



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

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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 Debate over Taliban Reconciliation

By Kara L. Bue and John A. Gastright



THE CHALLENGES TO peace and stability in Afghanistan spiked in 2008. The Taliban resurgence that began in 2006 continued to gain strength, with militants now capable of exerting influence over wide swaths of the countryside. Roadside bombs, assassinations, and carefully coordinated attacks on government and military targets have become common place. In the face of this rising violence, increased attention has been paid on how to resurrect positive momentum in a war and nation-building effort that has played second fiddle to Iraq for the last five years. Strategy reviews have been initiated, additional troops called for, and for the first time high level U.S. officials are talking openly about engaging in dialogue with the Taliban. While many believe that rethinking the existing strategy in Afghanistan is necessary, mere mention of talking to the Taliban has engendered heated debate. For some, it is a black

and white issue, guided by principles of right and wrong. For others, the issue is grey, rooted in practicality. In the end, however, it is one that needs to be addressed in the context of a larger strategy. Overall, it is critical to view the concept of negotiating with the Taliban as one strategic element among others that has the potential to improve the chances for success in Afghanistan.

U.S. Officials Open to Reconciliation

Much of the conjecture about engagement began in 2008 following a flurry of media reports about possible negotiations with the Taliban. The reports fanned speculation of a formal dialogue by highlighting a meeting hosted by Saudi King Abdullah in September with representatives of the Taliban and of the Afghan government.¹ The reports quoted Britain's commander in Afghanistan,

¹ Jason Burke, "Revealed: Secret Taliban Peace Bid," *Guardian*, September 28, 2008.

Brigadier Mark Carleton-Smith, who said that negotiations with the Taliban could bring needed progress.² Other reports focused on Afghan President Hamid Karzai's appeal for peace to Taliban leader Mullah Omar.³ This approach has since been publicly endorsed by both senior envoys from

“The rationale for engaging the Taliban in substantive talks rests primarily on the belief that the Taliban cannot be defeated militarily and any lasting peace requires a reconciliation process.”

Afghanistan and Pakistan, who met at a two-day Pakistan-Afghanistan tribal elders jirga in Islamabad.⁴ Even Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of Hizb-i-Islami and one of the most brutal commanders in Afghanistan, has reportedly displayed a readiness for peace talks with the Karzai administration.⁵

Comments made last fall by senior U.S. officials spurred much debate. Defense Secretary Robert Gates and U.S. Army General David Petraeus each offered public support for engagement with insurgents who are willing to reconcile with the government as a means of reducing violence and isolating hardcore militants. As noted by Gates, “That is one of the key long-term solutions in Afghanistan, just as it has been in Iraq... Part of the solution is reconciliation with people who are willing to work with the Afghan government going forward.”⁶

2 Christina Lamb, “War on Taliban Cannot be Won, says Army Chief,” *Sunday Times*, October 5, 2008.

3 Aryn Baker, “Facing Reality in Afghanistan: Talking with the Taliban,” *Time*, October 13, 2008.

4 Paul Koring, “Time to Talk with the Taliban, Governments Say,” *Globe and Mail*, October 28, 2008.

5 Javed Hamim, “Hekmatyar Show Readiness for Conditional Peace Talks,” *Pajhwok Afghan News*, October 29, 2008.

6 Jason Straziuso, “Taliban, Afghan Officials Meet in Saudi Arabia,” *USA Today*, October 6, 2008.

To many, these comments appeared to signal a significant change of approach in Afghanistan. Not only had the Taliban intentionally been excluded from the 2001 Bonn Agreement establishing the new Afghan state and institutions, but it had been pursued vigorously by international and Afghan forces with little inclination to talk. Suggesting that elements of the Taliban may now be allowed back into the fold through a form of political reconciliation seemed a sharp turn of events that was given all the more credence because of Petraeus' incoming role in Afghanistan as commander of U.S. Central Command. Petraeus had been the chief architect of the “Anbar Awakening” in Iraq, where the U.S. military successfully leveraged nationalist Sunni Arab insurgents as a means of driving a wedge between them and Sunni jihadists; a counterinsurgency strategy that many assumed he would employ against insurgents in Afghanistan.

Critics Remain Doubtful

For critics of this approach, the once unthinkable idea of talking to the Taliban remains so. How could the Afghan government, the United States, and their allies consider negotiating with fundamentalist Islamist extremists who once brutally ruled Afghanistan, harbored terrorist Usama bin Ladin, and continue to be al-Qa`ida's allies and protectors? Would not a re-emergence of the Taliban amount to a human rights disaster and a giant leap backwards for the fledgling democracy?⁷ Moreover, what message would that send to hopeful Afghans about the future of their country, as well as to the Taliban and other insurgent groups about the United States and its seriousness in the war on terrorism?⁸ According to some, “the sudden courting of the Taliban leaders appears to be more an act of desperation, than strategy”⁹ in the face of growing threats in a complex and costly war. For others, it reflects an attempt by Karzai, in advance of upcoming elections, to cover up inadequacies of his often

7 Terry Glavin, “The Price of ‘Peace’ with the Taliban,” *Vancouver Sun*, February 5, 2008, reflecting on comments by Dr. Sima Samar, the chairperson of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission.

8 Cheryl Benard, “Talk to the Taliban? Not Now,” *United Press International*, November 11, 2008.

9 Baker.

incompetent government.¹⁰

Today, with the worsening security situation and gains made by the Taliban, it is unclear whether they have any incentives to negotiate. This is especially true given that a portion of the movement's motivation stems from ideology and not politics. As Taliban commander Mullah Sabir told *Newsweek* magazine in November, “This is not a political campaign for policy change or power sharing or cabinet ministries. We are waging a jihad to bring Islamic law back to Afghanistan.”¹¹

Furthermore, there is the nature of the Taliban itself. Although the “Taliban” are identified as a group, it is more correctly identified as a loose alliance, united in common violence. As Richard Boucher, the assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, explained,

the component entities have different motivations for fighting, including religious ideology, political aspirations, tribal solidarity, and even temporary employment. They work together tactically when their interests converge, but there is a lack of real centralized command and control. To the extent there is a leadership group, it resides in Quetta, Pakistan, with Mullah Omar as a titular head. Other key figures include the extremist warlords, Hekmatyar and Siraj Haqqani, as well as many local figures who fight on the provincial or district level for autonomy, tribal, or other reasons.

In addition to this complexity are the questions about what it means to “talk” to the Taliban and whether any one element could enforce an agreement. It is also doubtful whether the approach used in Anbar Province could be easily transferred to Afghanistan, where elements of the Taliban share much of al-Qa`ida's harsh brand of Islam and believe that they are running their own war; two factors that did not exist for Sunni nationalists in the Iraqi context.

10 Ann Marlowe, “Don't Negotiate with the Taliban,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 18, 2008.

11 Sami Yousafzai and Ron Moreau, “Taliban Two-Step: Can't Sit Down Yet,” *Newsweek*, November 10, 2008.

Engagement Strategies

The rationale for engaging the Taliban in substantive talks rests primarily on the belief that the Taliban cannot be defeated militarily and any lasting peace requires a reconciliation process.¹² As General Petraeus said at a Heritage Foundation forum in October 2008, “This is how you end these kinds of conflicts.” There is “no alternative to reconciliation.”

That baseline assessment results in a differing opinion on whether the Taliban can be reconciled. Those who are encouraging engagement suggest that the looseness of the Taliban organization actually supports the argument for engaging in dialogue. It is the lack of a strong central command and Taliban elements’ varied motivations for fighting that make them vulnerable to division.¹³ The focus in this context would be to appeal to the non-ideological insurgents who are tired of the fight and ready to return to a more peaceful daily life. For the ideologically disposed and senior members of the Taliban, it is recognized that such approaches may be insufficient absent military action but that “the availability of these talks as a political solution is important to Afghanistan’s eventual peace.”¹⁴ In either case, supporters of engagement acknowledge that certain preconditions are necessary prior to any dialogue. Current U.S. policy, for example, demands the following preconditions: the Taliban must accept the Afghan constitution, abandon violence, cut all ties with al-Qa`ida, and not be given power-sharing deals or territory to control. The United States also has consistently held that any such negotiation talks be Afghan-led.

The idea of an engagement strategy is not a new concept in the Afghan struggle. In April 2003, President Karzai first announced plans for a reconciliation

¹² Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, “Thwarting Afghanistan’s Insurgency: A Pragmatic Approach toward Peace and Reconciliation,” U.S. Institute of Peace Special Report, September 2008, p. 2.

¹³ Fareed Zakaria, television interview of Dr. David Kilcullen, an Australian counterinsurgency specialist who advises the U.S. and British governments, CNN, November 16, 2008.

¹⁴ These comments were made by Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard A. Boucher.

policy in a speech before a gathering of *ulama* in Kabul, and in 2005 the Afghan government established the Independent Peace and Reconciliation Commission. In subsequent years, the Afghan cabinet adopted an action plan regarding reconciliation, and the Afghanistan National Assembly approved legislation on amnesty. As noted by Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, an adviser in the Afghan government,

attempts at outreach and reconciliation on a more local level also have been initiated with modest success by a number of actors—namely the Afghan government, nongovernmental organizations and the international community.¹⁵

Most would agree, however, that reconciliation efforts to date have lacked consistency and depth. As Stanekzai suggested, “The Afghan government and its international partners have offered conflicting messages, and there has been no consensual policy framework through which to pursue reconciliation in a cohesive manner.”¹⁶ The veracity of this argument can be appreciated when taking into account how Afghan officials offered amnesty to individuals such as Mullah Omar in direct contravention of UN Security Council resolutions that sanctioned those very leaders.¹⁷

Engagement Just One Element to Success

In the discussions about engagement, it has been easy to characterize the issue as binary—whether or not to talk to the Taliban. Given the complex nature of the Taliban and the social fabric of Afghanistan, however, the issue is far from that simple. Moreover, it is clearly not a question of whether talking to the Taliban will win or lose the war. Even supporters of engagement acknowledge that the Taliban have not publicly participated in talks and have not shown signs they are serious about negotiating. Even if they did, there is no guarantee any accommodation could be reached. Much more is required to secure a lasting peace in Afghanistan. What is important is to view the concept of talking to the Taliban for what it is: one element with the potential for improving chances of

¹⁵ Stanekzai, p. 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁷ The Security Council resolutions in question refer to UNSCR 1267 (1999) and 1735 (2006).

success in Afghanistan that needs to be considered as part of a larger, more coordinated strategy guided by well-defined goals.

That strategy would of course involve increased military forces and action. What is clear is that any discussions with the Taliban must be approached from a position of strength. To appeal to the Taliban in the current environment would likely embolden them further and validate their strategy. In this regard, the ongoing combat operations and additional forces bound for Afghanistan remain essential.

Despite the importance of increased troop levels in Afghanistan, they themselves cannot bring victory. Reconciliation is a necessary component of an overarching strategy. This does not only refer to reconciliation with Taliban elements,

“What is clear is that any discussions with the Taliban must be approached from a position of strength.”

which has the potential for being part of the solution by offering an avenue for insurgents to come in from the cold, but it also refers to reconciliation of the Afghan government with its people. As Joanna Nathan, an Afghanistan analyst with the International Crisis Group, was quoted as saying in *Time Magazine* last year,

real reconciliation should be taking place at the grass roots, with Afghans who have become alienated from the government. If they can be persuaded that the government is looking after their needs, they are less likely to support the Taliban.¹⁸

This means truly connecting the Afghan people to their government through more focused and effective development efforts that provide basic services to ordinary Afghans, real security sector reform such as that proposed by Afghanistan’s new Interior Minister Hanif Atmar, an Afghan government

¹⁸ Baker.

seen as rooting out corruption, and the development of a capable national army. Without real progress in development and increasing the capacity of the government to provide for its citizens, it is difficult to imagine that any amount of military action against the Taliban and its associates will lead to a lasting peace. Reconciliation must also involve regional actors such as Pakistan and India to resolve some of the root causes of strife in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Action needs to be taken to end the use of Afghanistan as a proxy Indo-Pakistani battleground, as well as to eliminate Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan.

Indeed, there is much to reconcile. To the extent that the prospect of talking to or reconciling with the Taliban, or elements of it, has garnered peoples' attention, it should be viewed in context as a single, complex, and possibly necessary element of a much larger strategy for succeeding in Afghanistan.

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Looking Forward: Hizb Allah's Evolving Strategic Calculations

By Vera L. Zakem

IT IS NO COINCIDENCE that many U.S. and international counterterrorism experts view Lebanese Hizb Allah (also spelled Hizballah) as the "A-list of terrorist organizations."¹ It is Hizb Allah's successful employment of conventional and irregular warfare capabilities that lead many analysts to this conclusion. Hizb Allah's ability to accrue political power and provide essential services to the Lebanese Shi'a and pro-Syrian Christians in Lebanon, however, is what makes it so unique. This allows Hizb Allah to influence its targeted population through the message of resistance and maintain its popularity in Lebanon, the Middle East region, and the international community. Since its 2006 war with Israel, Hizb Allah has realized important political gains among the Lebanese population. It is noteworthy, however, that since the 2006 conflict Hizb Allah has not carried out any major attacks or retaliated against anyone for the assassination of Imad Mughniyyeh, Hizb Allah's former chief of military operations.

This article examines the strategic, political and military calculations of Hizb Allah in the aftermath of the 2006 Israel-Hizb Allah war and the assassination of Imad Mughniyyeh. Specifically, it will look at the way Hizb Allah has been able to increase its political power following the 2006 conflict and provide essential services to its constituents, while choosing not to retaliate for Mughniyyeh's death. The article will explore the likelihood that Hizb Allah will continue to play the terrorism card when deemed strategically important. Finally, some recommendations will be offered for effective alternatives that could limit Hizb Allah's influence on relevant populations.

¹ This is a view expressed by many U.S. counterterrorism experts who the author interviewed during the course of her research on the topic.

Social Influences

In the immediate aftermath of the 2006 war, Hizb Allah stepped up its efforts to provide a variety of social services to the Lebanese Shi'a who were most affected by the conflict. With help from Iran, Syria, Islamic charities, and Shi'a groups,² Hizb Allah's reconstruction arm worked quickly to restore life in southern Beirut, Hizb Allah's stronghold. Aside from providing immediate health care to the wounded and getting people back on their feet, Hizb Allah handed out \$12,000 per family for temporary housing, while its construction company, Jihad al-Binaa, began rebuilding residential and commercial infrastructure. Considering the fact that the average per capita income in Lebanon is only \$6,200, receiving almost double that amount in cash within a matter of days was an impressive feat. With its rapid response, Hizb Allah was clearly able to show the world that it was capable of taking care of its people with greater speed and effect than the Lebanese government or the international community, who only made exaggerated promises of assistance. The results were obvious. Many Lebanese who were interviewed immediately after the war felt that Hizb Allah's ability to provide these types of services to the affected populations generated the notion that "Hizb Allah is the government" because it protects the people.³ This is precisely the influence message that Hizb Allah wanted to spread.

Immediately after the war, Prime Minister Fouad Seniora's government attempted to highlight its infrastructure revitalization efforts. Nayla Mouawad, Lebanon's minister of social affairs, said, "We are here. We are laying the groundwork for a housing project which would help people rebuild the damaged homes."⁴ Similarly, the international community organized a major donor conference to raise funds to rebuild Lebanon and bolster Seniora's legitimacy. While it has been able to distribute \$500.4 million⁵ for the entire

² Thanassis Cambanis, "With Speed, Hezbollah Picks up the Shovel," *Boston Globe*, August 19, 2006.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ This is the current figure to date for the entire country based on figures from www.rebuildlebanon.gov.lb, January 19, 2009.

country, Seniora's government and the international community moved slowly in providing badly needed services, thereby enabling Hizb Allah to respond more swiftly and aggressively. According to one U.S. counterterrorism expert, in the end the international community made multibillion dollar plans, but they did not pan out. As a result, Hizb Allah won over the population in southern Beirut.⁶

Political Influences

In addition to winning the "guts and souls"⁷ of the Lebanese Shi'a, Hizb Allah has made impressive political inroads in Lebanon since the 2006 war. This has enabled Hizb Allah to increase its political voice and influence across various diverse populations, even though it does not serve all of Lebanon's constituents. This was evident when Hizb Allah reached an agreement with Seniora's government allowing the organization to retain its weapons and gain ministerial posts within the parliament. Hizb Allah's postings allowed the organization to effectively have veto power over any major decision with which the organization does not agree. As such, Hizb Allah has been able to secure political legitimacy in the eyes of various sects in Lebanon. Since 2006, Hizb Allah has been careful to avoid any major conflict as it seeks to gain additional political representation in the June parliamentary elections. Through political influence, Hizb Allah has attempted to demonstrate that it can serve the people and provide them services, engage in terrorist activities regionally and globally, and represent Iranian and Syrian interests, all at the same time. With its political, socio-economic, and military influence capabilities, Hizb Allah has been able to effectively seal its status as an "armed state within a state."⁸

6 Personal interview, U.S. counterterrorism expert, January 6, 2009.

7 Dr. Shmuel Bar describes that Hizb Allah goes after "guts and souls" versus "hearts and minds" of relevant populations. Hizb Allah tries to arouse emotions and religious sentiment.

8 "State within a state" is a common term used to describe Hizb Allah's role in Lebanon. Hizb Allah is a violent non-state actor that carries out terrorist and influence operations against targeted populations, while at the same time has political representation and provides social services to the people.

Hizb Allah's Strategic Calculation Post Mughniyyeh

The February 2008 assassination of Imad Mughniyyeh was a major blow to Hizb Allah. It remains to be seen, however, whether Hizb Allah will retaliate for the assassination or whether it will skip retaliation and begin taking steps to become solely a political and social organization. While some experts believe that Hizb Allah may choose the political road, others are not as optimistic. A number of U.S. counterterrorism experts who were interviewed for this article expressed

"Despite Hizb Allah's recent political success, the United States cannot assume that it will cease all of its terrorist activities."

the view that, despite Mughniyyeh's assassination, Hizb Allah draws its core strength from its military operations and will continue to engage in terrorist activities as long as it is strategically important and useful for the organization. Furthermore, while the assassination of Imad Mughniyyeh might be a blow to Hizb Allah's international military organization, those who were interviewed expressed that Hizb Allah's central military arm will not be significantly impacted by his demise; as one U.S. counterterrorism expert said, Mughniyyeh was "one of several top guys."⁹

If Hizb Allah decides to retaliate in response to the assassination, it is unclear what form of retaliation it might choose and when it might act.¹⁰ As Shaykh Hassan Nasrallah stated after the assassination, "We shall defend ourselves the way we choose, at the time and place of our choosing."¹¹ Despite the rhetoric, Hizb Allah has to pick its battles carefully, especially since it is

9 The author interviewed several U.S. counterterrorism experts in 2009 for the purpose of this article.

10 It is not clear who was responsible for assassinating Imad Mughniyyeh, but Hizb Allah blames Israel for the car bombing that took his life in Damascus.

11 David Shenker, "Beyond Rhetoric: Hizballah Threats after the Mughniyyeh Assassination," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 28, 2008.

trying to further its political ambitions. This is perhaps the reason why Hizb Allah chose not to get involved in the most recent Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza. Another reason might be that Hizb Allah is patiently waiting to strike on the international scene when the world is least expecting it. Even though Hizb Allah has not carried out a major international terrorist attack since Mughniyyeh's death, it nevertheless is a robust transnational terrorist organization that is able to pull the trigger when it is strategically important and necessary.

Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations

Despite Hizb Allah's recent political success, the United States cannot assume that it will cease all of its terrorist activities. Furthermore, the United States should not treat Hizb Allah as a solely "Lebanese" problem. Hizb Allah is a transnational organization that has the capability to influence globally, despite the fact that one of its international masterminds is dead. Hence, Hizb Allah should be treated with as much priority as other major transnational terrorist organizations. While defeating and disrupting the military arm of Hizb Allah is critical, it is equally important to marginalize Hizb Allah's political and social influence in Lebanon and beyond, and provide unique political and socio-economic alternatives to the group's active and passive supporters.

Providing the right mix of political and socio-economic alternatives is not an easy task, especially in a country such as Lebanon that is made up of various religions and ethnicities, where outside state actors compete for influence and legitimacy. Nevertheless, the United States and the international community should aim to better empower Seniora's government and partners, including non-governmental organizations and local institutions that enjoy the support of the local population. The best messages of empowerment and influence come through fast and effective actions, not merely words. Therefore, it is important to help Seniora and his partners provide alternative essential services to the Lebanese in southern Beirut and other parts of Lebanon the moment they are needed. For instance, to counter Hizb Allah's influence, the United States and international partners should help Lebanon raise money not just to pay off

debt from previous conflicts, but also to create a surplus of social services and a reconstruction fund for future conflicts. If Hizb Allah's active and passive supporters see that other entities are helping them build and rebuild their communities, Hizb Allah's political and social influence will likely lose some of its cachet.

Finally, the United States and its partners should explore ways to isolate the divergent interests of Hizb Allah from its two main state sponsors: Syria and Iran. For Hizb Allah, Syria is a partner of convenience as it primarily provides logistical and training support. Yet, Syria relies on Hizb Allah's support for its own regime survival and legitimacy in the region. Iran, however, is an important strategic partner that provides spiritual and moral guidance, as well as military and financial support. To weaken these partnerships, the United States and its allies have to pursue different strategies. In regards to Iran, the United States and the international community should consider finding a better way to address broader regional security issues such as managing the nuclear proliferation issue in an effort to minimize Iran's influence in the region. With Syria, the United States should explore negotiation strategies to mitigate the Arab-Israeli conflict that could eventually lead to a peace agreement between Israel and Syria. Such an agreement could set a precedent for the rest of the region, consequently weakening both Hizb Allah's and Iran's legitimacies and influence given that much of their power derives from their anti-Israel stance.

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The Taliban's Versatile Spokesman: A Profile of Muslim Khan

By Imtiaz Ali

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS of the Afghan Taliban battling U.S.-led NATO forces in Afghanistan, the Pakistani Taliban are fighting on two fronts. In addition to attacking Pakistani troops in the tribal belt and in some parts of the settled areas of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), they are also waging a stunning propaganda campaign aimed at terrorizing security forces and gaining sympathy from the local population. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)—an umbrella group of militants operating in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and in parts of the NWFP—is running a full-fledged insurgency under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud, a tribal militant commander who is also suspected of assassinating Pakistani politician Benazir Bhutto in December 2007. Pakistan's security forces have made a continuous effort to break the backbone of the insurgency. Despite successful strikes against militant centers, Taliban spokesmen always counter government claims in an amazing demonstration of communication and propaganda prowess; Pakistan's newspapers publish statements by purported Taliban spokesmen almost every day.

Recently, as Pakistani forces intensify operations in the Swat Valley of the NWFP, the spokesman for the local Taliban in Swat—a militant known as Muslim Khan—has been making more headlines than any other Taliban spokesman. On February 15, for example, Khan announced a 10-day cease-fire amid reports of fresh efforts by the NWFP government to achieve a new peace deal in the war-torn Swat Valley. Part of Muslim Khan's rise to public prominence is due to the growing militancy in the Swat region. It also, however, is due to his multilingual skills and his wide range of experiences working abroad in Western countries, including possibly in the United States. This article identifies Muslim Khan's background and demonstrates his threat to peace in the region.

Muslim Khan's Rise to Prominence

As Pakistan grapples with a growing insurgency in its lawless FATA region, there has been a rise in violence in Swat, a picturesque valley in the NWFP. Swat has become another flash point in Pakistan's struggle against extremism. Dozens of military operations since November 2007 have proved ineffective. The valley has come under the control of Maulana Fazlullah, a radical mullah allied with the Taliban and al-Qa`ida.¹ Using an illegal FM radio station to broadcast his propaganda—in addition to commanding thousands of armed fighters—Fazlullah has converted the Swat Valley into a mini-Taliban state. In this mini-state, women's education is completely banned, and alleged bandits, drug smugglers and other criminals

“Muslim Khan's multilingual skills and his rich experience in working abroad in Western countries make him a rare talent for the Taliban movement, a group that involves mostly madrasa graduates and illiterate activists.”

are publicly lashed on the orders of Taliban courts. Since November 2007, approximately 1,200 civilians and 189 military personnel have been killed in the Swat fighting, while 2,000 civilians have been injured.²

As a result of Fazlullah's lack of formal education and aversion to the media, his spokesman, Haji Muslim Khan, has become the public face of the new mini-Taliban state in Swat. Although Khan has been part of Fazlullah's militia for approximately two years, he rose to prominence in April 2008 when he replaced Siraj Uddin as a spokesman for the Swat chapter of the TTP. His appointment occurred amid fierce

1 “The Fall of Swat,” *The News*, December 28, 2008.

2 “Fresh Strategy to Crush Swat Militants: Malik Names Terror Outfits Behind Insurgency,” *Dawn*, January 30, 2009.

fighting between Taliban militants and security forces competing for control of the valley. A month after assuming the position of spokesman, he found himself at the center of a major political development when he led the Taliban negotiation team that struck a peace deal with the new government in the NWFP, led by the Awami National Party.³ As the head of the negotiations team, Khan put forth four main demands: the implementation of Shari`a in the Swat Valley; the withdrawal of the Pakistan Army from the region; compensation to those affected by death or injury due to military operations in Swat; and the unconditional release of all people detained during military operations. Although the peace deal failed bitterly, the intense media attention surrounding the negotiations, combined with the signing of a deal, propelled Muslim Khan into the spotlight. This allowed him to play a leading role in the TTP.

A Journey from Liberal Politics to Religious Extremism

According to Muslim Khan's own account, he is 55-years-old and was born in Koza Banda village in the Swat Valley.⁴ After completing high school in his native village in 1972, Khan said he attended further studies at the Government Graduate Jehanzeb College Mingora, which is in the main town of the Swat Valley.⁵ During that time in Pakistan's politics, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the father of slain politician Benazir Bhutto, was the prime minister. Upon entering postgraduate college, Khan was impressed by Ali Bhutto and the philosophy of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). He joined the party's student wing, known as the People's Students Federation (PSF). Khan viewed favorably a religious figure, Maulana Kausar Niazi, who was a central leader in the party and who promoted Islam and Shari`a.⁶

Khan, however, was not a normal party activist. He staunchly participated in the party's activities and once resorted to kidnapping two government officials as revenge for killing a PPP student

activist.⁷ In response to the crime, Khan was placed in jail for 25 days on kidnapping charges.⁸ His association with the PPP demonstrated his liberal ideals during his youth. Khan claims, however, that he was "emotional" during this time, and did not truly understand the real policies of the PPP.⁹

In the early 1990s, Khan joined Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat- e-Mohammadi (TNSM), or the Movement for the Implementation of Islamic Laws.¹⁰ TNSM was led by Maulana Sufi Mohammad, who launched its struggle for the implementation of Shari`a in the Malakand region of the NWFP. As part of TNSM, Khan was

"Khan purportedly lived in the Boston area in the state of Massachusetts on a visitor's visa until 2000."

involved in many of the group's protest rallies, including the one against Benazir Bhutto's second regime in 1994 when the whole region was brought to a standstill due to the demand for the implementation of Islamic laws. A few years ago, however, Khan fell out with TNSM and began opposing its chief, Sufi Muhammad, for adopting what he calls a "soft approach" toward the implementation of Shari`a. In early 2009, Khan called TNSM a "fiction of old men who can do nothing."¹¹

In July 2008, Khan said in an interview that he had traveled to Afghanistan to fight "foreign infidels."¹² He did not, however, identify the details of the fighting. When asked about his views of democracy, he firmly stated that the "concept of the Western form of democracy is against Shari`a."¹³ According to Khan, "I am all about *khilafat* and this is my appeal to the Muslims around the world to get united

as an umma and form a single army and single currency."¹⁴ When asked about the aims and objectives of the Taliban movement, Khan said that "initially we want implementation of Shari`a in our own region—Malakand division—and then we would like the same in the North-West Frontier Province and then ultimately the whole of Pakistan."¹⁵

Khan is harshly critical of the religious party leadership in the country, particularly of Maulana Fazal Rahman and Qazi Hussain Ahmad, the leaders of Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam and Jamaat-i-Islami respectively. He accused the leaders of using the name of Islam to become members of parliament so that they could enjoy the privileges and "perks" that come with such titles.¹⁶

Overseas Experience

In the mid 1970s, Muslim Khan abandoned his college studies without completing his degree. In the early 1980s, he apparently found a job as a seaman in a British company with the help of the Pakistan Shipping Corporation.¹⁷ He worked for the company for two years. He claims he visited most of Europe and many other countries during his seamanship. Once he left that job, he went to Kuwait where he worked in some transport companies.¹⁸ When the Gulf War broke out in 1991, he left Kuwait for Pakistan along with hundreds of his countrymen.¹⁹ Once back in Pakistan, Khan reportedly started his own business and opened a medicine store in his native town.²⁰

Most interestingly, when Khan was an active member of TNSM, he allegedly came to the United States. Although the exact date of this entry is not known, it is estimated to be around 1997-1998. Khan purportedly lived in the Boston area in the state of Massachusetts on a visitor's visa until 2000. According to some sources, he worked as a craftsman in a painting company.²¹ Although Khan has made these claims to many journalists

3 "Government Inks Peace Deal with Swat Militants," *The News*, May 22, 2008.

4 Personal interview, Muslim Khan, June 2008.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 "Abul Hai Kakar's Profile Interview with Muslim Khan," BBC Urdu Online, October 2008.

8 Ibid.

9 Personal interview, Muslim Khan, June 2008.

10 Ibid.

11 "Special Investigative Report about Swat Situation," Geo TV, January 17, 2009.

12 Personal interview, Muslim Khan, July 2008.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 "Abul Hai Kakar's Profile Interview with Muslim Khan."

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

during interviews, he has yet to provide further details about his alleged stay in the United States.

Conclusion

Although Muslim Khan has stated that he takes his overall orders²² from Baitullah Mehsud, there is speculation that the two factions have parted ways.²³ Differences arose after Muslim Khan adamantly proclaimed in January that girls would not be able to attend school in Swat. The chief spokesman under Baitullah Mehsud, Maulvi Omar, reacted to the proclamation, telling reporters that the TTP had nothing to do with the closure of the girls' schools in Swat. These differences have yet to be resolved.

Muslim Khan's multilingual skills and his rich experience in working abroad in Western countries make him a rare talent for the Taliban movement, a group that involves mostly *madrasa* graduates and illiterate activists. His duties for the Taliban range from the explanation of how Shari'a should be implemented, waging jihad against U.S.-led NATO forces in Afghanistan, and claiming responsibility for the day-to-day bomb blasts and attacks on government installations and girls' schools in Pakistan. Muslim Khan has become a key leader in the Taliban movement, and it is likely that his responsibilities will increase as the conflict rages on.

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Exploiting the Fears of Al-Qa`ida's Leadership

By James J.F. Forest

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL years, al-Qa`ida has been portrayed by the press, pundits and the former Bush administration as a fearsome monolithic entity, a dark demon waiting to strike the United States at a moment's notice. Limited attention has been given to the glaring vulnerabilities that al-Qa`ida's leaders worry about every day. In addition to the usual operational security challenges with which any clandestine organization grapples, al-Qa`ida desperately seeks to influence perceptions throughout the world of its legitimacy, organizational unity, relevance and competence. This article will briefly examine each of these goals to illustrate the larger point that al-Qa`ida's fears can be made real, producing a significant and lasting impact on the organization's future.

Legitimacy Lost

Al-Qa`ida fears *fatawa* (religious decrees) more than bullets or Hellfire missiles. A central component of al-Qa`ida's propaganda requires gaining and maintaining legitimacy within the Muslim world. Failure to gain legitimacy will undoubtedly doom their cause and the future of the movement. Thus, al-Qa`ida's leaders were greatly concerned when Saudi Arabia's top cleric, Grand Mufti Shaykh Abdul Aziz al-Ashaykh, gave a speech in October 2007 warning Saudis not to join unauthorized jihadist activities,¹ a statement directed mainly at those considering going to Iraq to fight U.S.-led forces. Similarly, Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, a former top leader of the armed Egyptian movement Islamic Jihad and a longtime associate of Ayman al-Zawahiri, recently published a book that renounces violent jihad on legal and religious grounds.² In Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, Mufti Zainul Abidin recently issued a *fatwa* that declares the Pakistani Taliban to be “out of Islam” as a result of their violence, failure to follow Islamic teachings, and the pursuance of *takfiri* ideology (the latter referring to the

Salafi-jihadi practice of declaring fellow Muslims “infidels” if they oppose jihadist dogma).³ These actions by authorities that some radical Islamists look to for guidance possibly weaken al-Qa`ida's ability to recruit and retain followers.

Al-Qa`ida's primary objective is to acquire political power. While they use the terms, images and symbols of religious piety, al-Qa`ida is similar to many groups throughout history that used political violence in pursuit of change. Within the Muslim world, there is little support for al-Qa`ida's agenda, tactics, strategy or vision of the future. Al-Qa`ida, therefore, invests heavily in

“Al-Qa`ida is trying to build a populist movement, and yet their terrorist attacks kill or alienate potential supporters throughout the Muslim world.”

a massive propaganda campaign to try and increase support among their target audiences, and acquire the resources that will allow them to survive. If they fail to effectively convince their target audiences to support their cause, they are doomed. This is a tall challenge. Al-Qa`ida is trying to build a populist movement, and yet their terrorist attacks kill or alienate potential supporters throughout the Muslim world.

Finally, it is also necessary to remember that many extreme Islamist groups—including Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood—have a deep animosity toward al-Qa`ida. Pundits and politicians too often lump all “radical Islamists” into a single category, implying that they are all of the same mindset. This is dangerously misleading. It is a fact that Hamas has consistently rejected even the suggestion that they align with Usama bin Ladin's group, and leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in several countries have consistently condemned al-Qa`ida's actions and

22 “Taliban, Government Optimistic About Resumption of Talks,” *The News*, July 2, 2008.

23 “Taliban Divided on Girl's Education,” www.Islam-Online.net, December 26, 2008.

1 Michael Jacobson, “Top Cleric Issues Warning,” *Counterterrorism Blog*, October 10, 2007.

2 Jarret Brachman, “Leading Egyptian Jihadist Sayyid Imam Renounces Violence,” *CTC Sentinel* 1:1 (2008).

3 “Fatwa in Tribal Pakistan Declares Taliban ‘Out of Islam,’” *Terrorism Focus* 5:12 (2008).

leaders. Indeed, attacks carried out by al-Qa`ida affiliates in Pakistan, Indonesia, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and elsewhere have not mobilized a unified Muslim umma to the cause, but instead have driven wedges of ideological disagreement that only serve to benefit nations prosecuting the global war against them. Moreover, al-Qa`ida has failed to gain traction in Syria, Lebanon, or the Palestinian Territories, and it has lost its tenuous footholds in Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. In short, maintaining some sense of legitimacy is a major challenge for al-Qa`ida, one that the United States and its allies could make far more difficult through a variety of information operations and other efforts.

The Threats from Within

There is a considerable amount of infighting, conflict and disorganization within al-Qa`ida. Analysis of al-Qa`ida documents captured in several countries (and now stored in the Department of Defense's Harmony database) have brought to light a number of ideological and strategic debates among al-Qa`ida's top leaders.⁴ In one letter, the author, 'Abd al-Halim al-Adl, expressed concern that al-Qa`ida is "experiencing one setback after another," and placed the blame for this squarely on the shoulders of Usama bin Ladin. Other letters revealed corruption and malfeasance within al-Qa`ida's rank-and-file. Captured documents have illuminated several cases of embezzlement, counterproductive violence, insubordination, criminal activity (including drug running) and other activities that undermine the desperately promoted perception of al-Qa`ida members being devout Muslim "holy warriors." Indeed, Khalid Shaykh Muhammad—the mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks—was a flamboyant, globe-trotting womanizer and drinker who spent lavishly and stayed in plush hotels until his 2003 capture in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.⁵

4 *Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting Al Qaeda's Organizational Vulnerabilities* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006).

5 Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 235; Rohan Gunaratna, "Womanizer, Joker, Scuba Diver: The Other Face of al-Qaida's No. 3," *Guardian*, March 3, 2003.

Finally, al-Qa`ida members are human, and as such are not invulnerable to fear. The organization's leaders are aware of this, and are concerned about cowardice (or the appearance thereof) within the ranks. Although they may not entirely fear the U.S. legal system, CIA secret prisons, the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, or being killed by a U.S. airstrike, they do fear the middle ground between death and a humane Western legal system: their repatriation to Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey or any number of countries where the respect for human rights is often lacking. As demonstrated by postings on jihadist web forums (and by recent "recantations" by Jordanian cleric Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Saudi cleric Nasir bin Hamd al-Fadl and others), there is significant concern among al-Qa`ida's rank-and-file about the potential pain and suffering at the hands of interrogators in those countries. This, in turn, impacts their courage and commitment to actions that support al-Qa`ida's ideology.

Ignorance and Ineptitude

Al-Qa`ida's leaders do not understand the United States as well as they claim. The occasional propaganda blunder by Ayman al-Zawahiri and others have illustrated their ignorance about American society and values.⁶ Few of al-Qa`ida's senior members have lived or spent considerable time in a Western country, and thus their knowledge of culture, social and political trends is drawn mainly from open sources via the media, the Internet, and books.

This lack of knowledge was reflected in a 2006 study by Muhammed Khalil al-Hakaymah on how the U.S. intelligence system works, and what the intelligence community can and cannot do legally under U.S. law.⁷ His ambitious 152-page report was circulated widely on Salafi-jihadist websites, but cites a number of conspiracy websites and other dubious sources to support his assertions. As a result, he provides bogus information, such as details of how South Korean

6 For example, when Ayman al-Zawahiri called President-elect Barack Obama a "house Negro," it likely did more to unite Americans in Obama's defense.

7 Muhammed Khalil al-Hakaymah, *Myth of Delusion: Exploiting the American Intelligence*, published online on October 8, 2006; Steve Schippert, "Al-Qaeda's Guide to US Intelligence," *RapidRecon.com*, October 16, 2006.

intelligence influences U.S. national security agencies through the *Washington Times*, a newspaper controlled by the Unification Church.⁸

The limits of al-Qa`ida's knowledge impact the quality of intelligence available to make strategic decisions. Just as in any other organization, the fear of taking action based on faulty intelligence is unavoidable in al-Qa`ida, where leaders constantly worry about the unknown when planning their operations. As Gaetano Joe Ilardi recently observed, "by satisfying the organization's need for operational certainty and providing a basis upon which detailed plans can be constructed, intelligence is the fulcrum on which al-Qa`ida exists."⁹ Thus, one finds a consistent drumbeat of appeals for intelligence from al-Qa`ida's leaders throughout the online discussion forums frequented by jihadist supporters and sympathizers.

Finally, there are fears about potential ineptitude (or perceptions thereof) among al-Qa`ida's rank-and-file. Some online jihadists have expressed considerable disappointment at the failure of al-Qa`ida's leaders to conduct an attack during the U.S. election period, portraying this as a major opportunity squandered.¹⁰ Impatience is a common attribute throughout the terrorist world. A more important concern among al-Qa`ida's members and supporters, however, revolves around questions of organizational capabilities. While the Arab mujahidin had little to do with Soviet troops leaving Afghanistan in 1989, they did acquire useful skills in conducting irregular warfare against a superior enemy. Many of these seasoned veterans formed the core of al-Qa`ida at the turn of the century and have been the focus of various post-9/11 intelligence and military actions. Presently, most new recruits to al-Qa`ida bring nothing of value: no military training, specialized

8 Bill Roggio, "The Myth of Delusion," *The Long War Journal*, October 16, 2006; Eli Lake, "How Qaeda Warned Its Operatives on Using Cell Phones," *New York Sun*, October 18, 2006.

9 Gaetano Joe Ilardi, "Al-Qaeda's Operational Intelligence – A Key Prerequisite to Action," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31:12 (2008).

10 Such comments can be viewed on various Islamist web forums.

skills or knowledge. All they share is a “desire to do something.” Some can avail themselves of opportunities to learn in rudimentary training camps in Pakistan, but more often it appears that Iraq has provided much-needed “on the job training” for these new recruits. Therefore, a key challenge for al-Qa`ida is trying to advance their organization’s objectives with a restricted knowledge base among their personnel resources.

Irrelevance

As Brian Jenkins recently observed, “these virtual jihadists are locked into a closed-loop discourse on the Internet that is increasingly irrelevant...That’s the biggest fear of the terrorists: One day Osama bin Laden will issue his 450th proclamation, and no one will really be listening.”¹¹ A catalyst for the attacks on 9/11 was that al-Qa`ida’s leaders felt a need to prove to the Muslim world that they could support their words with deeds. Having captured center stage, they reaped the whirlwind of military-led responses and intelligence gathering that has seriously degraded their operational capabilities. Since then, Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri have tried mightily to keep a spotlight on themselves and their self-appointed vanguard group of “knights” by issuing periodic audio and video statements and encouraging a viral marketing campaign to support the global spread of their ideology. They clearly recognize the risk that, having been unable to orchestrate a follow-on attack equivalent (or greater) in scope and scale as 9/11, perceptions of their prominence and capabilities within the Muslim world are likely to diminish. Combined with the concerns described earlier about organizational ineptitude and opportunities squandered, this impatience among its followers may pressure al-Qa`ida’s leaders into hasty, desperate and sloppy decision-making, or even to a rapid downward spiral toward atrophy and disintegration.

Conclusion

Although al-Qa`ida must not be underestimated, it is important to recognize the terrorist group’s organizational vulnerabilities. Al-

Qa`ida operatives work hard to shape a global perception that they are a powerful movement with tentacles and cells everywhere. This perception aids them by generating fear and causing governments to overextend and overspend on homeland security and counterterrorism efforts. An occasional terrorist attack in some corner of the world—whether it kills dozens, hundreds or thousands—feeds this perception. For al-Qa`ida to remain temporarily viable, the group is not required to conduct a steady drumbeat of attacks on U.S. soil; it only needs to conduct¹² a terrorist attack at some location in the world, albeit preferably a media-rich Western target.

Al-Qa`ida is in danger, however, of being stalemated by counterterrorism successes, opposition by prominent clerics and Muslim groups, and problems within their own organization. They fear the decline in legitimacy that comes from a perception of inaction. Eventually, members and sympathizers will abandon all hope of achieving al-Qa`ida’s goals, and the overwhelming loss of money, recruits, safe havens and other necessary enablers will lead to its demise. This has been the trajectory of many terrorist groups throughout history, and al-Qa`ida’s leaders surely recognize this reality. Understanding al-Qa`ida’s fears will better help identify opportunities in which information operations and strategic communications efforts can lead to an acceleration of al-Qa`ida’s eventual decline and self-destruction.

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A Jihadist’s Course in the Art of Recruitment

By Brian Fishman and Abdullah Warius

JIHADIST RECRUITERS HAVE a new handbook to guide them through the art of radicalizing and organizing a fresh generation of operatives. The 51-page handbook by Abu `Amr `Al-Qa`idi, *A Course in the Art of Recruitment*, is designed to provide less-skilled jihadist recruiters operating independently of any cohesive terrorist organization the tools to effectively recruit secular and moderate Muslims into the global jihadist movement. Abu `Amr’s handbook prescribes a highly structured recruitment process with multiple stages and clear, simple metrics to assess a recruit’s progress—essentially, the bureaucratization of decentralized jihadist recruitment. Abu `Amr argues that structuring recruitment and providing simple quantitative assessment tools will allow recruiters with less education and knowledge of Shari`a to recruit safely and effectively.

Abu `Amr’s handbook has been widely distributed on jihadist websites, but it is not clear whether his recruitment program is actually being applied by jihadist operatives. Rather than a definitive explanation of current jihadist operations, Abu `Amr’s book is an insider’s look into the ideas and techniques critical to jihadist radicalization, and an attempt to simplify the difficult art of radicalization for a less-skilled generation of jihadist recruiters.

Individual Da`wa Versus Collective Da`wa

Abu `Amr’s recruitment course proceeds in five stages, designed to carefully introduce recruits to jihadist ideology and cell formation. Abu `Amr describes detailed goals for each stage and provides recruiters quantitative assessment tools to judge the progress of their recruits and determine when they are ready to move from one stage to the next. Recruiters are advised to tally their recruit’s score on end-of-stage questionnaires (which are provided) to determine whether or not recruitment should continue. To make decisions even easier for recruiters who lack jihadist education themselves, the

¹¹ James Kitfield, “How I Learned Not To Fear The Bomb: The Rand Corp.’s Brian Michael Jenkins on Facing the Threat of Nuclear Terrorism,” *The National Journal*, October 18, 2008.

¹² Or influence another group that shares its ideology to conduct a terrorist attack.

handbook provides various “Go/No Go” questions. If the recruit is deficient in a key area, they are unqualified to enter the following stage.

Abu `Amr’s recruitment process is built on the concept of “Individual Da`wa.”¹ This is an approach of calling a single individual to Islam, and refers to the person being called, not the person doing the calling. Conversely, “Collective Da`wa” invites multiple individuals to Islam in a public manner through lectures and sermons. According to Abu `Amr, Individual Da`wa is preferable because it will not draw attention from security forces. Abu `Amr explains that an individualized, highly structured recruitment process increases security because it gives the recruiter ways to assess whether the recruited individual has accepted certain key concepts before exposed to the recruiter’s true intentions. If the person being recruited is not ready for the next stage, the entire process can be cancelled without exposing the operative.

According to Abu `Amr, Individual Da`wa is also useful because it does not require the recruiter to have a thorough knowledge of Islamic Shari`a. Unlike Collective Da`wa, which requires recruiters who are capable of making legal and political arguments sophisticated enough to sustain public criticism, Individual Da`wa depends on eliciting emotional responses from recruits and building a personal relationship. Abu `Amr’s approach illustrates a recruitment concept called *al-tarhib wa’l-tarhib*, which is a carrot-and-stick technique of extolling the benefits of action while explaining the frightening costs of inaction. The concept was introduced in the Qur’an and is discussed by many Islamic thinkers exploring the best way to call people to Islam (several scholars, for example, have written books titled *al-tarhib wa’l-tarhib*).² According to Abu `Amr, recruiters should apply the concept throughout the recruitment process, but emphasize the benefits of action early in the process and the costs of inaction later.

¹ *Da`wa* is the act of calling individuals to Islam and is best understood as evangelism.

² As stated in Qur’an 21:90, “Indeed, they used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive.”



Figure 1. The front cover of the document.

Due to the private nature of Individual Da`wa, Abu `Amr argues the technique is applicable in the West and in countries ruled by “apostates.” The individualized approach does not mean Abu `Amr is not ambitious; he boldly explains, “if the preacher can recruit one person a year and that person can recruit one person a year, then after 30 years the total number of the jihadists is a billion.”³

Stage One: Acquaintance and Selection

Abu `Amr argues that a recruiter’s first job is to identify a suitable recruitment target. He advises recruiters to select “an old friend or a relative who happens to be not committed to Islam. Or close to your age or close to your accommodation.”⁴ Abu `Amr is critical of jihadists who only want to recruit religious people. Indeed, he warns against recruiting “Salafists and memorizers of the Qur’an” because “most Salafists hold opinions opposing to al-Qa`ida that were fed to them by their scholars.” Likewise, Abu `Amr does not trust memorizers of the Qur’an and believes that many of them are spies. He also warns against recruiting certain types of professionals, including scientists and military officials, because they are not amenable to al-Qa`ida’s message. Abu `Amr does not exclude recruiting religious people, but he focuses on secular individuals because they are

³ Abu `Amr al-Qa`idi, *A Course in the Art of Recruitment*, undated, p. 8, available on jihadist web forums.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

more common and can generally be approached without alerting security services.

Stage Two: Building a Relationship

According to Abu `Amr, a recruiter should build a close, friendly relationship with recruits before raising political or ideological issues. He instructs recruiters to invite recruits for lunch, send them text messages, and give them gifts. Since every recruit requires personal attention, recruiters are told to only target two people at a time. According to Abu `Amr, it is important to urge recruits to embrace the ritual obligations of Islam as a way to increase their sense of obedience, writing:

The issues that you will talk about at this stage are what we call the refining issues, meaning that you try to remedy his passiveness and make him love the path of obedience and make him perform prayers on time, but nothing more than this so you will not burden or rush him.⁵

Stage Three: Faith Awakening

In stage three, recruiters are urged to awaken passive religious sentiment in recruits. Recruiters are advised to tread carefully and avoid demanding “perfection or full commitment; you should progress gradually.” During this stage, recruiters should make recruits seriously consider the pleasures of heaven and the torment of hell. Abu `Amr argues that this dichotomy is a powerful motivator, explaining that radicalization “normally happens to those who fear the torment of the afterlife and who come to know that jihad is the salvation from eternal damnation. The result is that jihad is desired and craved.”⁶

During stage three of the program, recruiters should ensure their recruits watch videos of Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri and focus on identifying and fixing any of the recruit’s *shubhat* (suspicions). For example, Abu `Amr says that many Muslims blame jihadists for provoking both illustrations of the Prophet

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Muhammad in the Western press and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Such *shubhat*, even if they reflect hatred of the West, are disruptive to the recruitment process. Abu `Amr urges recruiters to address them immediately, saying, “Know my beloved brother that one suspicion only is enough to move people off the road, particularly in the beginning.”

Abu `Amr is particularly concerned about *shubhat* related to the rulers of Islamic states, and refers to Ibn Abbas’ argument that “there is a Kufr that is less than another Kufr.”⁷ Ibn Abbas argued that a ruler who does not apply Shari`a should not be considered an infidel—and therefore should remain immune from attack—if he applies different rules out of ignorance or if he believes in his heart that the Islamic Shari`a is the right path yet does not know how to apply it correctly. Ibn Abbas’ concept directly contradicts Ibn Taymiyya’s more expansive understanding of *takfiriyya*—denouncing a Muslim, including the ruler of a state, as an infidel—that is popular with jihadists.

Stage Four: Implanting Jihadist Concepts

The purpose of stage four is to instill jihadist interpretations of traditional Islamic concepts in recruits. Abu `Amr highlights five concepts that are particularly important:

1. Adherence to the book (Qur’an) and the sunna.
2. The religious duty of jihad and the necessity to be prepared.
3. The acceptability of *takfiriyya*.
4. Democracy is a religion and participation in elections is unacceptable.
5. The concept of *al-wala’ wa’l-bara’* (loyalty and disavowal).

Abu `Amr understands that the average recruiter will not be a theologian. Rather than master complex ideological arguments themselves, recruiters are urged to instruct recruits to use classic jihadist texts to explain and substantiate critical ideas. Among others, Abu `Amr recommends several classic jihadist writings, including `Abdullah `Azzam’s “Liberation of Muslim Lands,” the biography of Abu’l-Walid al-Ansari, the *fatwa* of Shaykh al-Shaykh on illegitimate rulers, and Abu

Basir al-Tartusi’s “Islamic Ruling on Democracy and Multiplicity of Parties.” In addition to reading these texts, Abu `Amr recommends that recruiters teach recruits to download jihadist media and correspond on web forums. In general, however, Abu `Amr’s approach to jihadist media is very cautious; he urges recruiters to only show recruits videos when they are in a contemplative mood and are willing to internalize the political message of the propaganda.

Abu `Amr is adamant that recruits accept jihadist ideological doctrine in its entirety, and eschew all other interpretations of Islamic concepts. He argues that doubts and confusion of any kind are disastrous to the effective radicalization of a recruit. Abu `Amr is particularly concerned that new jihadists will be dismayed if their fellow fighters commit illegitimate acts, which presumably refers to the killing of Muslims in places such as Iraq and Algeria. To allay this problem, he explains that recruits must understand that their only true relationship is with God; fighters should maintain their relationships with flawed jihadists but focus on their personal religious commitment rather than worldly concerns.

Stage Five: Formation of a Cell

Forming a cell is the fifth and final stage of Abu `Amr’s recruitment course. The fifth stage begins when the recruiter is convinced that a recruit has accepted the principles of jihadist ideology and truly desires violent jihad. Abu `Amr argues that these newly radicalized recruits are ready to read Abu Mus`ab al-Suri’s book *The Global Islamic Resistance Call* and suggests that al-Suri’s concept of decentralized “individual jihad” is appropriate for the current struggle. Recruiters are to urge recruits to wage jihad in their home country, but to expect that recruits may be unwilling to do so and will be more interested in traveling to Iraq or Afghanistan. Abu `Amr explains that recruits are emotionally drawn to high-profile jihads and must be convinced that it is religiously legitimate and strategically wise to fight at home.

Conclusion

Abu `Amr’s greatest innovations are the detailed methodology he provides lay-recruiters, the provision of specific

tools for measuring the progress of recruits, and an interesting explanation of how to use al-Qa`ida propaganda. By providing these tools, Abu `Amr aims to use structured bureaucratic techniques to empower a less-educated generation of jihadist recruiters to expand al-Qa`ida’s reach. In doing so, Abu `Amr also bridges the gap between al-Qa`ida’s bureaucratic organizations in Afghanistan and Iraq and the decentralized global jihadist social movement. Most al-Qa`ida handbooks for the decentralized jihadist movement are technical and focus on issues such as weapons or online security. Abu `Amr’s handbook is important because it tries to bring the organizational efficiencies of bureaucracy to individual jihadists everywhere.

Abu `Amr’s strict methodology reflects the long-standing struggle of jihadists to operate securely but effectively, using relatively unskilled people. Abu `Amr’s entire concept of recruitment is founded on the idea that recruiters—not just recruits—will have limited knowledge of jihadist ideological concepts, and therefore need a highly structured program to walk them through the recruitment process. Even though that program is designed to be applied in secret, Abu `Amr’s rigorous evaluation mechanisms will inevitably create a signature that less methodological recruitment approaches might not. Cautious recruiters will take care to minimize their risk of discovery, but in the real world not all of Abu `Amr’s recruiters will be so cautious. Abu `Amr’s program is a dangerous tool that may empower unskilled jihadist recruiters, but like all such innovations, it is also a double-edged sword.

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⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

Deconstructing Salafism in Yemen

By Laurent Bonnefoy

IN THE MIDDLE EAST, Salafism has gained prominence during the last two decades. This is especially true in countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia where a political version of Salafism, often labeled *sabwa*, emerged as a significant social movement.¹ In Yemen, however, the main Salafist trend is characterized by an apparently apolitical stance. It was developed by Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i in the early 1980s around the Dar al-Hadith institute in the small town of Dammaj in Sa'da Province. Al-Wadi'i was a cleric educated in the 1960s and 1970s at various Saudi religious institutions (including the famous Islamic University of Medina) and maintained ambiguous links with that country's rulers and religious elites until his death in July 2001.² Rapidly, Dar al-Hadith expanded and educated thousands of students coming from Yemen and abroad; other institutes spawned in other regions of the country. Theoretically, the main features of that version of Salafism include a claim of loyalty to the political ruler (*amir*, king or president) even when that ruler is corrupt and unjust, as well as a will to transcend local and national contexts by delivering a universal message based exclusively on the Qur'an and the hadith. These Yemeni Salafists aim to preserve Muslims from strife by not engaging in politics, nor participating in elections, demonstrations, or revolutions. Yet, they believe they can play a role in orienting state policies through advice given in private to the ruler.

Such positions clearly distinguish Yemeni Salafism from other Islamist trends and figures—including radical Muslim Brotherhood-associated figures such as 'Abd al-Majid al-Zindani³—who at least formally endorse elections and

are stigmatized as sources of division and corruption by al-Wadi'i's followers. Apolitical Salafists typically condemn violence and terrorist operations targeting civilians. In fact, al-Wadi'i was highly critical of the jihadist strategy at the global level as well as inside Yemen from the early 1990s onward. During that time, he accused Usama bin Ladin, who was then trying to launch new wars after Afghanistan, of preferring to invest in weapons rather than in mosques. He even apparently botched some of Bin Ladin's planned operations against the socialist elites of South Yemen.⁴

While bridges between apolitical Salafists (or "purists," as Quintan Wiktorowicz describes them⁵) and armed movements may exist, its frequent association with jihadist groups or its depiction as the antechamber of terrorism can be misleading. By focusing on the issue of violence, this article intends to show how the Salafist doctrine is often flexible and reinterpreted by clerics and activists.

Yemen's Salafists as Allies of Government?

In the post-9/11 period and after al-Wadi'i's death, condemnation of violence became a way for Yemen's Salafist movement to legitimize its position in a precarious context. Such a condemnation was obviously not new but grew more explicit as state repression became a possibility.⁶ Saudi sources condemning terrorism written by clerics close to the official religious establishment became more and more popular inside of Yemen.⁷ Essentially, these sources blamed the politicized Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and some political Salafists—including famous Kuwaiti

cleric 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd al-Khaliq and Syrian Muhammad Surur Zayn al-'Abidin—for upsurges of violence. They also considered al-Qa'ida an anomaly.

In such a context, the wide spectrum of Salafists in Yemen was eager to stress the fact that it would not endorse violent strategies against the state or its allies. Abu'l-Hasan al-Ma'ribi, the leader of a dissident Salafist fringe and writer of an anti-terrorism manifesto,⁸ along with his rival, Yahya al-Hajuri, supported Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdullah Salih's reelection for a new term during the 2006 presidential ballot. A few years before, Muhammad al-Imam, probably the most charismatic heir of al-Wadi'i, had delivered a speech at a conference in 2003 indirectly condemning jihad in Iraq against the U.S.-led occupation.⁹ He claimed that in order to be legitimate, jihad had to be endorsed by the Yemeni government, which as a new ally of the United States in the "global war on terrorism" would obviously not do. Such an assertion considered Yemenis leaving for Iraq as illegitimate fighters.

Through these steps, Salafists undoubtedly transformed themselves into allies of the Yemeni government in a matter that was reminiscent of the Saudi religious authority's capacity to endorse its state's policies and decisions in all circumstances. Despite their conservative and radical interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence, the Salafists appeared as advocates of loyalty or even moderation and as actors able to efficiently delegitimize violent strategies through theological arguments.

Potential for Violence Remains

This image, however, is incomplete, and it obscures many of the practical inconsistencies of the Salafist movement in Yemen. Deeds might at times appear to directly contradict the peaceful and apolitical doctrine. In parallel to such condemnations of violence, Salafist individuals have supported actions against various other political and religious groups, including socialists¹⁰

1 Madawi al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

2 Laurent Bonnefoy, "Salafism in Yemen: A Saudisation?" in Madawi al-Rasheed ed., *Kingdom without Borders: Saudi Arabia's Political, Religious and Media Frontiers* (London: Hurst, 2008), pp. 245-262.

3 Gregory Johnsen, "Profile of Sheikh Abd al-Majid al-Zindani," *Terrorism Monitor* 4:7 (2006): pp. 3-6.

4 On al-Wadi'i's criticism of Usama bin Ladin, see Muqbil al-Wadi'i, *Tuhfat al-mujib 'ala as'ilat al-badar wa al-gharib* (Sana'a: Dar al-Athar, 2005), p. 281. Also see Brynjar Lia, "Destructive Doctrinarians": *Abu Musab al-Suri's Critique of the Salafis in the Jihadi Current* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2007), p. 4.

5 Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 9:3 (2006): pp. 207-239.

6 "Zawjat Bin Ladin ta'ud ila al-Yaman ma'a 'asharat min 'anasir al-Qa'ida," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, December 29, 2001.

7 Zayd Bin Muhammad al-Madkhali, *Al-Irhab wa atharuhu al-sayyi' 'ala al-afraad wa al-umam* (Cairo: Dar al-Minhaj, 2003), p. 128.

8 Abu'l-Hasan al-Ma'ribi, *Al-taffir wa al-ightiyalat: al-asbab, al-athar, al-'ilaj* (Riyadh: Dar al-Fadila, 2004), p. 295.

9 Muhammad al-Imam, "Hay 'ala al-Jihad... lakin," recorded conference, 2003.

10 Muhammad al-Imam, *Al-Hizb al-Ishtiraki fi rubu' qarn* (Sana'a: Dar al-Athar, 2008), p. 32.

and Sufis.¹¹

The brutal rebellion in Sa`da between the national army and a group of Zaydi revivalists¹² headed by Husayn al-Huthi and then his kin since June 2004 emerged as another way for the Salafists to portray themselves as companions of the government. It also highlighted the Salafists' potential for violence. Indeed, Salafists actively participate in the stigmatization of Zaydi identity. Their propaganda often associates Zaydism to Iran and to a global Shi`a conspiracy that seeks to divert the Muslim world.¹³ In March 2007, two foreign students of the main Salafist center, Dar al-Hadith in Dammaj, were killed, supposedly in combat against Zaydi groups in the wider framework of the war against the "Huthis."¹⁴ These killings confirmed the rumors that Salafist groups assisted the Yemeni army in the war.

From a more global perspective, the positions defended by many Salafist clerics regarding the issue of jihad outside of their country (or more precisely outside of the Arab world) also show that both apoliticism and pacifism are not automatic options and that positions have been shifting. A clear example of internal practical contradictions appeared when al-Wadi`i's endorsement of jihad in the Molucca Indonesian Islands in 2000¹⁵

is confronted to his earlier criticism of Muslim Brotherhood Yemeni clerics, such as 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Daylami who labeled the 1994 war against the socialist-led secession a holy war. For al-Wadi`i, this was not the case, as labeling the war in this way would cause Muslim civilian casualties.

Although September 11, 2001 and other operations were generally considered illegitimate and wrong since they had, in retaliation, fostered further casualties and war in the Muslim

“These variations are better understood as ways of dealing with potential repression by not appearing as dangerous proponents of overt violence, while at the same time showing the movement’s independence of speech in order not to lose its legitimacy among activists.”

world, the condemnation of violence targeting Western interests is not systematic. In fact, the principle of confrontation between the West and the Muslim world is usually something that is acknowledged and supported. Nevertheless, in the dominant apolitical Salafists' perspective, use of violence is considered counterproductive: Muslims are first of all not ready to fight as they are too weak and divided, and Muslim governments have not raised “the banner of jihad,” so fighting would only cause turmoil. In that context, while the general objective of targeting a dominant West might be supported, it can only be attained in the long run; all current attempts are then bound to fail and as such are negative.

In various instances, al-Wadi`i showed an anti-imperialist rhetoric not very different from that of al-Qa`ida-type groups. In a 1996 conference, for example,

he asked God to destroy America by sending “a heroic nation like the people of Afghanistan who destroyed Russia,” yet he denies being a terrorist, claiming he “is even incapable of shooting a gun correctly.” Furthermore, in the same conference he said the Salafists “are currently preparing the people to fight America through jihad” and recalled how “America corrupted the nations by supporting the governments and the tribes but never the Salafis.”¹⁶ Rather than a double standard discourse, these variations are better understood as ways of dealing with potential repression by not appearing as dangerous proponents of overt violence, while at the same time showing the movement's independence of speech in order not to lose its legitimacy among activists.

Conclusion

The ambiguous positions expressed by Yemeni Salafist clerics would tend to suggest that apolitical Salafists and jihadist groups only diverge in matters of strategy. Consequently, apolitical Salafism (such as the one forged by al-Wadi`i and his successors) would, according to this argument, be considered the antechamber of terrorism or its ideological roots. While not systematically incorrect (John Walker Lindh, the famous “American Taliban,” allegedly spent time in al-Wadi`i's institute in Dammaj before leaving for Pakistan¹⁷), such an interpretation is biased. Indeed, it misinterprets the profile of most jihadist militants in Yemen as they in fact seldom have a strong religious background and do not use the apolitical Salafist clerics as legitimizing sources for their actions.¹⁸ Drawing a genealogy of violence through the writings of Salafist clerics is therefore insufficient as it often means overlooking the environment in which these ideas are either produced or reinterpreted. For example, the case for loyalty is only bearable as long as the Salafists are not themselves the main victims of authoritarianism and

¹⁶ Muqbil al-Wadi`i, “Jawâhir al-sunniya fi al-as`ilat al-faransiyya,” recorded conference, 1996.

¹⁷ François Burgat and Muhammad Sbitli, “Les salafis au Yémen ou...la modernisation malgré tout,” *Chroniques yéménites*, 2003, p. 143.

¹⁸ See, for example, Sa`id 'Ubayd al-Jamhi, *Al-Qa`ida fi al-Yaman* (Sana`a: Maktabat al-Hadara, 2008), p. 424; Mustafa Badi al-Lawjri, “Afghanistan: Ihtilal al-Dhaki-ra,” undated, p. 218.

¹¹ Alexander Knysch, “Contextualizing the Salafi-Sufi Conflict (from the Northern Caucasus to Hadramawt),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43:3 (2007): pp. 503-530. Also see Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim. Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 5.

¹² Zaydism is a branch of Shi`ism present in the Yemen highlands. The elites of this religious sect, which claimed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (the sayyids), ruled, under the authority of the imam, over parts or the whole of Yemeni territory for more than a millennium, until the 1962 Republican Revolution. Since then, Zaydism has been in crisis and has experienced important theological and political evolutions, some of which blunted the main features that distinguished it from Sunnism.

¹³ For examples of such stigmatization, see “Al-judhur al-fikriyya lil-fitna al-Huthiyya,” *al-Muntada*, April 2005 or Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Mahdi, *Al-Zaydiyya fi al-Yaman: Hirwar Maftuh* (Sana`a: Markaz al-Kalima al-Tayiba, 2008), p. 98.

¹⁴ “Al-Huthiyyun yuhaimun ma`had Dammaj al-salafi,” *al-Taghiyir*, March 26, 2007.

¹⁵ Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia* (Ithaca:

Cornell University, 2006), p. 115.

indistinct criminalization. That is precisely what al-Wadi'i meant when he said:

If I am censored, there will be strong reactions...That is why I advise the government not to do it. You were courageous when people abroad accused you of harboring terrorists and you answered "No, we only have 'ulama' that teach the Qur'an and the sunna." My brothers, I tell you, if the government was intelligent, it would leave us alone.¹⁹

As such, state repression and torture are probably more efficient incentives for violence than any given doctrine. As a fugitive militant accused of involvement in various attacks (including the one on the U.S. Embassy on September 17, 2008) asserted in a press interview, "The operations that are happening in Yemen are reactions from young people tyrannized by torture in the prisons."²⁰ While these words should be interpreted cautiously, they nevertheless show how the general political context plays a fundamental role. It is largely this context that will most often determine whether the Salafists, from the apolitical starting point, will be violent or will stick to the principle of strict loyalty to the state, or possibly start playing a more overtly political and inclusive game.

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19 Muqbil al-Wadi'i, "Hadhihi al-sururiyya," recorded conference, undated.

20 "Interview of Hamza 'Ali al-Dabyani," *al-Nabhar*, December 4, 2008.

New Government in Thailand Struggles to Defeat the Insurgency

By Zachary Abuza

SINCE THE SEPTEMBER 2006 coup in Thailand, attention has been focused on the country's rapid political turnover and instability. Yet the Malay-Muslim insurgency in the country's three southern-most provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat has continued unabated. The new government in Bangkok has stated that resolving the insurgency is one of its top priorities, and it has spoken of the need for reconciliation and social justice. The insurgents, unconcerned about who is in power in Bangkok, have continued their campaign of violence with no end in sight. This article addresses Thailand's political turnover, provides an analysis of the violence in the south, and finally offers a review of new policies that the government has initiated to quell the insurgency.

Political Turnover

On December 15, 2008, the Thai Parliament elected a new prime minister, Abhisit Vejjajiva, the fourth person to hold the post in a year. The backroom dealings, combined with the actions of a pro-monarchy and activist judiciary, as well as the support of the military and monarchy, ended a political stalemate that has hobbled Thailand since February 2006. Yet, in the three years of elite political machinations in Bangkok, there was little attention paid to the insurgency that has plagued Thailand's three majority Muslim provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat since January 2004. The insurgency has left more than 3,500 people killed and twice that number wounded. It has led to a breakdown of social services, law and order, and the de facto ethnic cleansing of Siamese Buddhists from much of the countryside. Large swaths of southern Thailand have been, in effect, ungoverned territory.

The September 2006 coup that ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was an opportunity to reverse the insurgency's gains. While interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont committed inordinate time and resources to quelling the insurgency, violence actually peaked

in 2007. In July of that year, the Thai army chief, General Anupong Paojinda, launched his own "surge" in order to suppress the violence. Following the drafting of a new constitution and the restoration of democracy in December 2007, a government comprised of Thaksin's former Thai Rak Thai Party emerged under Samak Sundaravej, re-branded as the People's Power Party (PPP). Fearful of another coup, Samak and his successor, Somchai Wongsawat, had a completely hands off policy in the south, letting the military have full control. Both offered no resistance to not only the military's massive budgetary expenditures, but two waves of major weapons acquisitions, the vast majority of which having little to no value in combating an insurgency.¹ With no civilian oversight, the Royal Thai Army escalated their counterinsurgency efforts, but at a tremendous cost to human rights, including the alleged systematic use of torture on detainees.²

When Abhisit came to power in December 2008, he quickly announced that resolving the insurgency, now entering its fifth year, was a top priority for his government. He pledged to overhaul the administrative structure and streamline the chain of command in the south. Unconcerned about the possibility of a coup since he had the full backing of the military and

1 The Royal Thai Army rewarded itself with a significant budget increase following the September 2006 coup. In December 2006, it announced major arms purchases worth B7.7 billion. The purchases included Swedish Gripen jet fighters, Ukrainian armored personnel carriers, Chinese surface-to-surface missiles, and submarines, hardly the weapons systems needed to combat an insurgency. This was followed with a second wave of arms purchases worth \$191.3 million in September 2008. This round included a Singaporean built amphibious frigate, Russian anti-aircraft missiles, as well as Israeli arms. In January 2009, the RTA announced another wave of arms imports, although these purchases are more oriented for counterinsurgency. They include six Russian-made Mi-17 helicopters, nearly 100 South African-made armored personnel carriers, and 80 Ukrainian APCs and assault rifles. "Cabinet Nod for B7.7bn to Buy Arms, Equipment," *Bangkok Post*, September 26, 2007; Patrick Winn, "Thailand Plans \$191.3M Arms Purchase," *Defense News*, September 12, 2008; and Patrick Winn, "Muslim Insurgency Triggers Thai Military Spending Blitz: Military Shores Up Attack Helicopters, APCs and Assault Rifles," *Defense News*, February 2009.

2 Amnesty International, "Thailand: Torture In The Southern Counter-Insurgency," January 13, 2009.

monarchy, he pledged to implement greater civilian oversight. Abhisit spoke of the Democrat Party's deep ties to the south, their traditional stronghold. He reiterated the failed pledges of the Surayud regime to engage in *samanchan*, or reconciliation. "My basic assumption is that you will never have reconciliation unless there is justice," he said before his one-day trip there in mid-January. "The same principle applies to the south."³ This does not bode well for the south and suggests that little progress will be made under the leadership of the Democrats in the coming years; they still fail to see the insurgency for what it is, not acknowledging the goals of the insurgents to establish an independent Islamic state. In five years, the insurgents have refused to negotiate or even enter into talks with the government; for them, there is nothing to reconcile.

Analysis of the Violence

Violence in 2008 was down considerably from the peak in 2007. According to the Thai Journalists Association, there were 1,056 violent incidents in which 546 people were killed and 1,075 wounded, 47% lower than the 2007 figure (1,056 killed and 1,992 wounded). There was an annual average of 1,956 violent incidents between 2004-2008. Civilians comprised 77% of the dead, the remainder government officials and security forces. Of the 1,056 violent incidents in 2008, 741 of them were gun attacks, 218 bombing attacks, 37 arson cases, 35 cases of attacks on state property and a number of uncategorized incidents.⁴ Security officials cited the dramatic decrease in violence as signs of their improved counterinsurgency efforts as well as the weakening of the militants. Yet the Thai government failed to acknowledge the secessionist aims or Islamist ideology of the insurgents, naively contending that the insurgency was solely about social justice.

Furthermore, despite the lack of attention to resolving the conflict by the country's leaders, it remains a drain on the government's coffers. A leading scholar of the insurgency, Professor Srisomphob Jitrphiromsri, has argued

that since January 2004 the government has spent more than Bt109 billion (\$3.1 billion) to quell the violence, and predicts that the government may have to spend three times that amount annually over the next five to ten years.⁵

Thai officials do not consider the fact that violence is down simply because much of what the militants sought to achieve in the early stages was accomplished. More than 20% of the region's 300,000

“The insurgents are clearly capable of escalating the rate of violence, but have calculated the ‘right’ amount to achieve their short-term goals: drive away Buddhists, make the region ungovernable, and eliminate political rivals while developing a parallel authority structure in the villages.”

Buddhists have fled, while countless more have evacuated their farms to the safety of the cities.⁶ Since early 2004, the militants have killed hundreds of suspected government informants, and there is little military presence in the villages. It is hard to imagine that the government has already recruited replacements. Finally, many government officials and services have evacuated the villages, supplanted by shadow government and services run by the militants. With so many of their goals accomplished, violence simply does not have to be at the same level.

If Abhisit thought that the militants would simply reduce their operations and give his administration a chance to implement new policies, he was mistaken. In the first 60 days since taking power on December 15, 2008, 64 people have been killed, including five

police, seven soldiers, three rangers, seven village defense volunteers and 42 civilians. The attacks include the beheadings of two rangers, the 27th and 28th decapitations in the past five years. Since mid-December, 97 people have been wounded, including 15 police, 44 soldiers and five rangers. Twenty-four bombs were detonated and seven more bombs either failed to go off or were defused.⁷ As one policeman noted, "The killing sprees in Yala have been less frequent since last year, but there have been more victims in each incident."⁸ While the rate of more than one death and two wounded per day is not exorbitantly high, it is unsustainable. The rate is near the 2006 average, when the violence started to spiral out of control. The rate is unlikely to go down because Thai security forces continue to be deployed statically.

Most of the killings have been shootings. While the militants in this period have not arsoned schools or attacked economic targets such as cell phone towers, or gone after Buddhist clergy as they have in the past, this is not uncommon. When one analyzes the violence during the five-year period, attacks on different targets come in waves, often in response to government countermeasures and defensive positions.

Review of Government's New Policies

Upon taking office, Abhisit announced that his administration would embark on new policies as well as streamlined coordination. He announced that the existing Southern Border Provinces Administrative Committee⁹ would be "stepped up" without elaborating how or what its new powers and resources would be.¹⁰ He then announced the formation of a special panel of ministers for the deep south, comprised of 16 cabinet members

⁷ These figures are based on daily press reports.

⁸ "Thailand: Four Die in Insurgent Attack," Associated Press, January 25, 2009.

⁹ The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Committee is a joint task force comprised of civilian administrators, police and army, established in the early 1990s to administer the south. Then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra dismantled the agency in 2002, declaring that the insurgency had been quelled. The interim government of Surayud Chulanont, installed after the September 2006 coup, reestablished the SBPAC in January 2007.

¹⁰ Waedao Harai, "New Agency Proposed to Tackle Insurgency," *Bangkok Post*, January 7, 2009.

³ "Thai PM Launches Review of Emergency Law in South," *The Nation*, January 15, 2009.

⁴ Veera Prateepchaikul, "Situation Improves in Deep South," *Bangkok Post*, January 22, 2009.

⁵ Don Pathan and Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Insurgency Taking a Huge Toll," *The Nation*, January 19, 2009.

⁶ "Deep South Violence Claims 3,195 Lives," *The Nation*, December 29, 2008.

and two representatives of the National Economic and Social Development Board and the Budget Bureau. It is hard to see how this new council will bring change: ministers of line agencies already had purview over the southern provinces; the south has just never been a priority for them. In both these moves, the prime minister said that the new groups would “not duplicate the tasks of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) Region 4,”¹¹ which means the military remains firmly in charge, with negligibly more civilian oversight.

In terms of policies, Abhisit articulated “less military-focused strategies,” explaining that “it makes no sense to be running the provinces under continuous application of the emergency decree. At the moment, we have actually also martial law there. We also have the new security law. We should be aiming at lifting these special laws.”¹² Yet on January 20, the cabinet voted to extend the emergency decree for another three months, the 14th consecutive extension since October 2005.

If Abhisit wants to make his imprint on the insurgency, there is no better place for him to begin than with a review of the detainee policy and the judicial process. The existing process has not only failed, but has led to serious recriminations and a breakdown in cooperation between the military, police and courts. Under the existing Emergency Decree, suspects can be detained for 30 days without trial, after which formal charges must be brought against them or they must be released. Detentions surged in 2007, but police often failed to build cases against the suspects. The army tried to extend detentions through an initiative of involuntary vocational training programs, but that was quickly struck down by the court. Some 1,544 suspects have been arrested between January 2004 and December 2008, yet the courts have only made rulings on 153 cases (10%).¹³ Charges have been dropped on more than 70% of the detainees,

infuriating the military.¹⁴ While part of the problem is the inability or lack of capacity of the police to acquire sufficient forensic evidence, the reality is that much of the violence is either unseen or witnesses are unwilling to cooperate with authorities.

The current detention policies have led to two other human rights concerns. On January 13, 2009, Amnesty International released a blistering report about the systematic use of torture by the Thai army, citing the cases of 34 detainees. Abhisit rejected accusations of “systematic” torture, stating, “I want to reassure you that it’s not government policy and it was not carried out systematically. The Thai government does not support extra-judicial power.”¹⁵ Muslims in the south have decried the blanket immunity for security forces that has led to egregious human rights abuses. There have been a handful of cases in which the blanket immunity has been lifted. On December 25, 2008, for example, an inquest ruled that soldiers tortured to death an imam in their custody, Yapa Kaseng, in March 2007.¹⁶

The security forces’ frustration at the court’s inability or unwillingness to convict and sentence detainees may be responsible in part for a wave of alleged extrajudicial killings. For example, on January 30, 2009, a religious teacher who had been previously detained by security forces but acquitted by the courts due to a lack of evidence was shot dead in front of a mosque in Pattani, provoking outrage in the Muslim community, which blamed the security forces for the murder.¹⁷

To that end, several Thai officials have called for the establishment of security courts to expedite the judicial process. They argue that the eight courts in the three provinces are not only overtaxed and understaffed, but are also ill-equipped to deal with security cases,

which they do not prioritize.¹⁸ The establishment of these courts could go a long way to curbing some of the egregious human rights abuses by security forces borne out of frustration with the current judiciary. At the same time, there is increasing pressure on the government to end the security forces’ blanket immunity.

Conclusion

While Abhisit has pledged to resolve the conflict in the south and to demilitarize counterinsurgency strategy, it is unlikely that he will gain much traction. The south remains an intelligence failure: few leaders of the insurgency have been arrested, and the shadowy coalition of militant organizations (the BRN-C, GMIP, New PULO, among others) remain intact. Most suspected insurgents who are captured are soon released, and the government has lost the support of the local population due to security force impunity, their failure to provide security—despite the fact that almost 45% of the armed forces are based in the south¹⁹—and the gradual erosion of social services. Insurgent documents have laid out a long-term strategy to achieve their goal of an independent state, and make clear they see themselves in the early stages.²⁰ The insurgents are clearly capable of escalating the rate of violence, but have calculated the “right” amount to achieve their short-term goals: drive away Buddhists, make the region ungovernable, and eliminate political rivals while developing a parallel authority structure in the villages. Abhisit continues to talk about reconciliation and social justice, but until Thai security forces begin to gain the upper hand and dismantle the insurgent networks, the insurgents have little reason to reconcile.

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11 “Panel of Ministers to Oversee Far South,” *Bangkok Post*, January 17, 2009.

12 Ambika Ahuja, “Thai PM Praises Obama’s ‘Politics of Hope,’” Associated Press, January 21, 2009.

13 Of them, 15 were sentenced to death. Some 33 others have received life imprisonment and 107 convicts were given a 10-year jail term. “Deep South Violence Claims 3,195 Lives,” *The Nation*, December 29, 2008.

14 Ibid. Based on personal interviews conducted in 2007-2008, this number could be more than 90%.

15 “Abhisit Rejects Torture Claim,” *Agence France-Presse*, January 15, 2009.

16 “Amnesty Alleges 4 Tortured to Death in Thailand,” *International Herald Tribune*, January 13, 2009.

17 “Imam Shot Dead in Front of His Mosque in Pattani,” *The Nation*, January 31, 2009.

18 Achara Ashayagachat and Muhammad Ayub Pathan, “Judges Say Region Needs Special Courts,” *Bangkok Post*, February 6, 2009.

19 “Thai PM Launches Review of Emergency Law in South,” *The Nation*, January 15, 2009.

20 Some of these documents will be published in the author’s forthcoming book, *Conspiracy of Silence*.

After Action Report: COIN Operations in Rutbah, Iraq

By Lieutenant Dan Alldridge, U.S. Marine Corps

IN JANUARY 2008, as a lieutenant in 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, 1st Marine Division, I was deployed as part of a Provisional Civil Affairs Group attached to Regimental Combat Team-5. Upon receipt of the mission, I was assigned a team and an Area of Operations (AO) that consisted of 10 Marines and the city of Rutbah in western Anbar Province in Iraq. I turned immediately to the Army and Marine Corps' 2006 counterinsurgency manual, Field Manual 3-24 (FM 3-24)/ Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 (MCWP 3-33.5).

This article first outlines key stages of a CounterInsurgency (COIN) fight as laid out in FM 3-24/ MCWP 3-33.5. From this foundation, the article focuses on my actions to execute counterinsurgency operations through each stage in Rutbah. The concluding section offers some critiques and realities that influenced my work through the deployment. My experience is limited to 2008 and 2009 within Rutbah, but hopefully the lessons learned by my team will be utilized by future civil affairs teams deployed throughout the Middle East.

Counterinsurgency

FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 outlines three stages of a counterinsurgency operation. The goal of the first stage is to "protect the population, break the insurgents' initiative and momentum, and set the conditions for further engagement." This first stage sets the foundation for the counterinsurgency force.

FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 emphasizes in the second stage utilizing the conditions set by the first to "develop and build resident capability and capacity in the Host Nation (HN) government and security forces." It is in this stage that the manual lays out Logical Lines of Operation (LLOs) as a focal point: "each LLO represents a conceptual category along which the HN government and COIN force commander intend to attack the insurgent strategy and establish HN government legitimacy." My team's primary focus was in the governance, economic, and essential services LLOs.

In addition to these three LLOs, the task force we were in direct support of worked across the security and communication LLOs. FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 notes that during this stage "the host nation increases its legitimacy through providing security, expanding effective government, providing essential services, and achieving incremental success in meeting public expectations."

Finally, the third stage is the battle handover of the LLOs. FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 states that the goal "is to transition responsibility for COIN operations to HN leadership." According to FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, as separate LLOs move toward a state of relative functionality, the counterinsurgency must move into a more "supporting role." It is through these latter two stages and the LLOs that this article will address the accomplishments, shortcomings, and difficulties in my team's COIN fight.

Governance

The goal of stage one had already been met when we arrived, allowing us to focus on building and developing the local government. As we began work in Rutbah, we were already falling in on an established local government; there was an elected mayor and all city council member seats were filled. Our immediate focus was on finding the key leaders that would help progress the city along. We were able to identify several individuals that became vital to our success in the city. We did, however, run into those less supportive of our presence. These hard liners were only interested in progress that would directly benefit their own personal well-being. The biggest personnel hurdle with which to deal was the current city council president, who maintained direct ties to the local insurgency. During the insurgents' reign in the city, this individual was their puppet head in the local government. Our immediate focus was to help facilitate the council expel him as their president. After months of work with coalition force intelligence as well as the local Iraqi police, we were able to bring up several criminal charges against the now ex-president. With him out of the picture, the council was able to elect a new council president. Fortunately from our point of view, it was one of those key individuals we had identified earlier in the tour.

With the new council president in charge, we shifted our focus on building cohesion between the city council, mayor and city department Directorate Generals (DGs). The only way to make progress in the city was for these three entities to cooperate with one another. By developing appropriate city council sub-committees to partner with specific DGs, we were able to ensure weekly interaction between the two. On top of keeping the council informed, the DGs were also able to request support from the council on future projects and funding requirements. Just as with all our work so far, there were a few speed bumps. A fair amount of the DGs knew little about the departments of which they were in charge. This is in part due to appointments by past officials based on familial and tribal ties versus professional advancement in the particular field. With these open lines of communication, however, we were able to make informed decisions on the type of projects we would be completing in the city.

Project development with the city council and DGs became a significant focus of my team's tour. With the use of a projects sub-committee, we were able to establish a project flow that facilitated communication between all levels of the local and provincial government. Before any project was proposed to my team, it had already been through the local project submission process. Between the local DG and city council, a project idea would develop. From the idea, the local government engineers would create a scope of work outlining what specifically the project would entail. After reviewing the scope, the projects committee would then invite local contractors to bid on the project. It was at this point that my team would sit down with the projects committee to discuss the selection of the contractor for that project. Once approved, the projects committee would be responsible for day-to-day oversight of the project, with my team conducting weekly inspections to ensure payments were warranted. Through our weekly projects committee meeting, we were able to develop projects that fit inside the larger government of Iraq projects planned for the district.

It is within this system that my team was able to transition to the third stage of strategic oversight. The council and the

DGs now have a process in place to cycle projects through with minimal need for coalition force support or funding.

Essential Services

As our work with the projects committee continued to take shape, the primary focus of our projects was on providing essential services to the city. Due to the lack of government funding outside of directed projects, the local DGs did not have an ability to do work on their own. This is where my team was able to greatly affect the ability of the local government to provide essential services for its citizens. Through the city council sub-committees mentioned above, we were able to work one on one with local DGs. This relationship gave the DGs control over what projects should be funded.

As our bond developed, so did the effectiveness of our projects. In one instance, the local DG of electricity was given 33 electrical transformers to install throughout the city. The government, however, failed to provide his department with all the essential items needed to hook up the transformers. Upon his request, my team developed a project to provide all necessary equipment to hook the transformers into the local power grid. With the transformers in place, the department was able to provide 80% of the population with access to the national power grid, compared with the 50% prior to the new transformer installation. It was only through this joint effort that we were able to see our projects have the greatest impact on the city.

This close relationship also facilitated my team's transparency in the process. By allowing the local DG to inspect and control the work, the public saw its own officials out in the city. Building the rapport between government officials and citizens was extremely important in a city that has been plagued with corrupt leaders. By taking a coalition face off the project, we were able to avoid the "save the day" label with the local populous.

Although not all essential services are fully functioning, the work with the local DGs has allowed the primary responsibility of providing services to shift from coalition forces to the local

leadership.

Economics

Due to the security limitations in the city, our influence on the local economy was unfortunately mostly negative. The city was and still is being controlled by two checkpoints that limit traffic flow in and out. This has put a strain on the local economy and its ability to mature. The city has historically been a stopping point on the Baghdad to Damascus highway; however, with the checkpoints this commerce has slowed over the years. Instead, the business has been pushed to gas stations and markets just off the interstate. Over time, the security in the city has progressed to a point where the checkpoints are manned and controlled solely by the Iraqi police.

Although our team was limited in the resources we were able to provide individual business owners, we did have a significant impact on a government owned enterprise. Through our work with the projects committee, we identified the city's neglected slaughterhouse as a source of income for the area. After several months of work on the site and some word of mouth advertising in the city, the Rutbah slaughterhouse was reopened. The success of the slaughterhouse is limited not just to economics, but it also has the added bonus of bettering public health by taking the slaughtering off the streets.

Recent attempts at economic growth have been through the use of micro grants in the city to help stimulate the economy. These grants are given to local business owners that have been identified as a trusted friend of the city. Due to our short duration and experience with the grants, it is hard to assess how they will affect the city in the long run. Currently, they have been a resource to immediately reopen a business and provide employment opportunities.

With the improved security and more reliable essential services, conditions have been set in the city for economic growth. It will be up to the local entrepreneurs and business owners to exploit these conditions for continued expansion.

Conclusion

My team's work with the local government of Rutbah has been extremely challenging and frustrating. It would be a mistake to state that our work in Rutbah has beaten the insurgency. We were not able to solve all the problems that plague the city. Nevertheless, across our different LLOs we have been able to see small improvements in the quality of life in Rutbah. As my team worked through the deployment, we identified targets of opportunity and engaged them as effectively as we could. Our work across each LLO allowed us to accomplish several objectives while setting the city up for future success. It is my hope that the conditions we have set in Rutbah will allow the local leadership to further mature through its own capacity.

First Lieutenant Dan Alldridge graduated from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville with a degree in Criminal Justice Studies and received his commission through OCS on August 11, 2006. After completing The Basic School in March 2007, First Lieutenant Alldridge attended the Field Artillery Officer Basic Course at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Upon graduating from Fort Sill, he reported to 1st Battalion, 11th Marines. After only a week at 1/11, he was assigned to Detachment 1, 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, Provisional Civil Affairs Group. From January 2008 through February 2009, he served as a civil affairs team leader in support of seven different battalion task forces under RCT-5 and RCT-8 in Rutbah, Iraq and later in Ninawa Province. Upon completion of the tour with Detachment 1, First Lieutenant Alldridge returned to 2d Battalion, 11th Marines and was assigned to G Battery.

Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

January 1, 2009 (IRAQ): The U.S. military formally handed control of Baghdad's "Green Zone" to the Iraqi government. - *CNN, January 1*

January 1, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban insurgents attempted to attack a joint base of Afghan and U.S.-led troops in Helmand Province. Three insurgents were killed. - *Reuters, January 2*

January 1, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): An insurgent driving an explosives-laden vehicle toward Canadian troops was shot and killed before he reached the target. The incident occurred in Shah Wali Khot district of Kandahar Province. - *Reuters, January 2*

January 1, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked an Afghan security force vehicle in Herat Province, killing one person. - *Reuters, January 2*

January 1, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone fired two missiles at separate targets in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. An estimated three foreign militants were killed in the attack. U.S. counterterrorism officials later revealed that one of the dead, Usama al-Kini, was a Kenyan national and al-Qa`ida's chief of operations in Pakistan. Al-Kini's Kenyan lieutenant, Shaykh Ahmad Salim Swedan, was also reportedly killed in the strike. According to the *Washington Post*, both al-Kini and Swedan "were ranked among the 23 most-wanted terrorists by the FBI, with a bounty offering of \$5 million for their capture." Al-Kini has also been accused of organizing the failed assassination attempt on Benazir Bhutto in October 2007, along with the September 16, 2008 car bombing on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, which killed 53 people. - *Reuters, January 2; Washington Post, January 9*

January 2, 2009 (CANADA): Canadian authorities released from detention Syrian citizen Hassan Almrei, who had been in custody since 2001 due to suspected ties with al-Qa`ida and other terrorist groups. He was the last suspect being held without charges on Canadian "security certificates."

Almrei will remain on house arrest until authorities decide whether or not he can be deported. - *UPI, January 3*

January 2, 2009 (IRAQ): At least 23 people were killed after a suicide bomber struck a predominately Sunni Arab tribal meeting in al-Yusufiyya near Baghdad. One of the reasons for the Quaraghuli tribal gathering was for the tribe's Shi`a minority and Sunni majority to reconcile their differences. They also had gathered together to discuss candidates in the upcoming provincial elections. The bomber was a member of the tribe. - *AFP, January 2; Los Angeles Times, January 3*

January 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone fired two missiles at targets in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Distinct from a similar attack the previous day in the same agency, the latest strike killed an estimated four militants. - *Reuters, January 2; RTT News, January 2*

January 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani authorities reopened the Khyber Pass, allowing transport trucks to make their way into Afghanistan to supply Western forces. Authorities shut down the pass for three days in an attempt to weaken the militants who have been increasingly attacking transport vehicles. - *Reuters, January 2*

January 3, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani security forces arrested Ustad Yasar, a senior Afghan Taliban official who was released from prison in Afghanistan as part of a prisoner swap in 2007. Yasar was apprehended in Peshawar after security forces received a "tip-off" about his present location. - *Reuters, January 3*

January 3, 2009 (SOMALIA): A roadside bomb killed four Ethiopian soldiers near Mogadishu. - *Voice of America, January 4*

January 4, 2009 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber killed 35 people during a Shi`a religious procession near the Kadhimiyya shrine in Baghdad. - *AFP, January 5*

January 4, 2009 (IRAQ): The U.S. government gave the Iraqi government control of the anti-al-Qa`ida Sunni Arab fighters aligned with the Sons of Iraq movement in Diyala Province. - *AP, January 4*

January 4, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): An Australian soldier was killed by a Taliban rocket attack in Uruzgan Province. - *AP, January 5*

January 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed six people in Dera Ismail Khan in the North-West Frontier Province. According to reports, a small bomb went off near a café, and 10 minutes later the suicide bomber targeted police and others who flocked to the scene of the initial blast. - *UPI, January 4*

January 4, 2009 (THAILAND): Today marked the fifth year anniversary of the resumption of violence in southern Thailand. According to Thailand's MCOT media conglomerate, which cited police figures, "Since the raid on the army base in Narathiwat on January 4, 2004 to November 2008, nearly 9,000 insurgent attacks and more than 3,000 deaths were recorded. More than 50 percent of the assaults were shooting attacks." - *MCOT, January 4*

January 5, 2009 (FRANCE): French authorities placed three al-Qa`ida suspects on trial for plotting the 2002 suicide bombing of a historic synagogue in Tunisia that killed 21 people. Two suspects include German national Christian Ganczarski and Tunisian national Walid Nawar. The third suspect, Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, who is being held at Guantanamo Bay, will be tried in absentia. Nawar was the suicide bomber's brother, while Ganczarski converted to Islam and allegedly played a large role in al-Qa`ida's European network. - *AFP, January 4*

January 5, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants in Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) kidnapped an 11-member peace delegation from neighboring Bajaur Agency. The kidnapped tribal elders were reportedly in Mohmand to ask the Taliban to stop firing rockets into Khar, the main town in Bajaur Agency. - *AFP, January 6*

January 6, 2009 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released an audio statement on Islamist web forums accusing Israel of conducting a "crusade against Islam and Muslims" due to its current offensive in Gaza. He vowed revenge for the deaths

of Palestinians, stating, “We will never stop until we avenge the death of all who are killed, injured, widowed and orphaned in Palestine and throughout the Islamic world.” Al-Zawahiri also called the offensive “Obama’s gift to Israel” before he takes office. – *Fox News, January 6; ABC News, January 6*

January 6, 2009 (UNITED STATES): According to State Department Counterterrorism Coordinator Dell Dailey, Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri have been unable to launch a successful major terrorist operation due to international anti-terrorism efforts. “Bin Laden can’t get an operational effort off the ground without it being detected ahead of time and being thwarted,” he said. “Their ability to reach is nonexistent.” – *Reuters, January 6*

January 6, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): U.S.-led coalition forces engaged Taliban insurgents in Lagham Province and killed 32 of them. – *Reuters, January 7*

January 6, 2009 (SOMALIA): A roadside bomb killed a Ugandan soldier in Mogadishu. – *Reuters, January 6*

January 6, 2009 (THAILAND): An unknown number of separatist militants attacked a military base in Pattani Province in southern Thailand, killing at least one Thai army ranger. – *AFP, January 5*

January 8, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber attacked international troops in Kandahar Province, reportedly killing two U.S. soldiers and one civilian. – *Voice of America, January 8; Voice of America, January 9*

January 9, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Three U.S. soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb along Highway One, which links southern Afghanistan with Kabul. – *AFP, January 9*

January 9, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed at least 10 people, including two police officers, in an attack at a market in Nimroz Province. – *Voice of America, January 9*

January 9, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): The U.S. military killed five militants in an attack on a bomb-making network in Zabul Province. – *Voice of America, January 9*

January 9, 2009 (YEMEN): Usama bin Ladin’s former driver, Salim Hamdan, was released from a Yemeni prison after serving out his sentence. A U.S. military tribunal convicted Hamdan in August 2008 for aiding al-Qa`ida; he was sentenced to five and a half years. Since he had already served five years at Guantanamo Bay by the time of the conviction, Hamdan was transferred to Yemen at the end of 2008. – *AP, January 10*

January 9, 2009 (SOMALIA): A top official in the Islamic courts movement, identified as Mohamed Abdi Gelle, was assassinated by masked gunmen in Galgadud region in central Somalia. There was no claim of responsibility. – *Shabelle Media Network, January 9*

January 10-11, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Hundreds of Taliban fighters attacked a Frontier Corps military base in Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Between six and ten security personnel and 40 Taliban fighters were killed during the fighting. According to al-Jazira, which received its information from a Pakistani military official, “most of the force of about 600 came from Afghanistan and were joined by local Taliban fighters.” – *al-Jazira, January 12; Radio Netherlands, January 11; New York Times, January 11*

January 11, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): The Australian Defense Ministry announced that its special forces killed a senior Taliban commander in Uruzgan Province. The exact date of the commander’s death was not made clear, although it was likely in the last week. The commander was identified as Mullah Abdul Rasheed and his death has “significantly disrupted insurgent operations in Uruzgan Province,” according to the Australian military. – *Reuters, January 11*

January 11, 2009 (SOMALIA): Rival Islamist groups fought for control of a small town in Galgadud region, causing the deaths of approximately 30 people. The fighting was between the radical Islamist military group al-Shabab and the newly-militarized Sufi Muslim group Ahl al-Sunna wa’l-Jama`a. Members of Ahl al-Sunna wa’l-Jama`a claimed that they repelled the al-Shabab assault on the town. – *Voice of America, January 12*

January 13, 2009 (ISRAEL): Israeli military officials announced that their offensive in the Gaza Strip has weakened Hamas, but that the terrorist group may survive. – *Washington Post, January 14*

January 13, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Approximately 13 prisoners—including one with ties to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)—managed to escape from a jail in Patikul in the southern Philippines. The prisoners dug a 10-meter long tunnel that brought them to the outside. The ASG suspect was identified as Magambian Sakilan, who was in jail for the illegal possession of firearms. – *Reuters, January 14; Philippine Daily Inquirer, January 14*

January 13, 2009 (SOMALIA): Ethiopian troops withdrew from key military bases in Mogadishu as part of their departure from Somalia. – *New York Times, January 13*

January 14, 2009 (GLOBAL): A new audiotape purportedly from al-Qa`ida leader Usama bin Ladin was released on Islamist internet forums. On the tape, Bin Ladin urged Muslims to launch a holy war against Israel in response to its recent offensive in the Gaza Strip. He also claimed credit for the U.S. financial crisis, stating, “Today the United States is staggering under the attacks of the mujahidin and their consequences...It is drowning in a financial crisis.” – *AP, January 14; UPI, January 15*

January 14, 2009 (UNITED STATES): President-elect Barack Obama responded to a new audiotape of Usama bin Ladin by telling reporters that “Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda are our number one threat when it comes to American security. We’re going to do everything in our power to make sure that they cannot create safe havens that can attack Americans. That’s the bottom line.” – *AFP, January 14*

January 14, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Two British NATO soldiers were killed in an explosion while fighting Taliban forces in Helmand Province. – *AFP, January 15*

January 14, 2009 (MAURITANIA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) released a new video statement on Islamist websites urging attacks on Israeli and Western interests in Mauritania in retaliation for Israel’s

recent offensive in the Gaza Strip. AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel said in the video, "We urge you to blow up this evil relationship as support of your brothers in Gaza. We ask you to go to jihad and we urge you to rise to strike Western interests everywhere." - *Reuters, January 18*

January 14, 2009 (SOMALIA): Islamist fighters fired mortars at Somalia's presidential palace in Mogadishu. At least five civilians were killed during the clashes between the Islamist militants and government forces. - *AP, January 14*

January 15, 2009 (UNITED STATES): A U.S. federal judge ordered the release of Guantanamo detainee Mohammed al-Gharani, who was apprehended in Pakistan seven years ago when he was 14-years-old. U.S. prosecutors maintain that al-Gharani, who is from Chad, "stayed at an al-Qaeda-affiliated guesthouse in Afghanistan," "received military training at an al-Qaeda-affiliated military training camp," "served as a courier for several high-ranking al-Qaeda members" and "fought against U.S. and allied forces at the battle of Tora Bora" ahead of the fall of the Taliban in 2001. The judge, however, wrote that government evidence amounted to "a mosaic of allegations." - *AFP, January 15*

January 15, 2009 (UNITED STATES): CIA Director Michael Hayden told reporters that the tribal regions in Pakistan are not as welcoming for al-Qaeda as they used to be. He said that al-Qaeda and its allies are "beginning to realize, beginning to think, this is neither safe nor a haven." - *Bloomberg, January 15*

January 15, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Two Pakistani paramilitary soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *AFP, January 15*

January 15, 2009 (SOMALIA): The last Ethiopian troops withdrew from Mogadishu; however, troops are expected to remain along border areas. - *Voice of America, January 15*

January 15, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Three International Committee of the Red Cross workers were kidnapped in broad

daylight on Jolo Island in Sulu Province in the southern Philippines. The workers included a Swiss national, an Italian national and a Filipino engineer. The Abu Sayyaf Group is suspected of being behind the abduction. - *Philippine Daily Inquirer, January 16*

January 16, 2009 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. Treasury announced that it would freeze the assets of one of Usama bin Ladin's sons, Sa'ad bin Ladin, and three other al-Qaeda members believed to be operating in Iran. - *Reuters, January 16*

January 16, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Director of National Intelligence Michael McConnell told reporters that one of Usama bin Ladin's sons, Sa'ad bin Ladin, "has left Iran...He's probably in Pakistan." McConnell saw this development as encouraging, stating, "It's better for my world if any of these players are in places that we have access." - *Reuters, January 16*

January 16, 2009 (SOMALIA): The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution expressing its intention to create a UN peacekeeping force in Somalia. The resolution renewed the mandate of the African Union (AU) peacekeeping force currently deployed in Somalia for six months. It also encouraged AU states to increase the size of the deployment from the current 2,600 troops to 8,000, which was the number originally authorized. The UN peacekeeping force will not be created, however, for at least several months until the situation on the ground in Somalia can be better assessed. - *AP, January 16*

January 17, 2009 (GLOBAL): A new al-Qaeda video bearing the logo of al-Sahab was released on Islamist websites. The video addressed Germany's involvement in fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan and warned that German "soldiers are safe nowhere." According to Reuters, in the video the masked man who leveled the threats had a sign behind his head that read "Abu Talha the German" and "spoke in German with a slight foreign accent." - *Reuters, January 18*

January 17, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber exploded outside the German Embassy in Kabul, killing one U.S. soldier and two Afghans. A

number of U.S. soldiers and German nationals were wounded. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. - *Washington Post, January 18*

January 17, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani security forces raided a militant stronghold in Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. During the attack, they killed 14 militants and lost two of their own. - *AFP, January 17; Reuters, January 18*

January 17, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) received "proof of life" on the three ICRC workers kidnapped by suspected Abu Sayyaf Group militants on January 15. No other details were offered. - *AP, January 17*

January 18, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber attacked and killed Hassan Zaidan al-Lihebi, a deputy leader of the Iraqi National Dialogue Front, an influential Sunni Arab political party. The attack occurred south of Mosul in northern Iraq. - *Reuters, January 18*

January 19, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomb attack occurred near the gates of a U.S. forward operating base in Khost Province, killing one Afghan. A second suicide bomber waited for emergency officials to arrive, and then attempted to detonate his explosives. Police, however, detected the second bomber and he was forced to detonate his explosives early, killing only himself. - *AP, January 19*

January 19, 2009 (YEMEN): Yemen's official state news agency reported that government forces killed two suspected al-Qaeda militants and wounded a third during a raid in Sana'a. A fourth al-Qaeda member part of the cell escaped. - *Reuters, January 20*

January 20, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): General David Petraeus, the head of U.S. Central Command, said that the United States has struck deals with Russia and several Central Asian countries to let U.S. supplies pass through their territories to U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan. The deals will reduce U.S. dependence on supply routes through Pakistan, which have been increasingly interrupted in recent months. - *AP, January 21*

January 20, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani security forces killed 38 Taliban fighters during an offensive in Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *Reuters, January 20*

January 20, 2009 (THAILAND): Thailand decided to extend an emergency decree in its three southern-most provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat for another three months, starting January 19. The three provinces have been plagued by a Muslim-Malay insurgency. - *Bangkok Post, January 20*

January 21, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed two Afghan soldiers in Herat Province. - *Reuters, January 21*

January 21, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): U.S.-led coalition forces killed six Taliban fighters during a raid in Zabul Province. - *AP, January 22*

January 21, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani security forces claimed to have killed the chief of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) for Mohmand Agency. The leader, identified as Umar Khalid, was reportedly killed with four other key militant commanders during the raid in the Lakaro area of Mohmand. The Taliban, however, denied that Umar Khalid was killed. - *Dawn, January 21*

January 21, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani forces arrested a senior Saudi al-Qa`ida operative wanted in connection with the July 7, 2005 terrorist attacks in London. Security forces arrested Zabi ul Taifi and six other suspected militants in Peshawar. - *AFP, January 21*

January 22, 2009 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida leader Abu Yahya al-Libi released a new video statement in which he called on "mujahidin all over the world [to] rise up like a raging lion" and strike at Western capitals in retaliation for Israel's recent offensive in the Gaza Strip. - *CBS News, January 22*

January 22, 2009 (UNITED STATES): President Barack Obama signed an executive order to close down the U.S. military detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. - *Guardian, January 22*

January 22, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan troops killed eight Taliban

fighters in Khost Province. - *AP, January 22*

January 22, 2009 (MALI): Four European tourists were kidnapped by armed assailants in Mali near the Niger border. The hostages include two Swiss, one German and a Briton. A Malian military source told reporters on January 29 that al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb was most likely holding the Europeans. - *Reuters, January 29*

January 23, 2009 (YEMEN): A U.S. counterterrorism official told reporters that a Saudi militant released from Guantanamo Bay has become a leading figure in the Yemen branch of al-Qa`ida. The militant, identified as Said Ali al-Shihri, was released to Saudi authorities in 2007. - *AP, January 23*

January 23, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. missile strike killed at least five suspected militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Another five people were also killed. - *AP, January 23*

January 23, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. missile strike killed at least eight people in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *AP, January 23*

January 23, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber killed two soldiers in the Swat Valley of the North-West Frontier Province. - *AP, January 23*

January 24, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber killed at least five policemen at a checkpoint in Garma, 20 miles from Baghdad. - *Reuters, January 24*

January 24, 2009 (SOMALIA): A suicide car bomb ripped through Mogadishu, killing at least 14 civilians. The intended targets were African Union peacekeepers. - *AFP, January 24*

January 25, 2009 (SOMALIA): Ethiopia completed its withdrawal from Somalia. - *AFP, January 25*

January 26, 2009 (YEMEN): The U.S. Embassy in Sana`a released a warden's message, stating that "the U.S. embassy has received a threat against the embassy compound regarding a possible attack which could take place

in the foreseeable future. U.S. citizens in Yemen are advised to exercise caution and take prudent security measures in all areas frequented by Westerners." - *AFP, January 26*

January 26, 2009 (YEMEN): Police exchanged fire with gunmen in a car at a checkpoint near the U.S. Embassy in Sana`a. The gunmen fled the scene, and there were no injuries. The incident occurred after the U.S. Embassy released a warden's message warning that threats were made against the facility. - *AP, January 27*

January 27, 2009 (UNITED STATES): U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates told Congress that "there is little doubt that our greatest military challenge right now is Afghanistan." - *AP, January 27*

January 27, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber killed three Iraqi soldiers in Mosul, Ninawa Province. - *AFP, January 27*

January 27, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants destroyed a boys' school and the houses of six pro-government tribal elders in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *AFP, January 27*

January 27, 2009 (JORDAN): A Jordanian military court put on trial 12 men accused of conducting terrorist attacks on a Christian church and cemetery. The primary suspect, Shakir al-Khatib, allegedly received training from an al-Qa`ida operative in Lebanon, although the court is not charging him with al-Qa`ida membership. - *AP, January 27*

January 27, 2009 (YEMEN): Al-Qa`ida's factions in Yemen and Saudi Arabia announced that they are merging their operations. The deputy of the new consolidated group has been identified as Said Ali al-Shihri, who was released from Guantanamo Bay in 2007. - *al-Jazeera, January 28*

January 28, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani security forces killed 12 suspected Taliban militants in Dara Adam Khel in the North-West Frontier Province. - *AFP, January 28*

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

January 28, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani authorities arrested nine men suspected of involvement in the June 2, 2008 attack on the Danish Embassy in Islamabad. The men were also accused of organizing the bombing of an Italian restaurant in Islamabad in March 2008, an attack that killed one individual and injured four FBI personnel. – *AP, January 29*

January 28, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): A Philippine government official visited three International Committee of the Red Cross workers who were kidnapped by the Abu Sayyaf Group on January 15. The official reported that the three workers are “in good condition.” – *Reuters, January 28*

January 29, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghanistan’s election commission announced that the country’s presidential elections will be delayed until August 20 due to logistical and security concerns. – *CNN, January 29*

January 29, 2009 (TURKEY): Turkish authorities announced that police had killed an al-Qa`ida militant who tried to rob a post office branch in Istanbul. Three other al-Qa`ida suspects were captured during the operation. – *Reuters, January 29*

January 30, 2009 (UNITED KINGDOM): Nicky Reilly, a convert to Islam, was sentenced by a UK court to life in jail with a minimum term of 18-years for his role in an attempted suicide bombing in Exeter. Reilly tried to detonate a nail bomb in a restaurant, but it exploded prematurely and he injured only himself. – *AP, January 30*

January 30, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A roadside bomb ripped through a Pakistani Army convoy in a village near the Swat Valley, resulting in the deaths of three soldiers. – *AP, January 31*

January 31, 2009 (IRAQ): Provincial elections took place in Iraq. The elections were largely peaceful. – *Bloomberg, January 31*

January 31, 2009 (SOMALIA): Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad, the former head of the Islamic Courts Union, was elected as the new president of Somalia after an all-night parliamentary session in neighboring Djibouti. Shaykh Sharif is viewed as a moderate Islamist leader. – *Reuters, January 31*