



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.

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# The Mysterious Relationship Between Al-Qa`ida and Iran

By Bruce Riedel



**T**HE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN al-Qa`ida and Iran is shrouded in mystery. Before and after the September 11 attacks on the United States, al-Qa`ida operatives transited Iran, and some found sanctuary in the country after fleeing Afghanistan in late 2001. Yet the hints of occasional operational cooperation between al-Qa`ida and Iran are outweighed by the considerable and public evidence of the deep animosity between Sunni extremist al-Qa`ida and Shi`a extremist Iran. Antipathy for each other is at the root of their ideologies and narratives, and it has been most visible in their competition for influence in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This dynamic may change, however, if the United States and Iran move toward confrontation or even conflict over the Iranian government's nuclear weapons ambitions. As tensions between Washington and Tehran increase, Shi`a antipathy for Sunni jihadists such as

al-Qa`ida and its Taliban allies may be outweighed by a desire to find ways to spoil U.S. interests in the region. Similarly, as Washington ratchets up the pressure on al-Qa`ida in Pakistan, Usama bin Ladin and al-Qa`ida may find Iran a more attractive partner. Thus, what has been a hostile relationship could become a more collaborative one.

This article reviews the historical relationship between al-Qa`ida and Iran before examining the factors that could cause the two entities to work together against the United States and its allies.

### Background

The evidence for a secret relationship between al-Qa`ida and Iran is significant, but largely limited and the facts quite murky. The 9/11 Commission's report concluded that there is evidence of contacts among al-Qa`ida, the Iranian government and Iran's Lebanese Hizb Allah ally dating back to Usama bin

Ladin's years in Khartoum in the mid-1990s.<sup>1</sup> During this time, it is possible that Hizb Allah provided some training to future al-Qa`ida operatives, as Sudan was a watering hole for virtually every terrorist and extremist group in the Middle East. As a result, it would not be surprising for the nascent al-Qa`ida group to have encountered the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS).

Some sources, including the 9/11 Commission, have suggested more than mere contact, alleging that the two may have collaborated in the attack on the U.S. Air Force barracks in Khobar, Saudi Arabia in 1996. In the *CTC*

## **“Al-Qa`ida’s rebuke to Hizb Allah and Iran for being ‘soft’ on Israel may strike many in the West as peculiar, but it is a visible manifestation of the depth of divide between the Sunni and Shi`a jihads.”**

*Sentinel*, however, Thomas Hegghammer made clear that the evidence for such collaboration is unconvincing.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, evidence that emerged in the decade after the attack, reviewed by the author, also suggests that al-Qa`ida did not have involvement in the Khobar attacks.<sup>3</sup> Bin Ladin has said the same.<sup>4</sup>

The 9/11 Commission's report also found that a senior Hizb Allah official visited Saudi Arabia in October 2000 to assist Saudis traveling to Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> Three of the 9/11 hijackers reportedly traveled from Saudi Arabia to Beirut, then to Iran and into Afghanistan on a flight

with an associate of a senior Hizb Allah official.<sup>6</sup> Khalid Shaykh Muhammad and Ramzi bin al-Shibh, two captured al-Qa`ida operatives, confirmed that 8-10 of the 9/11 hijackers at some point between October 2000 and February 2001 transited Iran on their way to or from Afghanistan “taking advantage of the Iranian practice of not stamping Saudi passports.”<sup>7</sup> What is not clear in the report is whether Iran gave these travelers any treatment different from that provided to other Saudis transiting Iran to Afghanistan in 2001.<sup>8</sup>

The bottom line of the 9/11 Commission's report, however, is unequivocal. It states that both Khalid Shaykh Muhammad and Ramzi bin al-Shibh categorically denied any relationship between the hijackers and Hizb Allah. On Iran, the commission concluded, “we have found no evidence that Iran or Hizballah was aware of the planning for what later became the 9/11 attack.”<sup>9</sup>

### **After 9/11: Al-Qa`ida Operatives in Iran**

After September 2001, several al-Qa`ida operatives, including one of Bin Ladin's sons and other relatives, fled to Iran to escape the debacle of the collapse of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Some of these individuals have remained in Iran ever since. Their status has never been clear; some reports suggest they are under house arrest or even in prison. Other reports say they are free to operate. It has been reported that these Iran-based al-Qa`ida cells played a support role in the al-Qa`ida attacks on foreigners living in Riyadh on May 12, 2003 that killed 35 people, including eight Americans.<sup>10</sup> It has also been suggested that the Iranian government may be using its al-Qa`ida detainees as hostages to help dissuade the terrorist group from attacking Iranian interests. Tehran may also have hoped to trade them to the United States for Mujahidin-i-Khalq leaders captured in Iraq in 2003.<sup>11</sup> Their value to the Iranian government may change over time.

Bin Ladin's son, Sa`ad, reportedly left Iran in 2008.<sup>12</sup> The circumstances are unclear about whether he was released by Iranian authorities or if he escaped. One of Bin Ladin's daughters left Iran for Saudi Arabia this year via Syria.<sup>13</sup> After the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, it is clear that al-Qa`ida messengers transited Iran to get from Pakistan to Iraq. The Iranian authorities apparently at least tolerated such transit if not facilitated it; they likely see such transfers as a relatively low risk method to keep the United States bogged down in two wars and therefore less likely to focus its attention on Iran.

### **Hostile Enemies?**

On the other side of the ledger, the animosity between Iran and al-Qa`ida is public and abundantly clear. For al-Qa`ida and its allies such as the Taliban, Shi`a are not true Muslims and should be treated as outcasts at best, if not apostates. For Iran, the Taliban and al-Qa`ida are bigots who abuse Shi`a. The Taliban harshly repressed Afghan Hazara Shi`a in the 1990s, murdering thousands when it took over their towns and cities in 1998. The Taliban murdered several Iranian diplomats as well in 1998, and the two almost went to war over the incident.<sup>14</sup>

Al-Qa`ida was an enthusiastic and public supporter of the Taliban in its conflict with Tehran, a lonely voice of support at the time that probably helped cement Bin Ladin's relationship with Taliban leader Mullah Omar. Al-Qa`ida provided troops and money for the fight against Iran's Northern Alliance allies. The IRGC and MOIS were consistent supporters of al-Qa`ida's Afghan enemy, the Northern Alliance, and had operatives in Afghanistan before and after 9/11. When the first Central Intelligence Agency team arrived in the Pansjhir Valley in late 2001 to overthrow the Taliban and al-Qa`ida, they found that the Iranians were already active in the area.<sup>15</sup>

1 *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004).

2 Thomas Hegghammer, “Deconstructing the Myth about al-Qa`ida and Khobar,” *CTC Sentinel* 1:3 (2008).

3 The author was present at the Khobar Towers hours after the attack. During the next decade, the author reviewed all the available evidence on the attack and did not find an al-Qa`ida hand in the operation.

4 Bruce Lawrence ed., *Messages to the World, The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 52.

5 *The 9/11 Commission Report*.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*

10 Douglas Jehl and Eric Schmitt, “US Suggests a Qaeda Cell in Iran Directed Saudi Bombings,” *New York Times*, May 21, 2003.

11 The Mujahidin-i-Khalq is an organization that advocates the overthrow of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

12 “Bin Laden Son Saad Left Iran, Now in Pakistan-US,” Reuters, January 16, 2009.

13 “Bin Laden's Daughter Set Free from Iran,” CBS/AP, March 23, 2010.

14 “Taliban Threatens Retaliation if Iran Strikes,” CNN, September 15, 1998.

15 Gary Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Ballantine, 2006), p. 89.

Since 2003, al-Qa`ida's franchise in Iraq has killed thousands of Iraqi Shi`a and scores of senior Shi`a leaders. Al-Qa`ida argues that the Shi`a are pawns of Iran seeking to restore "Safavid" control of the country, a reference to the first Shi`a Persian dynasty that fought the Ottoman Empire for control

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of Iraq in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Al-Qa`ida's first leader in Iraq, Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, was notoriously vicious in his hatred for the Shi`a, even earning a private reproach from Bin Ladin's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, for his indiscriminate attacks on Shi`a leaders, mosques and processions.

Al-Zarqawi wrote to al-Zawahiri to explain his view of the "heretic" Shi`a. It is worth looking at this letter, intercepted by U.S. intelligence, for an understanding of how al-Qa`ida views Iran and the Shi`a. Al-Zarqawi began by saying that the Shi`a are "an insurmountable obstacle, a lurking snake, a crafty and malicious scorpion, a spying enemy and a mortal venom."<sup>16</sup> For al-Zarqawi, "Shiism is a looming danger and a true challenge that has nothing in common with Islam."<sup>17</sup> Iran's goal is to create a "heretical state from Iran through Iraq, Syria and Lebanon to the cardboard kingdom of the Gulf."<sup>18</sup> He even quoted a European specialist as saying that if the "Safavids had not existed, we in Europe would be reading the Quran just as the Algerians do" because the Shi`a empire "stabbed

the Muslims in the back" when the Ottomans were at the gates of Vienna in 1683.<sup>19</sup> Memories are long in al-Qa`ida.

During and since the 2006 war between Hizb Allah and Israel, al-Qa`ida leaders, including al-Zawahiri, have been critical of Hizb Allah for accepting a cease-fire with Israel and allowing United Nations peacekeepers to operate on Lebanese territory. Al-Qa`ida's rebuke to Hizb Allah and Iran for being "soft" on Israel may strike many in the West as peculiar, but it is a visible manifestation of the depth of divide between the Sunni and Shi`a jihads. Since 2009, al-Qa`ida media outlets have reproached the Palestinian Sunni terrorist group Hamas for accepting aid from Iran in its fight with Israel.

On balance, the evidence of a hostile relationship is much more compelling than evidence for a collaborative one. Nevertheless, that does not preclude the possibility of occasional operational collusion; terrorists often seek help from criminals and drug dealers, and therefore from other terrorists as well. Yet it does not suggest a partnership or alliance.

#### Possible Change of Dynamics

This dynamic could change in the near future. The United States and Iran are on a collision course over Tehran's determination to develop a nuclear weapons capability. As this confrontation worsens, Iran will be looking for ways to damage U.S. interests in the region, especially through means that bog the United States down further in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since the United States is withdrawing forces from Iraq, Afghanistan is probably the best venue to strike. Moreover, as the war in Afghanistan is now "Obama's war"—where he has tripled U.S. troop numbers—the temptation to make the war harder may be impossible for Tehran to resist.

For several years, Iran has had a low-level relationship with its old nemesis, the Afghan Taliban. Since 2007, American and British commanders in Afghanistan have reported evidence

of small quantities of Iranian arms provided to the Taliban and of the IRGC training Taliban operatives.<sup>20</sup> Iran has kept its options open in Afghanistan and has positioned itself to be more helpful to the Taliban should it decide to adopt this strategy. On the whole, Iran has been an ally of the Karzai government in Kabul since 2001 and has invested significantly in western Afghanistan to help stabilize the border region. For example, the largest Afghan city in the west, Herat, is linked to the Iranian electrical grid. Yet Iran could choose to "turn off the lights" if it wanted to make the already difficult Afghan mission even harder for the United States and NATO. The Italian military, which patrols Herat, is extremely conscious of its vulnerability to Iranian mischief.

Increasing aid to the Taliban while making life in western Afghanistan unpleasant for NATO would be a fairly simple and relatively low risk way of signaling to Washington that Iran can play hardball. Another path could be allowing al-Qa`ida greater use of Iranian territory for travel transit or safe haven. Indeed, to the extent that the United States puts pressure on al-Qa`ida's safe haven in Pakistan, the terrorists will likely look for an alternative sanctuary. Iran is next door, and if allowed al-Qa`ida might find the change of venue attractive at least for parts of its infrastructure. While greater cooperation with the Taliban and al-Qa`ida could backfire and isolate Iran further, Tehran may consider the price worth paying in the face of Western aggression against its nuclear program.

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16 "Text from Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi Letter," GlobalSecurity.org, undated.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 "Letter to Bin Laden and Zawahiri," in Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli eds., *Al Qaeda in its Own Words* (Cambridge, NJ: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 251-267.

20 Damien McElroy, "Iran Helping the Taliban, US Ambassador Claims," *Telegraph*, December 17, 2009; Sajjan M. Gohel, "Iran's Ambiguous Role in Afghanistan," *CTC Sentinel* 3:3 (2010).



## Al-Shabab's Agenda in the Wake of the Kampala Suicide Attacks

By Tim Pippard

THE SOMALI ISLAMIST group al-Shabab demonstrated its expanding operational reach when it executed simultaneous suicide bombings in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, on July 11, 2010.<sup>1</sup> The attacks—targeting a rugby club and an Ethiopian restaurant in a neighborhood popular with expatriates as people watched the World Cup final—left 76 civilians dead, including one U.S. citizen.<sup>2</sup> While an investigation by Ugandan authorities into the attacks is ongoing (with some support from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation), U.S. Department of State officials acknowledge that initial evidence confirms the al-Shabab connection to the blasts.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Shabab previously announced its internationalist ambitions on February 1, 2010 when it formally aligned with al-Qa`ida, stressing in a media release that the “jihad of the Horn of Africa must be combined with the international jihad led by the al-Qa`ida network.”<sup>4</sup> Yet for the most part, this move had minimal immediate impact on al-Shabab’s operational activities. Aside from a handful of minor incursions into northern and northeastern Kenya, the group has retained a focus on Somalia and foreign military and political targets in the capital city Mogadishu, as well as parts of central and southern Somalia.<sup>5</sup>

1 Alisha Ryu, “Al-Shabab Leader Threatens More Attacks in Uganda,” *Voice of America*, July 15, 2010.

2 “Somali Militants Claim Kampala World Cup Blasts,” *BBC*, July 12, 2010; “Worldwide Alert Issued to Identify Kampala Suicide Bombers,” *Voice of America*, July 18, 2010.

3 Al-Shabab also officially claimed responsibility for the blasts. Separately, Ugandan police announced on July 13 that they had found an explosives-laden vest (rigged to detonate by cell phone) at a nightclub in Kampala, possibly preventing another explosion. For details, see Josh Kron, “Uganda Says it Thwarted Another Bombing,” *New York Times*, July 13, 2010; Philip J. Crowley, daily press briefing, U.S. State Department, July 12, 2010.

4 Sarah Childress, “Somalia’s Al Shabaab to Ally With Al Qaeda,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 2010.

5 Fred Mukinda, “Al-Shabaab Attacks Kenya Territory,” *Daily Nation*, March 31, 2010; “Shabab Militants Attack Village in Kenya’s North Eastern Province,” *Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, May 29, 2010.

Therefore, the Kampala attacks—al-Shabab’s first successful major foreign operation—constitute an important development, raising questions about the extent to which al-Shabab is evolving from an Islamic-nationalist group claiming to operate on behalf of Somalis, to one now seemingly incorporated more fully into a broader pan-Islamic campaign. This article will examine the group’s capacity to pursue and sustain a campaign outside of Somalia’s borders.

### Al-Shabab’s Foreign Focus

Al-Shabab emerged as an independent entity in early 2007 following the collapse of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which controlled much of central and southern Somalia during the latter half of 2006 until an Ethiopian invasion in late December ousted the Islamists from power.<sup>6</sup> Its central aims since that time have been to overthrow Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government (TFG), implement Shari`a, and eject all foreign security forces from the country.

The heavy presence of foreign military personnel in Somalia is one of the key drivers of al-Shabab’s campaign, ensuring that the group has always incorporated a foreign-focused element. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is currently the only force capable of challenging al-Shabab’s ascendancy in Mogadishu, having replaced Ethiopian troops in early 2007 to bolster the TFG.<sup>7</sup> Critically, of the 6,000 AMISOM military personnel currently deployed in Somalia, all but four military staff officers have been provided by Uganda and Burundi—a level of involvement guaranteeing that both countries remain priority targets for Somali Islamists.<sup>8</sup> Al-Shabab has also characterized AMISOM as a mere

6 “Somalia: The Tough Part is Ahead,” *International Crisis Group*, January 26, 2007; Ravi Somaiya, “Who is Al-Shabab?” *Newsweek*, July 12, 2010.

7 Will Hartley, “Terrorism Trends – Jane’s Intelligence Centre Seminar,” *IHS Jane’s*, June 22, 2010.

8 Although AMISOM’s force size has failed to reach its mandated 8,000, Uganda’s deployment of a fourth battalion in mid-March 2010 took the force size to 6,120 troops. Of this total, Ghana, Cameroon, Senegal and Zambia have contributed four military staff officers to AMISOM headquarters in Mogadishu. Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Zambia have also contributed to the 40-strong AMISOM civilian police deployment in Somalia. See “Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia,” *United Nations Security Council*, May 11, 2010.

continuation of the Ethiopian invasion, and thus Ethiopia too remains a key al-Shabab adversary.

In this respect, the Kampala attacks mark the continuation and intensification of al-Shabab’s rhetorical and operational campaign directed at Ugandan and Burundian targets that has become increasingly pronounced and coherent in recent months. On July 9, 2010, just two days prior to the Kampala blasts, al-Shabab issued a statement

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encouraging Islamist militants in Chechnya, Pakistan, Afghanistan and elsewhere to attack the diplomatic missions of Uganda and Burundi in response to their continued support for the TFG.<sup>9</sup> Specific threats targeting the Ugandan and Burundian capital cities also featured in an al-Shabab statement dated October 22, 2009, in which senior al-Shabab commander Shaykh Ali Mohamed Hussein stressed: “We shall make their people cry. We will attack Bujumbura and Kampala... We will move our fighting to those two cities and we will destroy them.”<sup>10</sup>

Ugandan and Burundian troops have also come under sustained attack in al-Shabab-controlled areas of Mogadishu in IED attacks, raids, ambushes, targeted assassinations, and stand-off weapon operations. In one such exchange on

9 “Somalia’s Shabab Calls on Global Islamist Militants to Attack Ugandan and Burundian Targets,” *Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, July 9, 2010.

10 “Shabab Threatens to Attack Burundian and Ugandan Capitals,” *Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, October 23, 2009; “Shabab Threatens Uganda and Burundi,” *al-Jazeera*, October 23, 2009.

June 3, 2010, mortar fire between al-Shabab militants and TFG troops (backed by AMISOM peacekeepers) in the Kaaraan, Yaqshid and Abdiuzziz districts of the capital left 23 people dead and 66 others wounded; two of those killed were Ugandan troops.<sup>11</sup>

#### Radicalization and Centralization

Al-Shabab's operational capacity to project its campaign beyond Somalia's borders ultimately relates to a range of shifts in the group's internal dynamics during the past two years, culminating in the emergence of a highly centralized and radicalized organization that is far more capable of pursuing its extreme Islamist ideology.

Most notably, al-Shabab's loose network structure has been supplanted by a more centralized organizational hierarchy coalesced around several key Somali extremists.<sup>12</sup> These include the group's leader Ahmed Abdi Aw-Mahmoud (known as "Godane"), Ibrahim Haji Jama "al-Afghani," and Shaykh Fuad Mohamed "Shongole." These individuals are thought to be supported by several foreign al-Qa`ida operatives implicated in the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, as well as the attacks on Israeli tourists in Mombasa in November 2002,<sup>13</sup> principal among them being Fazul Abdullah Muhammad (al-Qa`ida's leading figure in Somalia).<sup>14</sup> Many of these foreign fighters have settled in al-Shabab camps in southern Somalia and are involved in training Somali militants.<sup>15</sup> Their primacy in the upper echelons of al-Shabab's leadership hierarchy also facilitates and ensures the high degree of operational planning and

preparedness required to successfully launch large-scale operations.

In addition, al-Shabab has increasingly incorporated tactics synonymous with sophisticated al-Qa`ida operations—a progression common to local groups seeking to solidify ties with al-Qa`ida.<sup>16</sup> Several al-Shabab attacks have involved multiple, simultaneous mass casualty suicide explosions. On September 17, 2009, two al-Shabab suicide bombers infiltrated AMISOM's headquarters in the capital city, killing 17 soldiers

### **“Each of these attributes suggests that al-Shabab will continue to evolve into a greater regional threat.”**

(including Burundian Major General Juvenal Niyonguruza, AMISOM's deputy commander) and injuring another 40.<sup>17</sup> On December 3, 2009, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a graduation ceremony being held at Mogadishu's Shamo Hotel, killing 24 people, including four TFG officials.<sup>18</sup>

Al-Shabab has also crafted a vigorous communications strategy designed to promote and garner domestic and international support for its extreme ideology, as well as discourage further external meddling in Somalia. Al-Shabab's media wing—the al-Kataib Foundation for Media Productions—frequently issues high quality video and audio statements containing threats of future attacks, or glorifying past operations (particularly martyrdom operations). A 10-minute video released by al-Shabab in early June 2010 titled “The African Crusaders” is one of the slickest productions to date, containing footage and images of heavy clashes with AMISOM troops in northern Mogadishu

on May 27.<sup>19</sup> Speaking in English, the narrator questions the involvement of Ugandan and Burundian troops in Somalia, accusing them of “fighting America's war in a foreign land.”<sup>20</sup>

#### Diaspora Support

Al-Shabab is also actively seeking material and physical support from Somali communities in Western Europe and the United States, further enhancing its international characteristics. For instance, in February 2008 three Somali immigrants were arrested in Sweden and three in Norway on suspicion of financing terrorism (five individuals were subsequently released without charge; one Norwegian national was charged in October 2009 with collecting money for Somali terrorist groups).<sup>21</sup>

Many of the individuals recruited into al-Shabab's ranks or suspected of providing material support to the group are U.S. nationals, some of whom have become highly radicalized. On November 23, 2009, as part of an ongoing U.S. investigation into Somali Islamist insurgent support networks, 14 individuals were charged with recruiting and financing some 20 Somali men in the Minneapolis area of Minnesota, who subsequently traveled to Somalia and trained at al-Shabab camps.<sup>22</sup> According to official court documents, a Somali-American who traveled to Somalia, Shirwa Ahmed, was one of five suicide bombers involved in simultaneous suicide attacks in northern Somalia in October 2008.<sup>23</sup> The central concern among U.S. counterterrorism officials is that more members of the Somali-American diaspora might embrace terrorism, and that al-Qa`ida will continue to exploit and develop its base in southern Somalia from which to target U.S. and Western interests.<sup>24</sup>

11 “Mortar Exchange Leaves 23 Dead in Somalia's Mogadishu,” *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, June 3, 2010.

12 “Somalia's Divided Islamists,” *International Crisis Group*, May 18, 2010.

13 Johnnie Carson, “Developing a Coordinated and Sustainable U.S. Strategy Toward Somalia,” testimony before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Foreign Relations, May 20, 2009.

14 Fazul Abdullah Muhammad became al-Qa`ida's lead operative in Somalia after the death of Salah Ali Salah Nabhan in a U.S. raid on September 14, 2009. See “Shabab's Mixed Messages,” *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, January 27, 2010; “Somalia's Divided Islamists.”

15 “Al Qaeda in Yemen and Somalia: A Ticking Time Bomb,” report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, January 21, 2010.

16 For instance, in Algeria the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat's (GSPC) alignment with al-Qa`ida in late 2006 led to a resurgence in violence characterized by large-scale suicide attacks in April, September and December 2007. See “JTIC Country Briefing – Algeria,” *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, June 1, 2009.

17 “Shabab Attacks AMISOM,” *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, July 12, 2010.

18 “Somalia's Divided Islamists.”

19 “The African Crusaders,” al-Kataib Foundation for Media Productions, June 2010.

20 “Shabab Attacks AMISOM.”

21 “Somali Arrested in Sweden,” *Ice News*, March 11, 2008; Christian Nils Larson and Michael Jonsson, “Tax Evasion – Dealing with the Shabab's Funding,” *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February 9, 2010.

22 “Terror Charges Unsealed in Minneapolis Against Eight Men, Justice Department Announces,” U.S. Department of Justice, November 23, 2009.

23 *Ibid.*

24 Bronwyn Bruton, “In the Quicksands of Somalia,” *Foreign Affairs* 88:6 (2009); “Al Qaeda in Yemen and Somalia: A Ticking Time Bomb.”

Another U.S. national recruited to al-Shabab, Omar Hammami (also known as Abu Mansur al-Amriki), has emerged as a high-profile media representative, appearing in numerous al-Shabab propaganda videos and providing a foreign face to the group.<sup>25</sup>

### Conclusion

Each of these attributes—an increasingly radical agenda, a centralized leadership structure, refined propaganda machinery, and a foreign support network—suggests that al-Shabab will continue to evolve into a greater regional threat. Indeed, on July 15, 2010, al-Shabab threatened further attacks against Uganda and Burundi in an audio statement aired on Mogadishu radio stations, in which al-Shabab insisted that “what has happened in Kampala was only the beginning. We will keep revenging what your soldiers remorselessly did to our people.”<sup>26</sup>

Concurrently, however, al-Shabab’s evolution into a more overtly internationalist organization has undercut some of its appeal and support base within Somalia.<sup>27</sup> Al-Shabab’s hard line interpretation of Islam (in which it is attempting to impose religious uniformity on Somali society at the expense of traditional clan structures and beliefs) has failed to resonate with many Somali citizens.<sup>28</sup> In addition, while al-Shabab’s increasingly brutal operational tactics—specifically suicide bombings targeting civilians—have enabled it to retain territory in central and southern Somalia, such tactics have also caused public outrage and alienated supporters, even in traditional al-Shabab strongholds.<sup>29</sup>

Al-Shabab is also coming under increasing pressure from other Somali factions, particularly Hisbul Islamiyya (another of Somalia’s Islamist organizations that emerged from the collapse of the ICU). Tensions between the two groups intensified in October 2009 when Hisbul Islamiyya and al-Shabab militants fought each other for control of the strategically important town of Kismayo.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, al-Shabab’s efforts are now largely focused on re-establishing its political and military credentials, and vying for influence alongside other factions in Somalia’s Islamist movement.

As such, while al-Shabab’s successful execution of sporadic, large-scale attacks abroad seems quite feasible in the future, a protracted foreign campaign—in which al-Shabab develops and retains external networks responsible for launching attacks against Ugandan and Burundian targets—appears beyond the group’s present capabilities.

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## The Punjabi Taliban: Causes and Consequences of Turning Against the State

By Ben Brandt

THE KIDNAPPING AND murder of former Inter-Services Intelligence officer and Usama bin Ladin confidant Khalid Khwaja in March 2010 generated a wave of analysis throughout the counterterrorism community.<sup>1</sup> Although analysts have offered a variety of theories regarding both the nature of the “Asian Tigers” group that executed Khwaja and their motives in killing him, most have correctly noted that the incident is symbolic of a broader splintering between Punjabi militants espousing allegiance to the Pakistani state and a younger generation that has aligned itself with al-Qa’ida and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), turning their guns on the Pakistani government and the West. It is important to understand the manifestations of this fracture, as well as its causes and potential consequences, to better gauge the threat posed to the United States by what is frequently called the “Punjabi Taliban.”<sup>2</sup>

### Various Manifestations of Anti-State Sentiment

Khalid Khwaja’s execution is perhaps the most graphic manifestation of a trend that has been occurring for some time, particularly within terrorist groups that had previously designated India or rival Muslim sects as their targets. One of the best documented fissures within a Pakistani terrorist group dedicated to jihad against India is that which occurred within Jaysh-

<sup>25</sup> Andrea Elliott, “The Jihadist Next Door,” *New York Times*, January 31, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Mohamed Olad Hassan, “Al-Shabab Leader Threatens More Uganda Attacks,” Associated Press, July 15, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> “Somalia’s Divided Islamists.”

<sup>28</sup> The International Crisis Group (ICG) has documented numerous instances of public disaffection at al-Shabab’s attempts to impose its extreme vision of Islam on Somali society. ICG researchers also note that public disillusion with al-Shabab is being further fueled by its poor governance record in southern Somalia. See “Somalia’s Divided Islamists.”

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.; Mark Landler, “After Attacks in Uganda, Worry Grows Over Group,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Stig Jarle Hansen, “Faction Fluctuation – The Shifting Allegiances within Hizbul Islam,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, March 11, 2010. Tensions between Hisbul Islamiyya and al-Shabab commanders have continued, with clashes between the two groups occurring into mid-2010.

<sup>1</sup> For details, see Rahimullah Yusufzai, “The Kidnapping and Execution of Khalid Khwaja in Pakistan,” *CTC Sentinel* 3:5 (2010); Nicholas Schmidle, “How Did A Pakistan Ex-Spy End Up Dead?” *The New Republic*, May 4, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Hassan Abbas has defined the Punjabi Taliban as “a loose conglomeration of members of banned organizations of Punjabi origin” that work with Tehrik-i-Taliban to execute attacks inside Pakistan. Abbas described the Punjabi Taliban as being primarily composed of members of the groups Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, and Jaysh-i-Muhammad; disaffected anti-statist members of several other groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam, Lashkar-i-Tayyiba, and Harkat-ul-Mujahidin may be considered part of the Punjabi Taliban as well. For details, see Hassan Abbas, “Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network,” *CTC Sentinel* 2:4 (2009).



i-Muhammad (JM) in 2002-2003. In 2002, members of JM were implicated in a number of attacks targeting Pakistani Christians in Punjab, while in 2003 Masood Azhar, the founder of the group, expelled a dozen ranking JM members after revelations that they had organized attacks against Western and Christian targets in Pakistan without his authorization.<sup>3</sup> In July of the same year, he reportedly informed the Punjab governor that he had made the expulsions, that he should not be held responsible for the actions of the expelled members, and that the expelled members should be arrested.<sup>4</sup>

Azhar's decision caused a major schism within the group, as members deserted Azhar and joined the expelled individuals to form Jamaat-ul-Furqan (JuF).<sup>5</sup> Members of JuF were consequently arrested in connection to an assassination attempt against then-Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in 2004, and Rashid Rauf, who helped mastermind the 2006 liquid explosives plot that targeted trans-Atlantic flights, was described by an intelligence source as having utilized cooperation from members of JuF.<sup>6</sup> Today, JuF is thought to constitute part of the so-called Punjabi Taliban, which has executed attacks throughout Pakistan; Maulana Abdul Jabbar, who previously served as Azhar's deputy, is described as being involved with training fighters for JuF in North Waziristan.<sup>7</sup>

Other Pakistani terrorist groups focused on Kashmir have exhibited noteworthy fissures as well. A group calling itself Harkat-ul-Mujahidin al-Alami (HuMA) emerged from Harkat-ul-Mujahidin (HuM) in 2002, executing a string of attacks in Karachi against Western businesses, the U.S. Consulate, and then-President Pervez Musharraf.<sup>8</sup>

3 Amir Mir, "The Maulana's Scattered Beads," *Outlook India*, September 1, 2003.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 For more information, see the South Asia Terrorism Portal file on "Jaish-e-Mohammed (Army of the Prophet)," located at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

7 Amir Mir, "South Punjab Threat," *The News International*, October 25, 2009; Asif Shahzad, "Pakistani Militancy Spreads to Country's Heartland," Associated Press, June 16, 2010.

8 For more information, see the South Asia Terrorism Portal file on "Harakat-ul-Mujahideen Al-alam

The sectarian group Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) has also seen members leave to attack targets associated with the Pakistani state and the West.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that most Punjabi militants sympathetic to al-Qa`ida and the TTP move away from their parent groups in less dramatic fashion than JuF and HuMA, and many appear to maintain links with both their original organization and al-Qa`ida and the Pakistani Taliban. A report last year

**"The July 2007 storming of Lal Masjid (Red Mosque), a notorious center of Deobandi militant activity in Islamabad, is frequently and correctly noted as an important catalyst in Punjabi militants' decision to strike the state."**

chronicled the saga of a JM commander wounded in a drone strike while meeting with Taliban leaders. He was protected from arrest by his men while recuperating in Bahawalpur<sup>10</sup> and was later believed to have sought refuge in a JM seminary.<sup>11</sup> His case shows the overlapping memberships that many individuals hold in the region.

In the case of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HuJI), the group's leadership appears to have been involved in the decision to turn against the state. *Amir* Qari Saifullah Akhtar and operational commander Ilyas Kashmiri currently reside in Waziristan and enjoy strong

(HuMA)," located at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org). There is some debate as to whether Harkat-ul-Mujahidin al-Alami represented a true splinter faction of Harkat-ul-Mujahidin, or was merely a ruse used by the group to stage attacks. Given the Asian Tigers' recent vilification of Harkat-ul-Mujahidin and its long-time commander Fazlur Rahman Khalil as "proxies" of the ISI, however, it appears reasonable to assume that it represents a genuine splinter.

9 Shahzad; Schimle.

10 Bahawalpur is a major hub for Jaysh-i-Muhammad; Masood Azhar was born in the city and currently resides there.

11 Matthew Rosenberg, "Taliban Wages War on Police in Pakistan," *Wall Street Journal*, May 28, 2009.

ties to al-Qa`ida and the TTP.<sup>12</sup> The status of the sectarian group Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ) appears to be similar to that of HuJI, as many of LJ's *amirs* have been implicated in plotting attacks against the state.<sup>13</sup>

The role of Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LT, or LeT), perhaps Pakistan's most prominent terrorist group following the 2008 Mumbai attacks, is less clear. Although the LT's leadership has remained relatively loyal to the Pakistani military, members of the group have broken away to assist in attacks against the state. An example of this can be seen in the case of Umar Kundi, an LT member who left after quarreling with the group's leadership over its subservience to the Pakistani government and later assisted in attacks against Pakistani law enforcement and intelligence facilities.<sup>14</sup> LT's decision to establish a presence in Pakistan's tribal areas and interact with al-Qa`ida and TTP members operating there has likely facilitated this process.<sup>15</sup>

A 2009 LT plot to attack the U.S. and UK embassies in Dhaka, Bangladesh has given rise to rumors about the emergence of a faction within the group advocating open attacks against Western interests. The fact that a retired Pakistan Army major affiliated with LT helped David Headley plot a terrorist attack in Denmark last year further amplifies these concerns.<sup>16</sup> If elements within LT continue to plot increasingly brazen attacks against Western interests, it could force an open schism within the group, and drive members espousing an anti-Western agenda into greater conflict with LT's leadership and the state.

12 Bill Roggio, "Top Al Qaeda Leader Linked to 5 Americans on Trial in Pakistan," *The Long War Journal*, April 17, 2010.

13 LJ is closely affiliated with the SSP. For details, see "Obituary: Qari Mohammad Zafar," BBC, March 2, 2010.

14 Sabrina Tavernise and Waqar Gillani, "Frustrated Strivers in Pakistan Turn to Jihad," *New York Times*, February 27, 2010.

15 Stephen Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba in Perspective: An Evolving Threat," New America Foundation, February 2010.

16 *U.S.A. v. Abdur Rehman Hashim Syed*, "Criminal Complaint," Northern District of Illinois, 2009.

### Causes for Splintering Among Punjabi Militant Groups

Various factors have caused fissures within Punjabi terrorist groups and between these groups and the state. The July 2007 storming of *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque), a notorious center of Deobandi militant activity in Islamabad, is frequently and correctly noted as an important catalyst in Punjabi militants' decision to strike the state.<sup>17</sup> This point is graphically illustrated by the massive increase in mass casualty terrorist attacks in Islamabad, Lahore, and Rawalpindi since mid-2007. According to data provided by the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, for example, terrorist attacks in Lahore killed a total of 30 people from May 2004-July 2007, yet have killed approximately 229 people from August 2007-June 2010.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, terrorist attacks in Islamabad killed 25 people from July 2004-July 2007, yet 171 people since.<sup>19</sup> The significance of the attack on *Lal Masjid* is also illustrated by the attack on the Manawan Police Training School outside Lahore in March 2009, where attackers reportedly shouted "Oh red mosque attackers, we have come" during their assault.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the Ghazi Force, which has staged several attacks against the Pakistani state, was named for Abdul Rashid Ghazi, one of the two brothers who served as heads of *Lal Masjid*.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the likely role of the *Lal Masjid* assault in furthering breaches between militants, other factors have contributed as well. Journalist Nicholas Schmidle

has noted that Abdul Rashid Ghazi stated two months prior to the storming of the mosque that organizations such as SSP and JM were experiencing an increasing number of defections among their ranks.<sup>22</sup> Multiple assassination attempts against Musharraf in December 2003 and other members of Pakistan's military and government by members of Punjabi terrorist groups prior to July 2007 also illustrate this phenomenon.

The relationship between many Punjabi terrorist groups and the former Taliban government of Afghanistan is another cause for the ongoing rifts within Pakistan's jihadist community. During the Taliban's rule of Afghanistan, a large number of Deobandi terrorist groups established strong relations with al-Qa`ida and the Taliban government (which shared their adherence to Deobandi Islam<sup>23</sup>), established training camps in the country, and fought alongside the Taliban against the Northern Alliance and ethnic minorities such as the Hazara.<sup>24</sup> The tight linkages between the Pakistani groups and the Taliban regime were exemplified by HuJI's Qari Saifullah Akhtar's reported status as political adviser to Mullah Omar, as well as by Masood Azhar's visit to Mullah Omar following his release from an Indian prison.<sup>25</sup> The U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 engendered strenuous resistance by many Punjabi terrorist groups; Amjad Farooqi (a member of HuJI later tied to an assassination plot against Musharraf) reportedly led fighters into Afghanistan to battle NATO forces.<sup>26</sup>

Anger among members of Punjabi terrorist groups was compounded by the Musharraf government's acquiescence to the U.S. invasion, as well as its decision to assist the United States by curtailing militant operations in Kashmir to improve relations with India.<sup>27</sup> Members scorned the corresponding acquiescence of many leaders of terrorist groups to Musharraf,<sup>28</sup> despite their previous fiery denunciations of the United States.<sup>29</sup> One particularly cutting comment on this subject came from ranking JM member Abdullah Shah Mazhar, who gave as his reason for leaving the group: "Maulana [Masood] Azhar has nothing to do with jihad anymore and that was why we broke away from him."<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah has stated that when leaders of SSP and LJ were flown in to negotiate with former members of their groups when the latter attacked the Pakistan Army's general headquarters last year, the leaders were reportedly told, "You are traitors, you have left the right path."<sup>31</sup>

A final factor that may cause splintering among Punjabi terrorist groups is the influence of al-Qa`ida, which has

17 The Deobandi militant groups reacted more vehemently to the storming of *Lal Masjid* than did LT. First, because LT is an Ahl-e-Hadith organization and therefore was not as well-connected to the pro-Taliban Deobandi elements at *Lal Masjid*. Second, because of its Ahl-e-Hadith identity and organizational history of abjuring attacks in Pakistan, LT was also less involved with the Deobandi actors who constituted the already brewing insurgency. This information is based on personal interview, Stephen Tankel, July 2010.

18 Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, accessed June 16, 2010.

19 Ibid.

20 Sabrina Tavernise, Waqar Gillani, and Salman Masood, "Rampage in Pakistan Shows Reach of Militants," *New York Times*, March 30, 2009.

21 Abdul Rashid Ghazi was killed in the security assault on *Lal Masjid*. For details, see Animesh Roul, "Little-Known Ghazi Brigade Now a Major Player in the Punjabi Jihad?" *Terrorism Monitor* 8:28 (2010).

22 Schmidle.

23 LT did not enjoy similarly close ties to the Taliban leadership due to its adherence to the Ahl-e-Hadith sect, but did train in the Afghan provinces of Kunar and Nuristan during the 1990s. For details, see Daan Van Der Schriek, "Nuristan: Insurgent Hideout in Afghanistan," *Terrorism Monitor* 3:10 (2006).

24 See, for example, Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Peter Bergen, *Holy War Inc.* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Kanchan Lakshman, "Deep Roots to Pakistan's Sectarian Terror," *Asia Times Online*, July 9, 2003.

25 Amir Mir, "HUJI Chief Still at Large," *The News International*, September 23, 2008.

26 Bill Roggio, "Taliban Claim Responsibility for Attack on Pakistan Army Headquarters," *The Long War Journal*, October 10, 2009.

27 Amir Mir, "The Jihad Lives On," *Asia Times Online*, March 11, 2005; Tim McGirk, "The Monster Within," *Time Magazine*, January 19, 2004. Musharraf noted in his autobiography, *In the Line of Fire*, that Mohammed Jamil, a suicide bomber who attempted to kill him in 2003, swore an oath against him after becoming embittered after fighting NATO forces in Afghanistan. Ahmed Rashid described Jamil as a member of Jaysh-i-Muhammad in his book *Descent into Chaos*. Some reports also suggest that members of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi joined with al-Qa`ida due to Musharraf's decision to ban Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and engage in a major crackdown on the group. For details, see Lakshman.

28 One example is Azam Tariq, then-*amir* of Sipah-i-Sahaba, who was released from prison and allowed to sit in Pakistan's National Assembly, providing political support to Musharraf's government until Tariq's assassination by a Shi`a activist in 2003.

29 According to the Indian government, Azhar called for "jihad" against the United States upon his release from an Indian prison. Similarly, Fazlur Rahman Khalil of Harkat-ul-Mujahidin was a signatory of Bin Ladin's 1998 *fatwa* that called upon Muslims to kill Americans. Also see Steve Coll, "Time Bomb," *New Yorker*, January 28, 2008.

30 Muhammad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal Books, 2004).

31 Shahzad. Amir Mir reported that Fazlur Rahman Khalil of HuM and Mufti Abdul Rauf, younger brother of Masood Azhar, were flown in to negotiate as well.



preached violence against both the West and the Pakistani government.<sup>32</sup> As noted previously, members of Punjabi terrorist groups developed ties to al-Qa`ida during their sojourns in Afghanistan, interacting with and training alongside each other and thus creating an opportunity for ideological cross-fertilization.<sup>33</sup> Lashkar-i-Tayyiba possesses additional bonds with al-Qa`ida, such as its adherence to the Salafi-like sect Ahl-e-Hadith, and the reported role of al-Qa`ida-affiliated individuals in its founding.<sup>34</sup> Additional personal ties were forged during the exodus of jihadists from Afghanistan following Operation Enduring Freedom. It is reported that Amjad Farooqi developed ties with al-Qa`ida operations chief Abu Faraj al-Libi in this period, later leading to the two working together in attempts to assassinate Musharraf.<sup>35</sup> Al-Qa`ida's uncompromising adherence to struggle against the United States and its allies in the Pakistani government likely proved attractive to Pakistani militants frustrated with the relative inaction of their own leadership.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, al-Qa`ida's call for a global jihad against the West gained stronger resonance when Punjabi groups operating in

Afghanistan were directly affected by the U.S. invasion in 2001.

#### Consequences and Future Trends

Various outcomes can be anticipated from splintering within Punjabi terrorist groups and the alignment of many of their members with al-Qa`ida and Pakistani Taliban groups. The mainline factions of groups wishing to avoid conflict with the state will likely become marginalized as they continue to hemorrhage members to anti-statist groups. A recent estimate from a minister in Punjab estimated that between 10-20% of JM, SSP, and LJ members have joined the Punjabi Taliban.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, many dissidents may remain involved with their former organizations to some extent, and attempt to co-opt their resources and personnel.<sup>38</sup> The extensive training of many members of Punjabi terrorist groups and their access to the resources of their former organizations helps augment the ability of al-Qa`ida to train Westerners for attacks overseas, and may help it mitigate the effects of drone strikes that have killed many of the group's most experienced operational commanders.<sup>39</sup> As illustrated by the aforementioned LT plot against the U.S. and UK embassies in Dhaka, Punjabi militants aligned with al-Qa`ida could potentially use their organizations' resources to strike against Western interests throughout South Asia.

At the same time, many analysts have argued that al-Qa`ida's involvement with Pakistani militants engaged in bloody attacks against Muslims has strained its relationship with its longtime allies among the Haqqani network and the Afghan Taliban.<sup>40</sup> If this is true, al-

Qa`ida risks further alienating these groups by drawing closer to anti-statist elements. Al-Qa`ida's affiliation with the TTP and Punjabi militants has also significantly damaged its image in the eyes of Pakistanis: the Pew Research Center recorded that the number of Pakistanis who viewed al-Qa`ida favorably dropped from 25% in 2008 to 9% in 2009.<sup>41</sup> This affiliation could potentially erode the group's credibility among Muslims worldwide as well, particularly if the Punjabi militants aligning themselves with al-Qa`ida are granted official permission to use the al-Qa`ida brand. A precedent for this can be seen in the group's previously unpopular affiliation with Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi in Iraq.<sup>42</sup>

The consequences of the decision by many Punjabi militants to turn against their state sponsors and frequently away from their own militant organizations will continue to play out in the months and years to come. Although the activities of these groups and individuals may weaken al-Qa`ida's global appeal in the long-term, they pose challenges to Pakistan's internal stability and to the security of the United States in the interim.

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32 Usama bin Ladin reportedly called for Musharraf's overthrow in 2002, and Ayman al-Zawahiri did so in 2003, four months before twin assassination attempts against Musharraf.

33 As is well known, a 1998 cruise missile strike against training camps in Afghanistan associated with Bin Ladin killed a number of Harkat-ul-Mujahidin members, while Nicholas Schmidle reports that Qari Saifullah Akhtar arranged a meeting between Bin Ladin and Maulana Abdullah of *Lal Masjid* in 1998.

34 These include, for example, Usama bin Ladin's mentor `Abdullah `Azzam and Bin Ladin associate Abu Abdul Aziz "Barbaros." For details, see Bill Roggio, "Pakistani Court Orders Release of Lashkar-e-Taiba Leader," *The Long War Journal*, June 2, 2009; Evan F. Kohlmann, "Expert Witness: Synopsis of Testimony from Regina v. Mohammed Ajmal Khan, Palvinder Singh, and Frzana Khan," NEFA Foundation, undated.

35 Roggio, "Taliban Claim Responsibility for Attack on Pakistan Army Headquarters."

36 The leadership of some groups, however, was involved in tacitly assisting al-Qa`ida directly after 9/11. LT's leadership directed elements within the organization to provide safe houses and other forms of logistical support to foreign fighters, including members of al-Qa`ida, fleeing Afghanistan after 9/11. Personal interview, Stephen Tankel, July 2010. Tankel is conducting research for his book, *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba*.

37 Shahzad. It should be noted that the minister in question, Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanuallah, has been criticized for his ties to Sipah-i-Sahaba.

38 There is precedent for this form of cooption in the decision of many Pakistani terrorist groups to recruit at the annual *ijtema* of the apolitical Deobandi movement Tablighi Jama`at. Similar trends have been spotted in other theaters of operations as well: Noordin Top exploited his connections with Jemaah Islamiya to build his splinter group al-Qa`ida in the Malay Peninsula.

39 The impressive tradecraft displayed by both David Headley's reconnaissance efforts and by the subsequent LT assault on Mumbai are indicative of the skills Punjabi militants could conceivably leverage on behalf of al-Qa`ida.

40 Anand Gopal, Mansur Khan Mahsud, and Brian

Fishman, "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in North Waziristan," New America Foundation, April 2010; David S. Cloud and Julian S. Barnes, "Some U.S. Officials See a Growing Taliban-Al Qaeda Rift," *Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 2010.

41 "Pakistani Public Opinion," Pew Global Attitudes Project, August 13, 2009.

42 "Confidence in Osama bin Laden," Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2009.

## The Ghazi Force: A Threat to Pakistan's Urban Centers

By Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi

PAKISTAN IS INCREASINGLY under siege from militant factions that are primarily based in the country's northwest tribal region. Most attacks are blamed on Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an umbrella group of multiple Pakistani Taliban factions led by Hakimullah Mehsud. Disaggregating the various militant factions part of the Pakistani Taliban is more difficult. Yet details are emerging about a relatively new militant group that has undertaken a number of deadly attacks on Pakistani government and Western targets. Known as the Ghazi Force, it emerged in the wake of the government's July 2007 siege of Islamabad's *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque), a bastion of extremist thought. The attack on *Lal Masjid* is largely considered a turning point in Pakistan's struggle against militancy, and the rise in domestic attacks since 2007 is seen as a direct result of the incident.<sup>1</sup>

According to Islamabad's inspector general of police, the Ghazi Force has been behind some of the capital's deadliest attacks since 2007.<sup>2</sup> The official argues that the Ghazi Force dispatched a suicide bomber to attack the government's commando unit involved in the *Lal Masjid* siege in September 2007, helped to recruit the suicide bomber who blew himself up in the offices of the World Food Program in October 2009, was involved in a deadly suicide bombing at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad in September 2008 and attacked a NATO supply convoy in June 2010.<sup>3</sup>

This article profiles the Ghazi Force, identifies how the group was formed and assesses its future trajectory. It finds that this relatively new militant group is posing a growing threat to Pakistan's urban centers.

### The Role of Lal Masjid in the Formation of the Ghazi Force

For many years, *Lal Masjid* served as an indoctrination and waypoint station for Islamic fighters traveling to Afghanistan during the jihad against the Soviet Union. More recently, the mosque became a jihadist symbol of defiance against the Pakistan government's pro-Western and anti-jihadist policies. Students at *Lal Masjid* openly defied the writ of the state in the heart of Islamabad when they brazenly commandeered government buildings, kidnapped Chinese women who they accused of being sex workers and openly displayed weapons.<sup>4</sup> The leading clerics at *Lal Masjid*, Abdul Rashid Ghazi and his brother Maulana Abdul Aziz, were responsible for a 2004 *fatwa* that said Pakistani soldiers killed while fighting the Taliban in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) did not deserve a Muslim funeral or burial at Muslim cemeteries.<sup>5</sup>

On July 10, 2007, after a security standoff, government troops stormed the facility, and there were heavy exchanges of gunfire between fighters in the mosque compound and security forces. The operation infuriated radical Muslims throughout Pakistan and is likely responsible for the rise in domestic attacks in the country. The Ghazi Force soon emerged, named after Abdul Rashid Ghazi, the leader of *Lal Masjid* who was slain during the government operation.<sup>6</sup>

### The Ghazi Force Enters the Jihadist Milieu

Due to limited intelligence on militant groups in South Asia in general, it is not completely clear how the Ghazi Force developed. It is believed that Niaz Raheem and a militant known as Fidaullah co-founded the Ghazi Force with the support of two militants known as Habibullah and Ajmal.<sup>7</sup> Niaz is a former student at *Lal Masjid*, while Fidaullah reportedly indoctrinated students at *Lal Masjid* and convinced them to join suicide training camps

in South Waziristan.<sup>8</sup> Fidaullah, who was arrested by Pakistan's authorities in June 2009, also reportedly ordered the beheadings of three men in Buner District of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) on charges of spying for security forces.<sup>9</sup>

Niaz Raheem, the current leader of the group, came from Swat in Pakistan's northwest, and was a student of Jamia Faridia at *Lal Masjid*.<sup>10</sup> During his time at the mosque, Niaz was in charge of communications for the women's wing of the *Lal Masjid* establishment, known

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as Jamia Hafsa.<sup>11</sup> During the July 2007 security operation against *Lal Masjid*, Niaz escaped the complex with other students and took refuge with Maulana Sher Ali Khan of the Akora Khatak seminary in Attock District of the NWFP.<sup>12</sup> While at Akora Khatak, Niaz founded a students' organization of those who fled *Lal Masjid*; this grouping was peaceful, however, and did not yet have militant overtones.<sup>13</sup> He eventually traveled with other *Lal Masjid* students to Swat, where he reportedly came under the influence of Maulana Fazlullah.<sup>14</sup> Fazlullah then

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 *Lal Masjid* had two seminaries—Jamia Faridia, the male *madrasa*, and Jamia Hafsa, its female counterpart.

11 Personal interview, Amir Rana, director of Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies and internationally acclaimed researcher on militancy in Pakistan, July 2010.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

1 Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, “Red Trigger: Lal Masjid and its Aftermath,” *International Journal of Terrorism and Political Hot Spots* 4:1-2 (2009).

2 Kathy Gannon, “The Ghazi Force: Vengeful New Militant Group Emerges in Pakistan,” Associated Press, July 1, 2010.

3 Ibid.

4 Zaidi.

5 Ibid.

6 Maulana Abdul Aziz was taken into Pakistani custody shortly before authorities stormed the mosque compound.

7 Munawer Azeem, “Mastermind of Islamabad Suicide Attacks Arrested,” *Dawn*, June 1, 2009.

introduced Niaz to Hakimullah Mehsud in Orakzai Agency, who at the time was the TTP's deputy *amir* for the area. Hakimullah reportedly took Niaz under his wing, and instructed him to set up the militant group that soon came to be known as the Ghazi Force.<sup>15</sup>

Although it is a distinct group, the Ghazi Force can be considered a faction of the TTP umbrella organization. The Ghazi Force is believed to be based in Orakzai Agency, with a possible training camp in Guljo in the adjoining Hangu District of the NWFP.<sup>16</sup> The Ghazi Force is reportedly engaged in

**“What is the future path of the Ghazi Force? First, the Ghazi Force is a relatively new militant group; therefore, it will likely try to establish its reputation with a series of escalating terrorist attacks. These attacks are important to establish its jihadist credentials.”**

resisting Pakistan Army operations in the tribal areas side-by-side other Taliban factions. The main role of the TTP appears to be offering the Ghazi Force sanctuary for its fighters along with logistical assistance, whereas the Ghazi Force retains a certain amount of operational freedom. Nevertheless, tactical decisions by groups under the patronage of the TTP are reached by consensus of the TTP high command.

At its core, the Ghazi Force consists of an estimated 50 fighters.<sup>17</sup> At first glance, the size of the group appears small. Yet other deadly groups have had a similar sized cadre. The dynamics of asymmetric conflict are important in understanding these numbers, as guerrilla tactics and a

fluid organizational structure are more important than numbers. The Ghazi Force appears to be relying on cell-based structures within the organization, which amplifies their terrorist potential and makes disruption more difficult. Moreover, the estimate of the Ghazi Force's cadre size is based on police interrogations with Fidaullah, who may have downplayed the group's numbers. Kathy Gannon, an Associated Press journalist who did seminal work on the Ghazi Force, believes that the group's terrorist credentials are just the tip of the iceberg, and that there is more to the entity than their propensity to target Islamabad.<sup>18</sup>

In accordance with the TTP's tendency to outsource operations to other organizations, the Ghazi Force appears to be the TTP's "Delta Force" in Islamabad, similar to how Lashkar-i-Islam is employed for attacks in Peshawar.<sup>19</sup> Typically, those that undertake attacks in urban areas are locals who know the area and are able to blend in with the city's population. Fidaullah, for example, was arrested in Islamabad, raising the possibility that other members of the Ghazi Force use safe houses in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.<sup>20</sup> In fact, they could still be using the *Lal Masjid* establishment to "lie low" before activating operational cells.<sup>21</sup>

#### **The Future of the Ghazi Force**

What is the future path of the Ghazi Force? First, the Ghazi Force is a relatively new militant group; therefore, it will likely try to establish its reputation with a series of escalating terrorist attacks. These attacks are important to establish its jihadist credentials. Islamabad's police force already consider the Ghazi Force a major threat, and are devoting significant resources to countering the group. The police are anticipating new major attacks from the organization.

Second, the Ghazi Force is anti-Shi'a, which means its members can associate themselves with a range of sectarian groups in Pakistan that are operating on the same ideological underpinnings. As a result, alliances with al-Qa`ida, Jaysh-i-Muhammad, the Ilyas Kashmiri network, the Punjabi Taliban and other groups are possible. Clear recognition from these groups, however, will require the Ghazi Force to execute more significant attacks or increase its numbers. Even though these bigger groups are also in intimate contact with the TTP, they tend to recognize other TTP "franchises" such as the Ghazi Force only if they prove worthy of attention. Thus, newly emerging groups have to prove themselves to the TTP high command and its partners to "outbid" other small umbrella groups for attention and recognition. Judging by its recent history, the Ghazi Force may soon become a more prominent militant faction in Pakistan's increasingly violent domestic militant milieu.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> This information is based on the police interrogation report with Fidaullah, one of the founding members of the Ghazi Force. He remains in custody of the Islamabad police.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Personal interview, Kathy Gannon, journalist, Associated Press, June 2010.

<sup>19</sup> The TTP has a number of allied groups that it relies on for attacks in urban areas. The Ghazi Force is used for attacks in Islamabad, the "Punjabi Taliban" in Lahore, Lashkar-i-Islam and affiliates in Peshawar, and the Meherban Mehsud group and affiliates in Karachi.

<sup>20</sup> Azeem.

<sup>21</sup> This is a view shared by many analysts alongside the author who have studied this phenomenon, including Amir Rana and Kathy Gannon.



## Pakistan's Challenges in Orakzai Agency

By Tayyab Ali Shah

IN PAKISTAN'S FEDERALLY Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Orakzai Agency has become the scene of violent clashes between security forces and Pakistani Taliban militants. In the past few years, militants have fled to Orakzai to establish safe havens in the wake of Pakistani military operations in other parts of the tribal belt. As a result, on March 23, 2010, Pakistan launched a military offensive in Orakzai and declared victory on June 1. Pakistan claims that it has killed more than 1,500 militants in the agency during the last three months.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, despite the official end of its offensive, Pakistan's security patrols continue to be ambushed in Orakzai, and the government has responded by dispatching helicopter gunships and fighter jets to assault various areas of the territory. Military operations are ongoing today.

In light of the continued fighting, this article provides an overview of the strategic importance of the agency, the history of its Talibanization, the different Taliban groups operating there and the current state of Pakistan Army operations in Orakzai.

### The Strategic Importance of Orakzai Agency

Orakzai Agency, which has an estimated population of 250,000 people, is strategically important to both Pakistan's military and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).<sup>2</sup> Orakzai is considered the TTP's "second home," as its current leader Hakimullah Mehsud rose to power in the agency. Additionally, after Pakistan's military offensive in South Waziristan Agency in late 2009, many TTP militants relocated to Orakzai. The TTP is not the only militant group operating in Orakzai. Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Jaysh-i-Muhammad, for example, have bases and training camps in the agency, and they reportedly launched suicide bombers from Orakzai to attack targets in Punjab Province in late 2009

and early 2010.<sup>3</sup> Some analysts believe that Maulana Fazlullah, the former chief of the Swat Taliban, could also be hiding in Orakzai.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the Ghazi Force, believed to be behind most of the deadly attacks in Islamabad during the last three years—including an attack on the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the Marriott Hotel, the World Food Program and the recent June 9 attack near Islamabad that destroyed multiple NATO supply trucks—is also based in the agency.<sup>5</sup>

Geographically, Orakzai is in a strategic position as it borders the Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency, Kohat and Hangu districts of the North-West Frontier Province, and Kurram Agency. Orakzai's total area is 1,538 square kilometers (594 square miles).<sup>6</sup> The main access to Kurram, the only tribal agency with a Shi'a majority, is through Orakzai; by blocking this road, Taliban fighters have often put the Kurram Shi'a under siege.<sup>7</sup> Also, compared to other Taliban strongholds such as North and South Waziristan, Orakzai is closer to Peshawar, Islamabad and Rawalpindi, making it an ideal launching point for fighters attacking Pakistan's more populated and strategically significant cities. The topography of Orakzai also plays a factor, as the mountainous region between Stori Khel and Dara Adam Khel provide a natural fortress and plenty of cover for militants.<sup>8</sup> Orakzai, however, is the only tribal agency that does not share a border with Afghanistan.

### The Talibanization of Orakzai

The Talibanization of Orakzai Agency can be traced to 1999, when a 30-year-old native of the agency, Aslam Farooqi, raised a Taliban *lashkar* (militia).

3 Michael Hughes, "Pakistan Turns Up Heat on Tehrik-i-Taliban in Orakzai and North Waziristan," *Afghanistan Headlines Examiner*, May 25, 2010.

4 Rahimullah Yusufzai, "The Taliban Strike Back," *Newsline*, May 20, 2010.

5 Kathy Gannon, "The Ghazi Force: Vengeful New Militant Group Emerges in Pakistan," *Associated Press*, July 1, 2010.

6 For details, see the FATA Secretariat website at [www.fata.gov.pk](http://www.fata.gov.pk).

7 Tayyab Ali Shah, "Taliban Exploit Shi'a-Sunni Divide in Pakistan's Kurram Tribal Agency," *Terrorism Monitor* 8:15 (2010); Mariam Abou Zahab, "Sectarianism in Pakistan's Kurram Tribal Agency," *Terrorism Monitor* 7:6 (2009).

8 Hughes.

Farooqi belonged to the Mamuzai tribe and was affiliated with the anti-Shi'a group Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). In the wake of the U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan in 2001, Farooqi reportedly offered the Afghan Taliban

**“Orakzai is closer to Peshawar, Islamabad and Rawalpindi, making it an ideal launching point for fighters attacking Pakistan's more populated and strategically significant cities.”**

12,000 men with arms and ammunition to fight against the U.S.-led coalition.<sup>9</sup> Farooqi's men remained active in Afghanistan until the end of 2001, when they melted away as the Afghan Taliban resistance crumbled before the U.S.-led offensive.<sup>10</sup>

Orakzai was relatively calm until 2004-2006, when Pakistan Army operations in South Waziristan forced many Pakistanis, as well as foreign militants, to seek refuge in the agency. Orakzai acted as a safe haven for these fighters since Pakistan's military was not present in the area. After the formation of the TTP in 2007, a Taliban force was organized in Orakzai.<sup>11</sup> Hakimullah Mehsud, the current head of the TTP, moved to Orakzai and was appointed by the TTP's leader at the time, Baitullah Mehsud, as the chief commander for the group in Orakzai, Khyber and Kurram agencies.<sup>12</sup>

There have been attempts to counter Talibanization in the agency. Law and order is the responsibility of Khasadars<sup>13</sup>

9 "Orakzai Taliban Chief Extends Full Help," *Dawn*, November 6, 2001.

10 Personal interview, Brigadier (retired) Asad Munir, former Inter-Services Intelligence official, July 2010.

11 Asad Munir, "Taliban & Orakzai," *The News International*, June 13, 2009.

12 Amir Mir, "A Young Turk Takes Over TTP, Ringing Alarm Bells," *The News International*, August 28, 2009.

13 The Khasadar are a poorly trained and organized force that is recruited and managed by the FATA Political Agent, the head of a tribal agency.

1 "At Least 25 Militants Killed in Orakzai Clash," *Dawn*, July 21, 2010.

2 For details, see the FATA Secretariat website at [www.fata.gov.pk](http://www.fata.gov.pk).

in Orakzai, due to the absence of the Frontier Corps in the agency. Khasadars, basically local security forces, are not trained or equipped to combat well-trained militants. As a result, the tribes were forced to fight against Taliban fighters on their own. When the Taliban asked the biggest tribe in Orakzai, the Ali Khel, to expel 100 Shi`a families from the area, the Ali Khel convened a tribal *jirga* to establish an anti-Taliban *lashkar* in October 2008.<sup>14</sup> The *jirga*, however, was attacked by a suicide bomber, who killed more than 82 tribal elders.<sup>15</sup> This one attack decimated the tribal leadership of Orakzai and paved the way for the Taliban to take control of the entire agency.<sup>16</sup>

After consolidating its hold on the agency, Taliban militias announced the enforcement of Shari`a, and they established Islamic courts and complaint centers. Through mosque loudspeakers, they urged people to contact the Islamic courts to settle disputes in accordance with Islamic law. The Taliban established a parallel political administration and levied *jizya* (protection tax) on members of the local Sikh and Hindu communities.<sup>17</sup> In June 2008, six men were publicly executed after a Taliban-established court found them guilty of kidnapping.<sup>18</sup> In January 2010, the Taliban punished tribesmen who refused to remain in their village to support the Taliban in the fight against security forces by setting 63 houses on

14 Syed Hasan Mahmood and Mushtaq Yusufzai, "Orakzai Blast Toll Rises to 82," *The News International*, October 12, 2008; Farhat Taj, "Life in Orakzai," *The News International*, February 11, 2009.

15 Mahmood and Yusufzai.

16 Mukhtar A. Khan, "The Role of Tribal Lashkars in Winning Pakistan's War on Terror," *Terrorism Focus* 5:40 (2008).

17 The Sikhs of Orakzai have lived in the agency for centuries. When the Taliban took control of Orakzai, they discriminated against the Sikhs. In April 2009, 11 houses in the Sikh community were razed for not being able to pay the Rs. 150 million (\$1.9 million) *jizya* to the Taliban, and the Sikh community—comprising 30-35 families—had to shift from the Feroze Khel area to the nearby Merozai area in lower Orakzai. For details, see "Taliban Seize Houses, Shops of Sikhs in Orakzai," *Daily Times*, April 30, 2009; "Taliban Raze Houses of Sikhs in Orakzai," *Dawn*, April 30, 2009. There are also approximately 18 Hindu families in Orakzai. For details, see Munir and Mir.

18 Bill Roggio, "Pakistan Signs Peace Accord in Orakzai Tribal Agency," *The Long War Journal*, July 19, 2008.

fire in Tori Mela.<sup>19</sup> Continuing with their atrocities, the Taliban chopped off the hands of three men on theft allegations in the Ghaljo area of the agency in the first week of May 2010.<sup>20</sup>

Today, the most active Taliban groups operating in Orakzai are the Commander Tariq Group, the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, and the Ghazi Force. The Commander Tariq Group is headed by Tariq Afridi,

### **"Despite its recent offensive, Pakistan's government has yet to bring Orakzai under control."**

who is based in Dara Adam Khel, and is considered the most powerful militant group in Orakzai. The Abdullah Azzam Brigade was reportedly involved in the attack on the Pearl Continental Hotel in Peshawar and the killing of anti-Taliban religious scholar Sarfraz Naemi in June 2009.<sup>21</sup> Lashkar-i-Jhangvi is a violent, sectarian group and an offshoot of the SSP.<sup>22</sup> The Ghazi Force is named after Abdul Rashid Ghazi, the former cleric of *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque) who was killed when Pakistani security forces stormed the facility in 2007. The Ghazi Force is currently led by Niaz Raheem, a former student of *Lal Masjid*, and is suspected of being behind many of the recent violent attacks in Islamabad and other populated areas in Pakistan.<sup>23</sup>

The Commander Tariq Group is part of the TTP, while Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, the Ghazi Force and the Abdullah Azzam Brigade are closely affiliated with the TTP.<sup>24</sup>

19 "Militants Burn Village in Lower Orakzai," *Dawn*, January 5, 2010.

20 "Taliban Cut Off Hands of Three Tribesmen," *Dawn*, May 6, 2010.

21 Bill Roggio, "Arakzai Taliban Take Credit for Mosque Suicide Attacks," *The Long War Journal*, June 12, 2009.

22 Bill Roggio, "Taliban Torch Village in Arakzai," *The Long War Journal*, January 5, 2010.

23 Gannon.

24 Ibid.; Syed Yasir Shah, "Unknown Group Claims Peshawar Hotel Bombing," *The News International*, June 11, 2009.

### **Pakistan's Offensive in Orakzai**

On March 23, 2010, Pakistan's military launched a major anti-Taliban operation in Orakzai called *Khwakh Ba dee Sham*.<sup>25</sup> As part of the offensive, the army blocked most of the entry and exit routes to and from Orakzai. Both sides reportedly suffered casualties, and the military claims that the dead included foreign fighters, such as Arabs, Chechens and Uzbeks.<sup>26</sup>

On June 1, the Pakistan Army declared that the military operation in Orakzai was finished and the objectives achieved. This announcement, however, appears more a public relations move than a military reality. Air strikes in the agency have continued through July, providing ample proof that military operations are far from over.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, according to residents in the area, Mamozai, Ghaljo and Shahoo are still under Taliban control. Some government officials also admitted in early June that terrorists were putting up "stiff resistance" in upper Orakzai.<sup>28</sup> These results are not surprising considering that Pakistan's military deployed just 5,000 troops for only three months (March 23-June 1) to clear Taliban militants from the territory. By comparison, operations in South Waziristan and Swat were supported by more than 25,000 and 15,000 troops, respectively.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, it appears that Pakistan's military has cleared some areas in southern Orakzai to act as a base camp from where it can continue its anti-Taliban operations.

### **Conclusion**

Despite its recent offensive, Pakistan's government has yet to bring Orakzai under control. The security services

25 This is a Pashtu expression meaning, "I will teach you a lesson."

26 Ikram Sehgal, "Counterinsurgency Operations," *The News International*, April 29, 2010.

27 "At Least 38 Taliban Insurgents and Four Security Personnel Were Killed," *Express Tribune*, June 23, 2010; Manzoor Ali, "22 Suspected Militants Killed in Orakzai," *Express Tribune*, July 12, 2010.

28 Iqbal Khattak, "Taliban Still Rule Half of Orakzai," *Daily Times*, June 3, 2010.

29 Although Orakzai differs in size from South Waziristan and Swat, there are likely more militants in the agency and they appear to be in hardened positions. Therefore, it seems that the number of troops deployed in the Orakzai offensive was inadequate. For details, see "Brief: Military Operations In Orakzai Over?" Stratfor Global Intelligence, June 2, 2010.

need to approach the Orakzai campaign in a more “intelligence informed manner,” concentrating on breaking the Taliban from within. There are chances for success in this approach, as during the past two years there have been a number of occurrences where Taliban factions have fought each other over disputes in Orakzai.

In August 2009, for example, 21 militants were killed when two Taliban groups clashed for control of the Akakhel area of upper Orakzai.<sup>30</sup> In April 2010, more clashes were reported, when six Taliban, including a local commander, were killed in Orakzai during infighting between two rival Taliban factions led by Mullah Toofan and Mullah Rafiq.<sup>31</sup> There were also reports of a Taliban commander who defected to his Ali Khel tribe over the Taliban’s poor treatment of Shi’a in Orakzai.<sup>32</sup> Although the senior Taliban leadership was able to prevent these infighting incidents from spreading, it does show that there are possible rifts that can be exploited with a more nuanced understanding of the Taliban factions operating in Orakzai.

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## The Growing Threat of Female Suicide Attacks in Western Countries

By Houriya Ahmed

IN JANUARY 2010, U.S. intelligence officials warned that al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)—the Yemen-based group responsible for the attempted Christmas Day airline bombing in the United States—is training female suicide bombers to attack countries in the West.<sup>1</sup> In May 2010, AQAP itself issued a call to Muslim women to join the jihad movement in Yemen.<sup>2</sup> U.S. officials reportedly believe that these women may have a “non-Arab” appearance and have Western passports, making it easier for them to evade detection while traveling.<sup>3</sup>

There are growing concerns that al-Qa`ida will start deploying women in its global fight against Western states and their interests. The group is clearly reaching out to Muslim women and asking them to participate in its “struggle” against the West. This year, for example, female suicide bombers have already attacked in Russia, Iraq and Afghanistan. Belgium convicted one woman of leading a terrorist group, while Muslim convert Colleen LaRose is currently facing trial in the United States for wanting to fight violent jihad.<sup>4</sup> These signs, combined with the ongoing concern of homegrown militants, make it increasingly likely that the United States or Western European countries will experience their first female suicide bombing in the future.

This article provides background on Muslim female participation in violent extremism, shows how certain clerics have encouraged female participation in jihad, and finally examines how al-Qa`ida may adapt its strategy to make use of this tactic.

### Female Participation in Violent Extremism

Hizb Allah, the Shi`a Islamist group based in Lebanon, first introduced suicide terrorism in 1983.<sup>5</sup> Although it was the first religiously motivated party to use this tactic of warfare, secular nationalist groups popularized female suicide bombings in 1985 on behalf of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, according to one 2009 study, 85% of female suicide attacks have been carried out by secular organizations.<sup>7</sup>

By 2004, however, the Palestinian group Hamas employed a female suicide bomber—Reem al-Rayashi.<sup>8</sup> Since that attack, the tactic has been emulated by a number of militant Islamist groups waging jihad, especially in Iraq. Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, the deceased leader of al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI), claimed responsibility for the group’s first female suicide bomber in September 2005.<sup>9</sup> By November of that year, AQI claimed responsibility for an additional five female suicide attacks, which included one Iraqi-born woman, Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi, whose bomb failed

5 Cindy D. Ness, “In the Name of a Cause: Women’s Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism,” in Cindy D. Ness ed., *Female Terrorism & Militancy: Agency, Utility, and Organisation* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 18.

6 Lindsey A. O’Rourke, “What’s Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?” *Security Studies* 18:4 (2009). Other examples of secular militant groups that used female suicide bombers include the Kurdistan Workers’ Party in Turkey, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka and the Palestinian al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade.

7 Ibid. O’Rourke also states that female suicide bombers have detonated from approximately eight times in the 1980s to more than 100 since 2000. For details on that claim, see p. 696.

8 The militant Islamist group Palestinian Islamic Jihad also started using female suicide bombers. Hamas and Islamic Jihad are not the first Palestinian groups to have embraced female terrorism. Fatah’s militant al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (a nationalist group) was the first to introduce female suicide bombings against Israeli targets with Wafa Idris in January 2002. For more information see O’Rourke, pp. 697-698.

9 Little is known about AQI’s first female suicide bomber. See Christopher Dickey, “Women of Al Qaeda,” *Newsweek*, December 12, 2005.

1 A May 2010 magazine published by AQAP, *Sada al-Malahim*, includes an article by the wife of AQAP’s second-in-command, Said al-Shihri, calling on women to join the jihad in Yemen.

2 Ibid.

3 Phil Sherwell and Sean Rayment, “Al-Qaeda Has Trained Female Suicide Bombers to Attack the West, US Officials Warn,” *Daily Telegraph*, January 23, 2010; Anthony Browne, “Western White Woman a Suicide Bomber,” *The Times*, December 1, 2005.

4 “Belgium Convicts Terror Suspects,” BBC, May 10, 2010; “Muslim Convert Colleen LaRose, aka Jihad Jane, Faces Terror Charges,” *Guardian*, March 10, 2010.

30 “Hakeemullah’s Followers in Orakzai Clash; 21 Killed,” *Dawn*, August 12, 2009.

31 “Taliban Infighting Claims Six Lives in Orakzai,” *Daily Times*, April 2, 2010.

32 Taj.



to detonate when she executed a cross-border attack in Amman, Jordan.<sup>10</sup> Since then, Iraq has seen a number of female suicide bombers, as recently as July 2010.<sup>11</sup>

Afghanistan and Pakistan have also witnessed female suicide bombers.<sup>12</sup> Afghanistan nearly saw its first in December 2007: the woman, who claimed she was from Pakistan, was arrested before attempting the suicide attack.<sup>13</sup> By May 2008, however, the Afghan Taliban reportedly claimed responsibility for a successful female suicide attack.<sup>14</sup> Pakistan also saw its first female suicide attack in December 2007, and in January 2010 two teenage girls claimed that they decided to become suicide bombers after hearing speeches from a leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Maulana Fazlullah, but later changed their minds.<sup>15</sup> Security officials in Pakistan are concerned that the Pakistani Taliban may have recruited “hundreds” of female students from Islamabad’s Red Mosque (*Lal Masjid*), a hotbed of Pakistani radicalism.<sup>16</sup>

The United States and Western Europe have yet to suffer a female suicide attack. Women have, however, remained on the peripheries of major terrorism plots or acted as propagandists for al-Qa`ida’s global narrative. In Belgium, Malika el-Aroud was convicted and sentenced in May 2010 to eight years in prison for “leading a terrorist group linked with al-Qaeda,” which recruited people in France and Belgium and sent them to Afghanistan for fighting.<sup>17</sup>

10 Ibid. Also see “Jordan Shows ‘Would-Be Bomber,’” BBC, November 13, 2005.

11 “Suicide Bomber in Government HQ in West Iraq Kills 3,” Reuters, July 4, 2010.

12 O’Rourke.

13 “Afghans Detain Woman with Bomb Under Burqa,” Reuters, December 24, 2007.

14 “Female Suicide Bomber Kills 15 at Crowded Afghan Market,” Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, May 15, 2008.

15 Sze Leng Chan, “Pakistan’s First Female Suicide Bomber Killed Near Christian School,” *Christian Post*, December 5, 2007; “Swat: 2 Suicide-Bomb Girls Presented Before Media,” Geo TV, January 9, 2010.

16 For details, see Jeremy Page and Zahid Hussain, “Female Suicide Bomber Joins Pakistan Violence,” *The Times*, October 17, 2009.

17 “Belgium Convicts Terror Suspects,” BBC, May 10, 2010.

In the United Kingdom, where a total of five women were convicted for Islamism-related offenses, three acted as protectors for their respective fiancé, husband or brother-in-law in the July 21, 2005 failed suicide attacks in London, of which one described her husband as a “martyr.”<sup>18</sup> Of the other two, one was convicted of distributing a terrorist publication that encouraged

**“The fact that Ayman al-Zawahiri’s wife issued a call to women to participate in jihad and ‘martyr’ themselves suggests that al-Qa`ida may change tactics and follow in the footsteps of groups such as Hamas or its own Iraqi affiliate, AQI.”**

others to conduct jihad abroad; the other, Houria Chentouf, was convicted for attempting to smuggle a USB stick into the United Kingdom containing files that may have been useful for terrorists.<sup>19</sup> Chentouf was discovered with hand-written notes that indicated she was considering making herself and her children “bombs for the sake of this religion” for they seek “revenge.”<sup>20</sup>

Where Western women have participated in combat activities, they are known to have done so outside of Western countries. In November 2005, Europe saw its first suicide bomber in Iraq, when Muriel Degauque, a white Belgian convert aged 38, detonated explosives in Baghdad on behalf of

18 The three women are Yeshiemebet Girma, Mulumebet Girma and Fardosa Abdullahi. Police found a note in the Muslim convert Yeshiemebet Girma’s handwriting that described her husband, Hussain Osman, as a “martyr.” See “Wife of 21 July Plotter Convicted,” BBC, June 11, 2008; “21 July Plotter’s Fiancee Jailed,” BBC, July 11, 2008.

19 “Woman Produced ‘Holy War’ Leaflet,” BBC, February 3, 2009; Russell Jenkins, “Mother of Six Houria Chentouf Hid Terror Manual in Burka,” *The Times*, November 3, 2009.

20 Ibid.

AQI.<sup>21</sup> Reports suggest that Degauque was one of many female Muslim converts in Europe to have been targeted for recruitment to carry out suicide attacks in Iraq and Pakistan.<sup>22</sup> In January 2010, the *Sunday Times* reported that a British-Somali female medical student traveled to Somalia to help the al-Qa`ida-linked al-Shabab group.<sup>23</sup>

The motivations for females to participate in violent jihad are not categorically known, but some suggest that women fight out of a sense of revenge—particularly Chechen “Black Widows”—and to protect their male counterparts or country.<sup>24</sup> For example, Hawa Barayev, the first Chechen female suicide bomber, committed the act in 2000 to not only aid Chechnya’s independence but to set an example for men to follow.<sup>25</sup> Comparatively, some Palestinian suicide bombers are thought to have fought to regain a sense of honor, as seen in the case of Reem al-Rayashi.<sup>26</sup> Yet examples such as Colleen LaRose, who as “JihadJane” cited religious reasons to fight jihad, can lead to the conclusion that women, just like men, can participate in jihad for ideological reasons.

21 Karla Cunningham, “The Evolving Participation of Muslim Women in Palestine, Chechnya, and the Global Jihadi Movement,” in Ness, p. 95. Cunningham states that Degauque was “tasked by al-Zarqawi.” Also see “Journey of Belgian Female ‘Bomber,’” BBC, December 2, 2005.

22 Cunningham, p. 95.

23 Richard Kerbaj, “UK Students Recruited for Somali Jihad,” *Sunday Times*, January 24, 2010.

24 Farhana Ali, “Dressed to Kill: Why the Number of Female Suicide Bombers is Rising in Iraq,” *Newsweek*, July 30, 2008. “Black Widows” is a reference to Chechen women who have committed suicide out of revenge for losing their brothers, husbands or sons in the war against Russia.

25 Ness, p. 19.

26 Ibid., p. 28. Reem al-Rayashi was thought to have been involved in an extramarital affair. It is argued that her motivation may have been to regain a sense of honor. Similarly, Samira Jassim in Iraq allegedly confessed to organizing the rape of potential female suicide bombers to later convince them that becoming a suicide bomber was their only escape from “shame.” See Deborah Haynes, “Female Suicide Bomb Recruiter’ Samira Ahmed Jassim Captured,” *The Times*, February 3, 2009.

### Legitimizing Female Suicide Terrorism

Militant Islamist groups are increasingly adopting female suicide terrorism because it serves their ideological goals and is highly effective. Women are generally subject to more relaxed security checks and attract less suspicion, and their attacks garner greater media coverage; female suicide bombings have more shock value because women are considered less likely to commit acts of mass violence.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the increasing willingness of militant Islamist groups to use female suicide bombers reflects shifts in attitudes. Female terrorism has gained intellectual legitimacy, and this tactic of warfare has received scholarly, albeit Islamist, backing.<sup>28</sup>

Egyptian scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of Sunni Islam's preeminent clerics, has justified the use of female suicide terrorism against perceived "occupying" powers, such as Israel. He issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) that states: "...committed Muslim women in Palestine have the right to participate and have their own role in jihad and to attain martyrdom."<sup>29</sup> He also said that women can embark on a "martyrdom" operation "without a *mahram* (male guardian, a husband or male relative they cannot marry)."<sup>30</sup> Al-Qaradawi's *fatwa* makes it permissible for women to fight alongside men when jihad becomes *fard `ayn*—an individual duty during times of war that requires all men and women to participate—and they can do so without the permission or accompaniment of a male guardian.<sup>31</sup>

Hamas, inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, provides the best example of this shift, with its spiritual leader, Shaykh Yassin, claiming at the start of the second intifada: "Men are more efficient because they are better at hiding out with the bomb...They are

stronger psychologically than women, who might not be able to stay hidden and alone."<sup>32</sup> Hamas changed tact in 2004, however, when Reem al-Rayashi, a mother of two, believed she would attain martyrdom and become one of the 70 *houris* (nymphs) promised to male suicide bombers.<sup>33</sup> Shaykh Yassin explained why the group used a woman for the first time:

For the first time, Hamas used a female fighter and not a male fighter. It is a new development in resistance against the enemy... Resistance will escalate against this enemy until they leave our land and homeland.<sup>34</sup>

Despite Yassin's statement, Hamas did not deploy its second female suicide bomber until November 2006 with Fatima Omar Mahmud al-Najar, showing that Hamas has not yet adopted these bombings as a regular tactic.<sup>35</sup>

A similar intellectual shift may be occurring in al-Qa`ida. Usama bin Ladin's 1996 *Declaration of War Against the Americans* indicated that women should only play a supportive role in the fight against the West. He instructed women to "instigate their brothers to fight in the cause of Allah" and glorified women who did so. By the early 2000s, however, al-Qa`ida moved toward legitimizing female participation in

jihad. Yusuf al-`Uyayri, al-Qa`ida's leader in Saudi Arabia who was killed in 2003, issued a pamphlet, *The Role of Women in Jihad Against the Enemies*, aimed at women that implicitly encouraged them to participate.<sup>36</sup> He lionized women in early Islamic history who fought jihad and stated that they should be role models for women today. Al-`Uyayri went further to dismantle traditional religious arguments that require permission for women to fight: "But if the Jihad becomes an individual obligation (*fard `ayn*), then no permission is needed."<sup>37</sup> He argued that the jihad al-Qa`ida is currently confronting is *fard `ayn*: "And in our time jihad is an individual obligation."<sup>38</sup> This jihad, according to al-`Uyayri, applies equally to both men and women, and that the latter do not require the permission from a male guardian to fight.<sup>39</sup> Al-`Uyayri provided the religious and intellectual justification for female jihad, although fell short of explicitly sanctioning it by stating that women should instead support their men.<sup>40</sup> By 2004, al-Qa`ida launched the first online jihadist magazine aimed specifically at women, *al-Khansaa*.<sup>41</sup>

By December 2009, sympathetic jihadist forums posted a letter by Ayman al-Zawahiri's wife, Umaymah Hasan, titled

36 The exact publication date of the pamphlet is unknown, as the English translation published by at-Tibyan Publications makes no mention of it. Al-`Uyayri, however, mentioned in the pamphlet Hawa Barayev, who committed suicide in 2000, and al-`Uyayri was killed in 2003. This pamphlet can therefore be dated to sometime between 2000-2003. An English version of the pamphlet is available at [www.islamfuture.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/the-role-of-the-women-in-fighting-the-enemies.pdf](http://www.islamfuture.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/the-role-of-the-women-in-fighting-the-enemies.pdf).

37 For details, see al-`Uyayri's pamphlet. For legitimization, al-`Uyayri cited the classical scholar al-Qurtubi who wrote: "There may be a situation where it is obligatory for everyone to go out, and that is if jihad becomes an individual obligation...The one who has a father [i.e. *mahram*] can go without his permission, as well as the one without a father." Al-`Uyayri also cited another classical scholar, Ibn Qudamah, who argued the same.

38 Ibid.

39 For further analysis of al-`Uyayri's pamphlet, see David Cook, "Women Fighting in Jihad?" in Ness.

40 Ibid., p. 46.

41 The magazine is named after a famous Arab poetess who wrote eulogies in early Islamic history about her male relatives fighting in jihad. Articles in the magazine advised women on how to support jihad. See Sebastian Usher, "Jihad' Magazine for Women on Web," BBC, August 24, 2004.

27 O'Rourke; Debra Zedalis, "Beyond the Bombings: Analysing Female Suicide Bombings," in Ness.

28 Cunningham, p. 93.

29 The exact date of al-Qaradawi's *fatwa* is unknown. It is referenced, however, in a question and answer discussion dated November 6, 2006 on the Islamic religious website IslamOnline.net.

30 Ibid.

31 This is different from *fard kifaya* (collective duty), where the duty applies to the Muslim community collectively, but means that not every Muslim has to perform an act such as jihad as long as a sufficient number of community members fulfill the duty.

32 O'Rourke, p. 696.

33 Hala Jaber and Uzi Mahnaimi, "Husband Took Wife to Suicide Bombing," *Sunday Times*, January 18, 2004. In a video, al-Rayashi reportedly said, "I want to be the first woman to carry out a martyr attack." For details, see Margot Dudkevitch, "Suicide Attack at Erez Crossing Kills Four," *Jerusalem Post*, January 14, 2004.

34 Dudkevitch.

35 Steven Erlanger, "Grandmother Blows Self Up in Suicide Attack on Israeli Forces," *New York Times*, November 24, 2006. Al-Najar is the last known female suicide bomber claimed by Hamas. According to one study, Palestinian suicide bombings have been in decline since 2005. See Yoram Schweitzer, "Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers: Virtuous Heroines or Damaged Goods?" in Ness, p. 131. Another study claims that this decline is a result of effective Israeli counterterrorism measures. See Hillel Frisch, "Motivation or Capabilities? Israeli Counterterrorism Against Palestinian Suicide Bombings and Violence," The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, December 2006. A 2008 BBC report, however, states that Palestinian Islamic Jihad is training women as suicide bombers. See "Just Married and Determined to Die," BBC, October 13, 2008.

“[A Letter] to the Muslim Sisters.”<sup>42</sup> The letter stated that women should follow in the footsteps of those who “martyred” themselves in Palestine, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq. For the first time, women are openly called upon by al-Qa`ida to participate in its jihad against the West, which is made permissible by the group because jihad is considered *fard`ayn*. The letter described “martyrdom” as an aspiration, and the author asked for women to aid Islam by fighting alongside men.<sup>43</sup> Women should also encourage each other, the letter stated, to “not abstain from this religious obligation.”<sup>44</sup> Differing from al-`Uyayri and al-Qaradawi, however, the letter said that women should have a male guardian during combat activities: “Jihad is *fard`ayn* on every Muslim man and woman, but the way of fighting is not easy for Muslim women for it requires a *mabram*.” The letter continued to say, however, that

we should aid our religion in several ways and should keep our selves in the service of the Mujahideen, and we should fulfill whatever they ask of us, may it be through monetary aid to them...or participation in fighting or even through a martyrdom operation.

This apparent discrepancy over male guardians is perhaps an attempt to appease more conservative followers of al-Qa`ida.

#### Al-Qa`ida's Strategy

The case of Colleen LaRose parallels what al-Qa`ida may be hoping to achieve in the West: an increase of “homegrown” sympathizers among Western women who are able to provide logistical and operational support. A white convert and U.S. citizen, LaRose is alleged to have recruited men to wage

42 Al-Qa`ida's publishing house al-Sahab originally issued this letter in Arabic and it appeared on jihadist websites on December 17, 2009. For details, see “Wife of Al-Qa`idah's Al-Zawahiri Urges Muslim Women to Support Mujahidin,” BBC, December 17, 2009. The letter was translated into English by Dar al-Murabtieen Publications and was posted on the militant website Ansar al-Mujahideen. All quotes from the letter are taken from the English translation of the letter uploaded on Ansar. The PDF file, however, is no longer accessible.

43 The letter states: “...the Muslim women should work beside men to defend her religion and land.”

44 Ibid.

violent jihad in South Asia and Europe, and women who had the ability to travel into Europe in support of jihad.<sup>45</sup> She is accused of agreeing to kill a Swedish resident and using the internet to solicit funds for terrorists.<sup>46</sup> In an online YouTube forum, she posted comments as “JihadJane” stating her desire to become a “martyr in the name of Allah” and that her appearance would allow her to “blend in with many people.”<sup>47</sup> She is also accused of traveling to Europe in August 2009 with the intent to live and train with jihadists.<sup>48</sup>

LaRose's alleged attempts to radicalize others online are not uncommon. Houria Chentouf is believed to have been radicalized online by visiting jihadist forums. Similarly, Nicky Reilly, a 22-year-old man convicted in 2008 of attempting to commit a suicide attack in the United Kingdom that same year, is also believed to have been radicalized online by two men with alleged links to al-Qa`ida living in the Afghan-Pakistan border region.<sup>49</sup> In fact, posts encouraging women to participate in jihad are increasing on militant Islamist forums, including English-language ones such as Ansar al-Mujahideen and al-Qimmah.<sup>50</sup> This indicates that women from English-speaking countries, such

45 *U.S.A. v. Colleen R. LaRose*, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 2010.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid. There have been training camps in the United Kingdom, which members of the July 21, 2005 cell attended. These camps were run by Mohammed Hamid and Atilla Ahmet. Hamid was convicted in 2008 of soliciting to murder and providing terrorist training, and Ahmet in 2007 of soliciting to murder. See “Top Extremist Recruiter is Jailed,” BBC, March 7, 2008.

49 Duncan Gardham, “Al-Qaeda's Terrorists who Brainwashed Exeter Suicide Bomber Still on the Run,” *Daily Telegraph*, October 15, 2008.

50 A May 2, 2010 post included a video of a female fighter in the Ogaden region in Ethiopia. Forum members praised the woman for her bravery. For details, see [www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?p=75107#post75107](http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?p=75107#post75107). A January 29, 2010 post asked women to follow the example of al-Khansaa and support jihad. For details, see [www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=13736](http://www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=13736). A February 2010 post detailed how a woman should support her husband's jihad. For details, see [www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=13736](http://www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=13736). An August 2009 post included a letter intended for Muslim women praising them for their virtues and dignity in the jihad cause and “martyrdom...at the hands of a *kafir* [non-believer].” For details, see [www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?t=16807](http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?t=16807).

as the United Kingdom and the United States, are targeted for recruitment. Moreover, the fact that Reilly, along with Degauque and LaRose, is also a white convert to Islam worryingly suggests that converts, often in search of a new identity, are easy prey for al-Qa`ida or at least its violent ideology. It is suspected that the group may want to groom the next generation of operatives by targeting women with the ability to move freely and without suspicion in Western countries. Nevertheless, the extent to which women are actually targeted by al-Qa`ida's central leadership to become suicide bombers is still unclear.

#### Conclusion

The fact that Ayman al-Zawahiri's wife issued a call to women to participate in jihad and “martyr” themselves suggests that al-Qa`ida may change tactics and follow in the footsteps of groups such as Hamas or its own Iraqi affiliate, AQI. If so, female converts who have the advantage of blending in and possibly evading security measures would be a likely target. The internet has no doubt become an efficient way to propagandize and win over recruits worldwide. It is no coincidence that there has been a recent increase of posts on jihadist forums that eulogize and call on women to participate in jihad and “martyrdom operations.”

The legitimization of female terrorism as an individual duty by militant Islamist groups shows that they believe Muslims are facing a growing existential threat from the West and “occupying” powers. Hamas is fighting on behalf of Palestinians against Israel, making its attacks specific to one territory. Al-Qa`ida, on the other hand, is currently fighting its jihad to target those it perceives as posing a threat to Islam or Muslims worldwide. If group tactics are copied, it may be only a matter of time before the United States and Western European countries are attacked by a female suicide bomber.

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## Countering Terrorist Financing: Successes and Setbacks in the Years Since 9/11

By Michael Jonsson

FOLLOWING THE 9/11 attacks, efforts to counter the financing of terrorism (CFT) became a centerpiece of counterterrorism policy in the United States and in several European countries. These efforts have spanned a broad range of policy tools. New organizational units have been created,<sup>1</sup> intelligence gathering platforms invented,<sup>2</sup> substantial diplomatic pressure exerted against “passive state sponsors of terrorism”<sup>3</sup> and multi-agency analytical units have become an integral part of U.S. counterinsurgency efforts.<sup>4</sup> Yet in spite of the extensive intelligence assets and research efforts poured into understanding the field during the past decade, practitioners and academics remain deeply divided over the effectiveness of these efforts.

This article presents some measures of the effectiveness of CFT efforts and criticisms from scholars regarding negative side effects of these policies. It then explains why terrorism financing has proven challenging to prove in court, outlines some alternative responses from intelligence agencies and concludes by suggesting complementary indicators by which to judge the effectiveness of CFT efforts.

### Measuring CFT Effectiveness

Measuring the effectiveness of CFT efforts is challenging since the metrics tend to be either insufficient or unavailable to researchers. Merely studying convictions in court and asset forfeiture vastly underestimates the achievements, whereas indicators such as intelligence gathered, terrorist financiers deterred or impact on the internal dynamics of terrorist groups is challenging to access and quantify. When assessing the most obvious indicator—number of convictions on terrorist financing charges—the achievements thus far are modest. For the United States, a partial study found 59 convictions from 2001 to 2007, with 16 acquittals and another 15 charges dropped due to plea bargains on other charges.<sup>5</sup> Since then, the number of convictions seems to be increasing. Whereas in 2006 eight out of 54 convictions in terrorism-related cases involved material support charges, 28 out of 35 did so in 2009.<sup>6</sup> Comparing convictions across jurisdictions is complex and can easily be misleading, but in 2006 eight percent of all 703 arrests in terrorism cases in the European Union were on terrorist financing suspicions. Following a crude estimation—since no exact data exists—this would be expected to result in approximately 20 convictions.<sup>7</sup> For

2009, the data for EU member states is even less precise, but 21 persons were convicted of financing the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and more than 80 persons arrested for financing separatist groups in Spain and France, which following the same method would be expected to result in 40 convictions.<sup>8</sup> The number of convictions seems to be increasing, but remains modest in relation to the Herculean efforts demanded of financial institutions.<sup>9</sup>

### Critical Trade-Offs for CFT Policies

In terms of assets seized from suspected terrorists, the total amount of assets frozen rose dramatically shortly following the 9/11 attacks, but then leveled off and are now increasingly being challenged in court by some of the individuals targeted by such asset freezes.<sup>10</sup> Legally complex, the international asset seizure regime is subject to a number of due process concerns and seems unlikely to yield any dramatic achievements in the future.<sup>11</sup> Overall, CFT efforts face a number of daunting policy trade-offs—personal integrity versus data access, financial integrity versus investor friendliness,

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the “material support” provisions of the United States, which may skew the comparison somewhat.

8 *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2010* (The Hague: European Police Office, 2010), p. 27. Obviously, not all arrests result in prosecutions the same year, so these numbers are mainly mentioned by way of illustration. Financing of Islamist terrorist groups is also a major concern—20 Algerian and Moroccan citizens were arrested in 2008 in Spain alone, mainly on suspicions of financing and recruiting for such groups. For details, see “Country Terrorism Report: Spain,” U.S. State Department, 2008. In January 2009, 17 Algerian citizens were arrested across Europe on suspicions of terrorism financing. For details, see “Terror Fundraising Group Held in Italy,” *The Western Mail*, January 13, 2009.

9 From 2001 to 2009, the total number of Suspicious Activity Reports filed by U.S. financial institutions increased from approximately 200,000 to over 1.2 million. See the *SAR Activity Review*, June 2010, p. 4.

10 Steve Kiser, “Terror Finance: An Analysis and Simulation for Affecting Al Qaeda’s Financial Infrastructure,” Pardee RAND Graduate School, 2005, p. 135; Craig Whitlock, “Terrorism Financing Blacklists At Risk,” *Washington Post*, November 2, 2008.

11 For example, the Swedish section of the informal money transmitter al-Barakaat was removed from the UN and EU sanctions lists in October 2009, presumably as an indirect result from a 2008 European Court of Justice decision that found the defendant had not been granted a right to be heard by the court. See “Al Barakaat stryks från FN’s terrorlista,” Sveriges Radio, October 26, 2009.

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5 Adam Liptak and Leslie Eaton, “Mistrial is Latest Terror Prosecution Misstep for the U.S.,” *New York Times*, October 27, 2007; Robert Chesney, “Federal Prosecution of Terrorism-Related Cases: Conviction and Sentencing Data in Light of the ‘Soft Sentence’ and ‘Data Reliability’ and Critiques,” *Lewis & Clark Law Review* 11:4 (2007): pp. 879, 884. This study only covers the 18 U.S.C. § 2339B and 50 U.S.C. § 1705 statutes, whereas the terrorism financing offense in the United States usually also includes 18 U.S.C § 2339A and 2339C statutes. Hence, the total number of convictions on terrorist financing may be higher. For details, see “United States Mutual Evaluation Report,” Financial Action Task Force, June 23, 2006, pp. 38-39.

6 “Introduction to National Security Statistics on Unsealed International Terrorism and Terrorism-Related Convictions,” U.S. Department of Justice, March 26, 2010. Calculations by author, covering provisions 18 U.S.C § 2339A-C and 50 U.S.C § 1705.

7 *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2007* (The Hague: European Police Office, 2007), pp. 14-16. Assuming the same prosecution rate (43%) and conviction rate (85%) as that for the total sample of cases (which possibly overstates the real number) this would result in approximately 20 convictions. Some of what is reported as “facilitation” in the European Union report is included in

1 David P. Friedovich, “Tracking and Disrupting Terrorist Financial Networks: A Potential Model for Inter-Agency Success,” congressional hearing before the U.S. House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, March 11, 2009.

2 Such as the Terrorist Financing Tracking Program tapping into SWIFT data. See Eric Lichtblau, “U.S. Sifts Bank Data in Secret to Block Terrorist Financiers,” *New York Times*, June 23, 2006; John Snow, “Bank Data Report: Treasury Dept’s View,” *New York Times*, June 29, 2006.

3 Daniel Byman, “Passive Sponsors of Terrorism,” *Survival* 47:4 (2005): pp. 117-144.

4 Such as the Threat Finance Units in Iraq and Afghanistan. See John F. Burns, “Iraq Insurgency has Funds to Sustain Itself, U.S Finds,” *New York Times*, November 26, 2006.

due process versus being able to freeze very liquid assets, among others.<sup>12</sup> The most difficult trade-off, however, is that between humanitarian aid and countering terrorist financing, as epitomized by contemporary Somalia.

The shuttering of Somali informal money transmitter al-Barakaat following 9/11 was later roundly criticized for cutting remittances to Somalia by half, while producing no or very few prosecutions.<sup>13</sup> Five years later, Dalsan, another Somali money transmitter, collapsed, with the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia noting that “one of the reasons for the bankruptcy was that an ICU military leader managed to divert a large amount of money to help financially support the organization in its fight for the control of Mogadishu.”<sup>14</sup> Today, al-Shabab has begun “taxing” aid offices, impelling many agencies to leave in spite of the dire humanitarian situation.<sup>15</sup> There is no simple solution to this conundrum, and it is still not clear whether it is the legitimacy of al-Shabab or that of the international community that will suffer the most.

Somewhat cursorily summarized, these aspects—the low number of convictions, the problems of the terrorist asset freeze regime and the negative impact on development finance—have led several academics to conclude that the current CFT regime is not working as well as it should.<sup>16</sup>

### Achievement of CFT Programs for Counterterrorism Efforts

Current and former intelligence officials with first-hand experience of CFT efforts in practice have vigorously defended these policies. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, for example, argues that in a sample of 500 terrorist investigations, 42% of the cases had information from Suspicious Transaction Reports included in the case file.<sup>17</sup> So-called financial intelligence has also allegedly helped prevent terrorist attacks such as the 2006 airport plot in the United Kingdom and tracking down senior terrorist leaders such as Hambali, the suspected mastermind behind the 2002 Bali bombings.<sup>18</sup>

Sources outside of government have also claimed that certain wire transfer companies have been cooperating with U.S. intelligence agencies in monitoring money transfers to terrorist suspects, yielding important intelligence and tactical successes.<sup>19</sup> The U.S. Treasury Department has also vigorously defended the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program, which taps SWIFT data on interbank transactions, pointing to some 1,550 leads shared with EU countries and a number of attacks prevented as a result of the program. Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Stuart Leavey also stated on July 9, 2010 that data from the program had provided support to Norway in its arrest of three individuals suspected of plotting an attack against the country.<sup>20</sup>

Such self-evaluations obviously need to be taken cautiously and are close to impossible to verify, but they still underline a fundamental divergence in the perceptions of the relative effectiveness of CFT efforts writ large.

12 Ibid.; James Kanter, “Europe Resumes Sharing Bank Data with the US,” *New York Times*, July 8, 2010; Laura K. Donohue, “Anti-Terrorist Finance in the United Kingdom and United States,” *Michigan Journal of International Law* 27:303 (2006): pp. 399, 407.

13 John Roth, Douglas Greenburg and Serena Wille, “National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States – Monograph on Terrorist Financing,” 2004, pp. 57-86.

14 Nazzir Abdulaziz al-Nasser, “Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1676 (2006),” United Nations, November 2006.

15 Christian Larson, Michael Jonsson and Nir Artzi, “Tax Evasion. Dealing with the Shabab’s Financing,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, March 2010.

16 Thomas Biersteker and Sue E. Eckert, “Conclusion: Taking Stock of Efforts to Counter the Financing of Terrorism and Recommendations for the Way Forward,” in Thomas Biersteker and Sue E. Eckert eds., *Countering the Financing of Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 289-304.

17 John Pistole, deputy director of FBI, speech given at American Bankers’ Association’s Money Laundering Enforcement Conference, October 22, 2007.

18 Matthew Levitt and Michael Jacobson, “The Money Trail: Finding, Following and Freezing Terrorist Finances,” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 2008.

19 Ron Suskind, *The One Percent Doctrine: Deep Inside America’s Pursuit of its Enemies Since 9/11* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

20 “US: Anti-Terror Program Leads to Arrests,” United Press International, July 10, 2010; “The Terrorist Financing Tracking Program: Questions and Answers,” press release, U.S. Treasury Department, June 24, 2010.

### The Challenges of Prosecuting Terrorist Financing Cases

In assessing these diverging views of the effectiveness of U.S. and EU CFT efforts, a few basic points need to be emphasized. Terrorist financing is extraordinarily difficult to prosecute in court due to the nature of the crime. Terrorist financing operations, for example, tend to be cash-based, involve loosely regulated organizational entities (*bawaladars*, charities, NGOs) and involve multiple jurisdictions. Moreover, the target countries often lack efficient law enforcement, or their impartiality is questionable.<sup>21</sup> A few simple evasive measures by the terrorist financier can also make the case vastly harder to prove, such as infiltrating an existing NGO, diverting only a fraction of money collected to terrorist aims, using encrypted e-mails or talking in code on the phone. In the one successful prosecution on terrorist financing charges in Sweden, two men who were transferring money to Ansar al-Islam in northern Iraq used several of these techniques, making the admission of guilt by one of the men arguably crucial to the guilty verdict in spite of extensive circumstantial evidence.<sup>22</sup>

In two failed prosecutions against the al-Aqsa Foundation in Denmark and Sweden (prosecuted separately) that were suspected of financing Hamas, the final acquittal in both cases hinged largely on the court finding much of the evidence provided by Israel to be either inadmissible or not credible, with the Danish court divided on several counts.<sup>23</sup> Issues of mutual trust and confidence in its human rights record may explain why Spain has been fairly successful in combating the financing of the ETA with French assistance, whereas Turkey is increasingly irritated by

21 Law enforcement agencies in countries that are repeatedly attacked by terrorist groups may either commit human rights abuses or other transgressions making evidence inadmissible in court, or the country may simply be judged to be in a “war-like situation” against the group, lowering its credibility.

22 Michael Jonsson and Klas Kärrstrand, “Money Problems – Tackling Terrorist Financiers in Sweden,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, February 1, 2007, extensively citing the final verdict.

23 Michael Jonsson and Christian N. Larson, “Scandinavian Trials Demonstrate Difficulty of Obtaining Terrorist Financing Convictions,” *Terrorism Monitor* 7:5 (2009), citing court transcripts from both cases.

what it perceives as a lack of European cooperation in combating the financing of the Kurdistan Workers' Party.<sup>24</sup>

#### Alternative CFT Approaches for Security Services

Challenges to prosecuting terrorist financing cases implies that security services are often forced to adopt other tactics, such as focusing on intelligence gathering, pursuing less serious criminal charges or aiming to disrupt, deter or simply slow down terrorist financing networks. As Matthew Levitt has argued, one option is to move from criminal investigations toward "silent monitoring" and intelligence gathering.<sup>25</sup> In theory, such monitoring of financial intermediaries can help map out both support networks in country "A" and operative cells in country "B," but this typically requires additional intelligence from other sources, strong mutual trust between the countries and well-resourced intelligence agencies on both ends.

Another less noted approach is "pretextual prosecution," also known as "the Al Capone strategy," which refers to pressing charges on less serious but easier to prosecute charges.<sup>26</sup> For example, in a data set of "terrorism associated" cases in the United States compiled by New York University, in only 42% of cases the "top charge" was on either terrorism or national security grounds, whereas 29% were racketeering, drug crimes or commercial fraud, embezzlement and theft.<sup>27</sup> In the so-called Lebanese Hizb Allah cigarette smuggling case in which more than \$2 million was allegedly channeled to Hizb Allah, only one of 13 defendants was indicted on terrorism charges.<sup>28</sup>

24 Michael Jonsson, "Cashing up - Funding the Basque Battle for Independence," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February 1, 2008; Michael Jonsson and Svante Cornell, "Kurds and Pay - Examining PKK Financing," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 13, 2008. Also see the *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2010*, which cites the successful cooperation between France and Spain in countering the financing of the ETA.

25 Matthew Levitt, "Follow the Money: Challenges and Opportunities in the Campaign to Combat Terrorism Financing," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 6, 2007.

26 Chesney.

27 Karen J. Greenberg ed., "Terrorist Trial Report Card: 2001-2009," Center on Law and Security, New York University School of Law, 2009, p. 18.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

As for sentencing, convictions on terrorism charges resulted in 16 years imprisonment on average, national security 7.5-10.4 years and for other charges 1.2 years.<sup>29</sup> Hence, less severe crimes related to logistical support resulted in less severe sentences, but may nonetheless be efficient in disrupting logistical networks and planning. It is difficult to study the same trend in the European Union due to lack of data, but in 2006 19% of Islamist terrorism suspects were arrested for either preparing or carrying out an attack, whereas 27% were arrested on suspicions related to "facilitation" or "false documents."<sup>30</sup> In Sweden, the case of Yassin Ali provides a case in point. Ali was arrested in February 2009 on suspicion of terrorist financing to Somalia, but was released in April without charge, then convicted in October for bookkeeping errors and added to the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list by April 2010.<sup>31</sup>

#### Conclusion

Bridging the divide between scholars and intelligence officials, other possible indicators for taking stock of CFT effectiveness includes asking whether terrorist groups have been forced to change their methods for collecting or transferring funds to slower or more burdensome means, whether would-be terrorist financiers have been deterred and whether specific terrorist groups show signs of having trouble acquiring sufficient funding.<sup>32</sup> The

29 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

30 *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2007*, p. 20. Due to the complexities of comparisons across multiple legal systems and languages, carrying out comparative studies such as that compiled by New York University is decidedly more challenging within the European Union, which typically makes researchers dependent on the information presented in the annual *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Reports*.

31 Stockholms Tingsrätt, Dom Mål B 23273-07, October 17, 2009 (court sentence); "Recent OFAC Actions," U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control, April 13, 2010.

32 Terrorist groups may, for example, abandon the formal financial system, making it harder and costlier to transfer money where and when they need it. Deterrence may include both making diaspora groups more cognizant of the risk of abuse of charitable donations to conflict zones, and increasing pressure on key countries to rein in donations from a few wealthy donors. As for groups having trouble financing themselves, signs may include increased waves of extortion letters or non-lethal attacks

impact varies between groups, but there have been signs that both the ETA and the core of al-Qa`ida are struggling to obtain sufficient funding.<sup>33</sup> Whereas single terrorist attacks can be cheap, maintaining an efficient terrorist network is not, and even single attacks have frequently been underfunded, underlining that this remains a critical concern for terrorist groups.<sup>34</sup>

Groups that have access to drug trafficking—such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—are difficult to starve of funding, whereas other groups seem to be more critically dependent on outside support. As such, CFT efforts will not herald the end of terrorist groups, but they have opened a new front and created a new set of techniques for making life harder for such groups. Reversely, intelligence officials focused on CFT issues arguably need to better address the negative impact of some of their policies, including civil liberties concerns and disruption of humanitarian aid since the main battlefield against terrorist groups is not that over money, but over legitimacy in the eyes of the population.

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against business owners, increased public appeals for donations or intercepted messages indicating a lack of funds, or simply an increase in seemingly underfunded attacks.

33 Jonsson, "Cashing up - Funding the Basque Battle for Independence"; Nathan Vardi, "Is Al Qaeda Bankrupt?" *Forbes*, March 15, 2010.

34 Jacob N. Shapiro "Terrorist Organizations Vulnerabilities and Inefficiencies: A Rational Choice Perspective," in Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas eds., *Terrorist Financing and State Responses* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).



## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

June 1, 2010 (PAKISTAN): The Pakistan Army said it successfully concluded military operations against Pakistani Taliban militants in Orakzai Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The operation began in March 2010. In recent years, Orakzai Agency became a safe haven for many Taliban militants, especially for fighters fleeing the government's recent offensive in South Waziristan Agency in 2009. - *Voice of America, June 1*

June 2, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Insurgents attacked Afghan President Hamid Karzai's peace *jirga* in Kabul, but failed to significantly disrupt the proceedings. At least two suicide bombers disguised in women's clothing attempted to attack the gathering. The bombers were killed by security forces. Rockets were also fired at the *jirga* tent. - *New York Times, June 2; Los Angeles Times, June 3*

June 2, 2010 (YEMEN): Agence France-Presse reported that an Australian woman was detained in Yemen on suspicion of having ties to al-Qa`ida. The Australian, a convert to Islam, was arrested on May 15, 2010 along with two Bangladeshi women. She has been identified as Shyloh Jayne Giddens and was teaching English in Sana`a at the time of her arrest. On June 12, however, Yemeni authorities said that she had been released and was returning to Australia. - *Bloomberg, June 2; Guardian, June 3; Telegraph, June 4*

June 3, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Barry Walter Bujol Jr. was indicted in Houston on allegations of trying to provide money and equipment to al-Qa`ida. The indictment states that Bujol exchanged e-mails with Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaqi starting in 2008, asking for the cleric's advice on how to help al-Qa`ida. According to the *New York Times*, "The Federal Bureau of Investigation, after learning of the e-mail messages, sent an informer posing as a member of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula to contact Mr. Bujol, an American. From the informer, Mr. Bujol obtained equipment for the group, including global positioning system devices, telephone calling cards and a military compass. He was arrested May 30 after he boarded a ship bound for the Middle East with the equipment." - *New York Times, June 3*

June 3, 2010 (SAUDI ARABIA): Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which is based in Yemen, threatened to kidnap Saudi princes and ministers to secure the release of a female al-Qa`ida operative arrested by Saudi security forces. The operative, Hayla al-Qusayir, is thought to be a fundraiser for al-Qa`ida. - *Reuters, June 3*

June 4, 2010 (IRAQ): General Ray Odierno, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, told a news conference that approximately 80% of al-Qa`ida's leaders in Iraq have been captured or killed during the past three months. He said that only eight of al-Qa`ida's 42 chiefs in Iraq remain at large. - *BBC, June 4*

June 4, 2010 (RUSSIA): A policeman was killed after a bomb exploded in a shop near the town of Malgobek in Ingushetia, located in Russia's North Caucasus region. Twenty-five people were injured by the blast. The same shop had been bombed earlier in the day. - *Reuters, June 4*

June 4, 2010 (SOMALIA): According to CNN, as many as 200 foreign fighters affiliated with al-Qa`ida are estimated to be hiding in southern Somalia. CNN said the estimates were based on interviews with two unidentified U.S. military officials. - *CNN, June 4*

June 5, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Two New Jersey men were arrested at JFK International Airport in New York as they attempted to board separate flights to Egypt, with their ultimate destination reportedly being Somalia. U.S. federal authorities charge that the men planned to join the al-Qa`ida-linked al-Shabab insurgent group in Somalia. They have been identified as Mohamed Mahmood Alessa and Carlos Eduardo Almonte. The FBI had been monitoring the men since 2006. - *Fox News, June 6; New York Times, June 7*

June 5, 2010 (YEMEN): Suspected al-Qa`ida gunmen killed a senior Yemeni army officer and a soldier after ambushing their convoy in Marib Province. - *Reuters, June 5*

June 5, 2010 (INDIA): U.S. National Security Adviser James Jones reportedly told Indian reporters that Indian government investigators had been given access to David Coleman Headley, a Pakistani-American operative for Lashkar-i-Tayyiba. Headley, who is detained in Chicago, was reportedly

involved in the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008. - *PTI, June 5*

June 6, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb killed three policemen in Kunduz Province. - *AFP, June 5*

June 6, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): The Afghan Interior Ministry said that a suicide bomber on a motorcycle targeted a NATO convoy in Jalalabad, injuring 13 Afghan civilians. - *AFP, June 5*

June 6, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan Interior Minister Hanif Atmar and National Directorate of Security Chief Amrullah Saleh resigned in the wake of a June 2 attack on a major peace conference in the capital. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, "The attack was thwarted and none of the assembly participants was hurt. However, it proved embarrassing for Karzai, who had to interrupt his opening speech to urge calm as a rocket-propelled grenade landed within 100 yards of the *jirga's* tent." - *Voice of America, June 6; Los Angeles Times, June 7*

June 6, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle attacked a crowd of officers outside a police station in Baghdad, killing four of them. The attack occurred in the predominately Shi`a Amil district of the capital. - *Reuters, June 6*

June 6, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemeni security officials said that they arrested French national Jeremy Johnny Witter in late May in Sana`a on suspicion of having ties to al-Qa`ida. Authorities said that Witter was studying at the Sana`a Institute for Arabic Language. - *Voice of America, June 6*

June 6, 2010 (YEMEN): Hamza Ali Salah al-Dayyan, the al-Qa`ida operative accused of planning the July 2007 suicide attack that killed seven Spanish tourists and two Yemenis in Marib Province, surrendered to Yemeni authorities. Al-Dayyan was among the 23 al-Qa`ida operatives who escaped from a Yemeni jail in February 2006. - *RTTNews, June 7*

June 7, 2010 (IRAQ): A car bomb ripped through Baghdad's Mansur district, killing three people. - *Reuters, June 7*

June 8, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani officials said that the Taliban publicly executed a man in Miran Shah in North Waziristan Agency. The man, who was accused of killing his two brothers, was

shot to death in front of hundreds of people at a football ground. – *BBC, June 8*

June 8, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemeni authorities announced that they detained dozens of foreign nationals, including Americans, suspected of having ties to al-Qa`ida. – *UPI, June 8*

June 8-9, 2010 (TURKEY): Turkish police arrested 17 suspected al-Qa`ida members in an operation spanning several regions in the country. – *Ennahar Online, June 9*

June 9, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Syed Hashmi, who pleaded guilty in a U.S. court on April 27, 2010 to a charge of conspiracy to provide material support or resources to al-Qa`ida, was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Hashmi, a Pakistani-American, was arrested at London's Heathrow Airport shortly before boarding a flight to Pakistan on June 6, 2006. – *AFP, June 9*

June 9, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants shot down a NATO helicopter in southern Afghanistan, killing four soldiers. – *AFP, June 9*

June 9, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants in Helmand Province accused a seven-year-old boy of spying and hanged him in a public execution. A witness said three militants executed the boy in front of 150 people in Sangin district. – *CBS News, June 10; ABC News, June 10*

June 9, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber ripped through the wedding celebration of a man who had joined an anti-Taliban militia in Kandahar Province, killing 40 people. The Taliban publicly denied involvement in the attack. – *New York Times, June 9; CNN, June 10*

June 9, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): The *New York Times* reported that Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan have stepped up an assassination campaign aimed at officials and individuals tied to local governments in the south. According to the article, "Government assassinations are nothing new as a Taliban tactic, but now the Taliban are taking aim at officials who are much more low-level, who often do not have the sort of bodyguards or other protection that top leaders do. Some of the victims have only the slimmest connections to the authorities. The most egregious example came Wednesday in Helmand Province, where according to Afghan officials the insurgents executed

a 7-year-old boy as an informant." – *New York Times, June 9*

June 9, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber on a motorcycle targeted a U.S. Army patrol near the town of Muqdadhiyya, 50 miles northeast of Baghdad. Two civilians were killed in the blast. – *Reuters, June 9*

June 9, 2010 (IRAQ): A 16-year-old al-Qa`ida member was arrested just moments before he planned to detonate a suicide vest to kill a Shi`a cleric in Tal Afar, Ninawa Province. – *Reuters, June 9*

June 9, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Pakistani Taliban militants torched 50 NATO supply trucks on the outskirts of Islamabad, killing at least seven people. The incident marked the first attack on NATO supply trucks this close to the Pakistani capital. – *Guardian, June 9; AP, July 1*

June 9, 2010 (SOMALIA): A French security adviser who was kidnapped in Somalia in July 2009 appeared in a video posted on jihadist websites. "I ask the French people to do everything for my release," said the hostage, identified as Denis Alex. Alex, who is being held by al-Shabab militants, said his captors demanded the end of French political and military support to the Somali government and the withdrawal of all foreign military advisers and private security firms from Somalia. – *AFP, June 9*

June 10, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed three members of an anti-al-Qa`ida militia and two Iraqi soldiers in Baghdad. – *AFP, June 10*

June 10, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed three suspected militants near Mir Ali in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *BBC, June 11*

June 10, 2010 (INDIA): An Indian newspaper reported that David Coleman Headley, who is currently in U.S. custody, told Indian investigators that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) guided the Lashkar-i-Tayyiba operatives who carried out the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai. – *Times of India, June 10*

June 11, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber wearing a burqa detonated his explosives in a bazaar in Zabul Province, killing two NATO soldiers who were

walking through the same area. Two Afghans were also killed. – *New York Times, June 11*

June 11, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber in a vehicle killed two U.S. soldiers and at least three Iraqis in Jalawla, Diyala Province. – *Reuters, June 11*

June 11, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed at least 10 suspected militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The militants reportedly belonged to the Pakistani Taliban faction led by Hafiz Gul Bahadur. – *BBC, June 11*

June 11, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani police arrested two Pakistani Taliban militants who were planning "terror attacks" in Karachi. The men, accused of being members of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, were allegedly planning to bring a suicide bomber to Karachi from North Waziristan Agency, but their plot was foiled. – *AFP, June 11*

June 11, 2010 (ALGERIA): A suicide bomber drove a truck into the barracks of an elite police unit in Timizar, 60 miles east of Algiers. The blast killed at least nine people, including four police officers. Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb is suspected of being responsible for the blast. – *AP, June 11*

June 12, 2010 (YEMEN): Militants blew up an oil pipeline in Yemen's Marib Province. Authorities accused the militants of belonging to al-Qa`ida, although other officials said they were tribesmen. – *Saba, June 12; Voice of America, June 12*

June 12, 2010 (PHILIPPINES): Authorities discovered the bodies of three Filipino loggers, who were recently beheaded by Abu Sayyaf Group militants in the southern Philippines. – *New York Times, June 13*

June 13, 2010 (IRAQ): Fighters wearing Iraqi military uniforms raided Baghdad's Central Bank, killing at least 15 people. The militants used a suicide bomber and at least four other bombs to break into one of Baghdad's most heavily guarded facilities. The Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility. – *Guardian, June 13; Bloomberg, June 13*

June 14, 2010 (PAKISTAN): The Afghan Taliban captured dozens of Pakistani soldiers after attacking their checkpoint in Mohmand Agency in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The Afghan Taliban said it captured 40 Pakistani troops during the cross-border raid. - *BBC, June 16*

June 14, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemen's Defense Ministry said that it foiled an al-Qa`ida plot to attack vital facilities in Marib Province. - *Reuters, June 14*

June 15, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants overpowered a seven-man police post in Ghazni Province, killing five policemen. - *AFP, June 14*

June 16, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani helicopters and heavy artillery killed 38 militants in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Ten paramilitary soldiers were also killed. - *AFP, June 16*

June 16, 2010 (PHILIPPINES): Abu Sayyaf Group militants freed Carl Rieth, a Swiss-Filipino man held hostage by the group since April 2010. - *AFP, June 16*

June 17, 2010 (UNITED STATES): A new federal indictment against Faisal Shahzad, the suspect in the attempted bombing of New York City's Times Square on May 1, 2010, claims that he received \$12,000 from the Pakistani Taliban to carry out the attack. - *Washington Post, June 18*

June 17, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber in a vehicle targeted the police headquarters in Andar district of Ghazni Province. Three police officers and three civilians were injured. - *CNN, June 17*

June 19, 2010 (YEMEN): Militants attacked the main police intelligence headquarters in the southern Yemeni capital of Aden, killing at least 11 people. The insurgents, wearing military uniforms, used assault rifles, mortars and grenades against the facility. They reportedly freed a number of prisoners. Authorities believe that al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula may be responsible. - *Voice of America, June 19; Telegraph, June 19; Reuters, June 26*

June 19, 2010 (SAUDI ARABIA): A Saudi security official said that approximately 25 former detainees at Guantanamo Bay returned to militancy after participating

in Saudi Arabia's rehabilitation program for former al-Qa`ida militants. - *Reuters, June 19*

June 19, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. aerial drone killed 12 militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *Reuters, June 19*

June 20, 2010 (IRAQ): Two suicide bombers detonated explosives-laden vehicles outside the Trade Bank of Iraq in Baghdad, killing 26 people. The Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility. - *Reuters, June 20*

June 20, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber targeted a police patrol in Shirqat, Salah al-Din Province, killing at least six police officers and two civilians. - *CNN, June 20; BBC, June 21*

June 21, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A female suicide bomber killed two U.S. soldiers in Kunar Province. - *CNN, June 21; Wall Street Journal, June 22*

June 22, 2010 (SWEDEN): Authorities arrested a Swedish man in Stockholm who is suspected of planning an attack in Somalia. The arrest came one month after another Swedish man was detained on the same charges. - *AFP, June 22*

June 22, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A bomb targeted Azizullah Safari, the head of the public health department in Kunduz Province, killing him and injuring two people. - *Voice of America, June 22*

June 22, 2010 (INDONESIA): An Indonesian court sentenced two Islamic militants to jail for their role in the suicide bombings at the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta in July 2009. Supono (also known as Kedu) received a six-year sentence, while Rohmat Puji Prabowo (known as Bejo) was given seven-and-a-half years. - *AFP, June 22*

June 23, 2010 (UNITED STATES): U.S. General Stanley McChrystal, commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, resigned his post in the wake of controversial comments he made in an article published by *Rolling Stone* magazine. McChrystal will be replaced by General David Petraeus, the head of U.S. Central Command and the former commanding officer in Iraq. - *Fox News, June 23*

June 23, 2010 (IRAQ): Gunmen killed three police officers in Mosul, Ninawa Province. - *AFP, June 24*

June 23, 2010 (INDONESIA): Indonesian police arrested Abdullah Sunata and charged him with planning a Mumbai-style attack in Jakarta. Sunata was once a "poster child" for Indonesia's deradicalization program. - *AP, June 25*

June 24, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Police found the bodies of 11 Afghan civilians in Uruzgan Province. The civilians were allegedly killed by Taliban fighters, and all of the bodies had been beheaded. - *AFP, June 25*

June 24, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber attacked a checkpoint in the Shifa neighborhood of Mosul, Ninawa Province, killing four policemen. - *AFP, June 24*

June 24, 2010 (IRAQ): Two suicide bombers wearing military uniforms killed one Iraqi soldier and wounded five more at an army base in Mosul, Ninawa Province. - *AFP, June 24*

June 24, 2010 (IRAQ): A roadside bomb exploded in Baghdad as an Iraqi police patrol passed, killing two officers. - *New York Times, June 24*

June 24, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A Pakistani judge sentenced five Muslim American men from the Washington, D.C. area to 10 years in prison for terrorism offenses. The men, all friends from northern Virginia, were arrested by Pakistani police in Sargodha in December 2009. - *Bloomberg, June 24*

June 26, 2010 (IRAQ): Gunmen shot to death four jewelry store owners and robbed more than a dozen shops in Falluja, Anbar Province, possibly in an effort to finance insurgent operations. - *New York Times, June 26*

June 26, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed two militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *AFP, June 27; The News International, June 26*

June 27, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Leon Panetta, the head of the Central Intelligence Agency, told reporters that there are probably only 50-100 al-Qa`ida fighters in Afghanistan, and that there is "no question" that most of the terrorist



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network operates out of Pakistan's northwest region. He also said that the United States has "put pressure on the al-Qaida leadership in the tribal areas in Pakistan—and I would say that as a result of our operations that the Taliban leadership is probably at its weakest point since (Sept. 11) and their escape from Afghanistan into Pakistan." Nevertheless, Panetta warned that al-Qa`ida is still plotting attacks, and attempting to recruit people who do not "have a record in terrorism," which makes them harder to track. – *AP, June 27; UPI, June 28*

June 27, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed six militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AFP, June 27*

June 28, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants ambushed an army patrol in Pakistan's Bajaur Agency, killing four Pakistani soldiers. – *AFP, June 28*

June 28, 2010 (ISRAEL): Israeli officials announced the arrests of seven Arab citizens on suspicions of planning attacks against Jews and Christians. The men were allegedly inspired by speeches from Usama bin Ladin. The suspects were all arrested two months ago. – *AFP, June 28*

June 29, 2010 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula allegedly launched a new English-language online magazine, called *Inspire*. According to the Associated Press, "The table of contents included articles such as 'Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom,' which promised to be 'a detailed yet short, easy-to-read manual on how to make a bomb using ingredients found in a kitchen.'" – *AP, June 30*

June 29, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Militants opened fire on a UN vehicle in Kabul, killing an Afghan employee of the international body. – *AP, June 29*

June 29, 2010 (IRAQ): An Iraqi general was blown up by a magnetic bomb in Baghdad's Aden Square. – *AFP, June 29*

June 29, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed at least six suspected militants in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *BBC, June 29; Voice of America, June 29*

June 30, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Michael E. Leiter, director of the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, told a public conference that U.S. intelligence officials now estimate that there are somewhat "more than 300" al-Qa`ida leaders and fighters hiding in Pakistan's northwest tribal areas. As stated by the *New York Times*, "Taken together with the recent estimate by the CIA director, Leon E. Panetta, that there are about 50 to 100 Qaeda operatives now in Afghanistan, American intelligence agencies believe that there are most likely fewer than 500 members of the group" in the region. The numbers, however, do not take into account militant groups and factions allied with al-Qa`ida. – *New York Times, June 30*

June 30, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Authorities linked al-Qa`ida operative Adnan Shukrijumah to the New York City subway terrorist plot in 2009. Shukrijumah allegedly met with one of the plotters. – *AP, June 30*

June 30, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters launched a coordinated attack on the airport in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province. At least one attacker detonated a car bomb at the gate of the facility. Several Taliban fighters were killed. – *Voice of America, June 30*

June 30, 2010 (IRAQ): Two gunmen shot to death a police commander, his wife, and a friend in Hit, Anbar Province. One of the gunmen escaped, but the other was taken into police custody. As police were transferring the gunman to a hospital, he detonated an explosives vest, killing three police. – *AFP, June 30*

June 30, 2010 (RUSSIA): A suicide bomber detonated explosives near a music hall where the Chechen president was attending a concert. President Ramzan Kadyrov was unharmed, but five servicemen were injured. – *Reuters, June 30*

June 30, 2010 (ALGERIA): Militants killed up to 11 Algerian paramilitary police officers who were on a routine patrol in Tinzaouatine, close to the Malian border. Authorities suspect that the fighters belonged to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. – *National Turk, July 1*