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Contents

FEATURE ARTICLE

- 1 Why Terrorists Quit: Gaining From Al-Qa`ida's Losses**
By Michael Jacobson

REPORTS

- 4 An Ideological and Operational Threat: Abu `Amr/Shaykh `Isa**
By Erich Marquardt & Abdul Hameed Bakier
- 8 Indonesia's Approach to Jihadist Deradicalization**
By Kirsten E. Schulze
- 10 The High Stakes Battle for the Future of Musa Qala**
By David C. Isby
- 13 Al-Qa`ida Seeking to Recruit African-American Muslims**
By Cadets Benjamin Haas & Daniel McGrory
- 15 Propaganda and Peace Deals: The Taliban's Information War in Pakistan**
By Arthur Keller
- 18 Uncovering Extremist Violence in Morocco**
By Alison Pargeter
- 21 After Action Report: Nuanced Diplomacy in Zerok, Afghanistan**
By Captain John G. Gibson, U.S. Army
- 23 Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity**
- 28 CTC Sentinel Staff & Contacts**

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 in order to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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Why Terrorists Quit: Gaining From Al-Qa`ida's Losses

By Michael Jacobson



Jordanians protest the 2005 Amman hotel bombings, an operation that created divisions among al-Qa`ida's supporters.

IN RECENT MONTHS, there has been a spate of seemingly good news in the counter-terrorism arena, as former terrorist leaders and clerics have renounced their previous beliefs. Former Egyptian Islamic Jihad head Sayyid Imam al-Sharif (also known as Dr. Fadl), whose treatises al-Qa`ida often cited to justify its actions, has written a new book rejecting al-Qa`ida's message and tactics.¹ Shaykh Salman bin Fahd al-Awda, an extremist cleric whose incarceration in the 1990s by the Saudis reportedly helped inspire Usama bin Ladin to action, went on television to decry al-Qa`ida's operations, asking Bin Ladin, "How much blood has been spilt? How many innocent people, children, elderly, and women have been killed...in the name of al Qaeda?"² In the United Kingdom, former members of

the radical group Hizb al-Tahrir³ (also spelled Hizb-ut-Tahrir) established the Quilliam Foundation, which describes itself as "Britain's first Muslim counter-extremism think tank."⁴

While these are clearly positive developments and may have a real impact on preventing the next generation from going down the path of extremism, what effect will these renunciations have on al-Qa`ida's current members, and on others who are well on their way to becoming terrorists? What are the factors that can turn a would-be terrorist away from this dangerous path? Do former terrorists' and extremists' messages carry particular weight with this group? Unfortunately,

³ Although Hizb al-Tahrir is banned in some countries, it is not banned in the United Kingdom.

¹ Lawrence Wright, "The Rebellion Within," *New Yorker*, June 2, 2008.

² Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling," *The New Republic*, June 11, 2008.

⁴ Susannah Tarbush, "The Quilliam Foundation," *al-Hayat*, May 26, 2008. For a detailed analysis of the Quilliam Foundation, see James Brandon, "The UK's Experience in Counter-Radicalization," *CTC Sentinel* 1:5 (2008).

at this point there are too few answers to these important questions. What can be examined, however, are cases of individuals who have decided to quit involvement in a terrorist organization. There are a number of cases of terrorist “drop-outs,” and studying their motivations for turning their backs on their former compatriots is highly useful for creating an effective counter-terrorism strategy.

Many Candidates to Study

Despite al-Qa`ida's reputation for ferocity and secrecy and its purported esprit de corps, many individuals have quit the organization, making this a productive area of study. In fact, al-Qa`ida has seen its share of key members turn against the group from its earliest days. These include:

- Jamal al-Fadl, a Sudanese national, who was one of the first members of al-Qa`ida and was involved in the unsuccessful efforts in the early 1990s to procure uranium for the organization;⁵
- Essam al-Ridi, an Egyptian who first traveled to Afghanistan in 1982 to fight the Soviets and later purchased an airplane in the United States for al-Qa`ida;⁶
- L'Houssaine Khertchou, a Moroccan who joined the organization in 1991 and trained to serve as Bin Ladin's personal pilot.⁷

Even in the 9/11 plot—where attention has focused on al-Qa`ida's ability to convince 19 people to kill themselves as part of the attack—Bin Ladin was not entirely successful. Two Saudis who were selected for the plot—Mushabib al-Hamlan and Sa`ud al-Rashid—decided after leaving the training camps in Afghanistan not to participate in the attacks. In the summer of 2001, al-Qa`ida nearly faced an even bigger obstacle when Ziad Jarrah, the pilot of Flight 93, was deliberating about whether to withdraw from the operation. In an emotional conversation, Ramzi bin al-Shibh—the Hamburg-based liaison between the cell and the al-Qa`ida leadership—was able to persuade Jarrah to stay the course.⁸

5 U.S.A. v. *Usama bin Laden et al.*, Southern District of New York, 2001.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 9/11 Commission, “9/11 Commission Final Report,”

Defections from al-Qa`ida have continued since 9/11. For example, Sajid Badat, a young Muslim from Gloucester, England, was trained in Afghanistan and Pakistan to use shoe bombs to destroy aircraft. His assignment was to target airliners bound from Europe to the United States. While his associate Richard Reid—now better known as

“Tactical and operational differences with the leadership have also played a role in terrorists’ disillusionment.”

“The Shoe Bomber”—attempted to blow up an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami, Badat simply bailed on the plot, leaving his dismantled bomb in his parents’ house.⁹

Al-Qa`ida is hardly alone in suffering from defections. Some of its affiliates have had important losses as well, ranging from foot soldiers to key leadership personnel. Al-Qa`ida's Indonesian-based affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) was dealt a blow when Nasir Abas—one of JI's four regional commanders—left the organization.¹⁰ Noman Benotman, the former leader of the al-Qa`ida-affiliated Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), also abandoned the terrorist cause, turning not only on the LIFG but on al-Qa`ida as well.¹¹ In June 2008, Abu Hadhifa, a long-time veteran of the Algerian jihad, who had risen to become the commander of al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) forces in eastern Algeria, dropped out of AQIM and turned himself in to Algerian authorities.¹²

Factors Causing Operatives to Quit

In these various cases, patterns are evident in why they made the decision

July 2004.

9 Daniel McGrory and Zahid Hussain, “New Wave of British Terrorists are Taught at Schools, Not in the Mountains,” *Times Online*, July 14, 2005.

10 Bob Simon, “Switching Sides: Inside the Enemy Camp,” 60 Minutes, May 6, 2007.

11 Bergen and Cruickshank, “The Unraveling.”

12 “Report: Al-Qaeda Maghreb Commander Turns Self In,” Middle East Media Research Institute, June 8, 2008.

to leave the terrorist or extremist organization. Not surprisingly, some have departed after becoming disillusioned with the group's tactics and strategy. Former EIJ leader Dr. Fadl, Saudi cleric Shaykh al-Awda, and the founding members of the Quilliam Foundation all seem to fit this profile.

JI commander Abas began to turn on his organization and to cooperate with Indonesian counter-terrorism authorities after JI adopted a Bin Ladin *fatwa* that called for attacks on civilians. Abas believed that jihad was only to be fought on the battlefield in the defense of Islam. Abas later said that he felt “sinful” after the 2002 Bali bombings, since he had helped train the bombers in the attacks.¹³ AQIM commander Hadhifa turned himself in, according to his family, after reaching the conclusion that the jihad in Algeria was not legitimate.¹⁴ Far more shocking was the decision of Bin Ladin's son `Umar to quit al-Qa`ida in the wake of 9/11, calling the attacks “craziness” and saying that “those guys are dummies. They have destroyed everything, and for nothing. What did we get from September 11?”¹⁵

A lack of respect for the group's leadership has also been a factor. Former LIFG head Benotman had real differences with Bin Ladin over the direction of the global jihadist movement, and he claims to have asked the al-Qa`ida *amir* to get out of the terrorism business at a 2000 summit, realizing that they were fighting a losing battle. After 9/11, Benotman resigned from his position in the LIFG, concerned that the United States would likely respond to the attack by not only targeting al-Qa`ida, but his organization as well.¹⁶

More tactical and operational differences with the leadership have also played a role in terrorists' disillusionment. For example, Essam al-Ridi said that during the battles against the Soviets in Afghanistan he resented taking battlefield orders from Bin Ladin and other leaders who lacked military

13 Simon, “Switching Sides: Inside the Enemy Camp.”

14 “Report: Al-Qaeda Maghreb Commander Turns Self In.”

15 Peter Bergen, “War of Error,” *The New Republic*, October 22, 2007.

16 Bergen and Cruickshank, “The Unraveling.”

experience. Al-Ridi later testified that the final straw from his perspective was a battle in which many jihadists died—in his view due to the leadership's incompetence—but where al-Qa`ida declared victory nonetheless.¹⁷ For 9/11 hijacker Jarrah, one of the causes of his unhappiness was Muhammad `Atta's leadership style, in particular Jarrah's feelings that he was excluded from the broader decision-making process.¹⁸

While strategic differences appear to be an important factor, more petty grievances have also played a role in al-Qa`ida members deciding to turn their backs on the organization. Issues relating to money have frequently caused problems, as some terrorists have viewed inadequate compensation as a sign that they are being treated unfairly. For example, Jamal al-Fadl began embezzling funds from al-Qa`ida during their years in Sudan based on his displeasure with his salary—stealing approximately \$100,000 total. When Bin Ladin learned of al-Fadl's actions, he ordered him to repay the money. After repaying about \$30,000, al-Fadl fled, fearing retribution if he did not return the full amount.¹⁹

Khertchou, on the other hand, became bitter after one of Bin Ladin's aides turned down his request for \$500 to cover the costs of his wife's cesarean section. His anger level increased when al-Qa`ida paid the expenses of a group of Egyptians who were sent to Yemen to renew their passports. "If I had a gun," Khertchou later testified, "I would shoot [Bin Ladin] at that time."²⁰

It appears that terrorist cell members who maintain contact with friends and family outside the organization are more likely to withdraw. Perhaps in part in recognition of this, `Atta forbade the 18 hijackers in the United States from contacting their families to say goodbye. Jarrah's unwillingness to cut ties with his fiancé in Germany and his family in Lebanon was one of the causes of strife in his relationship with `Atta.²¹ In fact, potential 9/11 plotters al-Rashid and al-Hamlan abandoned

the plot when they left Afghanistan and returned to their home country of Saudi Arabia. After getting his U.S. visa, al-Hamlan contacted his family despite clear instructions to the contrary. When he discovered that his mother was ill, he decided not to return to Afghanistan despite repeated pressure from al-Qa`ida. He subsequently moved back in with his parents and returned to his college studies.²² Badat, the reluctant shoe bomber, likewise appears to have

“Without knowing why people have become disillusioned with terrorist and extremist organizations, it is difficult to determine what type of message would be most effective and who should deliver it.”

made the decision to abandon the plot once he returned to his home country and resumed contact with his family.²³

Lessons for the Government

Developing a better grasp of this phenomenon is critical for the United States and its allies' counter-terrorism efforts. Broadly speaking, it will be difficult for the United States to effectively counter radical ideology without understanding all aspects of the radicalization cycle—including both why and how people are drawn in to terrorist and extremist organizations and why people have walked away.

A comprehensive study exploring the drop-out phenomenon could have great practical benefits for the United States and its allies. Governments could use the knowledge gleaned to shape their counter-radicalization programs, which are growing in popularity throughout the world. Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Indonesia and Singapore, as well as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, are among the countries that have put these types of programs

into place in recent years. It is clear from a preliminary review of individuals who have quit or defected that there are many different factors at play—ranging from strategic disagreements to financial disputes—that drive seemingly committed terrorists to change course. This seems to suggest that a “one size fits all” approach is likely to produce only marginal results and that more flexible and tailored programs are necessary.

Figuring out why people have left terrorist and extremist organizations can help governments and non-governmental entities craft messages designed to pull people already engaged in terrorism. This is an area in which Western governments have struggled since 9/11, and where a new approach is needed. As Department of Homeland Security Undersecretary Charles Allen noted in a May 2008 speech, at this point “no Western state has effectively countered the al-Qaeda narrative.”²⁴ Without knowing why people have become disillusioned with terrorist and extremist organizations, it is difficult to determine what type of message would be most effective and who should deliver it.²⁵

A preliminary review reveals some interesting potential opportunities in this area. For example, since disagreement with the leaders seems to be a major factor for a number of drop-outs, the messages could focus, in part, on undermining the stature of the terrorist leadership. This suggests, for example, that perhaps the U.S. effort to discredit former al-Qa`ida in Iraq chief Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi by publicizing a video demonstrating that he was uncomfortable handling a firearm—and therefore hardly a worthy military leader—may have had some merit.²⁶ In addition, it appears that the United States should also try to avoid further enhancing Bin Ladin's stature by continually emphasizing the seriousness of the terrorist threat. As State Department Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Dell Dailey recently stated,

²⁴ Charles Allen, speech at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 6, 2008.

²⁵ Governments, and particularly the U.S. government, are not always the right messenger when it comes to delivering counter-radicalization messages.

²⁶ Again, however, it is not clear whether the U.S. government is the best messenger for these efforts.

¹⁷ *U.S.A. v. Usama bin Laden et al.*

¹⁸ “9/11 Commission Final Report.”

¹⁹ *U.S.A. v. Usama bin Laden et al.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ “9/11 Commission Final Report.”

²² *Ibid.*

²³ McGrory and Hussain, “New Wave of British Terrorists are Taught at Schools, Not in the Mountains.”

one of al-Qa`ida's goals is to "create a perception of a worldwide movement more powerful than it actually is."²⁷

Since targeting civilians is also a source of concern among those who have quit militant groups, focusing on al-Qa`ida's victims—particularly Muslims—also appears to be a worthwhile approach. The United States has recently started to focus on this, trying to demonstrate, as National Counter-Terrorism Center Director Michael Leiter has explained,

“Figuring out why individuals have walked away from terrorist groups may enable governments to better predict whether an individual, or even a cell, is likely to follow through with an attack.”

that “it is al-Qaeda, and not the West, that is truly at war with Islam” by highlighting the extent to which Muslims are victims of the organization's attacks.²⁸

This type of study could also have a number of benefits for law enforcement and intelligence agencies' counter-terrorism efforts. Figuring out why individuals have walked away from terrorist groups may enable governments to better predict whether an individual, or even a cell, is likely to follow through with an attack. Understanding the dropouts should also make it easier for law enforcement and intelligence to determine which terrorists might be induced to switch sides, and how the government should proceed.²⁹

27 Press conference on the release of the State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism 2007, April 30, 2008.

28 Michael Leiter, speech at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 13, 2008; see also Matthew Levitt and Michael Jacobson, “Highlighting al Qaeda's Bankrupt Ideology,” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 7, 2008.

29 The 9/11 plot offers some interesting examples in this regard. While Ziad Jarrah is the most obvious example of someone who might have been willing to turn on his co-conspirators, Said Bahaji—another member of the group

Conclusion

There is no obvious silver bullet. Yet, the stories of the “drop-outs” are of more than academic interest. Counterterrorism officials have spent a great deal of effort trying to understand the process of radicalization, but strikingly little work has been done on the flip side of the coin: the factors that can turn a fanatical would-be killer into a somewhat chastened citizen. While the recent statements of the clerics and leaders who have rejected al-Qa`ida and its ideology are certainly promising developments, the reality is that counterterrorism authorities do not have a full grasp on what type of impact these kinds of pronouncements will have. Until all aspects of the radicalization cycle are better understood, including those who have left the terrorists' fold, it will be difficult to develop an effective strategy to defeat the al-Qa`ida movement and its ideology.

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in Germany now commonly referred to as the “Hamburg cell”—may have been even more vulnerable. Bahaji, the only German citizen in the group, was described by associates after 9/11 as insecure, a follower, and not knowledgeable about Islam, which was not surprising given his own acknowledgement that he became a “strong Muslim in a very short period of time.” One observer said that he did not fit in with the rest of the group because he was “too German, too pedantic, too Western.” He was also quite weak, both physically and mentally. He left the German Army after a brief stint, and in Afghanistan after 9/11 he complained about the physical conditions and questioned the purpose of the 9/11 attacks. See Cam Simpson, Stevenson Swanson and John Crewdson, “9/11 Suspect Cut Unlikely Figure in Terror Plot,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 23, 2003.

An Ideological and Operational Threat: Abu `Amr/ Shaykh `Isa

By Erich Marquardt and Abdul Hameed Bakier

IN PAKISTAN'S TRIBAL regions, the Egyptian cleric Abu `Amr `Abd al-Hakim is proving to be a significant threat to Pakistan. Abu `Amr (also known as Abu `Amru) emphasizes the immediate need to focus attacks on the Pakistani government, rather than on encouraging supporters to strictly concentrate operations on international forces in Afghanistan, or on the “far enemy” abroad. To justify this “near enemy” approach, this previously obscure Egyptian cleric uses his writings and sermons to convince Pakistani Muslims that the government in Islamabad is apostate, declaring its agents *kafirs*. Although little is known about Abu `Amr, a few sources consistently identify him as an Egyptian cleric operating out of Pakistan's tribal areas and identified as “Shaykh `Isa al-Masri.” Shaykh `Isa has been named as a close associate of al-Qa`ida's central leadership and, according to Department of Defense documents, previously had played a role in training jihadists in Kabul in “the rules of jihad.”¹

Although it is not possible to independently prove that Shaykh `Isa and Abu `Amr are one and the same, a number of journalistic accounts have asserted this connection, a claim that seems highly likely. The majority of the accounts are based on the writings of Syed Saleem Shahzad, the Pakistan Bureau Chief of the Hong Kong-based internet publication *Asia Times Online*.² In a number of his reports, Shahzad has made reference to Shaykh `Isa and has stated that he is also known as Abu `Amr `Abd al-Hakim.³ Although there are many similarities between the two identities, Shahzad's reporting is the only source that clearly identifies the two names as one and the same.

1 “Unclassified Summary of Evidence for Administrative Review Board in the Case of Mouhammad, Maasoum Abdah,” Department of Defense, September 1, 2005.

2 Shahzad has reported from Pakistan's tribal regions and has allegedly conducted interviews with senior Taliban leaders on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

3 Syed Saleem Shahzad, “Al-Qaeda Goes Back to Base,” *Asia Times Online*, November 4, 2005.

Additionally, Ayman al-Zawahiri has made mention of both names. In his 188-page book *The Exoneration*,⁴ which was released March 2, 2008, al-Zawahiri said that “Abd al-Hakim Hassan” is one of the most trusted Salafi-jihadi shaykhs. He provided details on the shaykh’s background—including his knowledge of Islam, his role in jihad and the fact that he was arrested and tortured in Egypt—and then recommended al-Qa’ida’s followers to visit the shaykh’s website.⁵ In a February 2008 posting of a eulogy for the slain jihadist Abu Ahmad al-Suri, al-Zawahiri said that al-Suri was a perseverant student in the Shari’a college in Afghanistan where “Shaykh ‘Isa” taught.⁶

In light of claims that Abu ‘Amr is Shaykh ‘Isa, it is useful to analyze the activities of both aliases.

Abu ‘Amr’s Biography and Writings

According to a detailed, undated posting on the tawhede.com forum, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Hakim Hassan Abu ‘Amr was born in Egypt in 1959 and received an unofficial religious education from Egyptian shaykhs such as Muhammad ‘Umar Ilyas. He would later study religious jurisprudence and the hadith with mainstream Salafist shaykhs at Egypt’s al-Azhar University. Abu ‘Amr joined the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization and agitated against the Egyptian government until he was jailed after the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat.⁷ Once released, Abu ‘Amr pursued further studies in business management. After completing that education, he traveled between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, preaching his literature to shaykhs until 1985. At that point, he moved to Afghanistan to participate in, and preach about the legality of, jihad. During his time in Afghanistan, Abu ‘Amr was influenced by ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam and ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (also known as Dr.

Fadl). In 1992, at the start of the Afghan civil war, Abu ‘Amr moved back to Yemen and taught private religious classes. Once the Taliban began taking control of Afghanistan in 1995, Abu ‘Amr returned to the country and has allegedly remained in the region ever since. Once back in Afghanistan, Abu

“His e-book is a key text that is used to convince Pakistanis to conduct attacks against the government.”

‘Amr allegedly set up the religious school *Markaz Salah al-Din li’l-da’wa* (Salah al-Din Center for Preaching) and supervised the publication of the *Ma’alim al-Jihad* (*Signposts of Jihad*) magazine.⁸

Abu ‘Amr has published a number of writings, including “The Religious Verdict on Reporting on the Mujahidin to Infidel Governments,” “The Warning on Supporting Infidels,” “The Lebanese War and the Walk on Thorns” and his 118-page e-book titled *al-Idah Wa’l-Tibyan fi anna al-Tawaghit wa Jushabum Kuffar ‘ala al-Ta’yin* (The Clarification and Explanation Designating the Tyrant Rulers and their Armies as Infidels). His e-book is a key text that is used to convince Pakistanis to conduct attacks against the government. On one site where the e-book is available, a counter alleges that the document was downloaded more than 20,000 times.

In October 2006, the al-Fajr Media Center announced the launch of the website *kanzhassan.com*, which was identified as the site of “Shaykh ‘Abd al-Hakim Hassan (Abu ‘Amr).”⁹ The website contained links to a number of *takfiri*/Salafi-jihadi documents attributed to the shaykh. The doctrines promoted by the shaykh on the website were clearly geared toward encouraging and justifying attacks against the “near enemy.” At the time, users discussing *kanzhassan.com* on the al-Hisba forum

expressed surprise over the sudden appearance of the officially-sanctioned site, and they were unaware of the identity of “‘Abd al-Hakim Hassan,” which was considered especially surprising since so many jihadist texts were attributed to him. The failure to link this identity with the alias of “Shaykh ‘Isa” explains why, if these are the same individual, he was able to operate largely off the radar for so long.¹⁰

Even though *kanzhassan.com* has since been shut down and is no longer available on the web, writings attributed to Abu ‘Amr can be found on various jihadist websites, such as *muslm.net*, *hanien.inf* and *el-ekhlaas.net*. Abu ‘Amr’s Salafi-jihadi literature remains popular among jihadist forum members, especially due to al-Zawahiri’s affirmation of his work.

Abu ‘Amr’s Ideological and Religious Views

In his various texts, Abu ‘Amr places importance on attacking the “near enemy”—such as Pakistan, and other “apostate” Muslim governments—before the “far enemy.” The debate is far from academic, as Tehrik-i-Taliban, led by Baitullah Mehsud, has launched a terrorist-insurgent campaign against the Pakistani government and military, leading to hundreds of deaths. Analyst Brian Glyn Williams, who has studied the role that Arabs play in this insurgency, has “found considerable evidence that Arab ‘jihad-entrepreneurs’ such as Abu ‘Amr have played a significant role in providing the legitimacy and inspiration for Mehsud to attack the Pakistani government.”¹¹ Indeed, in Abu ‘Amr’s document “Are Jihadi Operations in the Infidel’s Country Better than in Muslim Countries Taken Over by Infidels?” he argues that

jihad against the enemy to liberate a country that was previously ruled by Islam but is now occupied, such as Afghanistan, is more binding than conducting jihad in the enemy’s country that hasn’t been conquered by Muslims yet, such as America.¹²

4 The full title of the book is *A Treatise Exonerating the Nation of the Pen and the Sword from the Blemish of the Accusation of Weakness and Fatigue*.

5 This website is now defunct, but was located at www.kanzhassan.com.

6 One site where the eulogy appears is www.mnbr2.net, with a post date of February 23, 2008.

7 Although this biography of Abu ‘Amr claims he was jailed after the assassination of al-Sadat, the date provided is 1980. This is clearly a mistake, as al-Sadat was assassinated on October 6, 1981.

8 “The Shaykhs Mentioned by al-Zawahiri in the Exoneration,” www.muslm.net, date unknown.

9 “Kanzhassan.com: Site of Cleric Abdel Hakim Hassan (Abu Amr),” Society for Internet Research, www.sofir.org.

10 Indeed, if this is the case, it is likely he is attempting to keep the connection between the two identities concealed.

11 Personal interview, Brian Glyn Williams, counter-terrorism analyst, July 16, 2008.

12 ‘Abd al-Hakim Hassan Abu ‘Amr, “Are Jihadi Operations in the Infidel’s Country Better than in Muslim

Abu `Amr and similar individuals are problematic for the Pakistani government because they utilize their religious credentials to “subvert” what were once internationally-focused jihadists—those intent on attacking international troops in Afghanistan, Indian forces over Kashmir or Western and other targets abroad. Abu `Amr’s literature, for example, attempts to convince Pakistani jihadists who were previously focused elsewhere that the primary “infidel force” is the Pakistani government itself. Whereas some jihadists recognize that it is counter-productive to launch attacks on Pakistan since that is where they seek shelter after engaging Afghan and international forces in Afghanistan, Abu `Amr represents an uncompromising view that jihadists are increasingly following, as seen in the rising attacks in Pakistan.¹³ One example demonstrates Abu `Amr’s role in local violence in Pakistan. A group of jihadists addressed a question to Abu `Amr, stating that they do not consider many members of the Pakistani Army as “infidels because they are ignorant of the truth,” explaining that “some prominent Pakistani scholars issued *fatawa* declaring them only sinners and not infidels.” Abu `Amr responded to the question by arguing that, according to the Shari`a and sunna, those who support infidels in any manner are infidels themselves. “It is blasphemy to fight or convey intelligence on the mujahidin to infidels and polytheists,” he declared.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Abu `Amr still encourages Muslims to agitate against the “far enemy.” He argues that the current war is of “different types such as military, economic, cultural and social,” and that all Muslims

must do what they can. The battle is not just Afghanistan. We find the enemy everywhere and the nature of the war is different today. As we

said, every Muslim, regardless of his nationality, be it Egyptian or Sudanese, has to fight the infidels, the Americans, English and Europeans, civilians or military, in any spot in the world we find them at. The religious proofs of this duty are abundant in Islam and even the foreigners themselves know them.¹⁵

Concerning the Shi`a, Abu `Amr’s views are rigid; he considers them “rejectionists” (*rawafid*) and infidels, calling them “illegitimate children who should be looted and killed.” Abu `Amr believes that the Shi`a “constantly try to undermine” the Sunnis and have “animosity for Muslims and Islam.” He thinks that the Shi`a of Iran, Iraq and Syria who have supported Hassan Nasrallah of Hizb Allah are concocting a conspiracy with the secret blessing of the United States to strike at the Salafi-jihadi mainstream since they are the only ones that shoulder the burden of battle against the enemies of Islam.¹⁶ Abu `Amr forbids any Muslim from supporting the “rejectionist” Hizb Allah, arguing that it is not obligatory to support “just anyone” who resists “the Jews.”¹⁷

Shaykh `Isa’s Activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan

One of the earliest reports of a “Shaykh `Isa” operating with the al-Qa`ida leadership came during an October 2001 report for CBS 60 Minutes, when the late journalist George Crile interviewed a Shaykh `Isa, who described himself as Usama bin Ladin’s spiritual advisor.¹⁸ During the interview, `Isa provided details about Bin Ladin’s daily routine.¹⁹ In documents from the fall of 2005, released by the Department of Defense and containing the summary of evidence for enemy combatants held at

Guantanamo Bay, a number of detainees were accused of partaking in training from “Sheikh Issa while residing at the Syrian guesthouse in Kabul,” located in the al-Qa`ida enclave area of Wazir Akhbar Khan.²⁰ These documents identify Shaykh `Isa as “an Egyptian, was an *amir* in the Egyptian Jihad Organization [Egyptian Islamic Jihad] and was the chief mufti of al Qaida.”²¹

“One explanation why Shaykh `Isa was able to increase his stature in Pakistan could be due to the Pakistani government’s increased pressure on Islamists within its borders.”

Among those detainees who received training from Shaykh `Isa are Abd al-Hadio Omar Mahmoud Faraj, Ali Husein Muhammad Shaaban, and Maasoum Abdah Mouhammad. According to one summary of evidence case,

reporting indicates that Sheikh Issa would provide a two-week training school at his residence in Kabul for Syrians and other Arabs who trained at the Usama Bin Laden camps. He would teach the rules of jihad, that Americans were non-believers, and it was justified to kill them.²²

It appears that Shaykh `Isa relocated to Pakistan and, according to the journalist Syed Saleem Shahzad, became active in Waziristan around 2003, eventually settling in Mir Ali, North Waziristan where he preached radical, *takfiri* views.²³ Pakistani press reports

Countries Taken Over by Infidels?” www.almaqreze.net, date unknown.

13 For example, see the recent July 6 suicide attack against Pakistani security forces in Islamabad, which left 15 people dead. See “Pakistani Police Hunt for Clues after Red Mosque Bomb,” *Agence France-Presse*, July 7, 2008; Mubashir Zaidi and Laura King, “Suicide Strike Targets Pakistan Police,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 7, 2008.

14 `Abd al-Hakim Hassan Abu `Amr, “The Clarification and Explanation Designating the Tyrant Rulers and their Armies as Infidels,” www.almaqreze.net, date unknown.

15 `Abd al-Hakim Hassan Abu `Amr, “How a Country Judged an Infidel Home or a Home of Islam,” www.almaqreze.net, date unknown. The suggestion of fighting the enemy across the world and in many different manners is similar to the jihadist strategist Abu Mus`ab al-Suri’s doctrines.

16 `Abd al-Hakim Hassan Abu `Amr, “The Lebanese War and the Walk on Thorns,” www.almaqreze.net, August 10, 2005.

17 Ibid.

18 George Crile, “60 Minutes II: Hunt For Bin Laden,” 60 Minutes, October 3, 2001. It is not clear whether this is the same “Shaykh Issa,” although it is likely.

19 Ibid.

20 “Unclassified Summary of Evidence for Administrative Review Board in the Case of Shaaban, Ali Husein Muhammad,” Department of Defense, September 8, 2005.

21 “Unclassified Summary of Evidence for Administrative Review Board in the Case of Mouhammad, Maasoum Abdah.”

22 “Unclassified Summary of Evidence for Administrative Review Board in the Case of Shaaban, Ali Husein Muhammad.”

23 Syed Saleem Shahzad, “Al-Qaeda Aims at Pakistan’s

further state that Shaykh `Isa managed to influence the views of two prominent Taliban commanders, Sadiq Noor and Abdul Khaliq Haqqani, in addition to Baitullah Mehsud's faction and the Uzbek faction led by Tahir Yuldash of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. All of these leaders and factions have shared the belief that the Pakistani government should be combated, and Shaykh `Isa's religious guidance likely helps to religiously ground their tactical objectives.²⁴

In August 2004, the Pakistani government accused Shaykh `Isa of planning a major attack on a number of high level targets to coincide with Pakistan's independence day. The accusations arose after authorities arrested five al-Qa`ida-linked operatives who were planning suicide attacks on the presidential office, prime minister's house, U.S. Embassy in Islamabad and the General Headquarters of the Chief of Army Staff House in Rawalpindi.²⁵ Pakistan's information minister and interior minister claimed that the foiled plot was planned by "Shaykh `Isa and Qari Isma`il," both identified as Egyptian.²⁶

One explanation why Shaykh `Isa has been able to increase his stature in Pakistan could be due to the Pakistani government's increased pressure on Islamists within its borders. Shahzad, writing in August 2006, argued that

the Pakistani military operations in the tribal areas of South and North Waziristan from 2003 to 2005 to root out al-Qaeda fugitives... gave rise to the *takfiri* faction in

al-Qaeda, which took advantage of the leadership and ideological vacuum to make its mark. Shaykh `Isa is an example.²⁷

The July 2007 siege of the radical *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque) in Islamabad has also proven to be a contributing factor for why jihadists are turning their attention to the Pakistani government. Shaykh `Isa's past involvement with Ayman al-Zawahiri and the al-Qa`ida leadership, in addition to his "near enemy" rhetoric against "apostate" Muslim governments, makes him an ideal leader to influence jihadists. Furthermore, on a more fundamental level, South Asian Muslims tend to be deferential to Arab Muslims due to the importance of the Arabic language in the divinity of the Qur'an and in hadith studies, and this may have contributed to his popularity.²⁸

Today, Shaykh `Isa is still largely operating off the radar, with some reports stating that he is either injured, dead or has left the region. Shahzad, for example, claimed in July 2007 that Shaykh `Isa suffered a stroke and was "bedridden and seriously ill."²⁹ Shahzad also claimed that `Isa was the target of a bomb attack—allegedly from a CIA-operated Predator drone—on December 28, 2007 and was wounded;³⁰ a number of other reports have repeated this claim, yet they are all based upon Shahzad's account. Additionally, a Pakistani security source recently revealed that although Shaykh `Isa operated out of North Waziristan until recently, rumors now place the jihadist leader in the Kandahar region of Afghanistan.³¹

Conclusion

Although it is not possible with the current literature to prove that Abu `Amr `Abd al-Hakim is indeed Shaykh `Isa, the biographies and beliefs of both men reveal many similarities. Regardless, the literature of Abu `Amr is especially popular among jihadists, and his words are being used to convince Pakistan's militants that the "defense of Islam" should begin at home. Abu `Amr's various texts are dangerous for the current Pakistani government, and if concrete evidence³² surfaces that Abu `Amr is indeed the Egyptian cleric operating out of the tribal regions known as Shaykh `Isa,³³ it will mean that this two-fold ideological and operational threat has operated for too long off the public radar.

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Heart," *Asia Times Online*, January 1, 2008.

24 Of course, loyalties can change, and if the Pakistani government were to reduce its operations against Taliban militants in the tribal areas, it is possible that these militants would turn their attention back toward outside arenas of jihad.

25 K J M Varma, "Pakistan Foils Major Al Qaeda Plot," *Rediff India Abroad*, August 22, 2004. Among the weapons confiscated included grenades, various explosives, rockets and rocket launchers and detonators.

26 Qari Isma`il, for example, would also later be accused of receiving \$6,500 from Baitullah Mehsud to organize what became the successful assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who was killed on December 27, 2007. See Carlotta Gall, "Pakistani Police Accuse Militant in Bhutto Death," *New York Times*, March 2, 2008.

27 Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah Look to Make Up," *Asia Times Online*, August 25, 2006.

28 Personal interview, Christopher Heffelfinger, counter-terrorism analyst, July 7, 2008.

29 Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Pakistan in the Grip of a Big Squeeze," *Asia Times Online*, July 24, 2007.

30 It should be noted that both the alleged CIA operation and the assertion that Shaykh `Isa is ill are based upon one account and cannot be confirmed.

31 This information is derived from an interview, not conducted by the authors, of a Pakistani security officer who wished to remain anonymous. The interview was conducted in the summer of 2008.

32 For example, a statement by either identities declaring ownership of the multiple aliases would suffice.

33 It is likely that Abu `Amr uses the "Shaykh `Isa" alias in order to maintain his security. Unlike already established ideologues such as Abu Yahya al-Libi, Abu `Amr has not featured in enough press reports to warrant a public admission of his multiple aliases. Furthermore, until recently at least, he appears to have been active in Waziristan preaching his ideology, which would explain why he would want to remain more anonymous than other high-profile al-Qa`ida-affiliated leaders.

Indonesia's Approach to Jihadist Deradicalization

By Kirsten E. Schulze

FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER 2002 Bali bombings by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), an experimental deradicalization program was established by the head of the Indonesian police's Bomb Task Force, Suryadharma. The program has been active for five years now and focuses primarily on jihadist prisoners. While it is too early to pronounce the program a success, and despite some notable weaknesses in the areas of rehabilitation and prison corruption as well as ideological limitations, its holistic outreach beyond the prisoners to their families and community without stigmatizing them is an approach worth emulating.

Program Details

There are approximately 170 jihadist prisoners in Indonesian jails who can be divided into three categories: Afghan veterans, JI members, and individuals from smaller organizations who were involved in the Ambon and Poso conflicts such as Mujahidin KOMPAK, Laskar Jundullah and Ring Banten. Of these, presently two dozen Afghan alumni, who are also members of JI, as well as many other JI prisoners and a few Mujahidin KOMPAK are involved in the deradicalization program. The two dozen Afghan alumni are mainly former prisoners, and they have received the most systematic attention. This is partially the result of the key "deradicalizers" Nasir Abas and Ali Imron coming from this pool and thus their initial "targets" became others from the same circle. The program, however, has been broadened since, with "Abas going around prisons across Indonesia, handing out money with the promise of more perks for more cooperation."¹

The program aims at neutralizing the ideological foundations of militant Islam and is based on two key premises: the first is the belief that radicals will only listen to other radicals; the second is the belief that through kindness,² the police

can change the jihadist assumption that government officials are by definition anti-Islamic.³ The thinking behind the first premise, as explained by the head of the counter-terrorism desk in the Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, police General Ansyad Mbai, is that the often-peddled line of moderates having to engage radicals is misconceived. While moderate Muslims may have a role to play in counter-radicalization, there is no place for them in deradicalization. "In the mind of the radicals, all *ulama* have already failed because they failed

"While moderate Muslims may have a role to play in counter-radicalization, there is no place for them in deradicalization."

to establish an Islamic state," Ansyad Mbai explained. "Their credibility is nothing with the militants."⁴ What is needed, therefore, is a reformed radical with different views, in this case on suicide bombings, to talk to the other radicals.

The second premise taps into one of the most deep-seated jihadist beliefs dating back to the Darul Islam (DI) rebellions of 1948-1965. It was these rebellions that pitted nationalist republican ideals against those of an Islamic state, or *Negara Islam Indonesia* (NII), and the violence experienced by the DI fighters as the state crushed the rebellions left lasting distrust and hatred of government institutions and officials. As JI is deeply rooted in NII culture, it is not surprising that it sees the Indonesian government "as *kafir*, starting with everyone who

similarly focus on embracing the families of the jihadists so as not to create the next generation of alienated Muslims. In Singapore, however, the religious counseling is being conducted by *ulama* with "solid credentials," meaning *ulama* who have studied at Egypt's al-Azhar or at one of the Saudi universities. As in Indonesia, both Singapore and Malaysia see their deradicalization programs as successful.

3 International Crisis Group, "Deradicalisation and Indonesian Prisons," November 19, 2007, p. 13.

4 Personal interview, Ansyad Mbai, head of counter-terrorism, Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Jakarta, July 24-25, 2006.

works for or with the government. They are the enemy and all products from that government are *haram*."⁵ The police believed that if they could overcome this distrust and could get the prisoners to accept police assistance, then other deeply-held jihadist tenets would also be questioned.

At the heart of changing the image of the police is what Mbai calls "soft power," which amounts to money and in-kind aid.⁶ During the last five years, the police have assisted the families of the jihadists in the program. This assistance has ranged from paying school fees to ensure that children remain in education; providing the wives with money to feed and clothe the family; allowing greater family access to the prisoners, even providing plane tickets for family members; allowing prisoner weddings; assuring that prisoners are treated well; and providing medical care. At the same time, the police have mixed with the prisoners, engaging in religious discussion, praying and breaking the Ramadan fast together. Upon release, the prisoners are provided with identity cards and papers as well as start-up money.⁷

The division within JI over the use of suicide bombings created a starting point for finding militant jihadists who would cooperate with the police. The police focused on recruiting those into their deradicalization program

5 Personal interview, Nasir Abas, deputy head of Mantiqi III and former JI trainer in Mindanao, Jakarta, September 13, 2007.

6 Personal interview, Ansyad Mbai, head of counter-terrorism, Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Jakarta, September 12, 2007.

7 A similar approach is also being pursued by the Saudi government. The Saudi deradicalization program pays "attention given to a prisoner's social needs. The Psychological and Social Subcommittee evaluates each participant to determine how best the Advisory Committee can assist them and their family. For instance, once a breadwinner is incarcerated, the committee provides the family with an alternate salary. Other needs, including children's schooling and family healthcare, are also provided. This is intended to offset further radicalization brought on by the detention of family members...The government further recognizes that if they fail to do this, then it is possible that extremist elements will move in to provide this support." For more information on this program, see Christopher Boucek, "Extremist Reeducation and Rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia," *Terrorism Monitor* 5:16 (2007).

1 Personal interview, Sidney Jones, International Crisis Group, June 25, 2008.

2 A similar deradicalization program to that in Indonesia is also being pioneered in Singapore and Malaysia, which

who disagreed with terrorism and saw bombings against civilians as a deviation from jihad, which they defined in purely defensive terms.⁸ This was a common view among JI trainers such as Nasir Abas, deputy head of Mantiqi III, who ran training camps in Mindanao. According to Abas, the split within JI emerged following Usama bin Ladin's 1998 fatwa, which was taken up by al-Qa'ida's Southeast Asia operative and JI military commander, Hanbali. Abas said that "a debate opened up between those who wanted to stick with the old values and those who wanted to take the war to the civilians."⁹

Abas and Imron would approach new JI prisoners and try to challenge their beliefs. Abas focused on two key issues that he wanted to deradicalize in the jihadist mindset: the killing of civilians, and the "need" for an Islamic state. With respect to the killing of civilians, Abas asserts that JI's struggle has been corrupted by bombings against civilians.¹⁰ On the question of an Islamic state, Abas is trying to show the militants that true *ulama* do not want an Islamic state: "The Islamic state is not connected with religion. The Prophet Muhammad never established a state. He struggled to make the people better

"Abas focused on two key issues that he wanted to deradicalize in the jihadist mindset: the killing of civilians, and the 'need' for an Islamic state."

persons. So why are we now struggling for an Islamic state?" He draws upon his own experience in Afghanistan and points to the collapse into *fitna* following the Soviet-Mujahidin war: "Afghanistan became an Islamic state in 1992 under the mujahidin and what happened was civil war. The Taliban fought an Islamic state in order to set up their own Islamic government. I saw

this."¹¹ Abas concludes that the struggle for an Islamic state is driven by politics and power, not by religion, and that "true *ulama* don't want an Islamic state. The *ulama* historically have been used by governments. So they should stay away from worldly affairs."¹²

Program Weaknesses

Abas' and Imron's success in changing the jihadist mindset has been limited. It has been embraced primarily by Afghan veterans, and in many cases those who have become part of the program are those who were opposed to violence in the first place. For instance, Bali bombers Imam Samudra and Amrozi were not interested when they were approached.

The program also reveals five other weaknesses. First, while the idea that only radicals have the credibility to challenge other radicals makes sense, it has a limited shelf-life as any radical who is cooperating with the police will eventually become discredited. Second, the ideological deradicalization itself is limited. While the killing of civilians by suicide bombings is being challenged, the jihadist violence perpetrated in the Ambon and Poso conflicts has been condoned. Third, there is no structured, thought-out, or even government-funded rehabilitation program to deal with the jihadist prisoners who are released from jail. Many of them have few skills, no work, little money and few opportunities outside their familiar circles. That means effectively that they return into the jihadist community to which they are often tied by marriage links and are re-exposed to militant ideas. Fourth, the lack of official budget for this program does not only raise accountability problems, but if, as a result of financial difficulties, the police fail to deliver on promises for assistance after release, these JI members will look elsewhere, most likely within jihadist circles; moreover, disillusioned ex-prisoners will not be as interested in sharing information with the police. Fifth, the Indonesian prison system and prison corruption are undermining the deradicalization program. Jihadist prisoners have been able to spread their ideas to non-jihadists in integrated prisons and have been able to radicalize

moderate jihadists in segregated prisons. Prison corruption has allowed for the proliferation of mobile phones and laptops among jihadists who have been involved in the planning of further operations as well as the translation of Arab jihadist literature and its dissemination. The prison system has

"The value of the program lies in the insight that the police have obtained into the complexities of JI from talking to jihadist prisoners, allowing it to fine-tune its operations."

been undermining the deradicalization program to such an extent that the Indonesian police are doing "their best to keep top terrorists at police headquarters, out of the normal prison system, because the chances of backsliding are so high."¹³

A Success Overall

Despite these weaknesses, the program has been hailed as a clear success story by the Indonesian police. In the Indonesian counter-terrorism context, with the military sidelined and the national intelligence agency (Badan Intelijen Negara) having little if any grasp of the situation, it certainly is. Mbai claims that the information that led to the arrest of JI military commander Abu Dujana in 2005 came from this program, and that as a result JI's military capacity has been reduced and there were no major bombings in 2006 and 2007.¹⁴ This, however, is almost certainly not true as the arrest of Abu Dujana was the result of Poso police operations that drew upon straightforward police interrogation work following the capture of Wiwin Kalahe and Sarwo Edi Nugroho. Moreover, while the arrest of Abu Dujana and his network weakened JI's military capacity, this was probably not the only factor for the absence of major bombings.¹⁵

8 Personal interview, Ansyad Mbai, September 12, 2007.

9 Personal interview, Nasir Abas, September 13, 2007.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 International Crisis Group, "Deradicalisation and Indonesian Prisons," p. 16.

14 Personal interview, Ansyad Mbai, September 12, 2007.

15 Personal correspondence, Sidney Jones, International

Instead, the value of the program lies in the insight that the police have obtained into the complexities of JI from talking to jihadist prisoners, allowing it to fine-tune its operations. Also, irrespective of whether anyone absorbs the religious counseling, the deradicalization program has created a link between the police and JI prisoners and ex-prisoners through which the police receives a steady stream of information about “who is doing what.” Most importantly, its value lies in the holistic approach of reaching out not only to the prisoners but also their families and their communities without stigmatizing them, while at the same time conducting more conventional counter-terrorism operations. That has been the real success, and that is the area that other countries contemplating deradicalization programs should study.

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The High Stakes Battle for the Future of Musa Qala

By David C. Isby

SINCE ITS REOCCUPATION by NATO and Afghan forces in December 2007, the remote Musa Qala district of northern Helmand Province in Afghanistan has become important to the future course of the insurgency but also to the future of a Pashtun tribe (the Alizai), a republic (the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan) and even a kingdom (the United Kingdom). The changes that take place at Musa Qala will influence the future of all of them. Failure has the potential to be a harbinger of potential ultimate failure for the Alizais, Kabul and London alike; each needs to succeed at Musa Qala.

The Alizai Heartland

The importance of Musa Qala to the Alizai is not surprising. It is their tribal heartland. In southern Afghanistan, local politics are tribal politics. In the 1970s—the last time such data could be collected—the Musa Qala district had approximately 30,000 people in around 70 villages, 93% of them Alizais from all six of the major clans, Khalozai (Khan Khel), Habibzai, Hasanazai, Shekhzai, Pirzai and Adozai.¹ The Alizai themselves are a sub-tribe of the Noorzai, one of the Panjpai (“five brothers”) tribes that makes up part of the Durrani Pashtuns.

While firmly part of the tribal politics of southern Afghanistan, those of Musa Qala differed from those in Kandahar Province or even elsewhere in Helmand Province. Musa Qala is dominated by a single tribal identity, differing from most other districts in the region, including those in southern Helmand. While Kandahar Province tends to be dominated by a relatively few large landowners, Musa Qala has traditionally had many smaller landowners, making use of the extensive irrigation from the Musa Qala river. In the 1970s, the district had approximately 2,300 landlords each with an average of 17 acres of cultivated land, with 60 canals irrigating more than a quarter of the

district. This created the standard of small landlords farming small, well-irrigated holdings. While tribal structure, economy and population alike have been badly damaged by decades of warfare, Musa Qala has a situation that is more likely to yield internal stability by building on what is left of traditional Afghanistan.

Before the well-publicized October 2006 “truce” that Alizai leaders concluded with the Taliban, Musa Qala had experienced a broad range of approaches to countering the insurgency. In addition to their dissatisfaction with British operations in 2006, local inhabitants claimed that Kabul had not supported them, shown by previous Afghan National Army (ANA) units operating in their area before that had been commanded by Dari-speaking officers who often made a point of pretending not to speak Pashtu, and with Dari-speaking soldiers who really did not know any other language, plus an Afghan National Police (ANP) presence that was active only in extracting resources from the population. Militias loyal to then-Helmand Governor Sher Mohammed Akhundzada also had poor relations with the Alizai jirga and much of the local population. This force became less effective after their patron lost power in 2006, leaving the British to inherit a security vacuum that had been filled by the Taliban. Only the local *arbaki* (tribal militia), with personally owned weapons, was regarded well.² The *arbaki* had helped turn back the initial Taliban attempt to establish a presence in 2004.

By December 2006, relations between the Taliban and Alizai leaders had soured.³ The Taliban, according to Afghan press reports, were not Alizai but were mostly foreign nationals who fled to Baghran district when Musa Qala was reoccupied.⁴ The Taliban have made sure that the local inhabitants of Musa Qala are aware that, while pre-2001 they reserved their more repressive policies for Dari-speaking urban populations

² This information was drawn from a source that was in Helmand Province during this period.

³ Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 50, 211.

⁴ “Terrorist Bases Should Be Eliminated,” *Anis* [Kabul], January 12, 2008.

¹ Pre-war information is drawn from Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan, Kandahar and South-Central Afghanistan* 5 (1980).

and treated their presumed supporters in the south better,⁵ this time there would be no mercy shown to “collaborators.” This included executing, along with alleged criminals, several “spies,” which included Afghans who had taken part in work-for-food programs.⁶

The Alizai are also hoping to get more from the new security situation. They have requested that Kabul make Musa Qala a separate province.⁷ This proposal has been supported by current and former Helmand provincial governors. This would provide opportunities for patronage and give them a legally-recognized base that competing tribal groups in the south would be unlikely to match.

Kabul's Challenge

Kabul's challenge is to prove that its policies are relevant to the future of Musa Qala and its people in a way it was unable to do in 2001-2006. For example, according to one press report, after recapturing Musa Qala the government announced that more than \$60 million would be spent on “reconstruction and welfare services in the provinces in an effort to encourage the people to stop supporting the Taleban and cultivating poppy.”⁸ Other press reports provided details: “a contract has been signed with private companies to build two schools and a religious school...at a cost of 6,394,700 dollars. Canada will provide the funds.”⁹ The press reports have not, however, identified whether a funding stream has been identified to operate these schools and the degree of local involvement with this development; both have frequently been absent from such efforts in the south.

Both reconstruction and recreating security in Musa Qala will be difficult.

5 For more information on the Taliban's weak enforcement of haircuts and schools in Musa Qala from 2006-07, see Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, pp. 72, 104.

6 Personal interview, Afghan source, 2008. See also “Taleban Hang Afghan Teenager for ‘Spying,’” *Pajhwok Afghan News*, January 18, 2008.

7 “Musa Qala Should Be Upgraded to Province,” *Hasht-e Sobh* [Kabul], February 17, 2008.

8 Mohammad Amin Mirzad, “The Taleban Still Rule Helmand Province,” *The Daily Afghanistan* [Kabul], January 26, 2008, p. 4.

9 Larghunpal, “Candle of Education is Relit in Musa Qala,” *Hewad* [Kabul], February 6, 2008.

The Musa Qala Taliban were not destroyed in battle, but moved largely to adjacent districts in 2007. Helmand member of parliament Nasima Niazi has claimed that the Taliban remain active in Musa Qala despite the reoccupation.¹⁰ Security outside the district center remains uncertain.

By strengthening the Alizai connection with a district chief with tribal legitimacy who can point out that the Taliban are largely foreigners, Kabul may be looking to get the population of Musa Qala to resist or at least limit cooperation with the largely cross-border insurgency and narcotics. Currently, while Musa Qala is growing a significant poppy crop, Kabul is not aiming to eradicate it (unlike in Greshk, Nawa, Marja and Nade-e Ali districts and the capital Lashkar Gah in Helmand Province).¹¹ This reflects Kabul's concerns that an eradication campaign would undercut the counter-insurgency effort.

The most obvious change is the appointment of Mullah Abdul Salaam, an Alizai of the Pirzai clan, as district chief. He was the former Taliban district chief of Kajaki and acting governor of neighboring Uruzgon Province prior to 2001, the highest-ranking former Taliban official serving under the current government. Abdul Salaam has been allowed to keep his own personal militia of some 300 men, who function as successors to the *arbaki*. This sets an important example to those opposing Kabul that they can be reintegrated into Afghanistan's political process. To the insurgents, he is a major target. Current Taliban propaganda stresses the use of fear to dissuade cooperation with Kabul and its coalition allies,¹² and if Abdul Salaam can cooperate so overtly and survive or even thrive, this will look less persuasive. He was the target of cross-border suicide bombers in January and gunmen in February.¹³

10 Ehsanollah Daulat Moradi, “Karzai's Confrontation with Britain over Administration of Helmand,” *Hasht-e Sobh*, January 27, 2008.

11 Dad Nurani, “How Drugs Will be Dealt With in Helmand Province,” *Arman-e Melli* [Kabul], February 27, 2008.

12 On Taliban themes, see Thomas H. Johnson, “The Taliban Insurgency and an Analysis of Shabnamah (Night Letters),” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18:2 (2007).

13 Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: Ex-Taliban Commander Lectures Mullah Omar About Koran,” RFE/RL, Febru-

Abdul Salaam is a charismatic and controversial figure. He is using his tribal and religious connections to talk with authority figures to help consolidate the government position in Musa Qala. Abdul Salaam's major theme is to portray the Taliban as outsiders, reflecting that many of them are either foreigners or Afghans from other areas and tribes. Western press reports have criticized him extensively. To British Lieutenant-Colonel Ed Freely, “He

“The loyalty of the Alizai may be a significant indicator of the overall situation in the south.”

appears less interested in governing his people than reinforcing his own personal position of power.”¹⁴ To the Kabul-appointed chief of police of Helmand Province, Brigadier Mohammad Hussain Andiwai, he is a “war criminal” involved in the slaughter of prisoners and a “leading heroin producer.”¹⁵

Great British Setbacks

The military operations in Musa Qala since the reoccupation have been carried out by a broad range of Afghan and coalition military forces. U.S. Marines have been playing a major role in recent operations in Helmand Province. Yet, Helmand remains a British area of operations, and the role of Musa Qala in the 2006 fighting—plus their withdrawal and the subsequent truce with the Taliban—make success in 2008 an important objective.

The British 2006 campaign in southern Afghanistan has already become part of military history—marked by a popular 2007 exhibition at the National Army Museum in London—but the results of that fighting have not helped the United Kingdom's image as NATO's foremost practitioner of counter-insurgency and stability operations, employing tactics refined since Malaya in conflicts

ary 1, 2008. Report on National TV Afghanistan, February 13, 2008.

14 Jerome Starkey, “Former Warlord Blames UK for Breakdown in Security,” *Independent*, June 9, 2008.

15 Stephen Grey, “Understanding the Taliban,” *New Statesman*, April 24, 2008.

worldwide. Rather, the image was of besieged “platoon house” outposts under Taliban attack and of too few deployed forces being desperately under-resourced.¹⁶ British forces in Afghanistan lack an ability to fund quick response development programs in a way comparable to the United States,¹⁷ and, according to the *Economist*, “a growing number of British officers grudgingly recognize that America is learning the lessons of irregular warfare, drawn mainly from British colonial experience, better than the modern British Army.”¹⁸

Since the initial withdrawal from Musa Qala in 2006, the British image for military capability in general and counter-insurgency competence in particular has suffered a number of setbacks, by no means all in Afghanistan. The success of Iraqi forces in Basra in 2008 was widely seen as them doing a job that the British had left unfinished for political reasons. Britain’s relations with Kabul have suffered a number of setbacks, from the removal of diplomats following direct negotiations (bypassing Kabul) with the Taliban at Musa Qala in 2006 to Kabul’s rejection of Lord Paddy Ashdown to be the new UN envoy in Afghanistan.¹⁹ British differences with the government in Kabul have increased, and Britain has become the focus of much of the frustration with coalition efforts.²⁰

A success in Musa Qala will have the potential to assure Kabul that Britain can still deliver results and that Helmand Province will not end up like Basra. It will also demonstrate that the United Kingdom can still produce

military successes despite a lack of resources. Otherwise, it will reinforce the perception that all the United Kingdom is capable of is to “scale back reconstruction objectives in order to end the fighting, declare victory, and leave.”²¹

The Future

Alizais, Kabul and London alike have a lot more at stake in Musa Qala than simply influencing the future of a remote town and its surrounding district. Each is looking at a potentially best possible case to show that they can make a positive contribution to Afghanistan’s future. If any of them fail, it raises the question, where can they succeed?

For the Alizais, the current situation is a chance to do things again their way under a fusion of tribal and federal government (rather than tribal and Taliban) leadership. If the Alizais in Musa Qala, who have the advantage of a cohesive population, defensible territory, and a leader appointed by Kabul to rally the population cannot succeed, then it is questionable which of the tribes that populate southern Afghanistan will be successful in countering the insurgency. The loyalty of the Alizai may be a significant indicator of the overall situation in the south. The tribe still reveres the memory of Aktur Khan, an Alizai who led the uprising against Shah Sujha, though a Durrani, in 1840, after he appeared to be too close to the British. Abdul Salaam is already on record saying that he is contending with large unmet desires by his tribal supporters and that neither the provincial government, Kabul nor Britain—due to tribal rivalry, lack of resources, corruption or distrust—are meeting these needs, hurting his claim to legitimacy.²²

For Kabul, it is an opportunity to show that it is relevant in creating a better future for all of the country, even those areas where the Taliban and narcotics are most entrenched. Unless Kabul can show that it will not once again be subjected to a deal made without its participation that allows the Taliban back, many in the area will be reluctant to support the government. The role of former Taliban in Musa Qala will have importance as a

model for Afghanistan as a whole; it will certainly be watched by Hamid Karzai’s critics in Kabul and from the Northern Alliance that are concerned Karzai has been appeasing the Taliban and aiming to secure Pashtun loyalty. It also could suggest a greater role for local leaders in Kabul’s appointment of district chiefs in the future, a change from the current insistence on centralization. Previous unmet aid commitments in Musa Qala have made the local inhabitants distrustful.²³

For the United Kingdom, it is a chance to show that the second largest coalition member in terms of troops in Afghanistan can demonstrate results on the ground commensurate with their status in bilateral and multilateral security relationships. As British policy is to channel aid through Kabul where feasible, this provides an opportunity for aid to be directed in Musa Qala in order to show a long-term commitment at preventing the Taliban from returning to burn schools and kill Afghans. If the United Kingdom fails in Musa Qala, its relations with coalition partners and Afghans alike is likely to be harmed, and it may have a further impact on its international standing.

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16 Extensive UK press coverage included Tim Albone, “Pathfinders on a Four-Day Mission Fight off Eight-Week Taliban Siege,” *The Times*, September 27, 2006. This article was critical of the ANP role.

17 “A War of Money as Well as Bullets,” *Economist*, May 22, 2008.

18 Ibid.

19 Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, pp. 211-12, suggests that the United States and Kabul took action to end the British-engineered truce.

20 Examples include “Coldness in Relations - Everything Started as a Result of Musa Qala,” *The Daily Afghanistan*, January 28, 2008; “Lack of Coordination in the War on Terror will Result in Failure,” *The Daily Afghanistan*, February 2, 2008; “Kandahar Awaits Helmand’s Fate?” *Rab-e Nejat* [Kabul], February 21, 2008; “Prince Harry Returns to London,” *The Kabul Times*, March 3, 2008.

21 Richard Weitz, “NATO Allies Experience Battle Fatigue,” www.eurasianet.org, May 19, 2008.

22 Grey, *Understanding the Taliban*.

23 Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, p. 197

Al-Qa`ida Seeking to Recruit African-American Muslims

By Cadets Benjamin Haas and Daniel McGrory

DOES AL-QA`IDA STILL operate primarily as a hierarchical organization, or is it fundamentally a worldwide brand-name for the global Salafi-jihadi movement? This question is the subject of an ongoing debate in terrorism studies. A specific subcomponent of this larger debate is the issue of organizational growth: is al-Qa`ida growing in the United States and elsewhere due to recruitment or to radicalization? Many argue that there are deliberate efforts by al-Qa`ida's high command to recruit operatives among the U.S. population, while others claim that due to the decentralized nature of al-Qa`ida, expansion has its roots in homegrown sentiments and action. Analytical effort is better spent, however, at the nexus of these two static paradigms, as expansion is neither exclusively a top-down nor bottom-up process. One dynamic of al-Qa`ida's recruitment activities is the high command's recognition of extant or potential radicalization patterns among social movements and its opportunistic capitalization on these observations. When al-Qa`ida recognizes the prospect of domestic radicalization in the United States, it amplifies that prospect from its media platform.

Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri's video release in May 2007 makes it clear that the al-Qa`ida leadership is targeting African-American Muslims as a potential source of membership, or at least as a fifth column in its operations against the United States. While this recruitment effort can be viewed as a top-down phenomenon, it is more accurately perceived as an attempt by al-Qa`ida to capitalize on domestic potentialities. This opportunistic methodology for expansion reinforces the idea that al-Qa`ida is pragmatic, adaptive, and less ideologically bound than some would be led to believe.

Propaganda Attempts

The transcript of the May 2007 interview of Ayman al-Zawahiri demonstrates al-Qa`ida's perception of trends in the African-American Muslim community.

During the interview, al-Zawahiri discusses, quotes and even displays video clips of Malcolm X. He reaches out to African-American Muslims in the United States, presumably because he interprets this community's activist past as a potential avenue for future activism and radicalization. Al-Zawahiri praises Malcolm X and, at one point, specifically highlights his radical activism:

Would that those who insist on peaceful resistance had heard what was said by the struggler and martyr (as we see him) al-Hajj Malik al-Shabazz, or Malcolm X (may Allah have mercy on him): "Anytime you beg another man to set you free, you will never be free. Freedom is something you have to do for yourself...The price of freedom is death."¹

While Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam did not advocate violence as a means of achieving their goals, al-Zawahiri interprets their story as an example of radical activism into which he can tap.

Al-Zawahiri seeks to further manipulate the sentiments of the African-American community by highlighting the alleged oppression and subsequent disenfranchisement under which it lives. To make his point, al-Zawahiri shows another clip of Malcolm X, who states,

No, I'm not American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism, one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy...I see America through the eyes of a victim.²

Al-Zawahiri immediately follows this clip by arguing that the United States "will throw you into the street without mercy like an old shoe."³ He supports his point by citing the example of homeless, wounded veterans who are victims of the "capitalist Crusade." By using such rhetoric, al-Zawahiri is trying to identify himself to the African-American community as a fellow victim

and a potential leader of African-Americans, similar to Malcolm X.

Al-Zawahiri proceeds to introduce a variant of the Salafi-jihadi doctrine of *takfir* into the African-American discourse. By making reference to former Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as "house slaves" who help keep down "field slaves," he is drawing a parallel to "apostate" Muslim leaders who keep down pious Muslims within their states. Ideally, al-Zawahiri would like to implant sentiments within the African-American community similar to those that are integral to al-Qa`ida's

"He is cleverly interlacing the narrative of the global jihad with the domestic context of oppressed African-Americans in an attempt to conflate both ideologies."

fundamental ideology. He is cleverly interlacing the narrative of the global jihad with the domestic context of oppressed African-Americans in an attempt to conflate both ideologies. Al-Zawahiri is co-opting the persona of Malcolm X to identify himself and al-Qa`ida as proponents of African-American Muslims. He adopts the same tone as Malcolm X, identifying problems African-Americans have historically faced in the United States. While Malcolm X does not specifically offer a solution in the video, al-Zawahiri does. He tells African-American Muslims that with Allah's help they can rise up to free themselves from the "most powerful tyrannical force in the history of mankind."⁴ While it is unclear whether he is seeking recruits for al-Qa`ida specifically, he is undoubtedly haranguing the domestic, African-American Muslim community to join in the fight against the West.

Although African-Americans have attracted the most focus from al-Zawahiri's recruitment efforts, al-Qa`ida is attempting to reach out

1 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Interview with Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri," al-Sahab, May 5, 2007.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

to multiple racial groups. In a post-May 5, 2007 web posting by Abu Dujana al-Khurasani, one of the elite writers for al-Qa`ida's secure al-Hisba website, al-Khurasani courts not only African-Americans, but also Native Americans, Vietnamese, Aborigines, Japanese, North Koreans, Venezuelans, Panamanians, Colombians, and poor immigrants to join in the fight against their "oppressor," the United States. Al-Qa`ida is looking to all these groups of people, whom they consider to be disenfranchised by the United States, as potential followers of its cause. Having seen numerous examples of radicalization within the disenfranchised and poorly integrated Pakistani population in the United Kingdom, al-Qa`ida understands that it is a worthwhile strategy to target disenfranchised communities for recruitment with deliberate propaganda campaigns.

After the al-Zawahiri interview, a fairly sizeable amount of Malcolm X chatter surfaced in jihadist internet forums. For example, the story and image of Malcolm X has been invoked several times in the al-Ekhlaas forum. Many of the postings praise him as a martyr and offer biographical information. More importantly, one can find links to a fascinating video entitled "Malcolm X: Prince of Islam." Preceding the biographical video on Malcolm X is a music video, "By Any Means Necessary," by "Sheikh Terra," who also produced "Dirty Kuffar" in 2004. The music video makes direct appeals to African-American sentiments by specifically presenting a rap song and showing images of Malcolm X, men clad in KKK robes and the lynchings of African-Americans. Calling the "Army of Allah" to "fight oppression," the music video further promotes militant activity by displaying video clips of Improvised Explosive Device attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq and training exercises of what one would assume to be jihadist militants.⁵ Again, Salafi-jihadis are attempting to interlace issues which matter to them with those that evoke emotions from African-Americans.

Furthermore, in January 2008 a jihadist in al-Hisba posted a diatribe that did not mention Malcolm X, but rather focused on racial tension in the context of the upcoming presidential election. He indicated that the Democratic contest between Senators Hillary Clinton and Barrack Obama has reinvigorated racial conflict in the United States and predicts that this tension will escalate into the ultimate "collapse" of the country.⁶

Groups Possibly Receptive to the Message

While it may seem speculative to assert that al-Zawahiri has taken note of certain radicalized groups of African-American Muslims, it is safe conjecture that they have not gone unnoticed due to the publicity they have received. Domestic and largely homegrown radical Islamist groups within the United States, such as Jama`atal-Fuqara' (JF), Jami`atal-Islam al-Sahih (JIS), and the radicalization efforts of Warith Deen Umar in the New York State prison system have attracted widespread media attention across the world. Accepting that al-Qa`ida is a "thinking" organization, members of the high command have likely noticed these radical cells and view them as a potential source for recruitment in the United States.

The four members of JIS who converted, radicalized and plotted attacks from within prison walls in Sacramento were arrested in 2005 for their "roles in a terrorist plot to attack U.S. military facilities, Israeli government facilities and Jewish synagogues in the Los Angeles area."⁷ Three out of the four members of this group, to include its leader and founder, Kevin James (Shaykh Shahab Murshid), are African-American Muslims. A militant strand of activism within the broader African-American Muslim community is further evidenced by JF. This group, allegedly founded by Shaykh Mubarak `Ali Gilani and "comprised mostly of African-American Muslim converts,"⁸ is credited with conducting "militant and criminal activities in the United

States and abroad."⁹ In addition to these groups, radical trends within the African-American Muslim community are highlighted in a Pew Research Center study: only 36% of native-born African-American Muslims expressed a very unfavorable view of al-Qa`ida, while other native-born Muslims did

"While al-Qa`ida has been able to take advantage of grassroots sentiments among Muslims in the United Kingdom, it is entirely possible that African-American Muslims, and American Muslims in general, simply have no inclination toward Salafi-jihadi actions."

so at a rate of 69% and foreign-born Muslims at a rate of 63%.¹⁰ It is safe to assume that al-Zawahiri is aware of such activities and sentiments on American soil and considers them as factors when pondering how to augment al-Qa`ida's global movement with American recruits and incite violence in the United States.

Evidence of Grassroots Recruitment?

Despite the recent appearance of Malcolm X in al-Qa`ida media and racially charged chatter in jihadist web forums, there does not appear to be any noticeable grassroots movement from the African-American Muslim community. This lack of a grassroots response may signify that this particular propaganda tactic with this particular community is ineffective or based on miscalculation. While al-Qa`ida has been able to take advantage of grassroots sentiments among Muslims in the United Kingdom, it is entirely possible that African-American Muslims, and American Muslims in general, simply have no inclination toward Salafi-jihadi actions. Al-Qa`ida's willingness to reach out to such communities

6 OSC, "Iraq: Jihadist Website Interprets Clinton, Obama Contest in Racial Light," 2008.

7 "Four Men Indicted on Terrorism Charges Related to Conspiracy to Attack Military Facilities, Other Targets," Department of Justice, August 31, 2005.

8 Chris Zambelis, "Radical Trends in African-American Islam," *Terrorism Monitor* 4:16 (2006).

5 "Malcolm X: Prince of Islam," Green72 Media, available at www.video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4868327196210505055.

9 Ibid.

10 "Muslim Americans," Pew Research Center, May 22, 2007.

within the United States with no strong history of Salafist-inspired activism indicates that al-Qa`ida's strategy for expansion or incitement is based more so on pragmatism than ideological imperatives.

Al-Zawahiri's May 2007 interview demonstrates that al-Qa`ida's approach to expansion in the United States is one that seeks to take advantage of perceived bottom-up trends within the African-American Muslim community. In essence, al-Qa`ida high command is using an opportunistic strategy. At least in regard to recruitment within the United States, al-Qa`ida hopes to find success at the nexus of opportunity in which bottom-up radical sentiments will be receptive to its top-down efforts to appeal to possible recruits. This methodology, which focuses neither solely on hierarchical efforts from the top nor homegrown interest from the grassroots, reflects immensely on al-Qa`ida's pragmatic and adaptive nature. Indeed, since al-Qa`ida cannot merely rely only on recruitment or radicalization independently, it is endeavoring to exploit the communities in which the two phenomena meet.

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Propaganda and Peace Deals: The Taliban's Information War in Pakistan

By Arthur Keller

IN EARLY 2008, the United States announced that it would invest \$400 million to train and equip Pakistan's Frontier Corps (FC) to combat the Pakistani Taliban and slow cross-border attacks into Afghanistan. U.S. counter-terrorism efforts in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region rely on Pakistani troops, such as those from the under-equipped FC, to control the border in the violent Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).¹ Most FC units—such as the Tochi Scouts—are composed of indigenous Pashtun levies.

Unfortunately, Pakistani soldiers are being actively targeted by the Pakistani Taliban's propaganda efforts, often with disturbing effectiveness. To realistically understand U.S. options in Pakistan, one must understand the impact of the Taliban's propaganda and intimidation tactics in FATA, and why these tactics have caused the Pakistani government to resort to ineffective "peace deals" with Taliban-affiliated fighters. These realities mean that U.S. assistance to Pakistan's FC is unlikely to curtail the Taliban's increasing influence.

The Taliban's Message

Amat studios is the Pakistani Taliban's production studio. It churns out a steady stream of propaganda aimed at the local Pashtun populace and the Pakistani armed forces. Amat's videos, generally in Pashtu or Urdu, seem to be intended for domestic consumption, although senior Taliban members have said they will soon be appearing on "You Tube." One Amat video, "Clean Army," hit the market in 2006.² The video starts with a clip of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf addressing assembled Pakistani Army officers,

which morphs into a computer graphic of a box of laundry detergent. The box is easily recognizable as the most popular brand in Pakistan. On this soap box, however, are words in English and Urdu for "Pak Force" or "Pak Foj" (common shorthand for the Pakistani Army) with a logo saying "Pervez" (a logo which later turns into "Bush"). The voiceover of the pseudo-commercial exclaims:

Slaves (infidels) you can buy the Pakistan Army for 25 rupees a box! For cleaning all Muslims! They are the best in destruction. Just say their name and ask for it. Look at the pictures and buy it. They are smarter than the devil.

The voiceover terminates with a sinister chuckle. Yet, "Clean Army" is only warming up. Next, it laments that the United States broke the promises it made to Pakistan for a better life for its citizens:

Now all of those four years have passed but none of the promises have been fulfilled...Economics and life in Pakistan speaks for itself, which needs no proof: Gas which was 30 rupees in 2001 per liter is now 70 rupees because of friendship with Bush. Sugar which was 20 rupees per kilo is now 35 rupees a kilo. There are a lot of other examples. Even ignorant people can see the difference between then and now.

The video finishes with a snuff-film ending. The viewer sees clips of Pakistani General Khattak,³ leader of the 2005 army campaign in South Waziristan. Then comes shaky low-light footage dated January 7, 2006. The location is Mir Ali, a small city in North Waziristan. Cries of "Allahu Akhbar" (God is Great) ring out to

¹ Hassan Abbas, "Transforming Pakistan's Frontier Corps," *Terrorism Monitor* 5:6 (2007).

² "Clean Army" is an untitled Amat studios video designated "Clean Army" because of the accusations of ethnic cleansing against the Pakistani Army. The video was transcribed by the author in May 2006.

³ Khattak was in charge of the Pakistani Army raids into South Waziristan in 2005, raids renowned for the amount of ill will they generated in the local Pashtun populace because of the popular perception that the Pakistani Army used their helicopter gunships and artillery indiscriminately, causing many civilian casualties. Khattak was also prominent in calling for a peace deal with local militants after the Waziristan offensive, a deal that is now widely acknowledged to have created a safe haven for the Pakistani Taliban and al-Qa`ida. Khattak is currently in charge of the efforts, funded with U.S. dollars, to improve the Frontier Corps.

the accompaniment of gunfire: the Pakistani Taliban are attacking a Tochi Scouts checkpoint. The video jumps to the aftermath, in which the checkpoint has been overrun and close-up shots of corpses with the Tochi Scouts' uniforms are clearly visible. The Taliban videographer zooms to a nauseating view of one of the Scout's corpses, his head smashed open and his brain clearly visible, as is the nametag on the uniform: "Tahir Iqbal." In the eerie light from fires of the burning camp, surrounded by charred and bloody Tochi Scout corpses, one of the Pakistani Taliban, spectrally lit with the green glow of low-light cameras, delivers a monologue aimed directly at every Pakistani Army or FC soldier that sees the video:

We want the "Pak Force" to understand their goals and not to give in to the Jews and Bush and go to hell for their doings. Listen and understand the meaning of belief, being clean, and jihad in the way of Allah. Think about your life after death. Army mothers, sisters, fathers, brothers, and family: make your children understand. You are a mother or father of the army, you have wished that your son sacrifice themselves for their country, and be successful. But today your sons have joined the infidels and the American flag and they are fighting with mujahidin and ruining the life and afterlife, and will go to hell. Would you like this to happen to your loved ones?

Labeling a box of soap "Pak Army" and saying that the army is "cleansing" brother Muslims is a simple but devastating accusation in a Muslim country. To many Muslims in the Pakistani military, the dual threat of brutal death and hellfire earned by siding with "infidels" against the umma has a dispiriting effect, and nowhere more so than in FATA.

Other Amat videos cleverly exploit local customs. One video, "Ansar,"⁴ goes into details on the duty of Pashtuns to shelter

al-Qa`ida, specifically playing on Pashtunwali, the Pashtun code, and the duty of Pashtuns to provide *milmasthia*, which loosely translates as "hospitality," to al-Qa`ida guests.⁵ Another Amat video, "Snake," reinforces the evil of the United States and its allies. The opening scene is a rattlesnake morphing into President Bush.⁶ The video displays houses in Waziristan demolished by the 2005 Pakistani Army offensive. One

"To many Muslims in the Pakistani military, the dual threat of brutal death and hellfire earned by siding with 'infidels' against the umma has a dispiriting effect, and nowhere more so than in FATA."

voiceover states that the demolished house belonged to a widowed mother of four. Another clip shows an interview of a young boy who explains that he has been orphaned and wants to become a jihadist. Passionate appeals for local tribesmen to take up arms against the Pakistani government are a constant theme in "Snake." The Taliban's propaganda in FATA also extends beyond videos. Dozens of unregulated or "black" low wattage radio stations spew extremist propaganda in almost every valley of FATA.

In conjunction with these propaganda vehicles, the Taliban have made a practice of attacking alternate sources of information, such as newsstands. To further control the information environment, Pakistani journalists in FATA have been assassinated for writing articles of which the Taliban did not approve. There has also been a campaign of intimidation aimed at the local Pashtun tribal leaders, who are called maliks. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have long employed "night

letters," crude notices posted in public places or nailed to buildings threatening death for those who cross the Taliban.⁷ The Pakistani Taliban also make prolific use of night letters to warn off maliks who might be inclined to cooperate with the Pakistani government against the Taliban. Maliks who have failed to heed the threatening letters have been summarily executed by the Taliban.

Added to the assaults on the maliks is the regular killing of ordinary Pashtun tribesmen by the Taliban. These killings are generally motivated by revenge or money, but the targets are left dead by the side of the road with "American Spy" pinned to their jacket. The dead men rarely had any connection to the United States, but their corpses nevertheless are chillingly effective psychological warfare.

Despite many outlandish claims and inconsistencies in Amat videos, the paucity of contradictory information flowing into FATA as well as the complete dominance of the Taliban's message means that the Taliban's twisted version of events is often the only one heard.⁸ How seriously is the Pakistani Taliban about spreading its propaganda? Tehrik-i-Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud recently announced a major propaganda push and stated, "The media war is the real war."⁹ Furthermore, Pakistani authorities have shown little ability to curtail this media war. For example, the "Clean Army" video included the name, location in the Wana bazaar, and phone number of the video distributor. The distributor obviously has no fear of Pakistan Army soldiers even though his wares openly advocate their death.

Are the Taliban's Tactics Successful?

Overall, the Taliban's tactics are working. The average FC soldier, having seen videos of fellow soldiers brutally

4 "Ansar" is an untitled Amat studios video designated "Ansar" because of the discussions of the need to harbor al-Qa`ida. The video was transcribed by the author in May 2006.

5 "Pashtun Tribes Live by Their Own Set of Rules," PashtunFoundation.org, date unknown.

6 "Snake" is an untitled Amat studios video designated "Snake" because of the opening sequences showing film of a rattlesnake. The video was transcribed by the author in May 2006.

7 Declan Walsh, "Night Letters from Taliban Threaten Afghan Democracy," *Guardian*, September 19, 2004.

8 Just a few of those claims include that the United States has 10,000 troops in Pakistan, that Musharraf has given the CIA 74 bases in Pakistan, that the U.S. battle against Islamic extremism is actually a systematic effort by Christendom to destroy Islam worldwide and contains the clear implication that the West wants to enslave Muslims lands.

9 Iqbal Khattak, "Media War is Real War: Mehsud," *Daily Times*, May 27, 2008.

killed, becomes ever more unwilling to oppose the Taliban. The malaise injected into Pakistan's military has long since spread from the paramilitary FC units such as the Tochi Scouts into Pakistan's regular army. In 2007, India's security and intelligence establishment noted that Pakistani Army troops in FATA have "unprecedented levels of desertions,

"The average FC soldier, having seen videos of fellow soldiers brutally killed, becomes ever more unwilling to oppose the Taliban."

suicides, and discharge applications." In the space of just five days in October 2007, the Pakistani Army allegedly suffered 150 desertions.¹⁰

Even stronger evidence of disaffection was the 2007 surrender of 250 Pakistani soldiers to a few dozen militants in South Waziristan without a single shot being fired. In January 2008, an entire checkpoint of 40 soldiers surrendered their post to Taliban militants, again without a single shot fired.¹¹ Apathy and risk aversion are pervasive in the Pakistani military.

The Taliban are not universally welcomed in FATA and their brutal tactics have excited considerable resentment among many Pashtun tribesman. Unfortunately, that resentment does not mean the Taliban's grip on power is weakening. The usual avenue for Pashtun tribesmen living in FATA to deal with physical threats is the formation of a *lashkar*, an informal tribal army. The assassination campaign against maliks suggests that a *lashkar* to oppose the Taliban probably will never be formed; many of the maliks who could lead such a *lashkar* are dead, others are cowed into inaction by the body count.

10 Rajat Pandit, "Multiple Conflicts Bleed Pak Army," *Times of India*, October 31, 2007.

11 Bill Roggio, "Pakistan Troops Abandon Second Fort in South Waziristan," *The Long War Journal*, January 17, 2008.

U.S. Assistance Unlikely to Make Impact

Although the United States declared it will invest \$400 million to train and equip FC troops to combat the Pakistani Taliban and slow cross-border attacks into Afghanistan, even in the best of circumstances it would be hard to get FC troops to actively engage the Taliban; in fact, many of the FC troops are related to Taliban members.¹² After factoring in the FC's demoralization, it becomes evident that no amount of training and equipment will likely be able to overcome the pull of local ties, when combined with the fear and guilt engendered by the Taliban's intimidation tactics and propaganda. Marksmanship classes or Kevlar vests will not change the social realities on the ground, or the near total information dominance of the Taliban in FATA. The likelihood of a return on the \$400 million investment is low.¹³

The Taliban's morale-destroying propaganda also has important implications for the various peace deals being negotiated with Pakistani Taliban in FATA. These deals are "bait and switch" scams. For example, the North Waziristan Accord of 2006 required the Pakistani Army to be withdrawn from many areas, to be replaced by expanded FC units. Another recent example is the 2008 peace deal with Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud (a deal that came even after Mehsud was accused of arranging the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto). The deal withdraws regular army troops from the Mehsud areas of South Waziristan and instead gives the FC "freedom of movement." Missing was any mention of how the FC will enforce the provisions of the agreement.¹⁴ Reliance on FC units for "enforcement" is one big reason all agreements with the Taliban are dead letters.

12 "US to Spend Over \$400m to Enhance the FC," *The News*, March 3, 2008.

13 The United States has tried training Pakistani soldiers before, to hunt al-Qa`ida in Afghanistan. The unit never saw action, but became an informal guard for President Nawaz Sharif and later dissolved, never having gone after a single al-Qa`ida member. See Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), p. 445.

14 Ismail Khan, "Peace Accord Finalized with Mehsuds," *Dawn*, April 22, 2008.

In some cases, the various Pakistan-Taliban peace agreements now under negotiation do not rely on either the risk averse regular army or the even more timid FC for enforcement, but on the local police force in FATA, the Khasadars, who are even more poorly trained and equipped than the FC. A provision of one of the latest peace plans is that an expanded force of Khasadars will fill the security gap left by the withdrawal of the Pakistan Army from FATA. The Khasadars will allegedly accomplish this extremely difficult task with the benefit of training, funded by the United States.¹⁵

The fact of the matter is that the peace deals are being signed because the Pakistani government knows that its demoralized soldiers and police have little will to fight, and believe face-saving but impotent peace deals are the only alternative to publicly admitting the truth: the Army, the FC and the Khasadars are incapable of handling the Taliban. Regardless of the reassurances

"Any U.S. plan to combat Islamist extremism that relies on effective ground action from the Pakistani Army, the FC, or the Khasadars will fail."

the United States may receive from General Khattak or Army Chief of Staff Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani, pervasive morale problems mean that no elements of the Pakistani military will slug it out with the Taliban in ground combat, with the exception of very limited engagements, such as clearing the *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque) in Islamabad in 2007, or the (now-curtailed) operations in Swat this year. Pakistan's recent "offensive" against militants in the Peshawar area, for example, grounded to an ineffectual halt in early July 2008 before significant numbers of militants were ever even engaged.¹⁶

15 "23,000 Levies Being Trained to Help Counter Terrorism," *Daily Times*, May 27, 2008.

16 Riaz Khan, "Pakistan Halts Assault on Militants," *Associated Press*, July 5, 2008.

Since 2005, the only consistent and tangible benefit to the United States for “engagement” with the Pakistani military has been the occasional authorization to target militant compounds inside Pakistan with airstrikes, an authorization which does not require the demoralized Pakistani military to put any of its soldiers at risk.¹⁷ Any U.S. plan to combat Islamist extremism that relies on effective ground action from the Pakistani Army, the FC, or the Khasadars will fail. Until that basic truth is recognized, U.S. efforts to combat militant Islamists in FATA will continue to flounder, and money will continue to be spent on training and equipping Pakistani troops while getting very little in return.

Indeed, the Taliban’s propaganda tactics, followed up with its campaign of fear, are making it increasingly unlikely that Pakistan, despite support from the United States, will be able to resist the Taliban’s growing strength and spreading influence in the near future.

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Uncovering Extremist Violence in Morocco

By Alison Pargeter

LONG HAILED AS A bastion of stability in a region prone to radicalism, today Morocco is struggling hard to deal with the problem of Islamist militancy. The newspapers are filled with stories of arrests of terrorist suspects and of court cases in which sentences are being handed out to those accused of recruiting for Iraq, plotting to launch attacks in Morocco and abroad, or of being part of militant currents such as “Salafiyah-Jihadiya.” In June 2008, for example, 29 individuals from the “Tetouan cell” were convicted of belonging to a terrorist group and of recruiting for Iraq, and in July 2008 35 people were arrested in a number of cities accused of recruiting for al-Qa`ida groups in Algeria and Iraq. As such, Morocco would appear to be a hotbed of militancy and terrorism.

For a kingdom that has long prided itself on the success of its containment strategy toward its Islamist opposition, not to mention the fact that the king’s special role as “Emir al-Mumineen” (Commander of the Faithful) has inferred an almost unquestionable religious legitimacy upon the monarchy, the extent of the militancy that is now being uncovered has come as a real shock and has left the regime grappling for solutions. It is responding with a multipronged strategy, on the one hand trying to bolster Morocco’s traditional Maliki school of Islam and the various Sufi tariqas that have been part of the country’s complex Islamic identity for generations, while on the other hand employing a zero tolerance strategy of preemptive arrests to the extent that, according to one high-ranking Moroccan official, around 4,500 militants have been arrested since the Casablanca attacks of 2003 alone.¹ Yet, this approach looks unlikely to stem the appetite for radical rejectionist ideologies within the kingdom, and all the indications are that militancy will continue to be a problem for the foreseeable future.

The Emergence of Militancy

This new wave of militancy has not materialized from thin air and has been brewing within the kingdom for many years. Indeed, in spite of the general assumption that the Moroccan state only woke up to the domestic threat after the Casablanca bombings of May 2003, in fact the realization that it had a problem came after 9/11. This realization coincided with the new king coming to power in 1999, a development that heralded a major security review within the kingdom. It was then that Morocco began wondering about the various Islamist currents active in its midst.

Yet, in spite of this recognition, the regime appears to be in a state of denial about the nature of this radicalism. Not only is it keen to hype links with international terrorism, blaming al-Qa`ida for the Casablanca bombings and the emergence of other militant cells, it is still insisting that this new breed of radicalism has been imported from abroad and is alien to the country’s long tradition of tolerance and moderation. Much of the blame is being pinned on Saudi Arabia and more specifically on Wahhabism. The former Moroccan minister of *habous* (religious affairs), Dr. Abdelkebir Alaoui M’daghri, recently asserted that the former Interior Ministry chief, Driss Basri, who was ousted shortly after King Mohammed came to the throne, had sponsored the Wahhabist movement

for specific geopolitical reasons... and also for personal reasons connected to the intimate relations that existed between [Moroccan and Saudi] officials. This is the reason why Wahhabism was sponsored in our country in every part of the state.²

It is true that the militancy evident today has been inspired by a range of outside influences that are far removed from the Maliki school. Yet, while these external factors are important, one cannot discount the role that the Moroccan state has played in fostering the local conditions in which such ideologies have been able to flourish. These conditions have arisen in part

¹⁷ As in Swat earlier this year, the Pakistani military has demonstrated that they will use artillery and Cobra helicopter gunships to target militants, but for any purposes requiring “boots on the ground,” such as active patrolling, border control and raids, the Pakistani military has been highly ineffective.

¹ Personal interview, senior Moroccan official, Rabat, April 2008.

² Abdelkebir Alaoui M’daghri, *Al-Houkuma al-Multabiya* (Rabat: Dar al-Amman, 2006).

from Morocco's Cold War alliances that placed it in the pro-Western camp of conservative monarchies. This meant that it not only gave its blessing to those volunteers who wanted to go to fight jihad in Afghanistan, Bosnia and other battlefields, but more importantly it permitted them to return. Although due primarily to the limited number of Moroccans who went to Afghanistan in the 1980s, these volunteers were not able to form a group that could seriously challenge the monarchy. These veterans were, however, able to spread their ideology and influence within the kingdom with relative ease. Indeed, it was only after the attacks of 9/11 that the Moroccan state began to seek out such individuals.

Furthermore, the Moroccan regime has always relied upon and taken refuge in Islam as a means of countering its opponents. The ruling elite, for example, bolstered the Islamist movement during the 1970s and 1980s to try to weaken the leftists. It encouraged the Islamists to dominate university campuses and abolished a number of university courses in the humanities, such as philosophy, that were deemed to be the bastion of the left-wing, replacing them with courses in Islamic studies. Such actions may have served to weaken the left, but they also helped foster a society in which religion came to play an increasingly important role in the public space.

The monarchy has also played one Islamist current off against another, thereby strengthening the king's position as "Commander of the Faithful." During the 1980s and 1990s, for example, it employed a strategy of countering its indigenous Islamist opposition, such as the banned but highly popular al-Adl wal-Ihsan movement, by promoting the Wahhabist trend. It encouraged Moroccan imams to study at Saudi universities and gave them pride of place when they returned to the country. Traditional religious scholars who had been trained at the Dar al-Hadith al-Hassania, the main school in Morocco for graduating imams in the Maliki tradition, were often passed over when it came to appointing teachers in Islamic studies in favor of those who had been trained in Saudi Arabia. Some of these Saudi trained individuals, such as the radical preachers Mohamed Fizazi or

Hassan Kettani, were ultimately to have a strong influence in fostering support for a rejectionist ideology that dared to challenge the king's religious and political legitimacy. As such, Morocco cannot argue that this new militancy has simply been imported from the outside.

The Militants

Morocco has also fostered certain socioeconomic conditions that have proven ripe for radicalism. Although one cannot make the direct link between poverty and radicalization, these ideologies have

"The Moroccan regime has always relied upon and taken refuge in Islam as a means of countering its opponents."

certainly been able to thrive in Morocco's slums and shantytowns that were left to fester for years without any attention from the authorities. According to figures published in 2007, 4.5 million Moroccans live in indecent housing and there are more than 1,000 shantytowns in 70 cities, as well as more than 1,250 "arbitrary neighborhoods."³ These slums are generally home to Moroccans who migrated from impoverished rural areas into the margins of the cities. It would seem that unlike the rural areas themselves, where the population is still steeped in local traditions of Islam that are locked into old patronage systems, these shantytowns have provided a particular mentality that is open to more militant ideologies, so much so that it is a common joke at the moment in Morocco to talk about these shanty neighborhoods as being the Kandahar of their respective cities.

Indeed, it was these shantytowns that were the domain of radical preachers such as Mohamed Fizazi during the 1990s and that became a natural recruiting ground for those seeking to bring others to the cause of jihad. It was out of these places that small groups of militants who created their own fiefdoms came to emerge, meting out punishments and even murders in the

bid to impose their rigid ideology upon their own communities. The most famous example is Yusef Fikri, who killed his uncle for "un-Islamic" behavior, but his was not an isolated case. The cell led by Abdelwahab al-Reba'ah in Meknes, for example, was recently accused of killing a number of people they considered *kafirs* because they did not wear Afghan clothes, had married through official channels and because they prayed in public mosques.⁴

These bands of young militants generally follow a similar pattern. They have tended to come from the same neighborhood, were often childhood friends and in many cases comprised siblings or members of the same family. Their education levels have for the most part been low, and they have tended to drift from job to job as street hawkers or petty traders hardly scratching a living. It is through militant Islam that these individuals seem to have discovered a form of salvation and self-esteem.

It was just such a group that carried out the Casablanca bombings in May 2003. Similarly, the cell that appeared in the spring of 2007, which included 23-year-old Abdelfattah Raydi, who blew himself up in a cyber café in Casablanca to avoid being captured by the police, had a similar profile. Raydi lived with his mother and six siblings in a tiny dilapidated room in the Dour Sekila shantytown. He and his brother, who was also part of the cell, both sold orange juice for a living. Raydi had already spent time in prison for his alleged linkage to the 2003 bombers before being released under an amnesty in 2005. According to an individual who knew him, Raydi was "fragile, and suffered from periodic bouts of epilepsy and complained of being harassed by the police even after his release from prison."⁵ Indeed, the fragile and inexperienced nature of these individuals is reflected in the fact that their attacks have for the most part been seemingly amateur or botched affairs, from the Casablanca bombings, where some of the bombers got lost and blew themselves up at the wrong target, to Raydi exploding himself in a cyber café,

4 "Morocco: The Investigative Judge Listens to al-Shatbi, One of the Nine Escapees from al-Kenitra Prison," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 10, 2008.

5 "Le Retour de la Peur," *Telquel*, March 17-23, 2007.

3 "The Triangle of Fear in Morocco," www.moheet.com, November 26, 2007.

to Hicham Doukali blowing himself up with a gas cylinder in Meknes in 2007 and only managing to injure himself. Indeed, none of these suicide bombers left notes or videos, reflecting perhaps their limited capacity and how they appear to be acting out of desperation as much as anything else.

Solutions?

In their bid to eliminate this militancy, the Moroccan authorities have adopted a strategy of conducting mass arrests by picking up anyone who appears to have Salafist tendencies. Many of the families of those who have been convicted have complained that their loved ones were

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not involved with any militant group but were simply religiously “committed” and were arrested because of those convictions.⁶ One young Salafist from Tangiers, for example, was reportedly taken from outside his home and spent 40 days in secret detention where he underwent extreme forms of torture as the authorities had considered him suspicious because he traveled twice a week between Tangiers and Mohamedia.⁷ He was later released with an apology.

The regime is not taking any chances. The profiles of the majority of those who have been arrested in Morocco since the Casablanca bombings of 2003 are similar to those who have conducted attacks. For example, in a list of 204 prisoners arrested in Casablanca, 30% of those arrested had only attended primary school and 35% had managed only the first few years of secondary school.⁸ Most were unemployed or working as street traders or in temporary

employment. The vast majority of those who have been convicted have been accused of being part of “Salafiyah-Jihadiya.” More than anything, however, this appears to be a label put upon these militants reflecting the fact that they do not belong to any particular formalized group. As such, “Salafiyah-Jihadiya” would seem to be a label invented by the Moroccan authorities to describe an ideological current. As the wife of one Moroccan convicted on terrorism charges explained, “We are so badly educated we couldn’t imagine even coming up with such a term.”⁹

Although this heavy-handed approach might resolve the immediate threat, it is unlikely to stem the support for such militant thinking. If anything, it is only likely to heighten resentment and to strengthen resolve against the state. To make matters worse, there have been repeated reports of Moroccan prisons becoming major radicalization centers on account of the large numbers of Salafist prisoners being held. Furthermore, the seemingly exaggerated numbers of arrests have given rise to the suggestion that Morocco is simply doing the bidding of the United States in the war on terrorism, especially in the case of those arrested for recruiting for the Iraqi jihad—an act considered by many Moroccans as a noble cause and religious duty. This, too, is only likely to increase frustration against the state.

Similarly, it seems difficult to imagine how the monarchy’s current reliance upon its old strategy of trying to counter one religious trend by strengthening another will have any real impact amidst the desperation of the shantytowns. Its recent bid to train women preachers (known as the *mourchidat*), for example, who can perform all the functions of a male imam except for leading prayers, with the aim that they will go into the community and promote more traditional Maliki Islam, is unlikely to have any far reaching effect. Similarly, the push to bolster traditional Sufi tariqas is likely to have limited impact given that such tariqas are viewed even by the more moderate Islamist currents as contravening what they consider to be “true Islam” and are regarded by those of a more militant nature as completely

sacrilegious. It is true that these types of initiatives may enable the state to gain greater control over mosques and public religious spaces, yet the official religious discourse will struggle hard to compete with the satellite channels such as Iqraa that have become hugely popular in the shantytowns where, in spite of the poverty, satellite dishes still dominate the neighborhoods and seem to provide the main source of entertainment.

Moreover, all the underlying conditions that fuel support for militancy are still very much present. In spite of some half-hearted development attempts, the poverty, lack of education, sense of alienation and social injustice will continue to feed an appetite for a simplistic rejectionist ideology that provides answers and a meaning to life. Of course, one should not overplay the threat in Morocco, as this current represents a minority of the population and any major Islamist uprising is unlikely. Yet, it would not be surprising if more cells appear in the future or if a bomb explodes in the heart of a tourist center such as Marrakech. Indeed, as far as militant Islam is concerned, Morocco can no longer claim to be the exception to the rule in North Africa.

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⁶ Personal interviews, families of those convicted on terrorism charges, Ain Sebha, Casablanca, April 2008.

⁷ Personal interview, Mohamed Darif, Moroccan academic, Casablanca, April 2008.

⁸ List of prisoners on terrorism charges collected by Moroccan human rights group and acquired by author in 2008.

⁹ Personal interview, wife of terrorism suspect, Ain Sebha, Casablanca, April 2008.

After Action Report: Nuanced Diplomacy in Zerok, Afghanistan

By Captain John G. Gibson, U.S. Army

ENEMY MACHINE GUN FIRE and Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) slammed into my convoy as two tracer rounds punched through the turret of my up armored vehicle. My third firefight in four days and the summer was only starting. It was mid-June 2007 in the mountains of the sprawling Paktika Province. I quickly realized that the enemy knew my name, number of vehicles, departure times and plans; I had just left a meeting with its informants, the Zerok tribal *shura*.

I was a company commander responsible for Sar Hawzeh, Naka and Zerok districts in northern Paktika Province. Zerok district is part of the Zadran tribal arc. The Zadran tribes span from the mountains of Pakistan's Waziristan tribal areas to the Afghan cities of Khost and Ghazni. The Zadran claim, as one of their own, the pro-Taliban leader Jalaluddin Haqqani. After six years of progress in Afghanistan, Zerok district remained a haven for foreign fighters, Taliban, Haqqani network fighters and corrupt government officials. In May 2007, however, the 10th Mountain Division created a series of small combat outposts near and along the Afghan-Pakistan border, and I inherited a combat outpost called Zerok COP. The outpost housed a small number of paratroopers and a large mortar tube. It was co-located with an Afghan National Army (ANA) contingent and shared a wall with the Zerok District Center. I was able to quickly interact with the tribal leaders (the *shura*) and the district governor. Upon the departure of my counterpart, the Zerok COP was ready for operations. Zerok district would become the setting for a lesson in corruption, violence and hope.

Identify the Problem

Zerok district sits as the most northern district in Paktika Province. Paktika comprises 18 districts that create a border province in the southeast of Afghanistan. The capital is the city of Sharona. Nine districts form eastern Paktika, the Area of Operation Eagle. Zerok district consists of two main unpaved roads, 9,000-11,000 foot mountains, and people from the Zadran

tribe. Two sub-tribes in Zerok make up the population base of the district. The people subsist on farming and small trade. The district is approximately 33 square miles and sits just 12 miles from the Pakistan border.

Corruption and collusion were the bedrock of Taliban operations focused on the destabilization of Zerok district. The first three weeks of my deployment consisted of several operations designed to simply assess the environment and create relationships with local district leaders, Afghan National Police, elders and *shura* members. Counter-insurgency doctrine states that creating separation between the

“The members of the shura began to claim allegiance to the government and provide names of contractors. The contracts began, and for the first time in a year attacks stopped.”

enemy and the people is the first step of transforming the environment. I spent the month of May and the first two weeks of June 2007 attempting to create separation by using a technique called Key Leader Engagement (KLE), or Village Engagement (VE). My company completed a series of patrols focused on meeting as many Afghans as possible in the neighboring district of Naka.

I had one platoon at the Zerok COP and planned to re-enforce the outpost with my headquarters, another platoon and several jingle trucks.¹ On June 13, however, one of my platoons responded to an attack along the only useable road leading to the Zerok COP. Enemy fighters engaged a combat engineer route assessment patrol with machine gun, RPG and AK-74 fire. My platoon responded and was also engaged in a firefight with the same insurgents. The following day, my headquarters, several jingle trucks, an ANA platoon and a U.S. platoon moved up the same route to re-enforce the Zerok COP. That convoy

was also engaged. This time, the enemy was able to kill two ANA soldiers and damage several vehicles.

I immediately met with the elders, *shura* members, the district governor and the ANP chief at the Zerok District Center. I discussed security, governance and development in the district. I asked the *shura* members if they knew anything about the enemy forces operating in the area. The entire room responded with a resounding “no.” Frustrated by the response, I reminded the group that jobs and economic development were impossible without security.

I moved my entire convoy element back down the route to Forward Operating Base Orgun. My battalion was planning a major operation in the Zerok area and we were to start preparations and rehearsals during the next few days. We departed Zerok COP under cover of darkness. Five miles south of my outpost we were hit again. My convoy stayed the night at the location of the firefight. We spent the next 24 hours combing the area, talking to Afghans and searching for intelligence. A tip came from an unexpected source. One of my paratroopers received a tip from a police officer at the Zerok COP. Sharing a coveted American cigarette, the policeman told us that the Taliban were in the district center and knew the exact moment our patrol departed the COP for FOB Orgun. It turned out that enemy forces were operating in the district center that shared a wall with my combat outpost. This, of course, caused me to suspect that many of my Afghan leaders were enemy or openly supporting them.

Taking a Hard Line: No Development

My district was rife with enemy corruption and active collusion. I had two *shura* members and a district governor that began meeting with me in secret. One of my platoon leaders confirmed that the police chief actually allowed the Taliban to climb into the towers of the district center to survey our activities. The district governor was disillusioned with the provincial government by a personality conflict with the provincial governor. He was also ineffective due to the elders and members of the *shura* being a de facto Taliban organization. Only two individuals in Zerok pursued me to talk seriously about the problems

¹ “Jingle trucks” are local flat-bed vehicles that are used for transport purposes.

facing the people of Zerok district.

Two elders became my trusted agents and the core of my battalion commander's security *shura* initiative. LTC Michael R. Fenzel ordered us to develop trusted agents that would discuss important issues honestly. Not to be confused with intelligence sources, the security *shura* members talked about politics, personalities, development, governance and security. My two security *shura* men began to make secret trips to visit me, and over cups of hot chi told me how to proceed with Zerok. They explained that the Taliban were directly testing the will of my unit and, further, the task force. I decided to take a hard line with

“Remote districts, left unattended, provide the Taliban with sanctuary, food, men, weapons and fertile ground for continued opposition to the Afghan government.”

the Zerok *shura*. I called a meeting in the district center and admonished the tribal council for not providing security for the people of Zerok and informed the council that no new economic project would come to Zerok until security was established. I told the *shura* that my forces and the ANA would inform the people of Zerok that the *shura* decided no projects or humanitarian and civic assistance should come to the district. The meeting was terrible and the elders were upset.

The two security *shura* men were surprised at this decision. They later reported that the *shura* fully expected me to announce the start of an economic initiative. The head of the *shura*, Haji Tadai, was furious. Haji Tadai's nephew was a Taliban commander in northern Paktika Province, working for Haqqani. The situation in Zerok was treacherous, and the next 11 months proved difficult and violent. In 13 months, my company fired more than 3,590 120mm mortar rounds, directed 79 airstrikes, participated in 21 firefights, received 43 enemy rocket and mortar attacks and spent more than \$2 million on projects

in districts other than Zerok.

Small Steps of Progress

We continued to engage the population of Zerok in meetings, patrols and behind closed doors. My battalion was able to assist me in removing three corrupt police officials. The provincial government replaced the district governor twice. We talked to the people and continued to spend money in other districts. The elders continued to harbor the Taliban as attacks persisted and security waned. The resounding theme of each weekly meeting was projects. Repeatedly, the *shura* suggested that projects would benefit the district. I continued to remind the leaders that security was the only requirement. Meanwhile, my other two districts flourished with projects. New road construction, well construction projects, and humanitarian and civic assistance missions took place in each district, except Zerok.

In March 2008, I began to plan projects for Zerok district as preparation for improved security. A municipal water system for a small village, two new water wells, three mosque refurbishments, a flood abatement wall, a solar light array, two school roofs and a food distribution were announced to the *shura*. The projects represented an employment opportunity for more than 150 Afghans. The members of the *shura* began to claim allegiance to the government and provide names of contractors. The contracts began, and for the first time in a year attacks stopped. The district remained quiet for 47 days. Enemy activity was reported by locals in the bazaar, Afghan contractors and several *shura* members. I was confident that the population was effectively separated from the enemy. Real transformation seemed possible for the first time.

Conclusion

Zerok District is a microcosm of Afghanistan. Day-to-day life in the area has not changed drastically in the last 200 years. The people have vehicles and a few telephones, yet farming and family ties rule the day. The situation in Zerok is ripe for progress. For example, compare this small area with the progress of the area surrounding Kabul or even the provincial seat, Sharona. The government of Afghanistan makes improvements and reaches the people

near significant population centers, but small districts such as Zerok are not relevant to the provincial or national government. Nevertheless, the government must focus on remote, isolated, under-developed districts. Taliban and forces opposed to the Afghan government place critical importance on the mental and physical disposition of districts such as Zerok. Remote districts, left unattended, provide the Taliban with sanctuary, food, men, weapons and fertile ground for continued opposition to the Afghan government. Projection of Afghan security and Afghan governance in the sanctuary of an insurgent force will sway the people of Zerok far greater than a thousand projects or an outpost. I often thought about the challenges of leaders in past conflicts and kept returning to this quote by T.E. Lawrence from *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*: “[War] upon rebellion was messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife.” War in districts such as Zerok is slow and messy indeed.

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Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

June 16, 2008 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. government designated the Philippines-based group Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM) as “specially designated global terrorists.” The decision will freeze the assets of RSM and its leaders. On June 4, the United Nations had previously declared that the RSM was linked to al-Qa`ida. – *Bloomberg, June 16*

June 16, 2008 (IRAQ): Four bombs targeting homes and vehicles of Iraqi security force members detonated simultaneously in Mosul, Ninawa Province. One policeman was killed. – *Reuters, June 16*

June 16, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Approximately 500 Taliban fighters seized control of seven villages in Kandahar Province’s Arghandab district. It is believed that some of the fighters were recently freed during the June 13 Sarposa prison break. Afghan and NATO forces, however, dispute the high number of Taliban troops. – *Washington Post, June 17*

June 17, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber on a motorcycle attacked a checkpoint in Baghdad, killing four anti-al-Qa`ida Sunni fighters. – *Bloomberg, June 17*

June 17, 2008 (IRAQ): A truck bomb exploded in a bustling market in a predominately Shi’a area of Baghdad, killing 63 people. The U.S. military believes that the attack was actually carried out by a Shi’a splinter group led by Haydar Mehdi Khadum al-Fawadi (also known as Haydar al-Majidi) in order to “incite (Shiite) violence against Sunnis; that his intent was to disrupt Sunni resettlement in Hurriyah in order to maintain extortion of real estate rental income to support his nefarious activities.” – *Reuters, June 17; AP, June 19*

June 17, 2008 (IRAQ): A car bomb exploded outside the police headquarters in Ba`quba, Diyala Province, killing one policeman. – *Reuters, June 17*

June 17, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters destroyed bridges in Arghandab district in anticipation of an Afghan government and NATO military assault

on their positions. The fighters also mined roads leading into the Taliban occupied villages, which were seized on June 16. – *AFP, June 17*

June 17, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Four British soldiers were killed in an explosion in Lashkar Gah, Helmand Province. The Taliban took credit for the operation. – *CNN, June 18*

June 17, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): The Abu Sayyaf Group released well-known journalist Ces Drilon, her cameraman and a university professor, all of whom had been held hostage since June 8. They were freed on Jolo Island. The hostages recounted their experience, saying that the ASG fighters, some of whom were as young as 12-years-old, threatened to behead them. Philippine authorities said that at least \$112,700 was paid in ransom in exchange for the release. – *AP, June 18; Reuters, June 20*

June 17, 2008 (UNITED KINGDOM): A prominent extremist Jordanian cleric with suspected ties to al-Qa`ida was released on bail. The cleric, Abu Qatada, has been labeled Usama bin Ladin’s “spiritual ambassador in Europe,” yet British courts have ruled that he cannot be deported back to Jordan and therefore should be released from detention in the absence of a conviction or trial. Nevertheless, British judges recognize that Abu Qatada is still a security threat and have ordered him to a 22-hour per day house arrest. He is prohibited from using a cell phone or computer and is not allowed to connect to the internet. – *Reuters, June 18*

June 18, 2008 (UNITED KINGDOM): Home Secretary Jacqui Smith told reporters that an appeal would be filed against a ruling that prevents authorities from deporting extremist Jordanian cleric Abu Qatada, who was freed on bail—albeit on strict house arrest—on June 17. Smith said, “I am appealing to the House of Lords to reverse the decision that it is not safe to deport [Abu] Qatada and the other Jordanian cases.” – *BBC News, June 18*

June 18, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan and NATO forces launched a major offensive against Taliban positions in Arghandab district in Kandahar Province. – *Washington Post, June 19*

June 18, 2008 (JORDAN): A Jordanian military court sentenced Ziad Khalaf Raja al-Karbouly, an Iraqi al-Qa`ida operative, to death for planning terrorist attacks on Jordanians in Iraq. According to an AP report, “The ruling was the second time the court had sentenced al-Karbouly to death in the case. Following the initial verdict in March 2007, a Jordanian Appeals Court asked military judges to retry him to verify his claims that he suffered a mental illness.” – *AP, June 18*

June 18, 2008 (THAILAND): A roadside bomb ripped through a police vehicle in Pattani Province, killing a police colonel and his driver. After the explosion, insurgents immediately opened fire, wounding five policemen. – *Reuters, June 19*

June 19, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): NATO and Afghan government officials announced that the Taliban have been cleared from the villages they recently seized in Arghandab district in Kandahar Province. Approximately 1,000 NATO and Afghan soldiers were part of the counter-offensive against Taliban forces. An Afghan official said that 56 Taliban fighters were killed, many of them foreigners; the actual death count may be much higher. An ISAF spokesman said that the joint forces are now in the “closing stage of the operation.” – *AFP, June 18*

June 19, 2008 (GERMANY): A German court sentenced Ibrahim Raschid to three years in prison for spreading internet links to audio and video messages of al-Qa`ida leaders. The Iraqi refugee was arrested in October 2006. Speaking about the sentencing, a prosecutor said, “For the first time, a German court has appraised the domain of Islamist activities on the internet and shown that they are punishable under German law.” – *AP, June 20*

June 20, 2008 (UNITED KINGDOM): A British court ruled that extremist Muslim cleric Abu Hamza should be extradited to the United States where he faces terrorism charges. The Egyptian-born Abu Hamza had been fighting the U.S. extradition request in British courts, but the judges ruled against him. At one point the cleric ran the Finsbury Park Mosque in north London. – *guardian.co.uk, June 20*

June 20, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber exploded at a checkpoint in Mosul, wounding at least five policemen. – *CNN, June 20*

June 20, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives near a NATO convoy in Gereshk district of Helmand Province. At least five civilians and one NATO soldier were killed. – *International Herald Tribune, June 20*

June 20, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters ambushed U.S.-led coalition forces in Zerok district of Paktika Province, near the Pakistani border. Approximately 55 Taliban fighters were killed in the engagement. – *Reuters, June 23*

June 20, 2008 (SOMALIA): Somali opposition and military leader Yusuf “Indha Ade” Mohamed Siad told a Mogadishu-based radio station that he rejects the recent June 9 peace deal between Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government and the opposition Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia. “I know nothing about that peace deal, therefore it does not concern us,” he said, adding that “the fighting will continue until Somalia is liberated from Ethiopian troops.” – *Garowe Online, June 20*

June 21, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): An IED killed four soldiers from the U.S.-led coalition in Kandahar Province. – *Reuters, June 21*

June 21, 2008 (THAILAND): Suspected Muslim insurgents boarded a train as it passed through Yala Province and proceeded to kill three civilian train employees and one policeman. – *AP, June 22*

June 22, 2008 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber detonated her explosives outside a government compound in Ba`quba, Diyala Province. The explosion killed at least 15 people. – *AP, June 23*

June 22, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber targeted a police checkpoint in Mosul, Ninawa Province, leaving 14 people wounded. – *AP, June 23*

June 22, 2008 (IRAQ): A mortar attack killed 10 members of an Awakening Council in Udaim, Diyala Province. – *AP, June 23*

June 22, 2008 (SOMALIA): A video statement of al-Qa`ida operative Abu Yahya al-Libi was posted on Islamist web forums, in which the leader urges Islamist fighters in Somalia to fight a United Nations peacekeeping force that may soon be deployed there, and to establish an Islamic state in the country. He criticized the June 9 peace deal between Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government and the opposition Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia. – *AP, June 23*

June 23, 2008 (SOMALIA): The deputy chairman of the Somali opposition group, the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS), Abdirahman Abdishakur, criticized a June 22 statement by al-Qa`ida operative Abu Yahya al-Libi, in which Abu Yahya denounced the June 9 peace deal between the ARS and Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government. “I do not think we are interested in al-Qaida’s statements and they have nothing to do with Somali issues,” Abdishakur said. “Al-Qaida has not got any base in Somalia and they always issue statements against any peace process. I do not think their statements are relevant to the Somali people.” – *Voice of America, June 23*

June 23, 2008 (IRAQ): Two U.S. soldiers were killed in Madain (also known as Salman Pak) in Baghdad Province after a disgruntled local official opened fire on them after a municipal council meeting. According to one witness, “The attacker came out of his car with an AK-47 rifle in his hand and started firing on the American soldiers until he was killed by the return fire.” Conflicting accounts in press reports state that the assailant was either formerly or currently a member of the municipal council. – *AP, June 24*

June 23, 2008 (IRAQ): A roadside bomb exploded next to an Awakening Council patrol in Ba`quba, Diyala Province, killing two of the council members. – *AP, June 24*

June 23, 2008 (THAILAND): The State Railway of Thailand suspended services in Thailand’s three southernmost provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat as a result of the June 21 killings of train employees by suspected Muslim separatist insurgents. – *Bangkok Post, June 23*

June 23, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber attacked an Italian NATO convoy in Shindand district of Herat Province, killing five civilians. – *Reuters, June 23*

June 23, 2008 (THAILAND): Approximately 200 soldiers and police raided a jungle hideout used by Muslim separatist insurgents in Yala Province, killing six of the fighters. – *Reuters, June 23*

June 24, 2008 (IRAQ): U.S.-led coalition forces killed al-Qa`ida in Iraq’s *amir* for Mosul, according to a press statement from Multinational Force-Iraq. The leader’s name was later identified as Abu Khalaf. – *MNFI-Iraq.com, June 24; AP, June 26*

June 24, 2008 (IRAQ): A bomb ripped through a Baghdad council meeting, killing 10 people. The dead included two U.S. government employees and two U.S. soldiers. The U.S. military blamed “rogue elements” of the Mahdi Army. – *Reuters, June 24*

June 24, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Germany announced that it would increase the number of its soldiers available for use in Afghanistan by 1,000. Once the change takes effect, Germany will have 4,500 soldiers deployed to the country. According to one press report, however, “Some military experts questioned how much help the additional German forces could provide if they were not permitted to engage in the heaviest fighting.” – *International Herald Tribune, June 25*

June 25, 2008 (PAKISTAN): The bodies of 22 members of a pro-government “peace committee,” who had all been killed by Taliban forces loyal to Baitullah Mehsud, were discovered in South Waziristan Agency. Mehsud’s men captured the town on June 23 and rounded up pro-government members of the Bhattani tribe. The Taliban began withdrawing from the town on June 24. According to an AFP report, “Clashes broke out in Jandola on Monday [June 23] between followers of pro-government tribal elder, Commander Turkistani, and militants belonging to Mehsud’s tribe after rockets were fired at the home of a peace committee member. Tensions had been high between the groups for months.” – *Reuters, June 25; Daily Times, June 25; AFP, June 26*

June 25, 2008 (YEMEN): Yemeni authorities announced the arrest of Haytham bin Saad, identified as an important member of al-Qa`ida in Yemen. The arrest, which took place in Hadramawt Province, included four of Bin Saad's bodyguards. – *Saba, June 25*

June 25, 2008 (SAUDI ARABIA): The Interior Ministry revealed that authorities had arrested 701 suspected al-Qa`ida-linked militants since the beginning of 2008. Out of the 701, 520 remain in custody, while 181 were released due to lack of evidence tying them to the terrorist group. – *AP, June 25*

June 25, 2008 (THAILAND): Five Thai Army soldiers were wounded when a remotely-detonated bomb exploded under their vehicle in Yala Province. – *TNA, June 25*

June 25, 2008 (SOMALIA): Nine police officers, including the Daynile district deputy police commander, were found dead inside a Mogadishu police station. The al-Shabab insurgent group was blamed for the killings. – *Garowe Online, June 26*

June 26, 2008 (UNITED STATES): A U.S. military judge denied a defense motion to delay the trial of Salim Hamdan, a former driver for Usama bin Ladin held at Guantanamo Bay. Pretrial hearings will begin on July 14, and the trial will start shortly after. – *AP, June 27*

June 26, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber targeted a municipal office in Garma in Anbar Province, killing the local mayor and at least 14 members of an anti-al-Qa`ida Awakening group. Three U.S. Marines were also killed. The Islamic State of Iraq later claimed credit for the operation. – *AFP, June 26; Los Angeles Times, June 26; AP, June 28*

June 26, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): In response to an attack while on patrol, Afghan and U.S.-led coalition troops killed 32 Taliban fighters in Uruzgan Province. – *Reuters, June 28*

June 26, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): Suspected Abu Sayyaf Group fighters kidnapped five employees of an electronics company on Basilan Island in the southern Philippines. One of the hostages was released shortly after capture due to his tribal affiliation. – *AP, June 26*

June 26, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): The head of the Philippines' armed forces, General Alexander Yano, told reporters that the Abu Sayyaf Group had been reduced to "plain bandits" as a result of a "leadership vacuum." According to Yano, "We still look at them as a loose organization with some splinter groups, in fact, some of them may be conducting their own operations, and now, has degenerated into a money-making group devoid of any ideology or cause." – *Philippine Inquirer, June 26*

June 26, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): Military officials announced the capture of Jul Akram Hadjail (also known as Dodong), an Abu Sayyaf Group fighter who had an estimated \$3,300 bounty. According to authorities, the suspect, who was captured near Jolo airport in Sulu Province, may have been involved in the June 8 kidnapping of ABS-CBN correspondent Ces Drilon and her team. – *GMANews.tv, June 27*

June 28, 2008 (IRAQ): Iraqi police raided a house on the outskirts of Samarra, Salah al-Din Province, and arrested 11 suspected al-Qa`ida operatives. In the house, police discovered the bodies of seven Iraqis who had been tortured and killed. – *Reuters, June 28*

June 28, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan leader Baitullah Mehsud suspended peace talks with the government "because the government is constantly using force against us...if the government takes any military action we are also ready for martyrdom." Mehsud had previously announced a unilateral cease-fire in April, and his latest announcement came after Pakistan's military "moved paramilitary troops to clear the area [outside of Peshawar] of militants and establish the writ of the government." – *AFP, June 28*

June 28, 2008 (YEMEN): A Yemeni court refused to grant bail to al-Qa`ida operative Jabir al-Banna. He will return to court on October 11 when the verdict on his appeal is ready. – *AFP, June 28*

June 28, 2008 (THAILAND): Rail service was restored to Thailand's three southern-most provinces. Service was suspended on June 23 in response to a June 21 insurgent attack on train personnel. – *TNA, June 28*

June 28, 2008 (SOMALIA): Islamist insurgents took control of the strategic town of Beledweyne, according to the town's residents. Reports said that the fighters were unopposed since Ethiopian and Transitional Federal Government troops were not present. – *AP, June 29*

June 29, 2008 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber attempted to blow up an Awakening Council headquarters in Diyala Province, but her explosives detonated prematurely after coming under fire by Iraqi guards. One council member was wounded. – *AP, June 29*

June 29, 2008 (IRAQ): A truck bomb detonated in Duluiyah in Salah al-Din Province, killing seven policemen and a member of an Awakening Council. Due to conflicting reports, it is unclear whether the bomb was remotely detonated or detonated by a suicide bomber. – *AP, June 29; Reuters, June 29*

June 29, 2008 (UNITED KINGDOM): A new report by MI5 warned that al-Qa`ida-linked operatives in the United Kingdom may be planning to purchase former ambulances and police vehicles to utilize them as suicide car bombs. According to one press report, "Every year dozens of police cars, ambulances and fire engines are sold. Some are fully marked and can be bought for as little as £1,500." – *The Sunday Times, June 29*

June 30, 2008 (GLOBAL): The UN Security Council voted to extend sanctions against the Taliban and al-Qa`ida for 18 months. According to one press report, "The Security Council mandate is a measure to prevent funds and other financial assets from reaching al-Qa`ida and the Taliban or any satellite organization with ties to the terrorist networks." – *UPI, July 1*

June 30, 2008 (UNITED STATES): The Pentagon announced that it would seek the death penalty against Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, a Saudi of Yemeni descent who is charged with "organizing and directing" the 2000 bombing of the USS *Cole* in Yemen. The al-Qa`ida operative is currently being held at Guantanamo Bay. – *AP, June 30*

June 30, 2008 (IRAQ): Gunmen attacked a checkpoint in Mosul, Ninawa Province, killing two Iraqi soldiers. – *Reuters, June 30*

June 30, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): U.S.-led coalition troops engaged a grouping of Taliban militants near the border with Pakistan, killing 33 of them with helicopter gunships and fighter jets. The incident occurred in Khost Province. – *AFP, June 30*

July 1, 2008 (NORTH AFRICA): According to new statements made by al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) leader Abdelmalek Droukdel, “American interests are legitimate targets” because AQIM “found America building military bases in the south of our country [Algeria] and conducting military exercises, and plundering our oil and planning to get our gas.” – *Arab Times, June 2*

July 1, 2008 (SPAIN): Authorities arrested three men of Algerian origin on suspicion of raising money for al-Qa`ida and other Islamist terrorist groups. The men were arrested in Huelva Province and in the Basque country. – *AP, July 1*

July 2, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Small-arms fire brought down a U.S. helicopter in Logar Province. The damaged helicopter landed safely, and the personnel were evacuated. Coalition forces then destroyed the disabled helicopter with precision-guided munitions. – *Reuters, July 2*

July 2, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber attempted to kill Nimroz Province Governor Ghulam Dastagir Azad, killing three police officers and one civilian during the attack. The governor was not wounded. – *AP, July 2*

July 2, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): During a 10-hour clash in Badghis Province, NATO and Afghan forces killed at least 25 Taliban militants. – *AFP, July 3*

July 2, 2008 (MOROCCO): Morocco’s state news agency announced that authorities apprehended 35 members of a group accused of sending suicide bomb volunteers to al-Qa`ida in Iraq and to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. Additionally, authorities accused the group of also planning attacks inside Morocco. – *Reuters, July 2*

July 3, 2008 (UNITED KINGDOM): UK authorities released from prison an Algerian who is suspected of al-

Qa`ida connections and for planning bomb attacks in the United States and France. The suspect, identified as “U,” served more than seven years in jail and is now under strict house arrest while he fights deportation procedures. According to one press report, “U was arrested at London’s Heathrow airport in February 2001 when attempting to fly to Saudi Arabia on a false passport. The British government calls him a ‘leading organiser and facilitator of terrorist activity aimed mainly at overseas targets,’ with direct links to bin Laden and other senior al Qaeda figures.” – *Reuters, July 3*

July 3, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Suspected Taliban gunmen killed eight Afghan police officers at a checkpoint between Zahri and Panjwaii districts in Kandahar Province. – *CBCNews.ca, July 4*

July 3, 2008 (PAKISTAN): The United Kingdom announced that it would double its aid program for Pakistan to help the country combat extremism in its tribal areas on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Assistance—which focuses on relieving poverty and improving health care and education—will reach \$950 million by 2011. – *Bloomberg, July 4*

July 3, 2008 (SAUDI ARABIA): Saudi Arabia’s grand mufti, Shaykh Abdul Aziz Al al-Sheikh, called on Saudi citizens to take the al-Qa`ida threat seriously and to cooperate with the country’s security services. “You should be aware that these militants, who claim to work for the cause of Islam and defend Muslims, actually hide their vested interests and vicious objectives...Aggressions against Muslims and occupation of land... cannot be a justification for explosions, denouncing other Muslims as infidels and disobeying the Muslim social consensus...Obeying the Muslim ruler without sedition is as a basic principle of Muslims who follow the path of the Prophet.” – *Arab News, July 4; Reuters, July 3*

July 4, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Gunmen killed Habibullah Sanzenai, a member of Afghanistan’s lower house of parliament for Kandahar, as he returned home in Kandahar Province. – *Reuters, July 5*

July 5, 2008 (IRAQ): Gunmen shot and killed two off-duty policemen in a market in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *Reuters, July 5*

July 5, 2008 (IRAQ): Iraqi police killed four militants near Tikrit, Salah al-Din Province. Two of the killed were foreigners. – *Reuters, July 5*

July 5, 2008 (THAILAND): Suspected insurgents shot up a café in Yala Province, killing three customers. The café was regularly frequented by police and soldiers. – *AP, July 5*

July 6, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a group of policemen in Islamabad during a commemoration of the first anniversary of when Pakistani security forces stormed the *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque). The bomber killed 15 people, 13 of whom were police. It is unclear who was responsible for the attack. – *Financial Times, July 6; AFP, July 6*

July 6, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A report published in *Dawn* alleges that Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has established a Shari’a court in Bajaur Agency, “and a large number of people are using them [TTP] to get disputes resolved, instead of waiting for action by the tribal administration.” – *Dawn, July 6*

July 6, 2008 (SOMALIA): Osman Ali Ahmed, the head of the UN Development Program in Mogadishu, was gunned down as he left a mosque in the Somali capital. It is suspected that Islamist fighters were behind the attack. – *AFP, July 7*

July 7, 2008 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber detonated her explosives at a market in Ba`quba, Diyala Province, killing nine people. – *Reuters, July 7*

July 7, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into the gates of the Indian Embassy in Kabul, killing at least 58 people. Since the attack, Afghan government officials have implied that Pakistani government elements may have been behind the operation. The Taliban have denied involvement. – *Reuters, July 7; AFP, July 8; AP, July 10*

July 7, 2008 (THAILAND): Suspected Muslim insurgents opened fire on a school bus in Pattani Province, killing two paramilitary rangers and wounding three students. – *AP, July 7*

July 8, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb killed an Australian

soldier in Uruzgan Province. – *Reuters*, July 9

July 8, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb killed a U.S. soldier in Kunar Province. – *Reuters*, July 9

July 9, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into the convoy of Iraqi General Riyadh Jalal Tauffiq, the head of security operations in Mosul and Ninawa Province. The attack, which occurred in Mosul, killed seven people, although the general was not harmed. – *AFP*, July 9

July 9, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants attempted to abduct aid workers building a well in Faryab Province, yet were driven away by a group of villagers who used a machine gun and other weapons to kill two of the Taliban fighters. One of the killed militants was the Taliban-appointed shadow governor for the province. – *AP*, July 10

July 9, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani authorities signed a peace deal with an 18-member group of tribal elders in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The tribal leaders had consulted with militant leader Mangal Bagh before the deal was signed. – *AFP*, July 10

July 9, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Police arrested an aide to Tehrik-i-Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud. The aide, known as Rafiuddin, was captured with four other associates while traveling in South Waziristan Agency. – *AP*, July 11

July 9, 2008 (YEMEN): Al-Qa`ida's wing in Yemen posted a statement on Islamist internet forums calling for the kidnappings of tourists in the country. The purpose of the kidnappings, the statement read, is to gain leverage against the Yemeni government so that it releases jailed al-Qa`ida-affiliated militants. – *Reuters*, July 9

July 9, 2008 (ISRAEL): Israeli authorities arrested two Israeli Bedouin Arabs on accusations that they provided strategic information, such as details on army bases, commercial buildings and an airport, to al-Qa`ida. According to an AP report, the allegations marked "the first time Israel has accused any citizens of cooperating with the global

terror network [al-Qa`ida]." – *AP*, July 9

July 9, 2008 (TURKEY): Suspected al-Qa`ida militants attacked a police guard post outside the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul, killing three police officers and losing three of their own. At least two of the attackers were Turkish nationals. – *AP*, July 9

July 10, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into an Iraqi Army vehicle in western Baghdad, killing two people. – *Voice of America*, July 10

July 10, 2008 (IRAQ): Gunmen shot to death the head of the National Identity Department for Ninawa Province. The incident occurred in Mosul. – *Reuters*, July 10

July 10, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): An IED killed two NATO soldiers in Paktika Province. – *Reuters*, July 11

July 10, 2008 (TURKEY): Turkish authorities detained four people suspected of involvement in the July 9 attack on the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul. Authorities are still investigating whether al-Qa`ida was involved in the operation. – *AP*, July 10

July 10, 2008 (MOROCCO): Hicham Doukali, a Moroccan would-be suicide bomber who attempted to blow up a bus filled with U.S., Italian and French tourists on August 13, 2007, was sentenced to life in prison. During the botched attack, the bus door was closed just before he boarded, causing him to blow off his own arm. A co-conspirator, Hassan Azougar, received a 10-year sentence. – *news24.com*, July 10

July 10, 2008 (PHILIPPINES): Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) militants released from captivity four electric company workers who were kidnapped on June 26. Authorities refused to reveal whether a ransom was paid in exchange for their release. – *AP*, July 11

July 11, 2008 (IRAQ): Iraqi authorities foiled a chlorine bomb attack after seizing a truck filled with chlorine bottles and explosives in Samarra, Salah al-Din Province. During the encounter, four militants were killed. – *Reuters*, July 11

July 11, 2008 (IRAQ): A roadside bomb wounded six civilians in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *Reuters*, July 11

July 11, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Maulvi Omar, a spokesman for Tehrik-i-Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud, warned that the Taliban would begin killing members of the security forces that it is holding hostage. To prevent the executions, the militant group is demanding the release of a number of Taliban militants held in Pakistani jails. The demand comes shortly after a top aide for Mehsud, Rafiuddin, was captured by authorities. – *USA Today*, July 12

July 11, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A new audio statement allegedly from al-Qa`ida commander Abu Yahya al-Libi was posted on Islamist web forums. In the statement, Abu Yahya threatens to increase attacks on international forces in Afghanistan and says that militants are "determined to turn the upcoming winter to hell for the infidels." – *AP*, July 11

July 11, 2008 (MOROCCO): Abdelhak Bassou, the head of Morocco's Renseignements Generaux domestic intelligence agency, told the AP that Moroccan security forces foiled a terrorist plot to attack tourists this summer, and said that it has become "near-daily work" to find and dismantle terrorist cells in the kingdom. – *AP*, July 11

July 12, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed two soldiers and a child in Helmand Province. – *Reuters*, July 12

July 12, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters killed two female police detectives and left their bodies in a graveyard ditch in Ghazni Province. – *Reuters*, July 13

July 12, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb killed three police officers in Zabul Province. – *Reuters*, July 13

July 12, 2008 (PAKISTAN): Pro-Taliban fighters ambushed a convoy of paramilitary soldiers in Hangu District of the North-West Frontier Province, killing at least 16 of them. – *The Age*, July 13; *Reuters*, July 12

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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.

July 13, 2008 (IRAQ): Three policemen were killed after two roadside bombs exploded in Falluja, Anbar Province. – *Reuters, July 13*

July 13, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Nearly 200 Taliban fighters attacked a remote American-run military outpost in Kunar Province, near the border with Pakistan. During the engagement, nine U.S. soldiers were killed. The insurgents managed to partially breach the compound. Taliban casualties were high. – *New York Times, July 15*

July 13, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber on a motorcycle detonated his explosives next to a police patrol in Uruzgan Province, killing 24 people, 19 of whom were civilians. – *AP, July 13*

July 13, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb killed six Afghans working as guards for a Western security firm in Helmand Province. – *Reuters, July 14*

July 13, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban gunmen kidnapped Abdul Wali, a member of parliament, in Logar Province. – *AP, July 13; AFP, July 14*

July 13, 2008 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber injured four people at a Shi'a religious gathering in Dera Ismail Khan in the North-West Frontier Province. – *AHN, July 13; Daily Times, July 14*

July 14, 2008 (IRAQ): Police killed a suicide bomber as he approached their checkpoint in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *Reuters, July 14*

July 14, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters killed eight civilian passengers seized from vehicles in Ghazni Province. A Taliban source told Reuters that the killed civilians were acting as spies for U.S.-led forces. – *Reuters, July 15*

July 14, 2008 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb killed six civilians in Paktika Province. – *Reuters, July 15*

July 15, 2008 (IRAQ): Two suicide bombers targeted a military recruitment center in Diyala Province. The bombs killed 27 people, 20 of whom were police recruits. – *Reuters, July 15*

July 15, 2008 (IRAQ): A U.S. soldier was killed by an explosive device during

operations in Ba`quba, Diyala Province. – *Reuters, July 15*

July 15, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber killed eight people in an attack on a police checkpoint in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *Reuters, July 15*

July 15, 2008 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives in a crowded area in Mosul, Ninawa Province, killing four people. – *Reuters, July 15*

July 15, 2008 (THAILAND): Thailand's cabinet extended emergency rule in the country's three southern-most provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat. Emergency rule has been in place since July 2005 due to ongoing separatist violence. – *AFP, July 15*