest is worn under the bomber's

2008; Hameedullah Mehsud, August 2008.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

35 Aitezaz Shah, January 2008; Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008; Abid Mehsud, July 2008; Mir Janan, September 2008; Hameedullah Mehsud, August 2008.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008; Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

42 Hasnain Gul, August 2009.

43 Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008; Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

garments, typically under a waistcoat so it is properly concealed. The orange color detonation cord connects the explosives vest or jacket to the striker sleeve, which is adhered to the bomber's left-hand wrist with duct tape. On reaching the target, the ring of the striker sleeve is pulled with the right hand and the blast occurs. There is no evidence of any intoxicant administered to the suicide bombers before the attack.

Since suicide bombers often either abort their missions or are arrested before they can detonate their explosives, they have been able to narrate their pre-attack emotions. The bombers' felt no fear of death or consequence before the attack. Some bombers, however, were anxious about missing the target, such as detonating their explosives early or too late (for example, after a convoy has already passed). Before the attack, they would feel pride that Allah had chosen them for such a great mission. Thoughts of their family did not enter their mind. They experienced no abnormal physical reactions such as sweating, dry mouth, restlessness, heart palpitations, or abnormal movements of the body. Breathing remained normal. There were no speech abnormalities, nor did they appear to be in a hurry.<sup>44</sup>

#### Post-Mission Activities

At the completion of a successful mission, the Taliban leaders do not always inform the other trainees about the real location of the suicide blast. They also sometimes give them false information about where the attack occurred.<sup>45</sup> When an attack occurs in Afghanistan, however, the leaders inform the recruits of this fact.

After an attack takes place, the *amir* of the Pakistani Taliban and the *amir* of the training camp visit the family of the suicide bomber, provided that the family is in Waziristan or accessible.<sup>46</sup> Although the other trainees at the camp feel loss for their former friend, they are consoled by the notion that the bomber has reached paradise. No specific funeral rituals or celebrations are offered at the camp for those who go on suicide missions. They are, however, remembered in prayers. The

families of the bombers rejoice over the martyrdom mission, and some mothers wear new black dresses to greet local women after the death of their son. One bomber, however, explained that while the mother of the bomber is typically sad, they cannot overtly express their true feelings due to threats from the Taliban.

Also, contrary to the general public's perception, the Taliban do not regularly pay compensation to the families of suicide bombers after an attack.<sup>47</sup> Any posthumous compensation package is largely a myth. In some cases, when the parents of a bomber are extremely destitute, they are given a small amount of financial assistance.

#### Conclusion

The suicide bomber training camps in South Waziristan have been shuttered as a result of Pakistan's October 2009 military operation. Yet insight into how the Waziristan camps functioned helps to provide context for how and why individuals choose to use their body as an explosive device. Moreover, although the South Waziristan camps have been closed, they may have been relocated elsewhere. Continuing to deny militants safe haven to train and plan for attacks is essential to reducing their operational capabilities in Pakistan and in the region.

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## Iran's Ambiguous Role in Afghanistan

By Sajjan M. Gohel

IRAN IS PLAYING a pivotal role in Afghanistan's post-Taliban development. It is a large source of foreign direct investment, and provides assistance in critical national infrastructure, road construction, distribution of energy supplies, and agricultural and communications development. Iran also shares ethnic, linguistic and religious links with millions of Afghan Shi'a. This is particularly true with Afghanistan's Shi'a-minority Hazara community, which resides in the central and northern regions of the country. As a result of these positive connections, Iran has been viewed as a potential stabilizing force in Afghanistan, with its interests largely aligned with those of the Western mission: concern about the Taliban insurgency, resistance to al-Qa`ida and weakening the opium trade

Paradoxically, Iranian-made armaments have been discovered in the hands of Afghan Taliban fighters, raising concern and questions about Tehran's overall strategy in Afghanistan. An August 2009 report authored by General Stanley A. McChrystal, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, cited Iran's "ambiguous role" in the country, stating that Iran is providing aid to the Afghan government while at the same time allowing weapons to pass into the hands of the Taliban.<sup>1</sup> U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has also accused Tehran of playing a "double game" in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> This "ambiguous" role has created confusion over Iran's true intentions toward its neighbor.

1 Stanley A. McChrystal, "COMISAF'S Initial Assessment, Secretary of Defense Memorandum June 2009, Initial United States Forces - Afghanistan (USFOR-A) Assessment," Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, August 30, 2009. General McChrystal's exact words were, "Iran plays an ambiguous role in Afghanistan, providing developmental assistance and political support to GIRoA while the Iranian Qods Force is reportedly training fighters for certain Taliban groups and providing other forms of military assistance to insurgents. Iran's current policies and actions do not pose a short-term threat to the mission, but Iran has the capability to threaten the mission in the future."

2 Mark Thompson, "U.S. Forces Get New Protection in Afghanistan," *Time Magazine*, October 28, 2009.

44 Ibid.

45 Mir Janan, September 2008.

46 Abid Mehsud, July 2008.

47 Ishaq Mehsud, June 2008.

This article attempts to explain Iran's paradoxical relationship with Afghanistan by providing the history of Iran's pre-9/11 relations with the country, examining its actions after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, and assessing Iran's overall goals in Afghanistan. It finds that while the theocratic Shi'a Muslim state of Iran should have little in common with the Sunni fundamentalist Taliban militia, elements within the Iranian military or government may be willing to assist Taliban fighters for a number of short-term interests. Although Iran does not want a hostile Sunni regime to take power on its eastern border, elements within its security forces may want to retain the capability to escalate tensions in Afghanistan in response to Western pressure on either Iran's ongoing nuclear program or its clandestine activities in Iraq and Lebanon. Moreover, Iran appears most interested in carving out influence in Afghanistan's western Herat Province at the expense of heightened Taliban violence elsewhere in the country.

#### Tehran's Pre-9/11 Afghan Dynamics

To understand Iran's role in Afghanistan today, it is necessary to examine its actions during the 1979 Soviet invasion and subsequent occupation of Afghanistan. The Soviet invasion created a conundrum for Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini was obligated to speak against the invasion of an Islamic country by "godless communists," yet he could not afford to directly antagonize the Soviet Union. The start of the invasion coincided with the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis in Tehran that irreversibly damaged U.S.-Iran relations.<sup>3</sup> As Iran became increasingly isolated during the hostage crisis, it began to tilt in favor of the Soviet Union to counter the growing U.S. influence with the Arab-Afghan mujahidin. As a result, although Tehran condemned the Soviet occupation and demanded it withdraw its forces, the clerical regime was careful not to allow its policy to damage its otherwise amiable relations with Moscow.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the Soviet occupying forces

did not dominate the Hazarjat region in central Afghanistan, the stronghold of the Shi'a community and where Iran's leverage was highest.<sup>5</sup>

In 1992, following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United Nations sponsored a conference for a political resolution to transfer power to Afghan Interim Government (AIG) President Sebghatullah Mojaddadi and his successor Burhanuddin Rabbani of Jamaat-i-Islami.<sup>6</sup> To consolidate his power base, however, Rabbani, an ethnic Tajik, resorted to pitting one ethnic group against the other including the Shi'a political faction Hizb-i-Wahdat (Party of Unity), led by Abdul Ali Mazari.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the Iranian clerical leadership supported Rabbani against the Shi'a Hizb-i-Wahdat and provided Rabbani's government with food and resources. Tehran's apparent logic was that by supporting Rabbani, its strategic interests in newly independent Central Asian states would be protected by a Tajik-dominated government in Kabul.<sup>8</sup>

A three-year war with Rabbani's government exhausted Hizb-i-Wahdat's military strength and resources.<sup>9</sup> As a result of Tehran's failure to support his party, Mazari made a fatal move by agreeing to a peace deal with the emerging Taliban.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, the Taliban forced Hizb-i-Wahdat to surrender its arms and relinquish its territory to members of the Taliban. Mazari and several members of Hizb-i-Wahdat's leadership were taken hostage and murdered in March 1995.<sup>11</sup> In 1996, the Taliban eventually overthrew the Rabbani government.<sup>12</sup> This enabled the Taliban to gain a foothold within central Afghanistan, which they would not relinquish until the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

5 Sayed Askar Mousavi, *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

6 Hafizullah Emadi, "The Hazaras and Their Role in The Process of Political Transformation in Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey* 16:3 (1997): p. 381.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 383.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., pp. 383-384.

12 Mohsen Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal* 60:2 (2006): pp. 242-243.

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan was highly antagonistic to Iran, and Tehran viewed it as a security threat. In August 1998, the Taliban captured Mazar-i-Sharif, the interim capital of the Northern Alliance. In addition to killing hundreds of Shi'a Muslims, the Taliban stormed the Iranian Consulate in the city and killed eight Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist, and held 50 other Iranian nationals captive. Tehran was incensed by the killings and dispatched 200,000 troops to the border as the government decided whether or not to invade. War was averted when the Taliban, after the threat from Iran and under pressure from the United Nations, returned the bodies of the murdered diplomats and sent the remaining Iranian captives home. The killings and the capture of Iranians were seen in Tehran as a national humiliation and perhaps a clear reminder of Tehran's failed policies in Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup>

#### Post-Taliban Afghanistan

During the period of reformist Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, Iranian opposition to the Taliban and its al-Qa'ida ally was such that Tehran cooperated with Washington during Operation Enduring Freedom by providing vital intelligence support to the U.S. war effort.<sup>14</sup> That level of cooperation, however, has somewhat dissipated and become more antagonistic.

Although the Iranian government has positive ties with Kabul and has supported a number of economic projects in the country, it appears to be maintaining leverage over the direction of the country by offering some support to the Afghan Taliban. Evidence has emerged that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), through its special Quds Force, has provided weapons, explosives, roadside bombs, and other forms of support to elements of the Afghan Taliban. Through 2009, British military forces have intercepted shipments of Iranian-made arms in Helmand Province, which have included Russian-made SA-14 "Gremlin" man-portable, low-altitude surface-to-air missiles.<sup>15</sup> Iranian-made

3 Mohsen Milani, "The Hostage Crisis," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. VII (New York: Columbia University, 2004), pp. 525-535.

4 Adam Tarock, "The Politics of the Pipeline: The Iran and Afghanistan Conflict," *Third World Quarterly* 20:4 (1999): p. 805.

13 Tarock, p. 801.

14 "Iran and the West: After 9/11," BBC, August 3, 2009.

15 Michael Smith, "Missile Threat to British Troops,"

rocket-propelled grenades have been found by U.S. troops in villages where the Taliban sought sanctuary, carrying markings such as “82 mm h-e lot O2 slash 87.”<sup>16</sup> Although these markings are copies of U.S. military ordinances, the lot numbers are fabricated and do not exist in the United States.<sup>17</sup>

It is conceivable that much of the weaponry smuggled across the Iran-Afghanistan border to the Taliban has been primarily through arms dealers and other criminal elements seeking profit or opium. Individuals within the Taliban, however, have themselves identified two routes for their access to Iranian weaponry, which has been corroborated by British officials. First, there are Iranian businessmen who sell arms to the Taliban, and then smuggle them into Afghanistan. Second, there are those within Tehran’s state apparatus who allegedly “donate” weapons.<sup>18</sup> In regard to the latter, it is not clear whether this is a directive from the central leadership in Tehran or instead decisions made by certain elements within the IRGC. Regardless, Iranian-made weapons are in high demand among Taliban fighters. A Kalashnikov rifle made in Iran, for example, costs \$200-300 more than one made in another country because the Iranian models are also capable of firing grenades up to 300 meters.<sup>19</sup>

Another concern in Afghanistan has been the discovery of AK-47s, C4 plastic explosives, mortars and advanced armor piercing explosives, known as Explosively-Formed Penetrators (EFPs), a shaped charge used with deadly effect by insurgents in Iraq.<sup>20</sup> EFPs, which appear to come from Iran, have earned the nickname in Afghanistan as “Dragons” because they are shaped so

that the explosive force is concentrated in the direction of the designated target rather than blasting in all directions and therefore weakening the impact.<sup>21</sup> Unlike ordinary mines that can cause minor damage to military vehicles, a Dragon can completely destroy it. The Taliban have credited Iranian-supplied weapons as being responsible for successful attacks against NATO forces in southern Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup>

Connections between Iran and the Taliban are also drawn from discoveries made by the Afghan authorities. In March 2009, Afghan security forces found a cache of Iranian-made explosives near the Bakhshabad Dam in Farah Province, a \$2.2 million coalition-sponsored project set to boost power and water supply in the area.<sup>23</sup> Mohammad Yunus Rassouli, the deputy governor of Farah Province, alleged, “Our reports indicate that the Iranian government is trying to prevent the construction of the Bakhshabad Dam. They will do whatever is necessary.”<sup>24</sup> In September 2009, Afghan police found explosives-packed jerrycans—which they thought came from Iran—during a search of Taliban fighters traveling on the Bagram-Kabul highway.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, Afghan border police have intercepted consignments of anti-tank mines and mortars bound for Afghan Taliban fighting NATO forces.<sup>26</sup> More alarming is that Iranian weapons are being discovered in provinces such as Helmand, which is seen as the key battleground between the Taliban and NATO forces. In May 2009, following an operation to clear Taliban fighters from the town of Marja, coalition forces found 44 bricks of Iranian-made explosives and dozens of Iranian-made mortars.<sup>27</sup> Marja developed international significance in 2010 following the initiation of “Operation Moshtarak,” a counterinsurgency operation jointly

conducted by British, American and Afghan forces.<sup>28</sup> Afghanistan is the world’s largest producer of opium, and Helmand is where much of the country’s poppy crop is grown; the proceeds from the drug trade help bankroll the Taliban, especially when it comes to purchasing weapons and explosive materials.<sup>29</sup>

While identifying the alleged role of the Quds Force in supporting elements of the Taliban insurgency, McChrystal’s report also mentioned that Tehran’s strategy and actions do not adversely harm the U.S.-led coalition’s Afghan assignment in the short-term.<sup>30</sup> McChrystal does believe, however, that Iran is capable of threatening the mission in the long-term.<sup>31</sup> Ironically, just as Tehran ignored the situation to its own detriment in the 1990s, it stands to lose a great deal again if there were a resurrection of a Taliban-led order in Afghanistan.

#### Reasons Behind Iran’s Policy

If it is true that elements within the Iranian government are providing weapons to Taliban fighters, then Tehran is playing a dangerous double game in Afghanistan. By covertly assisting the Taliban, they are hoping to achieve two strategic objectives.

First, by providing the Taliban weapons to battle NATO troops, Tehran is presuming that with the Taliban preoccupied, it will leave Herat alone and not disturb the “economic sphere” that Iran is developing in the province. One of Iran’s main objectives is to create

<sup>16</sup> *Times*, March 1, 2009; Alastair Leithead, “Iranian Influence in Afghanistan,” BBC, June 11, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Lara Logan, “Cooperation Rises Between Iran and Taliban,” CBS News, October 7, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Kate Clark, “Taliban Claim Weapons Supplied by Iran,” *Daily Telegraph*, September 14, 2008; Kate Clark, “Assignment,” BBC, September 18, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Significantly, the appearance of EFPs in Iraq has also been blamed on Iran. For details on the EFPs in Afghanistan, see David Hambling, “‘Deliberate Slip’ Reveals Afghan Superbombs,” *Wired*, January 28, 2009; Greg Bruno, “Iran and the Future of Afghanistan,” Council on Foreign Relations, March 30, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Clark, “Assignment.”

<sup>23</sup> Clark, “Taliban Claim Weapons Supplied by Iran.”

<sup>24</sup> “Tehran Accused of Complicity in Growing Weapons Trade,” Institute for War and Peace Reporting, April 20, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Chris Zambelis, “Is Iran Supporting the Insurgency in Afghanistan?” *Terrorism Monitor* 7:33 (2009).

<sup>27</sup> Ben Farmer, “Iranian Weapons Getting Through to Taliban,” *Daily Telegraph*, June 8, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Operation Moshtarak is designed to clear central Helmand of the Taliban and set the conditions for the Afghan government to introduce increased security, stability, development, rule of law, freedom of movement and reconstruction in the area. Moshtarak means “together” in Dari. The name is designed to signal that the Afghan army is now playing an equal role in fighting the Taliban. The assault on the town of Marja is the biggest test so far for Afghan forces. The town’s population is about 80,000 people, of whom up to 2,000 are thought to be Taliban. For details, see “Operation MOSHTARAK Begins,” British Ministry of Defense, February 13, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> “Crime and Insurgency: The Transnational Threat of Afghan Opium,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), October 2009.

<sup>30</sup> According to McChrystal, “Iran’s current policies and actions do not pose a short-term threat to the mission, but Iran has the capability to threaten the mission in the future.”

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

an economic sphere of influence in Afghanistan, with the ultimate goal of becoming a powerful strategic focal point for the transport and shipment of goods and services linking the Persian Gulf, Central Asia and the Far East.<sup>32</sup> Iran also projects influence in Afghanistan through economic initiatives and various religious programs. The bulk of Iranian investment is in the Herat region and involves infrastructure projects, road and bridge construction, education, agriculture, power generation, and telecommunications projects. Iran has helped rebuild Afghanistan's radio and television infrastructure, and has increased its own radio and television programs in Dari.<sup>33</sup>

It is in the Herat region that Iran's influence in Afghanistan is most visible. Until 1857, Herat was considered an "integral part" of Iran and served as the capital of the Persian Empire in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> When the British repelled Iranian advances toward Herat, Iran and the United Kingdom signed the Treaty of Paris in 1857. Although Iran abandoned its historic claim on Herat, it reserved the right, under Article VII of the treaty, to send forces into Afghanistan "if its frontier is violated."<sup>35</sup> Since then, Iran has occasionally sought to keep Herat as a buffer zone. For a few years, Ismail Khan, the Tajik governor of Herat, helped Iran realize that goal.<sup>36</sup>

Today, Herat is one of the most stable and prosperous regions in Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> It also benefited from the fact that Afghan President Hamid

Karzai made Ismail Khan minister of water and energy.<sup>38</sup> A small industrial city has been reconstructed, making it the industrial heartland of the country.<sup>39</sup> Following the completion of a highway from its border with Afghanistan, Tehran financed an extension linking Herat to Afghanistan's remote northern provinces. In 2009, a plethora of Iranian-built schools, health clinics and business centers around Herat were connected to the Iranian interior due to an \$80 million railroad project.<sup>40</sup> Herat's bazaars are filled with Iranian products, and the presence of the IRGC through the Iranian Consulate is openly visible.<sup>41</sup> In addition, hundreds of trucks cross from Iran to Herat and vice-versa on a daily basis.<sup>42</sup>

Second, it is plausible that the clerical regime wants to retain the capability to weaken stability in Afghanistan in reaction to Western pressure on its nuclear program or its clandestine activities in Iraq and Lebanon. Moreover, while Tehran wants a stable, friendly Afghanistan, it clearly wants to limit U.S. influence in the country. To achieve these aims, Iran may be covertly providing weapons and explosives to the Afghan Taliban to ensure that the West becomes preoccupied on other fronts.

#### Assessment

Today, strategic cooperation between Iran and the West should be theoretically possible because they have converging interests and common aversions in Afghanistan, such as the re-emergence of al-Qa`ida fighters, the Taliban and narco-traffickers. Indeed, Western capitals and Tehran could coalesce around stabilizing Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Tehran is seeking to influence Afghanistan's domestic and foreign policy while at the same time limiting the role Western states play in the region.

Kabul, which has become increasingly dependent on Iranian aid and infrastructure development, is reluctant to openly criticize elements within Iran on allegations of supplying the Taliban with weapons, especially considering that corrupt elements within the Afghan government itself have been doing the same for economic gain.<sup>43</sup>

Iranian influence in Afghanistan is inevitable and some of it is constructive. Yet it is also duplicitous, paradoxical and potentially destabilizing to the region. As a consequence, Tehran is in danger of conceding reverse strategic depth to the same forces it occasionally and tacitly assists. Yet, until the clerical regime accepts that support by elements of the IRGC toward the Taliban will have a detrimental impact on Iran itself, its "ambiguous" policy will continue in the foreseeable future.

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32 Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan."

33 "Iran Exports \$10m to Afghanistan," BBC Monitoring Service, October 1, 2002.

34 Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, *Amir Kabir Ya Ghabra-man-e Mobareze Ba Astemar* (Tehran: Farahnai Press, 1927), p. 377.

35 J.C. Hurewitz ed., *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: European Expansion, 1535-1914* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 341-343.

36 In September 1995, Ismail Khan fled to Mashhad, Iran, after the fall of Herat to the Taliban, but he returned with rearmed fighters within a few months. In 1997, he was captured and imprisoned by the Taliban in one of the clashes. After spending three years in captivity, he escaped and fled a third time to Iran. Since then, Khan, who is now minister of water and energy in Afghanistan, has developed and built upon close relations with the clerical regime in Tehran.

37 Jason Motlagh, "Iran's Spending Spree in Afghanistan," *Time Magazine*, May 20, 2009.

38 Abubakar Siddique, "Proposed Afghan Cabinet Stocked With Familiar Faces," Radio Free Europe, December 21, 2009.

39 Motlagh.

40 Ibid.

41 Personal interview, Afghan diplomat, November 27, 2009.

42 Gulshan Dietl, "War, Peace and the Warlords: The Case of Ismail Khan of Herat in Afghanistan," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 3:2-3 (2004): p. 52.

43 Clark, "Assignment."



## The Nexus Between Salafism and Jihadism in the Netherlands

By Beatrice de Graaf

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE 9/11 attacks, CNN displayed images from the Dutch city of Ede where groups of youth of Moroccan descent gleefully cheered and shouted over the apparent blow dealt to the United States. Two years later, Shaykh Fawaz Jneid, a well-known imam from a Salafist mosque in the Netherlands, cursed president George W. Bush, Ariel Sharon, Dutch parliamentarian Hirsu Ali and filmmaker Theo van Gogh and begged Allah “to destroy the enemies of Islam.”<sup>1</sup> Another imam refused to shake hands with a Dutch female minister, and a third advised his followers to throw homosexuals from the roof.<sup>2</sup> On November 2, 2004, two months after Fawaz had cursed Theo van Gogh, a young Dutch Muslim, Mohammed Bouyeri, murdered and slaughtered Van Gogh, quoting passages from the medieval Salafist cleric Ibn Taymiyya.<sup>3</sup> These incidents, and especially the terrorist attack committed by Bouyeri, brought the Salafist movement to the center of Dutch public outrage and debate, and prompted the Dutch Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) to warn against the damaging influence of Salafist ideology on the Dutch Muslim community.<sup>4</sup>

An authoritative or exhaustive history of the emergence of Salafism in the Netherlands does not exist, nor has the Salafist population in the country been mapped out meticulously.<sup>5</sup> To

1 “Imam beticht van opruiing tegen Van Gogh,” *NRC Handelsblad*, October 31, 2006.

2 Jaco Alberts and Steven Derix, “Laveren tussen de wet en Allah,” *NRC Handelsblad*, September 19, 2005.

3 Ibid.

4 “De radicale da’wa: De opkomst van het neo-radicalisme in Nederland,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 2007; “Weerstand en tegenkracht: Actuele trends en ontwikkelingen van het salafisme in Nederland,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, December 2009.

5 Salafism is a relatively new phenomenon in the Netherlands. As a movement, it is very closed to the outside world. Therefore, the author does not pretend to give an in-depth analysis, but presents this article as a well-informed snapshot of the present situation, taken instead from a security studies’ point of view, rather than a theological or anthropological one. The first in-depth

provide insight on this community, it is necessary to rely on reports by the Netherlands’ National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb) and the AIVD, newspaper clippings and the extensive field work of anthropologists and social scientists who carried out research projects among Salafist youths in the Netherlands in recent years.<sup>6</sup> Based on this information, this article will explain why Salafism<sup>7</sup> gained popularity in the Netherlands, and then examine the three stages through which it has passed since the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

### 1986-2001: The Creation of a Salafist Infrastructure in the Netherlands

The Saudi non-governmental missionary organization al-Haramain was responsible for the creation of the El Tawheed Foundation in Amsterdam

field study of the Salafist movement in the Netherlands is soon to be published, however: Ineke Roex, Sief van Stiphout and Jean Tillie, *Salafisme in Nederland. Aard, omvang en dreiging* (Amsterdam: IMES, 2010). Another good overview is “Salafisme in Nederland: Een voorbijaand fenomeen of een blijvende factor van belang?” Netherlands’ National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb), 2008. Also see Martijn de Koning, *Zoeken naar een ‘zuivere’ islam: Geloofsbeleving en identiteitsvorming van jonge Marokkaans-Nederlandse moslims* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2008).

6 Most notably, Frank J. Buijs, Froukje Demant and Atef Hamdy, *Strijders van eigen bodem. Radicale en democratische moslims in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) and De Koning, *Zoeken naar een ‘zuivere’ islam*.

7 Salafism is not a unified movement, as it displays various currents, historical trajectories and genealogies. Many Salafists are non-violent, and various strains are apolitical. Moreover, it is often used as a normative self-descriptor, used by religious factions to claim religious and political legitimacy, than as an objectifying term. Salafists claim adherence to the first three generations of exemplary followers of the Prophet Muhammad. As Quintan Wiktorowicz has described in his seminal text from 2006, Salafists are united around the strict adherence to the concept of *tawhid* (the oneness of God, or monotheism), the rejection of innovations (*bid’ a*) of the Islamic creed and practice, the condemnation of polytheism (*shirk*) and all other forms of venerating humans or objects. Salafists maintain that theirs is the only legitimate interpretation of the Qur’an and sunna. To them, Islamic pluralism, let alone subjective individual interpretation without being an accepted authority, does not exist. For an overview of Salafism, see Roel Meijer ed., *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), pp. 1-32; Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29:3 (2006): pp. 207-239.

in 1986 (led since the mid-1990s by the Egyptian imam Mahmoud Shershaby), thereby laying the foundations of the Salafist infrastructure in the Netherlands as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Three years later, another Saudi private missionary organization with headquarters in Riyadh, al-Waqf, initiated the establishment of the foundation al-Waqf al-Islami in Eindhoven. The al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven, led by the Sudanese imam Eisha Bersham, became the center of this foundation’s activities. In 1990, also with Saudi support, the Foundation Sounna was created in The Hague (in 1998 renamed as the Foundation As-Soennah/Centrum Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymia), led by the Syrian imam Fawaz Jneid and preacher Jamal Ahajjaj (Abu Ismail), who both play an important part in the dissemination of Salafism in the Netherlands.<sup>9</sup> The Foundation ISOOK<sup>10</sup> in Tilburg (led by the Syrian imam Ahmed Salaam) was created in 2000, through indirect assistance from Saudi Arabia. Salam is considered a highly educated cleric, who has published many religious works; Fawaz Jneid and Mahmoud Shershaby are said to be his pupils.

Other organizations came into existence as well, such as the Foundation for Islamic Youths in Breda, founded in March 1990, or the al-Haramain Humanitarian Aid Amsterdam (which was dissolved in 2006). The Salafist movement, however, was still a minor current within the Muslim community in the Netherlands during this time period, according to an AIVD report from 1998.<sup>11</sup>

The above-mentioned foundations and mosques in Amsterdam, Eindhoven, The Hague and Tilburg constitute the most prominent Salafist hubs in the Netherlands, drawing some 1,500 (As-Soennah) or even 2,000 visitors (al-Fourqaan) each Friday (of a population of about 850,000 Muslims in the Netherlands).<sup>12</sup> In comparison with other

8 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland”; De Koning, *Zoeken naar een ‘zuivere’ islam*, pp. 373-377.

9 Ibid.

10 ISOOK stands for the Islamitische Stichting voor Opvoeding en Overdracht van Kennis (Islamic Foundation for Education and Dissemination of Knowledge).

11 “De politieke islam in Nederland,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 1998.

12 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland.”

countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany or France, these Salafist groups became more popular and rooted within the Muslim communities than other related radical Islamist currents such as Hizb al-Tahrir (Hizb ut-Tahrir) or Takfir wal-Hijra.<sup>13</sup>

The Salafist mosques also mobilize a multinational crowd of visitors. Muslims from the Maghreb, the Horn of Africa, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, the Middle East and Dutch converts are among the attendants.<sup>14</sup> Although the Salafist movement in general consists of Saudi, Egyptian or Syrian members, Dutch Moroccans constitute the predominant group, in particular Muslim youth of Moroccan descent (40% of the Dutch Moroccan population is under 30).<sup>15</sup> The Moroccan community was also responsible for the establishment of the As-Soennah and al-Fourqaan mosques.

#### 2001-2002: Salafism as Empowerment

In the Netherlands, Salafi-jihadism is a latecomer compared to the other Salafist communities in Europe, where political refugees from the Middle East and veterans from the wars in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya imported militant experiences to the West as early as the late 1980s, such as in France and in the United Kingdom. From the late 1990s, but especially after 9/11, these Salafist groups extended their religious infrastructure in the Netherlands: they built new mosques, websites and informal networks. Martijn de Koning discerns three groups among them: "Selefies," politically involved Salafists

13 Hizb al-Tahrir is a very hierarchical organization, but lacks infrastructure and cadre in the Netherlands. This can be explained by the absence of a large immigrant community from Pakistan or India in the Netherlands. The first activities of radical Salafist and jihadist groups in the Netherlands were initiated by immigrants from Algeria, Morocco or Syria, all countries where Hizb al-Tahrir is less active. Immigration history and coincidence played a part in this.

14 NCTb, "Salafisme in Nederland."

15 Ten percent of the immigrant population is Moroccan (approximately 345,000 in 2009), whereas the Turkish minority stands at 11%. See the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek located at <http://statline.cbs.nl>; V. van den Maagdenberg, "Jaarrapport Integratie," in *Onderzoek vericht in opdracht van het Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP)* (Rotterdam: Instituut voor Sociologisch-Economisch Onderzoek, 2004), pp. 13-14.

and the jihadi/*takfiri* Salafists (or Salafi-jihadists).<sup>16</sup>

Selefies, as they label themselves, are the most apolitical, pious group, and claim to be non-violent. Their main preacher is Abdillah Bouchta, a Salafist teacher from Tilburg. The second group includes more politically-oriented Salafists who are non-violent as well, but engage more in local and international politics. This strand develops its mobilizing power through central nodes within the Muslim community, most of them financed or inspired by Saudi organizations.<sup>17</sup> A third, very marginal strand can be described as the jihadi/*takfiri* branch of Salafism, according to De Koning, and comprises a small number of Muslims, especially those connected to the former Hofstad Group.<sup>18</sup>

These groups differ, for example, regarding the status of Islamic clerics, attitudes toward parliamentary democracy and the desirability of the resurrection of a caliphate.<sup>19</sup> Although the first two branches of Salafism are non-violent, they nevertheless imported theological doctrines on the war against infidels, the search for a pure Islam and the tools for a radical form of Muslim empowerment to the Netherlands. These radical ideas grew in popularity within the Muslim community after 2001, when the so-called "Fortuyn-revolt" in the Netherlands gained momentum and started to attack "Muslim immigration." The charismatic right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn and his effervescent populist party entered the political stage in August 2001 and linked Islam, immigration, integration and terrorism together, discursively framing them into a security issue, which of course made an impression immediately after 9/11. The Salafist movement in particular became the focus of political and public attention, since the Salafists—with their emphasis on purity, hatred against "infidels" and revulsion against supposedly low moral standards in the West—posed the mirror image to the

16 Martijn de Koning, "Changing Worldviews and Friendship: An Exploration of the Life Stories of Two Female Salafis in the Netherlands," in Meijer, *Global Salafism*, pp. 408-410.

17 NCTb, "Salafisme in Nederland."

18 De Koning, "Changing Worldviews," p. 410.

19 Buijs et al.

Dutch defenders of national security, Western liberalism and secularization.

Therefore, after years of benign neglect, Moroccans, Turks and other immigrants were now framed as "Muslims" and were held responsible for jihadist attacks elsewhere. The consequence of this application of religious frames of identity in mainstream Dutch discourse was that youth with Moroccan parents, but born and raised in the Netherlands, embraced this stigmatization and fell back on this new collective, post-ethnic Muslim identity. They adopted the same set of mechanisms that can be found within other youth cultures: they appropriated a negative identity that frightened and provoked the mainstream population by incorporating violent and dangerous symbols and discourses in their group identity.<sup>20</sup> They adopted symbols and discourses from the Salafi-jihadi movement since this provided them with the tools to transform themselves into superior and militant human beings with direct access to the "Truth."<sup>21</sup>

From 2002-2003 onward, a small number of these alienated second-generation immigrants of Moroccan descent entered the path of violent radicalization. Among them were the members of the so-called "Hofstad Group."

#### 2002-2004: Salafism as a Hotbed for Homegrown Jihadism<sup>22</sup>

In late 2001 to early 2002, the AIVD began monitoring Salafist centers, such as the al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven that was suspected of recruiting young Muslims for the international jihad.<sup>23</sup> In 2002, two Dutch Moroccans were killed in Kashmir, Khalid el-Hasnoui and Ahmed el-Bakiouli, both supposedly

20 Martijn de Koning, "Een wekelijks portie burgerschap 8 - Wat meer radicalisering graag," February 22, 2010, available at [www.religionresearch.org/martijn/2010/02/22/een-wekelijks-portie-burgerschap-8-wat-meer-radicalisering-graag](http://www.religionresearch.org/martijn/2010/02/22/een-wekelijks-portie-burgerschap-8-wat-meer-radicalisering-graag).

21 De Koning, "Changing Worldviews," pp. 404-423.

22 This paragraph is partly based on the chapter "The Van Gogh Murder: A New Threat from Homegrown Terrorism in The Netherlands," to be published in the forthcoming book, Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares, *Leader-led Jihad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

23 "OM: moskee Eindhoven werft strijders," *NRC Handelsblad*, May 3, 2003.

recruited in the al-Fourqaan mosque.<sup>24</sup> Months later, 13 individuals were arrested for terrorist activities, some of whom were regular visitors of al-Fourqaan.<sup>25</sup>

Beginning in December 2001, the AIVD also monitored the radical Salafist El Tawheed mosque in the north of Amsterdam for suspicion of Egyptian and Saudi influences, since the mosque had financial relations to a Saudi non-governmental organization, al-Haramain International.<sup>26</sup> In the summer of 2002, the service identified a group of Muslim youth, who met in and around the mosque and gathered around Redouan al-Issar (also named “Abu Khaled” or “the Shaykh”) who had ties to radical Muslims in Spain and Belgium.<sup>27</sup> Abu Khaled was an illegal immigrant from Syria, a former member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and a Takfir wal-Hijra adherent who came to the Netherlands in 1995.<sup>28</sup> For a number of radical Muslims, he became a mentor.<sup>29</sup>

He inspired, among others, 17-year-old high school student Samir Azzouz, of Moroccan origin but born and raised in the Netherlands.<sup>30</sup> Samir Azzouz came

to the notice of the AIVD in January 2003, when he took the train to Berlin, bound for Chechnya, to join local jihadists in their fight against Russian forces together with his friend Khalid (or Hussam, who was 17-years-old), but they were arrested and put back on a train to the Netherlands.<sup>31</sup> After his return, Azzouz’s status rose; he started his own Islamic book company and began only associating with Moroccan youth.<sup>32</sup>

Ismail Akhnikh was another Hofstad Group member with international aspirations. Akhnikh, born in Amsterdam in 1982 from Moroccan immigrants, regularly attended the El Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam where he became acquainted with Azzouz and helped to form the Hofstad Group in the fall of 2002.<sup>33</sup> In the summer of 2003, he traveled with Azzouz to Barcelona to meet with Abdeladim Akoudad for guidance and instructions.<sup>34</sup> Abdeladim Akoudad (or “Naoufel”), a Moroccan living in Spain, was suspected by the Moroccan security services of involvement in the Casablanca attacks of May 16, 2003.<sup>35</sup>

After temporary arrests in October 2003, Akhnikh, Azzouz and Jason Walters further developed their skills as jihadists and urged other Muslims to go abroad to wage jihad.<sup>36</sup> Akhnikh went to Pakistan that year, as did “Zakaria T.” and Walters (who even went twice, in July and December 2003).<sup>37</sup> Walters and

Akhnikh even bragged about contacts with Maulana Masood Azhar, the founder of Jaysh-i-Muhammad, which they later downplayed in court—but no evidence of concrete preparations was found.<sup>38</sup>

Then, on the early morning of November 2, 2004, Mohammed Bouyeri, a 26-year-old Dutch Moroccan, born and raised in Amsterdam, awaited publicist Theo van Gogh in an Amsterdam street, shot him off his bicycle and slaughtered him with a ritual knife in the street in front of many witnesses.<sup>39</sup> Under the new Dutch anti-terrorism laws passed in August 2004, Bouyeri was arrested and tried for murder with “terrorist intent.”<sup>40</sup> On July 26, 2005, he received a life sentence, without parole—unusually harsh in Dutch judicial history.<sup>41</sup>

Bouyeri’s action took the security services by surprise. From 2002, the AIVD had monitored a group of jihadist radicals with whom Bouyeri was acquainted, a network the service internally dubbed as the “Hofstad Group” since it operated in the nation’s capital, Amsterdam (Hofstad translates as “capital city”).<sup>42</sup> Its core members were under surveillance, but Bouyeri did not belong to them. He did not take part in the foreign trips some of the members made and was not considered a

24 Siem Eikelenboom, *Jihad in de polder: De radicale islam in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Veen, 2004), p. 63.

25 Eikelenboom, *Jihad in de polder*; “Annual Report 2002,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 2003; “Saoedische invloeden in Nederland. Verbanden tussen salafistische missie. Radicaliseringsprocessen en islamistisch terrorisme,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, June 2004.

26 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland”; “De omstreden El Tawheed-Moskee,” NOVA broadcast, November 9, 2004. According to NOVA, Saudi businessman Aqeel Alaqeel financed the El Tawheed mosque with 1.3 million euros. Al-Haramain was blacklisted as an al-Qa’ida charity, but the accusations were not substantiated and the mosque continued to operate. Thanks to Dennis de Widt for these references.

27 “Letter to Parliament,” Netherlands’ ministers of the interior and justice, *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer*, No. 5319045, November 10, 2004, pp. 20-24.

28 Ibid.

29 “Feitenrelaas,” attachment to the “Letter to Parliament,” Netherlands’ ministers of the interior and justice, *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer*, No. 29854, November 10, 2004.

30 For an account of this story, see “Samir A. First Enemy of the State,” *KRO Reporter*, October 1, 2006. The documentary includes interviews with Azzouz and his wife. Also see Eric Vrijzen, “Van Samir A tot Marad J,” *Elsevier*, December 1, 2005; Arjan Erkel, *Samir* (Amster-

dam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2007).

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 “Verdict in the Hofstad-case,” Court of Rotterdam, The Hague, March 10, 2006. Also see Emerson Vermaat, *De Hofstadgroep. Portret van een radicaal-islamitisch netwerk* (Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2005), pp. 55-77.

34 Ibid.

35 Petter Nesser, *The Slaying of the Dutch Filmmaker: Religiously Motivated Violence or Islamist Terrorism in the Name of Global Jihad?* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2005), pp. 17-19.

36 “Repliek van de officier van justitie in de strafzaken tegen Nadir A. etc.,” National Prosecutor’s Office (Landelijk Parket), Amsterdam, February 6, 2005, pp. 7, 13.

37 “Dutch Radical Islamic Group Planned Euro 2004 Attack in Portugal,” *Agence France-Presse*, November 15, 2004; “Dutch Islamists Planned Barroso Attack,” *Reuters*, November 15, 2004; “Letter to Parliament,” Netherlands’ minister of justice, November 10, 2004, *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer*, 2004-2005. Also see the parliamentary debate on this report on November 11,

2004, *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer*, 2004-2005. 38 Ibid.

39 A highly informative account of the assassination of Van Gogh and the development of the Hofstad Group can be found in: Albert Benschop, “Jihad in the Netherlands. Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold,” available at [www.sociosite.org/jihad\\_nl\\_en.php](http://www.sociosite.org/jihad_nl_en.php).

40 See the verdict against Bouyeri, Court of Amsterdam, July 26, 2005.

41 In the Netherlands, life sentences are rare. Bouyeri was the 28th person to receive such a sentence since 1945, war criminals included. Capital felonies, such as murder, usually result in sentences of 10-15 years. The new terrorism law, however, states that if there is a terrorist motive for a crime, the sentence can be increased by half. Imprisonments ordinarily in excess of 15 years can be upgraded to life imprisonment, as was the case with Bouyeri.

42 Description of this case is based, among others, on the requisitory of the National Prosecution in the Hofstad Group case. See “Requisitoir van de officier van Justitie,” part I, National Prosecutor’s Office, January 23, 2006 and part II, January 25, 2006; District Court of Rotterdam, verdict in the Hofstad Group case, March 10, 2006; “The ‘Hofstadgroep,’” working paper, Transnational Terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law, April 2008.

main actor in the Dutch jihadist scene.<sup>43</sup> Bouyeri's radical texts calling for violent jihad, disseminated under the name "Abu Zubair," were only noticed after the police and the AIVD stepped up their investigation into the Hofstad Group after the murder of Van Gogh on November 2, 2004.<sup>44</sup>

After the attack, it became clear that Bouyeri sought legitimacy for his atrocity in religious arguments. With him, he had a farewell letter titled "Drenched in Blood." This versed text read as an incitement to holy war and was signed Saifu Deen al-Muwahhied. According to Ruud Peters, a Dutch Islam expert and witness for the prosecution, this alias was a combination of two Arabic terms—"sword of religion" (*Saif al-Din*) and "confessor of Tawhid" (*al-Muwahhid*).<sup>45</sup> In the "open letter," Bouyeri directly threatened Dutch-Somali liberal politician Hirsi Ali, and blamed politicians for allowing Jewish influences in politics. According to Norwegian researcher Petter Nesser, the conclusion of the letter shows "the essence of 'al-Qaidaism,'" by foreseeing the defeat of the enemy on the individual, local, regional and global levels in order of priority:

And like a great prophet once said: "I deem thee lost, O Pharaoh." (17:102) And so we want to use similar words and send these before us, so that the heavens and the stars will gather this news and spread it over the corners of the universe like a tidal wave. "I deem thee lost, O America." "I deem thee lost, O Europe." "I deem thee lost, O Holland." "I deem thee lost,

43 The Review Committee on the Intelligence and Security Services officially established in March 2008 that this had been a serious intelligence failure, as evidence surfaced prior to the attack that Bouyeri was at least affiliated with Dutch jihadist groups. See "Toezichtsrapport inzake de afwegingsprocessen van de AIVD met betrekking tot Mohammed B.," Commissie van Toezicht betreffende de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten (CTIVD), March 2008.

44 Siem Eikelenboom, *Niet bang om te sterven: Dertig jaar terrorisme in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 23-27; "Repliek van de officier van justitie in de strafzaken tegen Nadir A. etc.," National Prosecutor's Office (Landelijk Parket), Amsterdam, February 6, 2005, pp. 4-5, 9-10, 17-23.

45 "Repliek van de officier van justitie in de strafzaken tegen Nadir A. etc.," pp. 4-5.

O Hirshi Ali." "I deem thee lost, O unbelieving fundamentalist."<sup>46</sup>

These two texts showed that Bouyeri's attack was the outcome of an ideological turn to violent jihad that evolved from the Hofstad Group, since Bouyeri wrote these texts in spiritual support for this network.<sup>47</sup> In one of Bouyeri's last writings, an "Open Letter to the Dutch Population" dated August 12, 2004 (which he left on a USB-stick for other Hofstad Group members to disseminate within "the *umma*"),<sup>48</sup> he announced attacks against Dutch public places, justifying them due to the support of the Dutch government for the United States and Israel. His argument echoed a *fatwa* announced by dissident Saudi Shaykh Hamud Ibn `Uqla al-Shu'aybi, legitimizing the September 11 attacks.<sup>49</sup> A translation of this *fatwa* was found on computers of other Hofstad Group members.<sup>50</sup>

Bouyeri and the Hofstad Group drew inspiration from several Salafist sources. They took the principle of *al-wala' wa'l-bara'* (loyalty and disavowal) from the Salafist cleric Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, which dictates that true jihadists should isolate themselves from the non-Muslim world and hate those who threaten Islam.<sup>51</sup> From the London-based Salafist imam Abu Hamza al-Masri, they took the principle of *takfir* (declaring fellow Muslims infidels).<sup>52</sup>

46 Nesser, p. 25.

47 "Requisitoir van de officier van Justitie."

48 "Repliek van de officier van justitie in de strafzaken tegen Nadir A. etc.," pp. 31-32.

49 A biography of this shaykh is available on a website called "Marokko Community," in which references to the September 11 *fatwa* are found. For the biography, see "Sheikh Hamoud bin Uqla as-Shu'aybi: De levensloop van een groot geleerde," July 24, 2008, available at [www.forums.marokko.nl/showthread.php?t=2092457](http://www.forums.marokko.nl/showthread.php?t=2092457). Al-Shu'aybi's *fatwa* in English can be found at [www.tawhed.net/a.php?a=hmodUkla](http://www.tawhed.net/a.php?a=hmodUkla).

50 "Requisitoir van de officier van Justitie."

51 Al-Maqdisi has revolutionized this theme in Salafijihadism. For details, see Joas Wagemakers, "A Purist Jihadi-Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36:2 (2009): pp. 287-297; Joas Wagemakers, "Framing the 'Threat to Islam': al-wala' wa al-bara' in Salafi Discourse," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30:4 (2008): pp. 1-22; Joas Wagemakers, "Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi: A Counter-Terrorism Asset?" *CTC Sentinel* 1:6 (2008): pp. 7-9.

52 De Koning, *Zoeken naar een 'zuivere' islam*, p. 374; See also R. Peters, "De religieuze en ideologische ontwik-

Finally, it is argued that Bouyeri acted in line with Fawaz Jneid's malediction of Theo van Gogh and Hirsi Ali.<sup>53</sup>

After these connections became public, the whole Salafist movement was put on trial in the eyes of the Dutch population. The members of the Hofstad Group had been visitors of the As-Soennah and El Tawheed mosques in The Hague and Amsterdam.<sup>54</sup> The al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven was accused of recruitment activities and radical Salafist imams had on many occasions lashed out against the Netherlands, homosexuals and liberal intellectuals such as Hirsi Ali or Theo van Gogh.<sup>55</sup> In the perception of large parts of the Dutch population, the November attack showed that every orthodox Muslim could be a potential terrorist,<sup>56</sup> and opinion polls said that 80% of the population wanted "tougher policies against immigrants."<sup>57</sup> Jihadist terrorism became a public nightmare. In 2005, the Dutch population listed it as the most important issue facing the country.<sup>58</sup>

#### 2004-2010: Salafist Resilience Against Jihadists

After the murder of Van Gogh and the public outrage that followed suit, a process of reorientation seemed to set in within the Salafist movement in the Netherlands, partly due to the increased monitoring and control activities conducted against them

keling van Mohammed Bouyeri. Deskundigenrapport opgesteld op verzoek van het Openbaar Ministerie voor de Arrondissementsrechtbank Amsterdam," May 2005; R. Peters, "Overzicht teksten geschreven of vertaald door Mohammed B.," attachment to the report mentioned above.

53 "Imam beticht van opruiing tegen Van Gogh."

54 NCTb, "Salafisme in Nederland."

55 Ibid.

56 Ron Eyerman, *The Assassination of Theo van Gogh. From Social Drama to Cultural Trauma* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 11. In reality, research revealed that probably less than 2% of the Dutch Muslim population of Amsterdam was susceptible for "radicalization." See Marieke Sloodman and Jean Tillie, *Processen van radicalisering: Waarom sommige Amsterdamse moslims radicaal worden* (Amsterdam: IMES, 2006).

57 Justin Sparks, "Muslim Mole Panics Dutch Secret Service," *Times*, November 14, 2004.

58 "Kwantitatief onderzoek risicobeleving terrorisme 2008," Netherlands' National Coordinator for Counterterrorism & Netherlands' Government Information Service, September 2008, p. 5. Fear of terrorism was mentioned spontaneously by 40% of the respondents. The economy ranked second with 25%.

by the security services and local authorities. In February 2005, Minister for Immigration and Integration Rita Verdonk, for example, declared three imams from the al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven as unwanted aliens, and started procedures to expel them from the country.<sup>59</sup> These more repressive measures were flanked by other central and local deradicalization programs, directed against so-called “hotbeds of radicalization.”<sup>60</sup>

Consequently, due to these forms of external pressure, Muslim resilience against jihadism increased.<sup>61</sup> Immediately after the murder of Van Gogh, various Salafist leaders warned their followers against interpreting radical texts without consulting clerics.<sup>62</sup> In 2005, it was revealed that the Amsterdam imam Fawaz had urged some young Muslim women that were under the influence of the Hofstad Group to report to the police.<sup>63</sup> As a result of their statements, the case against the Hofstad Group in 2005-2006 became stronger. Moreover, in 2006 the Islamic Foundation for Culture and Welfare in Tilburg, headed by the apolitical Selefie imam Bouchta, published a booklet in which it condemned suicide attacks, warned against preachers of hate and accused Salafists who turned to violence of sinful aberrations.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, Salafist leaders such as Fawaz realized that jihadist activities such as the murder of Van Gogh could only backfire against Muslims in the Netherlands. His warnings against the *takfiri*-ideology of Bouyeri and the other members of the Hofstad Group were, however, not only inspired by strategic musings; to some Salafist clerics, individual *takfiri*-activities are a

real danger and an aberration from Islam since they ignite *fitna* (chaos and sedition) within the Muslim community itself.<sup>65</sup>

In 2007, the AIVD signaled that more unity had been achieved among the different Salafist branches, among which the strand of political, non-violent Salafism was gaining the upper hand.<sup>66</sup> The NCTb underlined this estimate and identified trends of moderation and adaptation to the outside world. The increasing resilience against jihadist-thinking within the Salafist movement was supported by a decreasing fear of homegrown terrorism within the broader Dutch society that felt more at ease since there had been no further jihadist attacks since November 2004 and no other substantial homegrown networks uncovered.<sup>67</sup>

In its 2008 annual report (published in April 2009), the AIVD concluded that “the terrorist threat increasingly emanates from transnational and local networks with an international orientation, but less from local-autonomous networks.”<sup>68</sup> Activities of “homegrown” radicals and their networks had been effectively disrupted.<sup>69</sup> In December 2009, the level of security alertness regarding terrorism was therefore lowered from “substantial” to “restricted” since terrorist attacks against the Netherlands no longer seemed imminent.<sup>70</sup>

Radicalization of Moroccan youth is still taking place, according to the AIVD, certainly if compared to the Turkish community.<sup>71</sup> These young

Muslims meet on the internet or during sermons of traveling youth preachers, and they translate and exchange jihadist texts.<sup>72</sup> Radicalization has remained marginal, however, and should be viewed more as part of a radical Islamist youth counterculture and a way of expressing identity within the Dutch context. Moreover, the service noticed that Dutch Moroccan Muslims increasingly found ways of articulating their grievances and frustrations through democratic and activist channels. The anti-Islam movies of right-wing parliamentarian Geert Wilders (*Fitna*, 2008) and the politician/publicist Ehsan Jami (*An Interview with Mohammed*, 2008) attracted a weaker response from the Muslim community than anticipated. Additionally, the Israeli bombing of Gaza in December 2008 to January 2009 led to a number of non-violent initiatives. Within the Dutch Salafist milieu, the AIVD therefore noted a “self-cleansing power” and an increased resilience against (violent) radical tendencies within the Muslim community.<sup>73</sup>

### Conclusion

After 2001, the orthodox Salafist creed gained popularity because it offered alienated Dutch youth of Moroccan descent a critical perspective of their own society. It enabled them to identify with the *umma* and suffering of Muslims elsewhere (in Iraq, Chechnya or Palestine), whose plight, in their view, mirrored their own discriminated position in the Netherlands. Salafism provided youths who felt caught between their traditionalist parents and the modern, secularized Dutch society a clear set of beliefs and a means of (re)gaining pride and self-esteem.<sup>74</sup>

59 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland”; “Ook tweede Eindhovense imam terecht uitgezet,” Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau, October 10, 2007.

60 “Lokale en justitiële aanpak van radicalisme en radicalisering,” Kamerstukken 2004-2006 29754 No. 5; “Actieplan polarisatie en radicalisering 2007-2011,” Netherlands’ Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, August 2007.

61 “Saoedische invloeden in Nederland. Verbanden tussen salafistische missie. Radicaliseringsprocessen en islamistisch terrorisme.”

62 De Koning, *Zoeken naar een ‘zuivere’ islam*, p. 372.

63 Alberts et al.

64 “Folderen in strijd tegen aanslagen,” *Brabants Dagblad*, June 10, 2006.

65 To these clerics, *takfir* can only be pronounced by qualified religious authorities under special and restricted circumstances. See Thomas Hegghammer, “Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries: On Religion and Politics in the Study of Islamist Militancy,” in Meijer, *Global Salafism*, pp. 244-266.

66 “De radicale da’wa: De opkomst van het neo-radicalisme in Nederland.”

67 “The ‘Hofstadgroep,’” p. 16; “Annual Report 2006,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 2007, p. 33.

68 “Annual Report 2008,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 2009, pp. 20-22.

69 Ibid.

70 “Letter to Parliament with the Eleventh Counterterrorism Progress Report,” Netherlands’ National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, December 15, 2009.

71 Regarding the Turkish community, social resilience against radicalization is traditionally higher because of the moderating influence of Islamist organizations such

as Diyanet and Milli Görüs and the impact of Turkish nationalism. In its annual report in 2007, the AIVD did, however, signal that some youths were trying to shirk away from their tight community and were radicalizing on their own account, through the internet. No news of violent activism perpetrated by radical Islamist or Salafist Turkish youths has yet come to light. See “Annual Report 2007,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 2008.

72 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland.”

73 “Weerstand en tegenkracht: Actuele trends en ontwikkelingen van het salafisme in Nederland.” Also see A. Olgun, “Nuance keert terug in Nederland,” *NRC Handelsblad*, February 13, 2008; “Bijna 3000 digitale knuffels voor PVV-voorman Wilders,” *Metro*, January 30, 2008; Bas Heijne, “Waarom ik Geert Wilders dankbaar ben,” *NRC Handelsblad*, January 26, 2008.

74 Buijs et al., pp. 228-231.

Only a tiny group among them went a step further, embracing the lifestyle and symbols of jihadists abroad as the only answer to their perceived sense of injustice and insecurity, and even put them into practice in the Netherlands.<sup>75</sup> The members of the Hofstad Group legitimized their terrorist intentions with thoughts they took from notable Salafi-jihadi clerics such as Abu Hamza al-Masri or Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi.

This still does not solidify a causal relationship. Salafist mosques did indeed function as an ideological hotbed for potential radicals. The al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven was identified as a playground for jihadist recruiters. The members of the Hofstad Group, however, were not passive victims of Salafist “hatemongers” from abroad. On the contrary, militant Muslims such as Samir Azzouz, Jason Walters or Mohammed Bouyeri were actively seeking jihadist guidance once they had embarked on their course of radicalization. At some point, they even stopped visiting their Salafist mosques because it did not offer them instructions to wage jihad in the Netherlands. They therefore constructed their own brand of *umma*-oriented jihadism through texts and principles they found on the internet.

Indeed, the AIVD defined Salafism as “anti-integrative, anti-democratic and isolationist” in 2007 and again in 2009.<sup>76</sup> This definition, however, cannot be equated with terrorism. Salafism is not a sliding scale from passive orthodoxy into violent orthopraxy. On the contrary, from 2005 onward, Salafist imams, including Fawaz Jneid, have tried to put a brake on overly enthusiastic jihadist emotions among Muslim youth by steering them into more apolitical and especially non-violent action modes and sometimes even reported them to the police.<sup>77</sup>

75 Kees van den Bos, Annermarie Loseman and Bertjan Doosje, *Waarom jongeren radicaliseren en sympathie krijgen voor terrorisme: Onrechtvaardigheid, onzekerheid en bedreigde groepen* (The Hague: WODC, 2009).

76 “De radicale da’wa: De opkomst van het neo-radicalisme in Nederland”; “Weerstand en tegenkracht: Actuele trends en ontwikkelingen van het salafisme in Nederland.” Also see Hans Moors and Menno Jacobs, *Aan de hand van de imam. Integratie en participatie van orthodoxe moslims in Tilburg-Noord* (Tilburg: IVA beleidsonderzoek en advies, 2009).

77 Buijs et al.; Alberts et al.

In sum, the Salafist movement in the Netherlands is still controversial. The strand of political Salafism remains responsible for anti-Western, isolationist and radical opinions; however, as stated by De Koning, political Salafists and apolitical Selefies hold a different view on violence and attitudes toward “infidels” compared to the jihadists. Salafist criticism of the war in Afghanistan or the exploitation of women in Western media and society should not be equated to terrorism, but could be viewed as the voice of a group of highly critical and religious citizens that are searching for a self-conscious position within Dutch society.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, both the NCTb and the AIVD signal a trend of adaptation and moderation (inspired by external pressure from Dutch security services and local authorities as well as from the Saudi regime) of Salafist excesses and a growing resilience and resistance against the seeds of violent jihadism.<sup>79</sup>

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78 De Koning, *Zoeken naar een ‘zuivere’ islam*, p. 378.

79 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland”; “Weerstand en tegenkracht: Actuele trends en ontwikkelingen van het salafisme in Nederland.”

## Pakistan’s Anti-Terrorism Courts

By Huma Yusuf

IN THE WAKE of the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari stated, “Pakistan is committed to the pursuit, arrest, trial and punishment of anyone involved in these heinous attacks.”<sup>1</sup> Zardari’s emphasis on prosecuting accused terrorists in legal courts renewed interest in Pakistan’s anti-terrorism court (ATC) infrastructure, a parallel legal system established in 1997 under the Anti-Terrorism Act to dispense quick justice for those charged with terrorist activities. Almost a year later, an ATC in Rawalpindi indicted seven men for providing weapons and training to the Mumbai terrorists.<sup>2</sup> The trial is still in process, and in January 2010 an ATC judge in Rawalpindi rejected petitions seeking the acquittal of six of the seven who stand accused.<sup>3</sup>

Although the involvement of Pakistani militants in the Mumbai attacks placed the spotlight on ATCs, the government’s decision to conduct military operations against Pakistani Taliban fighters in Swat in May 2009 and in South Waziristan Agency in October 2009 forced the government to revisit the ATC infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> As hundreds of militants either surrendered or were arrested during the operations, questions have risen about how they should be dealt with according to the law.

This article will explain why the ATCs have become especially relevant due to Pakistan’s recent military operations in its northwest, provide the history of the country’s anti-terrorism legal policies and finally express significant concerns about the ATCs and the country’s overall anti-terrorism judicial infrastructure.

1 Asif Ali Zardari, “The Terrorists Want to Destroy Pakistan, Too,” *New York Times*, December 8, 2008.

2 “Seven Indicted for Planning, Aiding Mumbai Attack,” *Dawn*, November 25, 2009.

3 “Pakistan Court Refuses to Acquit Mumbai Suspects,” *Agence France-Presse*, January 6, 2010.

4 “Pakistan: The Swat Offensive Update,” *Stratfor*, May 22, 2009; Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Assessing the Progress of Pakistan’s South Waziristan Offensive,” *CTC Sentinel* 2:12 (2009).

### ATC's Re-Enter the Spotlight

At the start of Pakistan's recent military operations in the northwest, it was unclear under what law suspected militants should be prosecuted. The government had not clarified whether military operations against militants were constitutionally categorized as law enforcement actions or operations "in aid of civil power" under Article 245 of the constitution.<sup>5</sup> In the latter case, the detainees' fundamental rights would be suspended for the duration of the operation. Moreover, their trials would be conducted under the Action in Aid of Civil Power Ordinance (1998) that authorizes the establishment of mobile military courts. The Supreme Court, however, had previously ruled that military courts should be replaced with regular session courts.<sup>6</sup> For that reason, in October 2009 the Interior Ministry clarified that all militants taken into custody during military operations and security sweeps in Swat, South Waziristan, and in other tribal agencies such as Bajaur and Khyber would be tried under the amended Anti-Terrorism Act in ATCs.<sup>7</sup>

To underscore that terrorists and Pakistani Taliban supporters would be answerable to the law, ATCs declared known militants as "proclaimed offenders"—fugitives from the law—as soon as local courts resumed functioning in the wake of the military operation in Swat. In August 2009, a Swat-based ATC identified the area's Taliban chief Maulana Fazlullah and six of his aides as proclaimed offenders and ordered that they appear in court within a week or face judgment in absentia.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in January 2010 Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan and 23 other militants who the government had in detention

were declared proclaimed offenders by an ATC and currently face charges of murder, attempted murder, kidnapping, attacking government installations, treason, and terrorism.<sup>9</sup>

As the number of suspects in custody—especially at the three interrogation centers in Fizat, Khwazakhela and Malakand in the Swat Valley—soared, human rights groups began to question the transparency of interrogation and detention procedures and the credibility of due process for arrested militants. Reports that more than 250 bodies had been dumped on the streets of Swat also raised concerns about extrajudicial killings of terrorism suspects by the military.<sup>10</sup>

To ensure that terrorism suspects were dealt with justly and expediently, the Supreme Court in August 2009 announced the formation of special committees to monitor the ATCs and ensure the quick disposal of anti-terrorism cases.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in November the government issued the Anti-Terrorism Amendment Ordinance (2009), which included new clauses to facilitate the framing of charges against hundreds of alleged militants. As per the latest amendment, "extrajudicial confessions" recorded by security personnel are admissible as evidence in ATCs, the remand period is extended from 30 to 90 days, and the burden of proof has shifted to the accused.<sup>12</sup>

By a special presidential order, the amended act was also extended to the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), which include Malakand Division where Swat is located.<sup>13</sup> The

authorities also established new ATCs in the region, bringing the total number of special courts in Peshawar and Malakand Division to 11.<sup>14</sup>

These measures acknowledged that the current ATC infrastructure, particularly in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), is ill-equipped to deal justly with the hundreds of suspected militants awaiting trial.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, since their inception in 1997, ATCs have failed to fulfill their mandate, as described by then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, to "impart timely and inexpensive justice."<sup>16</sup> Riddled with the same problems faced by the regular justice system—inadequate funding, understaffing, trial delays, and corruption—ATCs cannot be relied on to ensure that suspected terrorists are served justice.

### The Anti-Terrorism Act in Context

One of the problems ATCs face in dispensing swift and credible justice is that they have always been perceived as discriminatory. The Anti-Terrorism Act (1997) is an extension of the Suppression of Terrorist Activities Act (1975), which was passed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government to contend with opposition and nationalist movements in the NWFP and Baluchistan. Anti-terrorism mechanisms have thus been historically understood as means to suppress dissent.<sup>17</sup>

In 1997, Sharif's government promulgated the Anti-Terrorism Act after years of communal and sectarian violence contributed to political instability. The act established special courts and gave the police wide-ranging powers to arrest and detain suspects. The following year, in its judgment in the *Mebram Ali v. Pakistan* case, the Supreme Court declared 12 key sections

situated, with the approval of the President, so directs."

<sup>14</sup> Personal interview, Colonel Waheed Hamid, Inter-Services Public Relations, Islamabad, Pakistan, February 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations, the exact number of detainees awaiting trial has not been determined because suspected militants are constantly being transferred between ATCs, and from the settled areas of the North-West Frontier Province to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

<sup>16</sup> "Anti-Terrorism Act Promulgated," *Dawn*, November 29, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Fayyaz.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmer Soofi, "The Legal Challenge," *Dawn*, October 3, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See *Liaquat Hussain v. Federation of Pakistan*. In its 1999 judgment on the Liaquat Hussain case, the Supreme Court directed that civilians cannot be tried by military courts; that special courts cannot perform parallel functions to regular courts; and that the Action in Aid of Civil Power Ordinance (1998) does not extend to the creation of courts. For more information on this case, see Shabana Fayyaz, "Responding to Terrorism: Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Laws," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2:6 (2008).

<sup>7</sup> "Militants to Get Fair Trial, Says Rehman Malik," *Dawn*, October 28, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> "Anti-Terrorism Court Declares Fazlullah a Fugitive," *Indian Express*, August 19, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> "Muslim Khan, 23 Others Declared POs," *Dawn*, January 31, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Jane Perlez and Pir Zubair Shah, "Pakistan Army Said to be Linked to Swat Killings," *New York Times*, September 14, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> "Special Committees to Monitor Anti-Terrorism Courts," *Daily Times*, August 4, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Khalid Khesghi, "Anti-Terror Ordinance May Be Extended to Malakand," *The News International*, November 6, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> "Anti Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance 2009 Extended to PATA of NWFP," Associated Press of Pakistan, November 17, 2009. The order reads: "Under Article 247 of the Constitution, no Act of Parliament or Provincial Assembly shall apply to a Provincially Administered Tribal Area (PATA) or any part thereof unless the Governor of Province, in which the Tribal Area is

of the law unconstitutional and called for amendments.<sup>18</sup>

Since then, the Anti-Terrorism Act has been amended in 1998, three times in 1999, once in 2001, twice in 2002, and once in 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2009. These amendments were usually to increase the range of crimes covered by the act.<sup>19</sup> In addition to terrorist activities, the act covers arms trafficking, kidnapping, hijacking, extortion, sectarian violence, targeted political killings, and until last year gang rape.<sup>20</sup>

### Significant Dockets and Security Concerns

The variety of cases covered by the Anti-Terrorism Act contributes to the current backlog in ATCs nationwide. For example, in the southern port city of Karachi, which has largely escaped the wave of terrorist attacks that plagued the northern and western parts of Pakistan in 2009, there are 35 suspected Pakistani Taliban militants awaiting trial in the ATCs.<sup>21</sup> However, 56, 54, and 89 cases, respectively, are pending in ATC I, ATC II, and ATC III—the three special courts in the city—making it unlikely that the 35 suspected Pakistani Taliban militants will be tried this year.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, ATCs nationwide have been facing significant dockets since 2001.<sup>23</sup> These are worsened by the fact that the courts are severely understaffed and lack basic resources. The post of the judge for Karachi's ATC II, for example, has been vacant for more than six months. For their part, state prosecutors

complain that they are working in the poorest conditions—they have no offices, stationery, legal resources such as an archive of judgments, or clerical staff.<sup>24</sup> Many of these problems stem from the fact that the government has not allotted enough funds for the ATC infrastructure, a problem that plagues the Pakistani legal system at large. Moreover, since they work for a parallel system, state prosecutors employed by ATCs cannot even utilize the scant resources available to the regular session courts. As a result, ATCs have failed to deliver on their primary mandate—quick justice.<sup>25</sup>

ATC trials are also delayed due to security concerns. In cases where suspects are accused of heinous crimes, in-camera trials are conducted in jail. Arranging logistics for such hearings can lead to prolonged delays.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, complainants and witnesses often refuse to testify against the accused. Since extensive militant networks support most terrorism suspects, witnesses fear being targeted during ATC trials.<sup>27</sup>

Separately, personal security concerns on the part of judges, state prosecutors, and defense counsels frequently lead to the postponement of hearings. In January 2010, for example, Khwaja Sultan—the defense counsel for Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, who is accused of plotting the 2008 Mumbai attacks—petitioned the Rawalpindi ATC to transfer Lakhvi's case to an ATC in Lahore citing security concerns. In his petition, he claimed that he feared Indian intelligence officials would target him during his long commute to Adiala Jail, where Lakhvi is being tried.<sup>28</sup> The Lahore High Court refused to transfer Lakhvi's trial, but has asked

the government to ensure the counsel's security.<sup>29</sup>

### Judicial or Political Expediency?

Beyond the impact security concerns have on ATC verdicts, a long history of political victimization through anti-terrorism cases continues to undermine the credibility of convictions. According to Judge Syed Hasan Shah Bukhari of Karachi's ATC I, until a democratic government was elected in February 2008, most ATCs were issuing convictions on the authorities' instructions, rather than on the basis of transparent trials.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that ATCs are vulnerable to political influence is exemplified by several famous cases. For example, in November 1999 a case was registered against the recently deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the Karachi ATC, and he was eventually sentenced to life imprisonment for conspiracy to hijack a flight that was carrying General Pervez Musharraf from Sri Lanka to Pakistan.<sup>31</sup> In December 1999, Musharraf introduced amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act, extending offenses cognizable by the ATC and creating a new ATC in Karachi. The crimes that Sharif was accused of committing were not previously cognizable before ATCs, and without the amendments would have been filed in regular courts.<sup>32</sup> By turning to the ATCs, Musharraf successfully sidelined his political rival.

Similarly, former Baluchistan chief minister and President of the Baluchistan

18 For a detailed discussion of the evolution of anti-terrorism laws in Pakistan, see Charles Kennedy, "The Creation and Development of Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Regime," in Satu Limaye et al. eds., *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004), pp. 387-412.

19 Ibid.

20 "Rangers in Karachi to Get More Powers," *Dawn*, January 5, 2010. Under the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Rangers, a paramilitary force, were authorized to detain anyone suspected of violent activities for 90 days without charges.

21 Personal interview, Irfan Bahadur, deputy superintendent, Special Investigation Unit, Karachi, Pakistan, February 24, 2010.

22 Personal interview, Muhammad Khan Buriro, special public prosecutor, Anti-Terrorism Court I, Karachi, Pakistan, February 2010.

23 Kennedy, p. 15.

24 Personal interview, Buriro.

25 Kennedy, p. 15. According to the amended Anti-Terrorism Act, cases should be investigated within seven days, and subsequently disposed within seven days. Moreover, ATCs should only be assigned one case to dispose of at a time.

26 Personal interview, Mobashir Ahmed Mirza, special public prosecutor, Anti-Terrorism Court III, Karachi, Pakistan, February 2010. Mirza describes, for example, how state prosecutors ask the court to arrange transport for them from their offices to the Karachi Central Jail. Days may pass before the car requisition is granted.

27 Personal interview, Buriro.

28 "Lakhvi's Counsel Fears Attempt on Life," *Dawn*, January 14, 2010.

29 "LHC Refuses to Transfer Lakhvi's Trial," *The Nation*, January 23, 2010.

30 Personal interview, Syed Hasan Shah Bukhari, judge, Anti-Terrorism Court I, Karachi, Pakistan, February 2010.

31 On November 10, 1999, Lieutenant-Colonel Atiq-uz-Zaman Kiyani submitted a written complaint to the SHO Airport Police Station, Karachi, alleging that Nawaz Sharif had conspired to hijack Flight PK-805, thereby eliminating then COAS Pervez Musharraf. Karachi's ATC I convicted Sharif of the charges of hijacking and terrorism under Section 402 PPC and Section 7(ii) of the Anti-Terrorism Act. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and fined Rs. 500,000. The Sindh High Court upheld the ATC's decision. While serving his sentence, Sharif entered into a deal with Musharraf and agreed to remain abroad for 10 years and desist from political activities.

32 Kennedy, pp. 398-401.



National Party Sardar Akhtar Mengal was declared a proclaimed offender for taking army personnel hostage by Karachi's ATC V in June 2006.<sup>33</sup> He was then arrested during a rally in November 2006, a day before General Musharraf was due to visit Baluchistan. According to Amnesty International and the Asian Human Rights Commission, Mengal, who is a champion of the Baluch nationalist movement, was illegally detained until his release in May 2008, when all charges against him were dropped by the provincial Sindh government.<sup>34</sup>

### Human Rights Violations

Mengal's case illustrates how trials in ATCs can lead to human rights violations. Indeed, as soon as the Anti-Terrorism Act was passed in 1997, human rights groups such as Amnesty International rejected the formation of special courts.<sup>35</sup>

There continues to be concern that law enforcement personnel resort more frequently to torture and extrajudicial executions if given wide-ranging powers. In particular, by placing time limits on the investigation process, ATCs can make investigating officials prone to falsifying evidence and using coercive methods with suspects. A 2009 amendment to the Anti-Terrorism Act, which permits "extrajudicial confessions" to be used as evidence, has been seen in some quarters as an invitation for investigators to torture suspects.<sup>36</sup>

The courts themselves are perceived as lacking independence, as judges are held accountable to the executive. Moreover, ATCs deny terrorism suspects the right to equality before the law, as procedures differ significantly from regular courts. Terrorism suspects are also denied

the right to be tried in a public place, with a full defense, as well as the right to be presumed innocent until proven otherwise.

For these reasons, Peshawar High Court advocate Ghulam Nabi challenged the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance 2009 under Article 199 of the constitution in December 2009, declaring that it violated basic human rights.<sup>37</sup>

### Conclusion

Although the Anti-Terrorism Act is flawed, observers in Pakistan are currently concerned about shortcomings in the state's anti-terrorism mechanisms that allow known militants to go free without facing charges in ATCs. For example, the decision to pursue a case against a terrorism suspect is left to the discretion of the apprehending security officials. There is currently no system in place to determine on what basis some detainees are freed, while others are charged with terrorist activities.<sup>38</sup>

Terrorism suspects who remain in detention are transferred into the care of joint investigation teams, comprising officials of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Federal Investigation Agency, Intelligence Bureau, and police. These teams then determine whether local police officials should frame charges against the suspect, who would then be tried in the nearest ATC. During this process, terrorism suspects are often transferred between locations and interrogation cells. Investigating intelligence officials and police personnel have to gather evidence without having access to the area in which the suspect was first arrested. As a result, the charges they frame are often based on eyewitness accounts of military personnel. For this reason, it is expected that most suspected militants who were apprehended in recent military operations and are due to face trial in ATCs will be acquitted or face mild sentences.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, the Anti-Terrorism Act does not technically apply to residents of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas,

from where most known militants hail. Even if militants who claim FATA residency are arrested in the settled parts of the NWFP, they cannot legally be tried by ATCs and instead have to be transported to their tribal agency to face justice under the Frontier Crimes Regulation.<sup>40</sup> Although the government wants to try all militants in the ATCs, in the few situations where charges have been framed against FATA-based terrorism suspects in ATCs, their defense counsel has succeeded in having the charges dropped on the basis that residents of the tribal belt are subject to judgment under the FCR.<sup>41</sup>

If, as President Zardari stated, the Pakistan government is truly committed to punishing militants, the authorities must assess the credibility and capabilities of the anti-terrorism infrastructure. Funneling hundreds of suspected militants through the parallel courts will require the drafting of clear detention and interrogation protocols, financial investment, inter-provincial coordination, and appropriate human resource allocation. In their current incarnations, ATCs—even if they deliver convictions—cannot offer legal recourse against militant activity in Pakistan.

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33 "ATC Declares Mengal Proclaimed Offender," *Dawn*, June 11, 2006. Mengal's private security guards detained two army personnel at his private home after they tried to tail Mengal as he dropped his children off at school.

34 Peter Tatchell, "Pakistan's Nelson Mandela," *Guardian*, March 28, 2008; Latif Baloch and Ishaq Tanoli, "Mengal Freed; Worried About Missing Workers," *Dawn*, May 9, 2008.

35 "Legalizing the Impermissible: The New Anti-Terrorism Law," Amnesty International, October 1, 1997.

36 Personal interview, Iqbal Haider, co-chairperson of the Pakistan Human Rights Commission, Karachi, Pakistan, February 2010.

37 "Anti-Terrorism Law Challenged in PHC," *Daily Times*, December 24, 2009.

38 Personal interview, Hamid.

39 Personal interview, Haider.

40 According to Article 247 of the constitution, no act of parliament applies to FATA. Instead, a unique set of laws drafted by the British in 1848 and known as the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) are enforced. As per the FCR, the doctrine of collective responsibility, whereby an entire tribe is punished for crimes committed on its territory, applies. A federally appointed political agent is also empowered to arrest individuals without specifying charges; detain members of a suspect or absconder's tribe; or blockade the absconder's village. The FCR has been criticized for violating human rights, and in August 2009 the Pakistani government made some amendments to the regulations. For more information, see Syed Irfan Raza, "Amendments to Frontier Crime Regulation Approved," *Dawn*, August 13, 2009.

41 Personal interview, Hamid.

## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

February 1, 2010 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber targeted Shi'a pilgrims in Baghdad, killing at least 41 people. Approximately 12 children were among the dead. – *Independent, February 2; Voice of America, February 3*

February 1, 2010 (SOMALIA): According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the Somali militant group al-Shabab released a statement announcing that it is aligned with al-Qa`ida. Al-Shabab also announced that it has allied with Kamboni, a smaller insurgent group based in the southern town of Ras Kamboni and led by Hassan Turki. – *BBC, February 1; Wall Street Journal, February 2*

February 2, 2010 (UNITED STATES): U.S. Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair told a Senate panel that al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has emerged as the “foremost concern” for U.S. intelligence agencies. – *Los Angeles Times, February 3*

February 2, 2010 (YEMEN): In an interview with al-Jazeera, Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi admitted that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab “is one of my students” and that the two “were in correspondence.” He also said, however, that he “did not give [Abdulmutallab] a *fatwa* in regards to this operation,” referring to the failed Christmas Day bombing plot of a U.S. airliner near Detroit. – *Washington Post, February 6*

February 3, 2010 (IRAQ): A bomb on a motorcycle exploded near Karbala, killing at least 20 Shi'a pilgrims. – *Voice of America, February 3*

February 3, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed at least seven people, including three U.S. military personnel, in Lower Dir District of the North-West Frontier Province. According to Agence France-Presse, “It appears to be the first time American soldiers have been killed in such an attack in Pakistan.” Three Pakistani schoolgirls also died in the blast. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed credit for the operation. – *Christian Science Monitor, February 3; BBC, February 4*

February 4, 2010 (UNITED STATES): A jury in a U.S. federal court found Aafia

Siddiqui guilty of trying to kill U.S. servicemen in Afghanistan. Siddiqui, a Pakistani neuroscientist trained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States, was accused of trying to gun down a group of U.S. servicemen at an Afghan police station in July 2008. After being found guilty, she said, “This is a verdict from Israel, not America. The anger should be directed where it belongs.” – *AFP, February 4*

February 4, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan authorities arrested a district administrator in northern Badghis Province for leaking information on Afghan and international troop movements to Taliban fighters. The administrator, identified as Aminullah, was in charge of Bala Murghab district in Badghis. – *Wall Street Journal, February 9*

February 4, 2010 (INDIA): India's home minister, Palaniappan Chidambaram, said that the 10 Pakistani terrorists who attacked Mumbai in November 2008 could have been guided by an Indian handler. Authorities do not have the handler in custody, nor do they know the individual's identity. – *Times of India, February 4*

February 5, 2010 (IRAQ): A car bomb ripped through a group of Shi'a pilgrims in Karbala, killing 10 people. Shortly after, a suicide bomber in a vehicle detonated explosives at the first blast site, killing another 22 people. – *Los Angeles Times, February 5*

February 5, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Two suicide bombers killed 25 people in Karachi, located in Pakistan's Sindh Province. The first bomber rammed an explosives-laden motorbike into a bus carrying Shi'a on one of the city's busiest roads, killing 12 people. Two hours later, the second bomber detonated his explosives at the entrance to the casualty department at Jinnah Hospital, where families of the victims hurt in the first blast had gathered; 13 people died in the second blast. According to a senior police official, “The perpetrators knew Jinnah Hospital was the nearest to the site of the first attack and ensured a follow-up attack when they saw significant numbers of people gathered there.” – *AFP, February 5; RIA Novosti, February 6*

February 5, 2010 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

said that it will extend its deadline for French captive Pierre Camatte until February 20. In exchange for Camatte's release, AQIM is demanding that the French and Mali governments release four AQIM militants held in Mali. – *AFP, February 5*

February 6, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemeni authorities announced that they recently arrested a man in Sana`a who threatened to blow up foreign embassies and assassinate Yemeni leaders. The announcement did not state whether the man was a member of al-Qa`ida. – *AFP, February 6*

February 8, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani authorities arrested six suspected Taliban militants who were allegedly about to attack the five-star Pearl Continental hotel in Lahore, the capital of Punjab Province. The six suspected militants were armed with a suicide vest and 26 hand grenades, and they were supposedly hoping to kill Americans. – *AP, February 9*

February 8, 2010 (YEMEN): Said Ali al-Shihri, the deputy leader of al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), purportedly released a new audio statement calling on Muslims in the region to attack the United States and its allies. During the speech, al-Shihri praised Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's “glorious invasion,” referring to the failed Christmas Day bombing attempt against a U.S. airliner near Detroit. Al-Shihri is a former inmate at the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. – *BBC, February 8; Washington Post, February 8*

February 9, 2010 (PAKISTAN): The Pakistani Taliban reportedly confirmed that their leader, Hakimullah Mehsud, died from injuries sustained in a U.S. drone missile strike in January. – *Los Angeles Times, February 10*

February 10, 2010 (ISRAEL): Palestinian security forces said they recently arrested a suspected cell of al-Qa`ida sympathizers in the West Bank. According to a Palestinian security official, “They considered themselves part of Al-Qaeda but did not have any contacts with Al-Qaeda leaders abroad.” The men were apparently carrying out military training, but had not yet chosen a target to attack. – *AFP, February 10*

February 10, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a police patrol

vehicle in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing 18 people. At least seven of the dead were police. – *AFP, February 11*

February 10, 2010 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine police announced that they recently arrested Sukri Hassan Itauris, an alleged Abu Sayyaf Group militant involved in the kidnappings of 20 tourists, including three Americans, from a Philippine resort in 2001. He was arrested in Basilan Province. – *Philippine Star, February 10*

February 11, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a joint Afghan-U.S. military base in Pathan district of Paktia Province, wounding five U.S. soldiers. The bomber was wearing an Afghan border police uniform, and the Taliban later claimed that the bomber was in fact a Taliban fighter who also served as a police officer. – *New York Times, February 12*

February 11, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Two suicide bombers detonated their explosives outside a police training center in Bannu District of the North-West Frontier Province, killing at least 15 people. – *AFP, February 11; New York Times, February 11*

February 11, 2010 (INDIA): Three gunmen shot dead a lawyer representing Fahim Ansari, who is accused of involvement in the November 2008 Mumbai attacks. The lawyer, Shahid Azmi, was killed in Mumbai. – *CNN, February 12*

February 11, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemen's president announced that a cease-fire has been achieved with the country's northern rebels. According to the Associated Press, "After years of sporadic fighting with the [northern] militants, Yemen has come under international pressure to quickly draw a close to the war and free up resources to confront a separate threat from an al-Qaida offshoot that has set up operations there over the past year." – *AP, February 11*

February 12, 2010 (IRAQ): The leader of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi, threatened the upcoming March 7 elections in Iraq, warning that "[we] have decided to prevent the elections by all legitimate means possible, primarily by military means." – *AFP, February 12*

February 13, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): U.S. soldiers began a major operation against the Taliban stronghold of Marja in Helmand Province. – *CBS News, February 13*

February 13, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber on a motorcycle attacked a joint U.S.-Afghan foot patrol in Kandahar Province, wounding six U.S. soldiers and five civilians. – *New York Times, February 15*

February 13, 2010 (INDIA): A bomb ripped through a bakery in a neighborhood popular with foreign tourists in the western city of Pune. The explosion killed at least 12 people. – *New York Times, February 13; AFP, February 20*

February 14, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed seven militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The drone targeted a compound near Mir Ali. – *Reuters, February 14; AFP, February 14*

February 15, 2010 (AUSTRALIA): A judge in Australia sentenced five Sydney men to 23 to 28 years in prison for conspiring to commit terrorist acts. The men were stockpiling chemicals to make explosives. – *Australian Broadcasting Corporation, February 15; Reuters, February 15*

February 15, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani officials announced that the Afghan Taliban's second-in-command, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, was captured last week in Karachi. He was arrested in a joint U.S.-Pakistani intelligence raid. – *AP, February 15; Christian Science Monitor, February 16*

February 15, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed at least three militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AFP, February 15*

February 17, 2010 (CANADA): Said Namouh, a Moroccan-born man from Quebec who plotted international terrorist attacks with a group tied to al-Qa`ida, was sentenced to life in prison by a Canadian judge. – *Canadian Press, February 17*

February 17, 2010 (LEBANON): Lebanon indicted 11 suspected militants with plotting terrorist attacks and monitoring the movements of United Nations peacekeepers in southern Lebanon. – *AP, February 17*

February 18, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives near the government headquarters in Ramadi, the capital of Anbar Province. At least 13 people were killed. – *New York Times, February 18*

February 18, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Officials announced that two senior Afghan Taliban leaders were recently arrested in Pakistan. Afghan officials identified the arrested men as Mullah Abdul Salam and Mullah Mir Mohammed, the Afghan Taliban's shadow governors for Kunduz and Baghlan provinces respectively. – *New York Times, February 18*

February 18, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A bomb ripped through a mosque in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing at least 29 people. – *AP, February 18*

February 18, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed at least four militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AFP, February 18*

February 18, 2010 (MALI): Malian authorities reportedly released four Islamist prisoners in an apparent deal with al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb, which is holding French national Pierre Camatte hostage. – *Reuters, February 20*

February 19, 2010 (YEMEN): The U.S. government has approved \$150 million in military assistance to Yemen, which will pay for military equipment and training for Yemeni forces. – *AP, February 22*

February 21, 2010 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine soldiers killed six Abu Sayyaf Group militants on Jolo Island. One of the dead, Albader Parad, was a top al-Qa`ida-linked militant. – *AP, February 20*

February 22, 2010 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri purportedly released a new audiotape criticizing Turkey. The recording said, "The Turkish troops will carry out the same operations in Afghanistan that the Jews are carrying out in Palestine, so how would the pious, free Turkish Muslim people accept such a crime against Islam and the Muslims?" – *CNN, February 22*

February 22, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Najibullah Zazi, accused of planning a terrorist attack on New York City, pleaded

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guilty to conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction, conspiracy to commit murder in a foreign country and providing material support to al-Qa`ida. - *Reuters, February 22*

February 22, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber assassinated Hajji Zaman Ghamsharik, a prominent Afghan warlord, near Jalalabad in Nangarhar Province. The Taliban denied responsibility. According to the *New York Times*, Ghamsharik was "accused of helping Osama bin Laden escape from the Americans at Tora Bora," and he had "so many enemies that his assassination...came as no particular surprise." A number of civilians were also killed in the blast. - *New York Times, February 22*

February 22, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani officials announced the arrest of Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Kabir, who served on the Taliban's Council of Ministers. - *CNN, February 22*

February 22, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a security force convoy, killing eight people in Pakistan's Swat Valley. - *Reuters, February 22; CNN, February 22*

February 23, 2010 (INDONESIA): Indonesian police arrested four suspected militants in a major raid on a terrorist training camp in remote Aceh Province. More than 50 militants were using the camp, and police "strongly" suspect that the men belong to Jemaah Islamiya. Most of the militants escaped into the jungle. - *AFP, February 23*

February 23, 2010 (MALI): Malian authorities announced that al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb released French national Pierre Camatte. The move comes after Malian authorities released four Islamist prisoners on February 18, in an apparent trade for Camatte's release. - *BBC, February 23*

February 24, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone strike killed at least 13 militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Pakistani intelligence officials later identified one of the dead as Mohammed Qari Zafar, a Pakistani Taliban commander wanted in the deadly bombing of the U.S. Consulate in Karachi. - *Voice of America, February 24; New York Times, February 24; AP, February 26*

February 25, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Two co-defendants of Najibullah Zazi pleaded not guilty to conspiring in a plot to execute terrorist attacks in New York City. The men, Adis Medunjanin and Zarein Ahmedzay, were charged with conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction, conspiracy to commit murder in a foreign country and receiving al-Qa`ida training. - *Reuters, February 25*

February 25, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): The Afghan flag was raised over Marja as part of a major coalition offensive in the region that began on February 13. Marja is located in Helmand Province. - *CNN, February 26*

February 26, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters launched a coordinated assault on Kabul, killing at least 16 people. As part of the attack, three suicide bombers attacked the Park Residence Hotel and the Aria Guesthouse nearby, and it appears that Indians were targeted. An Italian diplomat, a French filmmaker and at least six Indians were among the dead. - *Bloomberg, February 26; Times, February 27*

February 27, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber from the Pakistani Taliban detonated a car laden with explosives at the gate of the main police station in Karak, located in the North-West Frontier Province. Four people were killed. - *Voice of America, February 27; Dawn, February 28*

February 28, 2010 (GLOBAL): A posthumous video message appeared on jihadist websites from Humam Khalil Abu Mulal al-Balawi, the al-Qa`ida double agent who killed seven CIA operatives and a Jordanian spy on December 30, 2009. In the video, al-Balawi said, "We planned for something but got a bigger gift, a gift from Allah, who brought us, through His accompaniment, a valuable prey: Americans, and from the CIA. That's when I became certain that the best way to teach Jordanian intelligence and the CIA a lesson is with the martyrdom belt." - *AP, February 28*