



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

OBJECTIVE . RELEVANT . RIGOROUS

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## About the CTC Sentinel

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

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## Comparing the U.S. and Soviet Experiences in Afghanistan

By Bruce Riedel



Soldiers with the 101st Division Special Troops Battalion, 101st Airborne. - Photo Courtesy of the U.S. Army

A COUNTRY RARELY FIGHTS the same war twice in one generation, especially from opposite sides. Yet that in many ways describes the U.S. role in Afghanistan today. In the 1980s, the Central Intelligence Agency, working from a safe haven in Pakistan, engineered the largest covert operation in its history to help defeat the Soviet 40<sup>th</sup> Red Army in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> Today,

the United States is fighting a Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan that operates from a safe haven in Pakistan. Many suggest that the outcome will be the same for the United States as it was for the Soviet Union—ultimate defeat at the hands of the insurgency. Pakistan's role as a safe haven is remarkably consistent in both conflicts, but focusing exclusively on that similarity misses the fundamental differences between the two wars. This article will address those differences, and will also assess how Pakistan's role is impacting the United States' possibilities for success today.

1 The story of the first Afghan war has been told from many angles. George Crile's *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of how the Wildest Man in Congress and a Rogue CIA Agent Changed the History of our Times* underplays Ronald Reagan's and Bill Casey's role but is full of insights into the U.S. side of the war. Robert Gates' memoirs *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How they Won the Cold War* has a more balanced view. Also important is Milt Bearden's two books on the war, *The Main Enemy: The Inside Story of the CIA's Final Showdown with the KGB* and *The Black Tulip: A Novel of the War in Afghanistan*. Bearden was the CIA chief of station in Islamabad at the end of the jihad.

The Soviet side of the war has long been neglected but finally received attention from Gregory Feifer in *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan*. Most important is the Pakistani version, written by the ISI commander of the battle, Mohammad Yousaf, with Mark Adkin in *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story* in which the CIA is a duplicitous and timid partner for the ISI.

### Goals and Objectives

The first and perhaps most critical difference between the two wars is over goals and objectives. The United States intervened in Afghanistan in 2001 on the side of the Northern Alliance to topple the Taliban Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan only after the country had been used as a base for the 9/11 attacks on the United States. The U.S. goal, endorsed by the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), was self-defense against a government that had allowed its territory to be used for an act of

**“While the Soviets faced a national uprising, the U.S.-led coalition faces a minority insurgency that is segregated from much of the country. Moscow’s task was much more difficult than the one facing NATO today.”**

war against another state. From the beginning, the United States has had no ambition to dominate or subjugate the Afghan people, or to stay in Afghanistan once the threat posed by al-Qa`ida and the Afghan Taliban is defeated. President Barack Obama reiterated this fact in his speech outlining the new U.S. policy for Afghanistan and Pakistan on March 27, 2009.<sup>2</sup>

The Soviet invasion in 1979 was a different matter. It is now understood that Moscow blundered into Afghanistan with little appreciation of the difficulties

2 In his March 27, 2009 speech, President Obama said: “We are not in Afghanistan to control that country or to dictate its future. We are in Afghanistan to confront a common enemy that threatens the United States, our friends and allies, and the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan who have suffered the most at the hands of violent extremists. So I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future.” See “President Obama’s Speech on Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *U.S. News & World Report*, March 27, 2009.

it would face.<sup>3</sup> Its goal was to shore up a communist regime that was on the edge of collapse in the face of a national uprising. The Soviet leadership wanted an Afghanistan that would be similar to other Soviet satellite states and under virtual Soviet imperial rule with only the façade of independence. The Soviets may also have had ambitions to use Afghanistan as a base to project authority further south.

The Soviet invasion and the attempt to impose communism on a rural and largely illiterate Islamic country with a history of xenophobia produced the predictable result: a mass national uprising. With the exception of small pockets of the urban middle class and a few minority regions—most notably the Uzbek province of Jowzjan where a tough local warlord, Abdul Rashid Dostum, raised a pro-Soviet militia—virtually the entire country was violently opposed to the new occupation and its atheist ideology.

In contrast, polls show most Afghans have supported the coalition forces that overthrew the Taliban, although that support is now dwindling as the coalition has failed to provide law and order and reconstruction.<sup>4</sup> The Taliban are not widely popular either; support for the Taliban is mostly restricted to the Pashtun belt in southern and eastern Afghanistan. It has virtually no appeal to the 60% of Afghans who are not Pashtun. Therefore, the Soviets’ most difficult battlespace—the famous Panjshir Valley, home of the legendary Ahmad Shah Massoud (the Lion of the Panjshir)—is today quiet and devoid of Taliban because it is an exclusively Tajik area.

In short, while the Soviets faced a national uprising, the U.S.-led coalition faces a minority insurgency that is segregated from much of the country. Moscow’s task was much more difficult than the one facing NATO today.

3 Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).

4 Anthony Cordesman, “Afghan Public Opinion and the Afghan War: Shifts by Region and Province,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 13, 2009.

### Tactics and Support

The Soviets responded to Afghan opposition with a ferocity and brutality that made the situation even worse. At least 1.5 million Afghans were killed, another five million or so fled the country to Iran and Pakistan (one out of three Afghans), and millions more were displaced inside the country. A country that began the war as one of the poorest in the world was systematically impoverished and even emptied of its people. The Soviet Air Force carpet bombed cities such as Kandahar, where the population fell from 250,000 to 25,000.<sup>5</sup> Millions of land mines were planted all over the country, with no records kept of where they had been laid. Nothing even approaching this level of horror is happening in Afghanistan today.

In part because of that brutality, the Soviet invasion was condemned by virtually the entire world except for its client states. The campaign to assist the Afghan insurgency, the mujahidin, enjoyed the backing of countries around the world including China, the United Kingdom, France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran and others.

NATO forces in Afghanistan today have the support of the United Nations and operate under a UN Security Council mandate. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), created by the United Nations in 2001, has troops from 41 countries currently in Afghanistan, including U.S. forces, NATO contributions, and troops from non-NATO states such as Australia, Sweden and the United Arab Emirates. Efforts are underway to get more states, especially in the Muslim world, to send troops.

Much of the hardest fighting in the current war has been conducted by non-American troops. The British in Helmand Province, the Canadians in Kandahar and the Dutch and Australians in Uruzgan have been fighting for the last several years in the heartland of the Taliban’s Pashtun belt. They have taken considerable casualties in the process. Indeed, for much of the last five years the principal battle against

5 On the cost of the war, see Robert Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), pp. 184-188, 223.

the al-Qa`ida enemy that attacked the United States in 2001 has been fought by American allies, while the United States' primary focus has been on al-Qa`ida in Iraq.

#### **The Role Played by Pakistan**

If the differences between the American and Russian experiences are significant, there is at least one major similarity: the role played by Pakistan. In the 1980s, President Zia ul-Huq agreed to support the mujahidin insurgency despite the enormous risk involved in provoking the Soviet Union, then the world's largest military power. The Soviets responded with an intense covert campaign to foment unrest inside

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Pakistan, especially in the border areas and in the refugee camps. Both the KGB and its Afghan ally, the KHAD, conducted terrorist attacks to bring pressure on Zia.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the Soviets used military power, especially its air force, to intimidate Pakistan.

Zia insisted that outside support for the mujahidin had to flow through Pakistani hands, principally via the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate of the Pakistani Army. The ISI sought exclusive access to the mujahidin. Outside players had little choice but to accept Zia's rules. Consequently, Pakistan served as the safe haven for the mujahidin, its logistical supply line and its advocate on the world stage.

Ironically, today Pakistan again acts as the safe haven for Afghan insurgents and their logistical supply line. The ISI is again the instrument by which

6 One of the most famous such attacks was on a logistics supply base the ISI had near Rawalpindi for the mujahidin, which was blown up by saboteurs in April 1988. More than 100 Pakistanis were killed, 1,000 injured and 10,000 tons of arms and ammunition destroyed. See Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story* (South Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2002), p. 220.

Pakistan maintains its links to the Afghan Taliban and other extremist organizations.<sup>7</sup> This should come as little surprise since in the 1990s the ISI was a critical factor in the creation and development of the Taliban; it only reluctantly agreed to distance itself from the Taliban after 9/11 under enormous U.S. pressure. It is now clear that the distancing is far from complete. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen has said, the ISI “has been very attached to many of these extreme organizations and in the long run they have got to completely cut ties with them in order to move in the right direction.”<sup>8</sup>

The key leadership node of the Afghan Taliban sanctuary in Pakistan is the Quetta *shura* council, named after the capital of Balochistan where the senior Taliban leadership, probably including Mullah Omar (the Taliban's leader since its founding), resides.<sup>9</sup> Quetta, a city of some two million, provides excellent cover for the Afghan Taliban leadership to operate and lead the insurgency. It is close to the Afghan border but remote from outsiders; few Westerners have access to the area.

Even more ironically, Pakistan serves as the major logistical supply line for NATO forces in Afghanistan. More than 80% of the supplies U.S. and other coalition forces depend on arrive via Pakistan from the port of Karachi. Geography effectively precludes another alternative unless the alliance is willing to rely on Russia or Iran to control its supply lines. Moreover, the ISI is also a key partner in the struggle against al-Qa`ida. The ISI has helped capture or kill several senior al-Qa`ida operatives, despite declining ISI assistance since the early years after 9/11. Without Pakistan's cooperation, many operations against al-Qa`ida would be much more difficult today.

Therefore, Pakistan has unusually strong leverage on both sides of the war in Afghanistan. President Obama's

7 Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, “Afghan Strikes by Taliban Get Pakistani Help, U.S. Aides Say,” *New York Times*, March 26, 2009; Bruce Riedel, “Pakistan and Terror: The Eye of the Storm,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618:1 (2008).

8 Mazzetti et al.; Riedel.  
9 Ibid.

new policy explicitly recognizes the critical role played by Pakistan and elevates the importance of working with Pakistan to shut down the safe havens in Balochistan and elsewhere along the Afghan-Pakistan border. He has promised to triple economic aid to Pakistan and provide military aid that is focused on counterinsurgency requirements such as helicopters for air mobility in the rugged border region.

For a number of reasons, Pakistan retains links to the Afghan Taliban despite the rising incidence of jihadist violence inside Pakistan. Most important is the army's calculation that Washington and Brussels do not have the political will to persevere in Afghanistan. It is assumed by many in Pakistan that American and European patience to fight it out in Afghanistan is eroding, an assumption reinforced by polls that show support for the conflict steadily declining on both sides of the

**“Pakistan must recognize that the existential threat to its freedoms comes from the jihadists. Only when the key players in Pakistan, both in the political parties and in the army, come to that conclusion will change occur.”**

Atlantic. Supporting the Afghan Taliban is thus a useful hedge in case NATO decides to withdrawal and give up the struggle. Pakistan would then have a relationship with the Pashtun future of southern and eastern Afghanistan and would have an asset in the struggle for post-NATO Afghanistan.

#### **Changing Pakistan's Calculations**

If the United States and its partners in Afghanistan demonstrate their resolve, especially with the additional forces en route to the battlefield this year, the calculation in Pakistan's military may change. The alliance needs to make clear to Islamabad that the Taliban will not succeed on the battlefield.

Unfortunately, the politics in Islamabad are working in the wrong direction. The Pakistani Taliban are getting stronger and the political parties are squabbling over power. The army remains preoccupied with India. Pakistan must recognize that the existential threat to its freedoms comes from the jihadists. Only when the key players in Pakistan, both in the political parties and in the army, come to that conclusion will change occur. The United States needs to engage intensively to convince them of this reality.

There is no inherent reason why the NATO and U.S. war in Afghanistan must follow the pattern of the Soviet war. The differences between the two outweigh the similarities, especially in what most Afghans want for their country. While pundits may find the cliché that Afghanistan is the graveyard of empire simplistically attractive, there is every reason to believe that smart policies can avoid such an outcome.

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## Quetta: The Headquarters of the Afghan Taliban

By Mukhtar A. Khan

IN MARCH 2009, the U.S. special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, told the BBC that “Quetta appears to be the headquarters for the leaders of the Taliban.” After the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Taliban leadership likely fled from Kandahar Province into Pakistan’s southern Balochistan Province.<sup>1</sup> For Mullah Omar and his senior aides, Balochistan’s capital of Quetta was the closest safe haven geographically and also the friendliest due to the cultural similarities it shares with southern Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>

Today, U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan’s Kandahar and Helmand provinces—located across the border from Pakistan’s Balochistan Province—are facing fierce resistance from the Taliban. It is believed that these fighters regularly cross the porous and mostly unguarded border to conduct attacks, and then slip back into their Pakistani safe havens in Balochistan. Afghan officials and Western analysts regularly allege that Mullah Omar and his Quetta *shura* council are sheltering in and around the city, from where they are planning and directing attacks across the border. To combat this problem, some analysts have suggested that the U.S. government expand Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) strikes to Taliban targets in the Quetta area.<sup>3</sup>

1 “Afghan Taliban Hiding in Quetta,” *Daily Express*, June 7, 2007; Jonathan S. Landay, “Why Hasn’t the U.S. Gone after Mullah Omar in Pakistan?” *McClatchy Newspapers*, November 16, 2008. Al-Qa`ida’s leaders, on the other hand, escaped from Afghanistan’s Tora Bora mountains across the border into Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

2 Southern Afghanistan and Pakistan’s Balochistan Province share many cultural similarities. The ethnic groups resident on both sides of the border are nearly identical, and they share the same dialects. The dress code is also the same.

3 The United States regularly conducts UAV strikes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and it more recently expanded these strikes to targets in the North-West Frontier Province.

This article will provide background information on Balochistan, explain allegations that the senior Taliban leadership operates from its capital, and provide evidence of broader Taliban activity in the Quetta area.

### Balochistan: Strategically Important

Balochistan Province is a vast and underdeveloped region bordering Afghanistan and Iran. It is home to the strategically significant Gwadar Port, a deep sea port located on the Arabian Sea at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Its capital, Quetta, is a frontier city that is approximately a three-hour drive from Kandahar city in Afghanistan. It is encircled by mountains, and it commands the entrance into Afghanistan through the strategic Bolan Pass.<sup>4</sup> Quetta has an established network of roads and railways connecting it to the

**“The Quetta shura is of paramount importance for counterterrorism officials because it is considered the intellectual and ideological underpinning of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan.”**

rest of Pakistan. The province is rich in natural gas, coal, oil and mineral reserves—resources that have sparked tension between the government and secular Baloch nationalist movements. These movements have been active in the province since the early 1970s, and they seek autonomy over Balochistan’s natural resources,<sup>5</sup> as well as greater economic and political rights. During the last four decades, several military operations and other strict measures

4 Afghanistan is linked through Chaman Road, Qamar Din Karez Road via Qila Saifullah, Brahamcha Road via Noshki and Chaghi Giridi Jangal Road. The Chaghi Giridi Jangal road is infamous for drug trafficking. Iran is connected to Balochistan via Tuftan RCD Highway, Turbat-Mand Road, Gwadar Coastal Highway via Jivani and Punjgur Road.

5 Robert G. Wirsing, “Baloch Nationalism and the Geopolitics of Energy Resources: The Changing Context of Separatism in Pakistan,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, April 2008.

have been taken by successive Pakistani governments to suppress the ethnic Baloch movement.

The province's population is divided between Baloch and Pashtuns. Estimates place the Baloch at 45% of the province, whereas the Pashtuns comprise 38%. Pashtuns, however, outnumber the Baloch in Quetta, especially after 2001 when a large number of Afghans took refuge in the city. The long war in Afghanistan has also made Quetta the hub for arms and drug smuggling to the outside world. A large portion of opium in Afghanistan is cultivated in the southern region, mainly in Kandahar Province. According to one journalist, the general route for smuggling opium proceeds overland from Afghanistan to Balochistan and then across the border into Iran. It then passes through Iran's northwestern region, which is inhabited by Kurds, and finally into laboratories in Turkey, where the opium is processed and moved into Europe.<sup>6</sup>

#### Home to the Quetta Shura Council

The Quetta *shura* is the Taliban's most important senior leadership council. It is different from the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) *shura* council in FATA, which is comprised of young but violent Pakistani Taliban militants.<sup>7</sup> The Quetta *shura* is of paramount importance for counterterrorism officials because it is considered the intellectual and ideological underpinning of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> It is also identified as the Taliban government-in-exile. The Quetta *shura* is a 10-member council<sup>9</sup> of senior Taliban leadership, who under the guidance of their spiritual leader, Mullah Omar, devise military, political, religious and intelligence strategies that are then

6 Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Opium Gold Unites US friends and Foes," *Asia Times Online*, September 3, 2005.

7 Jayshree Bajoria, "Pakistan's New Generation of Terrorists," Council on Foreign Relations, February 6, 2008.

8 This description—that the Quetta *shura* is the "intellectual and ideological underpinnings of the Taliban insurgency"—came from Lt. Gen. David W. Barno, a retired former commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan who recently advised General David Petraeus. See Erich Schmitt and Mark Mazzetti, "Taliban Haven in Pakistani City Raises Fears," *New York Times*, February 9, 2009.

9 The size of the *shura* council is debateable. Some accounts place it at 12, whereas others place it as high as 30. The author believes that there are 10 hardcore members.

executed by Taliban fighters mostly in southern Afghanistan. There are reports that they also raise money for their military operations from the Gulf countries along with supplies of arms and fresh fighters.<sup>10</sup> According to one recent press report, Maulvi Hamdullah, a senior Taliban leader who previously headed the Finance Department of the former Taliban government in Afghanistan, has been appointed as Taliban representative for the Gulf countries to raise money for

### **“The Taliban in Quetta have mostly engaged in cross-border fighting against U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan; they have not challenged the Pakistani security forces. This distinguishes the security problem in the south from that in the northwest tribal areas.”**

the movement.<sup>11</sup> He has been allegedly contacting Taliban sympathizers in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar for donations.<sup>12</sup> Mullah Omar himself has reportedly written letters to approximately 1,000 "philanthropists" asking for help in supporting the Taliban.<sup>13</sup>

#### Evidence of Taliban Activity in Quetta

A number of important Taliban leaders were tracked or arrested in and around Quetta. In October 2005, Taliban spokesman Abdul Latif Hakimi was apprehended in Quetta.<sup>14</sup> In February 2007, Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, the former Taliban defense minister and a senior member of the Quetta *shura*, was arrested in the city by Pakistani authorities.<sup>15</sup> Mullah Dadullah Mansur

10 Schmitt and Mazzetti.

11 Shamim Shahid, "Quetta-based Taliban Move to Karachi," *The Nation*, April 30, 2009.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Carlotta Gall, "Pressed by U.S., Pakistan Seizes a Taliban Chief," *New York Times*, March 2, 2007.

15 Ismail Khan, "Mullah Omar's Deputy Obaidullah

was arrested in Balochistan's Qilla Saifullah district in February 2008 after he was discovered crossing the border from Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> His elder brother, senior Taliban commander Mullah Dadullah Akhund, was believed to have been killed after he left Balochistan and crossed into Afghanistan in May 2007.<sup>17</sup> Commander Abdullah Mehsud, leader of the Taliban in South Waziristan tribal agency, was killed in the Balochistan town of Zhob, 207 miles from Quetta, in July 2007. Separately, when Taliban spokesman Dr. Mohammad Hanif was arrested in January 2007, he confessed before the media that Mullah Omar was hiding in Quetta under the safe protection of the ISI.<sup>18</sup> Other Taliban spokesmen, in addition to the Pakistani government, rejected Hanif's allegation. Analysts argue that the multiple arrests in Balochistan provide ample evidence that senior level Taliban leaders are operating in and around the city.

Besides U.S. and Afghan officials, local secular Baloch nationalist groups also blame Pakistan for consolidating the grip of the Taliban in and around Quetta. The Balochistan National Party accused Pakistan's ISI of facilitating the Taliban in acquiring land worth \$2.5 million in the eastern and western parts of Quetta.<sup>19</sup> They also charge the Pakistani government with letting the Taliban use Quetta as a resting and treatment location for Taliban militants recovering from injuries sustained fighting international troops in Afghanistan. They suspect the government is using the Taliban against secular-nationalist Baloch and Pashtuns, who are demanding autonomy over the province's resources. Pakistani government officials, on the other hand, allege that the nationalist forces in Balochistan are armed and funded by Afghan and Indian intelligence agencies for separatist moves against Pakistan.<sup>20</sup>

Captured," *Dawn*, March 2, 2007.

16 "Top Taliban Chief Arrested in Pakistan," ABC News, February 11, 2008.

17 "Taliban in Quetta," BBC Pashtu, April 3, 2009.

18 David Montero, "More Evidence of Taliban Leader Hiding in Pakistan," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 19, 2007.

19 Malik Siraj Akbar, "Taliban Consolidating Grip on Quetta," *Daily Times*, January 5, 2009.

20 Abdul Haye Kakar, "Quetta: The Headquarter of Taliban," BBC Urdu, February 18, 2009; Muqqadar Iqbal, "Pakistani Security Forces Facing Stiff Resistance in Balochistan," *The Exclusive News*, May 8, 2009.

### Quetta's Refugee Camps

Quetta likely provides a ready supply of young men prepared to fight in Afghanistan. Most of these men are recruited at the many refugee camps around Quetta, trained in safe houses in the city and nearby Chaman and then shifted to Afghanistan for fighting against U.S. and NATO forces.<sup>21</sup> Taliban leaders can easily shelter in these camps; despite Taliban rule in Afghanistan for almost five years, many of its leaders are not recognizable since they have

**“During the past seven years, Pakistan has conducted several military operations against al-Qa`ida and their Taliban allies in FATA and in the NWFP. In Quetta, however, there have been no such offensives.”**

always avoided photographs. There are 13 Afghan refugee camps in Balochistan, including the famous Jangal Pir Alizai, Girdi Jangal, Panj Pai, Katwai and Surkhab. Pakistani officials have complained that these refugee camps—notably Jangal Pir Alizai and Girdi Jangal—have been used by terrorists as safe havens and recruiting grounds.<sup>22</sup> They want the camps relocated to Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup>

The areas of Pashtunabad, Karbala and Pishin in and near Quetta that stretch toward the border with Afghanistan are believed to have sprawling religious seminaries, some of which are used for inciting jihad against U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. In Balochistan, there are around 1,300 *madrasas*,<sup>24</sup> among

which Madrasa Arabia in Chaman and ‘Matlu’ul Uloomul Arabia Nizamia’ on Quetta’s Bravery Road have been popular for jihadist recruiters looking for fighters for the Afghan jihad.<sup>25</sup> Another *madrasa*, Jamiya Islamiya, located on Haji Ghabi Road, has hanging boards with inscriptions “Long Live Mullah Omar,” and “Long Live Fazl-ur-Rehman,” the leader of Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam-Fazlur (JUI-F) and the coalition partner of President Asif Ali Zardari’s Pakistan People’s Party.<sup>26</sup> Locals say they have seen people from this area frequently slipping into Kandahar and that some of them were “martyred” in the jihad.<sup>27</sup>

Pakistani Taliban gains in Swat have also impacted Quetta. The Taliban and its sympathizers have become emboldened by developments in Swat, and in Quetta women are increasingly being pressured against eating at outdoor restaurants. Some restaurants that were once popular among women now have inscribed boards with statements such as “Only for gentlemen. Women not allowed.” In recent months, Taliban militants also threatened music and CD shops and internet cafés in Quetta.<sup>28</sup> There are fears that if Swat becomes the model, the Taliban may start bombing Quetta’s girls’ schools and colleges.<sup>29</sup>

The Balochistan government does not appear concerned about tackling the rise in Talibanization. One reason is that the ruling party in the province does not want to antagonize its coalition partner—JUI-F—which is believed to have close links with the Afghan Taliban. JUI-F officials say that they want the implementation of Shari`a in Pakistan, but not the one enforced by the Taliban in Swat. They claim their struggle for Shari`a is through democratic means.<sup>30</sup>

dul Raheem Mandokhel, the leader of the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP).

<sup>25</sup> This information is based on personal interviews with contacts in the region.

<sup>26</sup> Carlotta Gall, “At Border, Signs of Pakistani Role in Taliban Surge,” *New York Times*, January 21, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Abdullah Shahin, “Where the Taliban Train,” Institute for War and Peace Reporting, March 3, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Malik Siraj Akbar, “Curbs on Women in Militancy-Hit Areas Spreading to Quetta,” *Daily Times*, January 25, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Raza Khan, “Taliban Shifts to Southwest Pakistan,” *Washington Times*, March 19, 2009.

### Conclusion

During the past seven years, Pakistan has conducted several military operations against al-Qa`ida and their Taliban allies in FATA and in the NWFP. In Quetta, however, there have been no such offensives. One important reason is that the Taliban in Quetta have mostly engaged in cross-border fighting against U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan; they have not challenged the Pakistani security forces. This distinguishes the security problem in the south from that in the northwest tribal areas.

Nevertheless, pressure is growing on the Pakistani government to take action in Balochistan Province before it becomes another spotlight in the war on terrorism. Media reports frequently speculate whether U.S. intelligence agencies will begin targeting high-value individuals in Quetta with UAV strikes. The Pakistani government, however, continues to deny the presence of al-Qa`ida and Taliban leaders in Quetta despite arrests proving the contrary. The government needs to take the problem of Taliban militancy in Balochistan more seriously, as the Taliban alliance is shaking the entire socio-political fabric of Pakistan and increasingly posing a serious threat to regional security.

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<sup>21</sup> Ahmad Rashid, “US Failure Breeds a Stronger al-Qaeda,” *Asia Sentinel*, September 4, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Hamid Mir, “Capital Talk,” Geo TV, January 23, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Many Afghan refugees do not want to return to Afghanistan. The security situation is less volatile in Pakistan, and Afghanistan’s health and education facilities are poor. As a result, the official argument of the Afghan government is that it will not force refugees back “home,” but rather make the repatriation process voluntary.

<sup>24</sup> This information was conveyed to the author by Ab-

## Examining Saudi Arabia's 85 Most Wanted List

By Christopher Boucek

IN FEBRUARY 2009, the Saudi government released a new list of 85 most wanted terrorism suspects. All of the individuals on the list are suspected of being outside the country's borders. The publication of the list followed the January release of an al-Qa`ida video featuring Saudi returnees from Guantanamo Bay who are now operating out of Yemen. The video was the first public confirmation that former Saudi Guantanamo detainees had returned to militancy and fled the kingdom.

This article seeks to place the list in context and provide a brief overview of the suspects, including travel patterns, suspected current whereabouts, and details of the charges against them. It is based on discussions with Saudi officials and a review of Saudi documents detailing the allegations and charges against the 85 individuals.<sup>1</sup>

### Release of the List

In late January 2009, news broke that two Saudi returnees from Guantanamo Bay had surfaced in Yemen and assumed leadership positions with the newly formed al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The returnees were identified as Said al-Shahri (#31 and ISN 372) and Mohammed al-Aufi (#73 and ISN 333).<sup>2</sup> The news was compounded by the fact that the two were also graduates of Saudi rehabilitation and reintegration programs for returnees from Guantanamo Bay.<sup>3</sup> Al-Shahri and

1 The author's discussions with Saudi officials occurred in February and March 2009 in Saudi Arabia. Most of the officials were from the Interior Ministry. Much of the information, however, was discovered after studying the 85 most wanted list in addition to the accompanying dossiers on the suspects written by the Saudi government.

2 Individuals are identified in this article by their number on the list of 85 as issued by the Saudi government. Returnees from Guantanamo Bay are also identified by their Internment Serial Number (ISN). Transliterations are based on the official government list as published in English by the Saudi Press Agency. The numbers and English spellings differ from the Interpol list.

3 Robert Worth, "Freed by the US, Saudi Becomes al Qaeda Chief," *New York Times*, January 23, 2009; Caryle Murphy, "Ex-Guantanamo Inmates Return to Militancy in Yemen," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 27,

al-Aufi appeared in a video alongside al-Qa`ida in Yemen commander Nasir al-Wahayshi and deputy commander Qasim al-Raymi announcing the formation of AQAP, a product of the merger of the Yemeni and Saudi al-Qa`ida affiliates.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the statements in the video focused on the war in Gaza and criticism of Arab leaders, including Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Hizb Allah leader Hassan Nasrallah, and Saudi Interior Minister Prince Muhammad bin Na'if bin `Abd al-`Aziz. Al-Shahri and al-Aufi both spoke about Guantanamo, accusing regional governments of cooperating with the U.S. government by sending interrogators to the U.S. detention facility to extract confessions later used against detainees. Al-Shahri discussed prison conditions in Saudi Arabia, while al-Aufi railed against the Saudi care program, mentioning by name Prince Muhammad bin Na'if<sup>5</sup> and Dr. Turki al-Atyan.<sup>6</sup> Publicity generated by the video focused attention on the relative "success rate" of Saudi efforts to reintegrate returnees from Guantanamo Bay.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after this news, on February 2, 2009 Saudi authorities released a new list of 85 most wanted terrorism suspects.<sup>8</sup> The list of 85 persons—83 Saudi nationals and two Yemeni nationals—included only suspects who were located outside the country. It is unclear why the two Yemenis—al-Wahayshi and al-Raimi<sup>9</sup>—were included in a list of suspects that the kingdom

2009.

4 The video was likely produced on or around January 12, 2009.

5 Prince Muhammad bin Na'if bin `Abd al-`Aziz is the assistant minister of interior for security affairs, the overall official responsible for the Saudi rehabilitation program.

6 Dr. Turki al-Atyan is the head of the Psychological and Social Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee, which runs the rehabilitation program.

7 Initial returnees from Guantanamo went through a different process than later returnees. For more information, see Christopher Boucek, "After Guantanamo: How Effective are Rehabilitation Programmes in the Muslim World?" Royal United Services Institute, February 10, 2009.

8 The Saudi government had previously issued two other most wanted lists, with the last being issued in June 2005 that included 36 suspects.

9 Among the charges against the two Yemenis, al-Raimi is charged with plotting to assassinate the U.S. ambassador in Yemen.

wanted repatriated to face Saudi justice. According to Saudi sources, the two Yemenis were not on the original list, while Yemeni officials have noted that they were added at the last minute.<sup>10</sup>

The list of 85 was provided to Interpol, which in turn issued an Orange Notice requesting information about the suspects. It was not until March 25, 2009 that a Red Notice was issued for 81 suspects. Red Notices can act in part as an international arrest warrant, and it indicated the kingdom's desire to extradite the 81 suspects. It is not clear what accounts for the differences in the two lists. It is possible that the 81 figure excludes the two Yemenis and two Saudis, the latter of whom have already been repatriated to Saudi Arabia since the issuance of the original list.<sup>11</sup>

### Missing Guantanamo Returnees

Included on the list of 85 were 11 Saudi nationals who had returned from Guantanamo Bay and are now believed to be in Yemen. Prior to the release of the list, it was understood that the Saudi government was unable to locate several returnees who had passed through rehabilitation. The disappearance of the 11 returnees was well-coordinated in advance and they traveled to Yemen in several groups.<sup>12</sup> The flight of the Saudi returnees was allegedly coordinated with other non-Saudi former Guantanamo detainees who have been repatriated to other countries, indicating that returnees have maintained ties from Guantanamo.<sup>13</sup> Since the first returnees

10 Their inclusion on the list is odd in light of Article 44 of the Yemeni constitution that prohibits the extradition of Yemeni nationals. This has previously contributed to difficulty in the cases of Jamal al-Badawi and Jabir al-Banna.

11 On April 8, 2009, Agence France-Presse reported that three of the 85 had been repatriated to Saudi Arabia, although no names were provided. The two Saudis known to have been repatriated are al-Aufi (#73 and ISN 333) and Abdullah Abdul Rahman Mohammed al-Harbi (#43). Fahd Rikad Sameer al-Ruwaili (#61) is believed to have surrendered to Yemeni authorities. The author has not seen a copy of the Red Notice list.

12 At least one group was delivered into Yemen by Saudi criminal smugglers unconnected to al-Qa`ida who have since been arrested by Saudi authorities. It has been claimed that others traveled disguised as women. See Huda al-Saleh, "Saudi Most Wanted Suspects Used Disguises to Flee Country," *Sharq al-Awsat*, February 11, 2009.

13 Personal interview, senior Saudi official, February

were repatriated to the kingdom in 2003, the Saudi government has been able to exert significant social control over returnees by explaining that their continued good behavior would facilitate the return of the remaining Saudis held at Guantanamo. The 11 Saudis fled once it became clear that the roughly 13 remaining Saudi nationals at Guantanamo Bay would not be released from U.S. custody.

Several weeks before the list's public release, Ministry of Interior officials visited the families of the 83 Saudi suspects and urged them to help facilitate the return of their loved ones. Families were informed that their relative's name would appear on a list of individuals wanted in connection with terrorism and security offenses. The families were encouraged to facilitate their relatives' return in exchange for leniency. The use of family pressure is common in Saudi reintegration programs, often producing results. On this occasion, however, none of the 83 Saudis availed themselves of the opportunity.<sup>14</sup>

#### Saudi Most Wanted Suspects

When the list was released, authorities provided little information about the suspects or for what they were wanted. According to senior Saudi security officials, everyone on the list is alleged to have either participated or plotted to participate in attacks against Saudi targets, both within the kingdom and abroad. The charges against the suspects include allegations of al-Qa`ida fundraising, recruitment, communication and travel facilitation, and document forgery. The list includes one sub-group charged with seeking to attack Saudi oil facilities and assassinate government officials,<sup>15</sup>

while another sub-group is alleged to be connected with a cell in Yemen led by the late-Hamza al-Q`uyati. Those charged with targeting oil or "vital facilities"—a term frequently used to describe hydrocarbon infrastructure—includes Ibrahim Hassan Tali Assiri (#1), Salah Abdullah Saleh al-Qaraawi (#34), Abdullah Hassan Tali Assiri (#40), Obaid Abdul Rahman Abdullah al-Otaibi (#50), Mohammed Abdul Rahman Suleiman al-Rashid (#71), Naif Mohammed Saeed al-Kodari al-Qahtani (#81), and Waleed Ali Mishafi al-Mishafi Assiri (#83). Several on the list are accused of belonging to a cell in Iran led by Saleh al-Qaraawi (#34), the alleged leader of an al-Qa`ida group in Iran.<sup>16</sup>

#### Statistics on Alleged Locations of Suspects

The suspects on the list are believed to be in several countries. Privately, Saudi officials have expressed confidence in knowing where most of them are located. Most are believed to either be in Yemen or Iran and the Afghan-Pakistan region. The documents state that 26 of the 85 are thought to be in Yemen (including the 11 Guantanamo returnees<sup>17</sup>), while eight are identified as being in Iran. According to Saudi documents, a further 27 are listed as last being in Iran, Pakistan, or Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> A breakdown of the locations of others on the list includes 14 in Iraq, two in Lebanon, two in Syria, one moving between Syria and Lebanon, and one moving between Syria and Yemen. The whereabouts of four suspects are unknown. Most of the 85 last left Saudi Arabia for other Gulf states, including 22 through the United Arab Emirates and 15 via Bahrain.<sup>19</sup> Many others are believed to have transited through Yemen.

facilities, senior officials, security installations, and anti-extremist clerics had been foiled.

16 The allegations of an al-Qa`ida group located in Iran are made in dossiers on the suspects that were part of the 85 most wanted list. Saudi officials have also spoke about this group in Iran in numerous press reports, one of which is: Turki al-Suhail, "Saudi Arabia: Al-Qaeda Using Iran as Base of Operations," *Sharq al-Awsat*, February 5, 2009.

17 Al-Aufi's return to Saudi Arabia leaves 10 Guantanamo returnees believed to be in Yemen.

18 A senior Saudi security official told the author in February 2009 that roughly 35 of the 85 are in Iran, protected by elements of the Iranian government who facilitate the Saudis' movement and transit in official vehicles.

19 No travel data is available for 14 of the 85.

#### Social and Family Connections

Examination of the list reveals a number of family and social connections among the suspects.<sup>20</sup> Family and social connections are useful in understanding the list; it helps place in perspective that these are not merely 85 unconnected individuals, but rather a group of people connected by a series of social networks.

Ibrahim Hassan Tali Assiri (#1) appears to be the brother of Abdullah Hassan Tali Assiri (#40). Abdullah Farraj Mohammed Hamoud al-Juweir (#46) is the brother of Fahd al-Juweir, who was killed by Saudi security several days after the February 2006 Abqaiq oil facility attack.<sup>21</sup> Fahd allegedly led the attack against the massive Abqaiq facility and was #2 on the list of 36 most wanted released by Saudi Arabia in June

### **“All of the Guantanamo returnees who fled Saudi Arabia went to Yemen, and there are additional militants who traveled with them.”**

2005. Abdul Mohsen Abdullah Ibrahim al-Sharikh (#49) is the brother of two Guantanamo returnees, Abdulhadi (ISN 231, repatriated September 2007) and Abdulrazaq (ISN 067, believed repatriated September 2007). A fourth al-Sharikh brother was killed in Chechnya sometime around 2000.<sup>22</sup> Guantanamo returnee Adnan Mohammed Ali al-Sayegh (#55 and ISN 105) fled to Yemen with fellow returnee Othman Ahmad Othman al-Omeira al-Ghamdi (#53 and ISN 184) in January 2009.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, al-Sayegh is married to al-Ghamdi's sister. Yousef Mohammed Mubarak al-

20 These connections are drawn from regional press reports, the author's discussions and consultations, and the author's examination of the list.

21 Stephen Ulph, "Al-Qaeda Leader al-Juweir's Testament and Warnings in Saudi Arabia," *Terrorism Focus* 3:11 (2006).

22 See "Summarized Sworn Detainee Statement," ISN 067, undated.

23 Mansour al-Shahri and Khaled A-Shalahi, "Names Keep Climbing on Infamous Terror List," *Saudi Gazette*, February 7, 2009.

2009.

14 Al-Aufi was repatriated to Saudi Arabia in mid-February. After his appearance in Yemen, his family was visited by a senior Saudi official who informed them they would be taken care of—financially and otherwise—in his absence. His wife and brother then began to pressure him to return to the kingdom. Before he returned, he was in touch with staff from the Care Center who facilitated his return. After first going to prison, he and his family are allegedly resident in a rehabilitation facility. It is also thought that Saudi government funds to Yemeni tribes helped close off al-Aufi's (and others) options.

15 Similar charges have been alleged in the past by the Ministry of Interior. Following arrests in summer 2008 and spring 2007, it was alleged that plots targeting oil



Jubairi al-Shahri (#85 and ISN 114) is the brother of Saad al-Shahri (#34 on the June 2005 list of 36 most wanted), and is married to the sister of Said al-Shahri (#31 and ISN 372). In a further family connection, Abdul Ilah Mustafa Mohammed al-Jubeiri al-Shahri (#38) is believed to be a cousin of Said al-Shahri (#31 and ISN 372).

#### Who's Who on the List

The list includes individuals charged with being involved in a number of serious plots and ongoing operations.<sup>24</sup> In addition, several high level facilitators are also included, as are alleged bomb makers and trainers from camps in Afghanistan and other locales.

Ahmad Ibrahim Mohammed al-Tuweijiri (#5) is charged with belonging to Asbat al-Ansar, a Sunni extremist group based in the `Ayn al-Hilwa refugee camp near Sidon in southern Lebanon. It is alleged that he left Saudi Arabia for Syria in August 2004 and is believed to currently be in Lebanon. Al-Tuweijiri is also accused of being linked to an unspecified bombing in Beirut in 2004. According to the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Asbat al-Ansar has no formal organizational ties to al-Qa`ida, although Saudi documents charge that al-Tuweijiri oversees al-Qa`ida finances in Lebanon and has funded groups in Bekaa and in the Badawi refugee camp in northern Lebanon. Saudi authorities also charge that al-Tuweijiri worked as an organizer with the late Iraqi insurgent leader Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi.

Little is known about Badr Saud Owaid al-Aufi al-Harbi (#15). His present whereabouts are unknown, and it is charged that he participated in the production of the online journal *Sawt al-Jihad*. According to Saudi documents, he left Saudi Arabia for Bahrain on September 21, 2001, one day before Said al-Shahri (#31 and ISN 372) also left for Bahrain.<sup>25</sup> Badr Saud Owaid al-Aufi al-Harbi is likely a cousin of Mohammed

Otaik Owaid al-Aufi al-Harbi (#73), as well as being related to Saleh al-Aufi.<sup>26</sup>

Khaled Ibrahim Ahmad al-Sunbul al-Assiri (#25) left Saudi Arabia for Bahrain on February 24, 2000, and Saudi documents allege that he intends to return to the kingdom on a forged non-Saudi passport to commit terrorist acts. He is currently believed to be operating between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. Similarly, Rayed Abdullah Salim al-Zahiri al-Harbi (#29) is also accused of intending to return to Saudi Arabia. Al-Harbi is currently in Yemen and does not possess a Saudi passport. He is charged with planning to help support attacks inside the kingdom, specifically with a plan to secure a safe house in Qassim.

Sultan Radi Sumeilil al-Otaibi (#32) left Saudi Arabia for Syria on October 9, 2006 using a fraudulent passport he obtained with his brother's ID.<sup>27</sup> Two other suspects left Saudi Arabia within days of al-Otaibi's departure: Abdullah Mohammed Abdullah al-Ayed (#47) to the UAE and Obaid Mubarak Obaid al-Kufeil (#51) to Bahrain, who then ventured on to Syria and Lebanon. It has been asserted that both al-Otaibi and al-Ayed are deceased, although this remains unclear.<sup>28</sup> Al-Ayed, said to be in Iran and allegedly connected to al-Qaraawi, is wanted in connection with the April 2007 decapitation of Saudi Arabian General Intelligence Department Colonel Nasir al-Othmani in Buraydah.<sup>29</sup> Al-Kufeil has been linked to al-Qa`ida and is charged with fighting in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in

northern Lebanon. Saudi documents claim he was last moving between Syria and Lebanon.

Saleh Abdullah Saleh al-Qaraawi (#34) has been charged by Saudi officials with leading an al-Qa`ida cell in Iran. Press reports, quoting Saudi sources, have claimed that some 100 other militants are in Iran with him.<sup>30</sup> Al-Qaraawi is married to a daughter of Khalil al-Hakaymah, an alleged al-Qa`ida media coordinator formerly affiliated with Egyptian Jama`a al-Islamiyya. Saudi documents charge him with holding a senior position with al-Qa`ida, of having a relationship with al-Zarqawi, and having helped escapees from al-Malaz prison in Saudi Arabia.<sup>31</sup> He is also accused of having trained in explosives and targeting vital facilities in Saudi Arabia.

Others on the list include Mohammed Abdullah Hassan abul-Khair (#72), accused of being a former bodyguard for Osama bin Ladin. He is also believed to have married one of Bin Ladin's daughters. Saudi authorities charge that abul-Khair had links to accused 9/11 conspirator Ramzi bin al-Shibh. Azzam Abdullah Zureik al-Maulid al-Subhi (#56) is accused of working at an Afghan training camp and of linkages to Abdel Aziz Migrin and Sayf al-Adl.<sup>32</sup> Fahad Rikad Sameer al-Ruwaili (#61), who possibly turned himself in to authorities, is charged with recruiting fighters for Iraq and of working in camps along the Syrian-Iraqi border. One of the more interesting suspects is Naif Mohammed Saeed al-Kodari al-Qahtani. In the most recent issue of *Sada al-Malahim*<sup>33</sup> released in March 2009, he penned an article about the list of the 85 most wanted. Saudi authorities charge that he has funded attacks in Yemen. These include the Marib bombing in

26 On August 18, 2005, Saudi police gunned down al-Qa`ida in Saudi Arabia commander Saleh al-Aufi in Medina. See Roger Harrison and Javid Hassan, "Al-Qaeda Chief in Kingdom Killed," *Arab News*, August 19, 2005. Thanks to Thomas Hegghammer for bringing to the author's attention the connection with Saleh al-Aufi.

27 At least four of the 85 left Saudi Arabia with fake passports. Three of the four used their brother's ID to obtain fake passports in their sibling's name.

28 "Al-Qaeda Says Two of Saudi's 85 'Most Wanted' Already Dead," NEFA Foundation, February 2009. This report claims that al-Otaibi was killed in Baghdad in January 2007, although Saudi documents claim he is presently in Yemen. Al-Ayed was also profiled by NEFA as deceased in early 2008 based on his appearance in an Afghan martyrdom video.

29 Samir al-Saadi, "Terrorists Likely Killed Officer," *Arab News*, April 16, 2007; "Security Officer Decapitated in Saudi Arabia," *Terrorism Focus* 4:11 (2007).

30 Turki al-Suhail, "Saudi Arabia: Al-Qaeda Using Iran as Base of Operations," *Sharq al-Awsat*, February 5, 2009.

31 "Terror Suspects 'Flee Saudi Jail,'" BBC News, July 8, 2006.

32 Abdel Aziz Migrin led al-Qa`ida in Saudi Arabia until he was killed in a shootout with Saudi police in June 2004. See Raid Qusti, "Abductors Behead Johnson," *Arab News*, June 19, 2004. Sayf al-Adl is a senior member of al-Qa`ida wanted by the U.S. government in connection with the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings.

33 *Sada al-Malahim* is an online jihadist publication produced in Yemen.

24 The details in this section are drawn from Saudi documents outlining the charges against the 85 suspects.

25 Al-Shahri is alleged to have traveled through Iran to Afghanistan, before being apprehended and transferred to the Guantanamo Bay detention camp. See Evan Kohlmann, "The Eleven: Saudi Guantanamo Veterans Returning to the Fight," NEFA Foundation, February 2009.

July 2007, the July 2008 attack on a Sayyun security building, and a series of other attacks against oil facilities and foreigners in Yemen.

### Conclusion

The Saudi list of 85 most wanted suspects includes a number of dangerous individuals. The timing of the list's public release is obviously in response to a jihadist video featuring al-Shahri (#31 and ISN 372) and al-Aufi (#73 and ISN 333). The list was likely an effort to draw attention to the situations in Yemen and Iran, in an attempt to boost both cooperation and international regional coordination.<sup>34</sup> The flight of 11 Guantanamo returnees to Yemen highlights the difficulties in repatriating Guantanamo detainees. It is also clear that the manner in which detainees have been held has resulted in former inmates maintaining contact over time and space. It is all but guaranteed that there will be recidivists among former Guantanamo detainees.

Most importantly, the list highlights the risk posed by the reconstitution of al-Qa`ida in undergoverned regions of Yemen. All of the Guantanamo returnees who fled Saudi Arabia went to Yemen, and there are additional militants who traveled with them. There is a real fear that the newly formed AQAP is taking advantage of conditions in Yemen to prepare for attacks in Saudi Arabia. The recent arrests of 11 Saudis near the Yemen border with an alleged 35 suicide vests underscores this perception.<sup>35</sup> Al-Qa`ida currently has significant growth opportunities in Yemen, with potentially dangerous implications for security in Saudi Arabia.

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<sup>34</sup> The list can also be viewed as a way to pressure these governments; to encourage Yemen to be more proactive on issues of concern to Riyadh; and to re-raise Saudi concerns about Iranian behavior in the region.

<sup>35</sup> None of the Saudis arrested on April 8 were included on the list of 85. For more information, see "Questions about AQAP's Return as Saudi Arrests Point to Ambitious Jihadist Plans," *Gulf States Newsletter* 33:851 (2009): pp. 7-8.

## Revisiting Al-Qa`ida's Anthrax Program

By René Pita and Rohan Gunaratna

SINCE NOVEMBER 2008, a number of developments have occurred concerning al-Qa`ida's biological weapons (BW) program. On November 24, the Malaysian government released from jail Yazid Sufaat, previously responsible for al-Qa`ida's anthrax program in Afghanistan. On February 2, 2009, Abdallah al-Nafisi, identified as a Kuwaiti "professor," appeared on al-Jazira television promoting an anthrax attack against the United States. "There is no need for airplanes, conspiracies, timings, and so on," al-Nafisi reportedly said. "One person, with the courage to carry four pounds of anthrax, will go to the White House lawn, and will spread this 'confetti' all over them, and then will do these cries of joy. It will turn into a real 'celebration.'"<sup>1</sup> Compounding matters, the police chief of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) stated that some al-Qa`ida and Taliban militants had "expertise in making biochemical weapons,"<sup>2</sup> and in April 2009 the Islamic State of Iraq said that the mujahidin are "in great need" of chemical and biological warfare agents.<sup>3</sup> These developments have raised concern about a possible reactivation of al-Qa`ida's anthrax program and demonstrate the importance of understanding the terrorist group's prior attempts to obtain a BW capability.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Al-Nafisi said that "four pounds of anthrax—in a suitcase this big—carried by a fighter through tunnels from Mexico into the U.S., are guaranteed to kill 330,000 Americans within a single hour, if it is properly spread in population centers there." The transcript can be read at [www.memritv.org/clip\\_transcript/en/2027.htm](http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/2027.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Bilal, "Qaeda, Taliban Planning 9/11-like Attacks in US, Europe: NWFP IG," *Daily Times*, March 31, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> The transcript can be read at [www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP232009](http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP232009).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Mark Hosenball and Michael Isikoff, "A Germ Warfare Guru Goes Free: Why did Malaysia Release Al Qaeda's Bioweapons Expert?" *Newsweek*, December 17, 2008. Also, members of the al-Wafa "charity" organization linked to the anthrax program have been released recently from Guantanamo Bay. See Thomas Joscelyn, "Al-Qaeda's Anthrax Scientist," *Weekly Standard*, December 12, 2008; William Glaberson, "U.S. Decides to Release Detainee at Guantánamo," *New York Times*, March 31, 2009.

This article outlines al-Qa`ida's justifications for using weapons of mass destruction (WMD), provides background information on the first and second phases of al-Qa`ida's anthrax-based BW program, and then assesses whether it could begin a third phase.

### WMD Justifications

Since Usama bin Ladin declared in 1998 that the acquisition of WMD was a "religious duty," there have been numerous statements indicating that jihadists are not restricted from using these weapons.<sup>5</sup> In fact, they have argued that it is justified as retaliation

## "What characterized al-Qa`ida's anthrax program were its unsuccessful attempts to recruit Pakistani and Indonesian scientists who had access to microbial culture collections."

for what they consider use of WMD by the United States and its allies in Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the al-Qa`ida structure that was formalized in the early 1990s included a WMD Committee, a subcommittee under its Military Committee, led by Ali Sayyid Muhammad Mustafa al-Bakri (also known as Abdul Aziz al-Masri).

### First Phase

After the beginning of U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan, one of the main discoveries that provided information on al-Qa`ida's BW program was made by journalist Alan Cullison

<sup>5</sup> For an analysis of these statements, see René Pita, "Assessing al-Qaeda's Chemical Threat," *Athena Intelligence Journal* 2:2 (2007): pp. 34-45; Sammy Salama and Edith Bursac, "Jihadist Capabilities and the Diffusion of Knowledge," in Gary Ackerman and Jeremy Tamsett eds., *Jihadists and Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2009), pp. 101-128.

<sup>6</sup> This allegation is based on coalition forces using conventional weapons (e.g., missiles) that cause a large number of casualties and destruction. For this reason, some jihadists argue that these weapons could be considered WMD. See Pita, "Assessing al-Qaeda's Chemical Threat."

of the *Wall Street Journal*.<sup>7</sup> He purchased two computers in Kabul that the seller claimed had been stolen from the office of Muhammad `Atif (also known as Abu Hafs al-Masri), the head of al-Qa`ida's Military Committee. `Atif was killed by a U.S. Predator airstrike in November 2001 in Afghanistan. The computer contained documents that described al-Qa`ida's attempts at starting a chemical and biological weapons program, known as "al-Zabadi" ("Yogurt"), with a budget of only \$2,000 to \$4,000. `Atif and Ayman al-Zawahiri started the program in May 1999 after studying different Western biomedical books and publications on the weapons.<sup>8</sup> An electronic message sent by al-Zawahiri to `Atif dated April 15, 1999 stated:

I have read the majority of the book...[It] is undoubtedly useful. It emphasizes a number of important facts, such as:

- a) The enemy started thinking about these weapons before WWI. Despite their extreme danger, we only became aware of them when the enemy drew our attention to them by repeatedly expressing concerns that they can be produced simply with easily available materials...
- b) The destructive power of these weapons is no less than that of nuclear weapons.
- c) A germ attack is often detected days after it occurs, which raises the number of victims.
- d) Defense against such weapons is very difficult, particularly if large quantities are used...

I would like to emphasize what we previously discussed—that looking for a specialist is the fastest, safest, and cheapest way. Simultaneously, we should conduct a search on our own... Along these lines, the book guided me to a number of references that

I am attaching [articles published in *Science*, *The Journal of Immunology* and *The New England Journal of Medicine*, as well as the books *Tomorrow's Weapons*, *Peace or Pestilence* and *Chemical Warfare*]. Perhaps you can find someone to obtain them...<sup>9</sup>

According to former CIA Director George Tenet, al-Qa`ida became interested in WMD after Aum Shinrikyo's 1995 sarin attack on the Tokyo subway.<sup>10</sup> Al-Zawahiri's e-mail, however, stated that it was "the enemy" who brought BW to his attention, possibly by U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen.<sup>11</sup> In November 1997, Cohen appeared on television showing a five pound sugar package and saying that if it were to contain spores of *Bacillus anthracis*—the etiological agent of anthrax—and spread over Washington, D.C., half its population would die.<sup>12</sup> A photograph of Cohen holding the five pound sugar package was allegedly also found in Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup>

A subsequent message dated June 1999 insisted on the need to find qualified personnel for the BW program in educational institutions. This seems to be the strategy followed with the collaboration of Saud Memon (allegedly involved in Daniel Pearl's assassination and who died in May 2007 in Pakistan) whose search for qualified microbiologists focused on Pakistani scientists. Documents retrieved from the Kabul house of a Pakistani nuclear scientist, Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood, included diagrams of what seemed to be a plan to disseminate *B. anthracis* using helium balloons,<sup>14</sup> some results of internet searches on anthrax vaccines, articles on BW, and even an article on the Plum Island Animal

9 Quoted in Cullison, "Inside al-Qaeda's Hard Drive."

10 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), p. 260.

11 Milton Leitenberg, *The Problem of Biological Weapons* (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College, 2004), pp. 41, 123-124; Milton Leitenberg, *Assessing the Biological Weapons and Bioterrorism Threat* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), p. 35.

12 William S. Cohen, "This Week with Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts," ABC News, November 16, 1997.

13 This allegation can be found in Leitenberg's *The Problem of Biological Weapons*, p. 124.

14 These were similar to the Japanese "balloon bombs" designed to use winds crossing the Pacific Ocean to attack the United States in World War II.

Disease Center of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>15</sup>

Most important in understanding the first stage of the *B. anthracis* BW program, however, were the documents found in a laboratory under construction near Kandahar and in a nearby al-Qa`ida training camp.<sup>16</sup> These documents included letters addressed to al-Zawahiri from a person who was later identified as a Pakistani doctor in microbiology, Abdur Rauf Ahmed. Rauf worked in the Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR).<sup>17</sup> The first letter was written in Europe in 1999. In it, Rauf claimed to have attended or obtained information on a conference on biological agents that took place in Europe and to have visited a biosafety level three laboratory (apparently in the United Kingdom) where efforts were being made to obtain a pathogenic strain of *B. anthracis* and anthrax vaccines.<sup>18</sup> Finally, he assessed the expenditure required to purchase the material for a laboratory and complained about the scarce financial resources available to him.

In a second letter (whose pages have the Society for Applied Microbiology letterhead), Rauf explained his scant achievements in the start-up of the program with *B. anthracis*. He claimed to have been unable to obtain neither the pathogenic strain nor the vaccines, although he intended to continue trying in another country, for which he

15 Mahmood resigned from Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) in 1999 and in 2000 founded Ummah Tameer-e-Nau (UTN), a relief organization in Afghanistan. The house in Kabul where the documents were found served as the headquarters of the organization. See Chris Stephen, "Kabul House of Anthrax Secrets," *Evening Standard*, November 22, 2001; "Al Qaeda Runs for the Hills," *Newsweek*, December 17, 2001.

16 Several books and scientific journal articles on BW were also found. Leitenberg, *The Problem of Biological Weapons*, pp. 133-135; Leitenberg, *Assessing the Biological Weapons and Bioterrorism Threat*, pp. 28-31; James B. Petro and David A. Relman, "Understanding Threats to Scientific Openness," *Science* 302:5652 (2003): p. 1,899.

17 This information is based on the authors' interviews with members of the intelligence service involved in the arrest and debriefing of Rauf.

18 For a detailed analysis of the letters, see Leitenberg, *The Problem of Biological Weapons*, pp. 133-135; Leitenberg, *Assessing the Biological Weapons and Bioterrorism Threat*, pp. 28-31.

7 Alan Cullison and Andrew Higgins, "Files Found: A Computer in Kabul Yields a Chilling Array of al Qaeda Memos," *Wall Street Journal*, December 31, 2001; Alan Cullison, "Inside al-Qaeda's Hard Drive," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 2004.

8 Ibid.

requested more money.<sup>19</sup> Also included was a set of basic laboratory sketches with the staff and material required, explaining that a cover-up for the program would be needed, such as by setting up an NGO, private company, teaching institute or medical laboratory. As a result of these letters, the report of the U.S. WMD Commission dated March 31, 2005 concluded that al-Qa`ida's BW program was further ahead than what the intelligence community had initially estimated.<sup>20</sup>

### Second Phase

Rauf's letters indicate that he was incapable of obtaining the pathogenic strain of *B. anthracis* or the anthrax vaccines, and that he did not have adequate financial resources. In 2000, al-Zawahiri, unhappy with Rauf's results and attitude, dispensed with his services,<sup>21</sup> thereby initiating the second stage of al-Qa`ida's BW program. As part of this stage, al-Qa`ida attempted to benefit from its relationship with Jemaah Islamiya (JI), a terrorist organization in Southeast Asia with which al-Qa`ida's leaders in Afghanistan stayed in contact by means of Khalid Shaykh Muhammad (KSM), the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks.<sup>22</sup> KSM declared before a military court at Guantanamo Bay on March 10, 2007 that he was involved in al-Qa`ida's BW program after Muhammad `Atif's death.<sup>23</sup> KSM was arrested on March 1, 2003 in Rawalpindi at the house of Pakistani microbiologist Abdul Quddoos Khan, and in subsequent interrogation sessions explained that there was a *B. anthracis* program for which Yazid Sufaat, a member of JI and of Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM), was responsible.<sup>24</sup>

19 Ibid.

20 Leitenberg, *Assessing the Biological Weapons and Bioterrorism Threat*, pp. 36-37.

21 This information is based on the authors' interviews with members of the intelligence service involved in the arrest and debriefing of Rauf. Rauf was later arrested by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence in December 2001, only to be released in 2003 due to insufficient evidence that he supported al-Qa`ida.

22 Al-Qa`ida's close collaboration with JI started in 1998. For details, see *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2004), pp. 150-152.

23 This information is found in the verbatim transcript of the combatant status review tribunal hearing for ISN 10024, p. 17.

24 Barton Gellman, "Al Qaeda Near Biological, Chemical Arms Production," *Washington Post*, March 23, 2003;

Sufaat's nomination as the person responsible for the program was made after KSM's request to Riduan Isamuddin (also known as Hambali), operational leader of JI and an Indonesian cleric, to find a person to continue the anthrax program.<sup>25</sup> Sufaat was a former captain of the Malaysian Army Medical Corps who received a Bachelor of Science degree at California State University in Sacramento in the 1980s.<sup>26</sup> In addition to providing his apartment to two of the 9/11 hijackers and facilitating planning meetings in Kuala Lumpur, he provided protection, funding, and facilitated the entry of Zacarias Moussaoui, an al-Qa`ida suicide pilot, to the United States.<sup>27</sup> Before traveling to Afghanistan, Sufaat participated in Project Natal, the JI operation to bomb multiple churches in Indonesia on December 24, 2000. In Afghanistan, Hambali introduced Sufaat to al-Zawahiri as the "man who was capable of leading al-Qa`ida's biological weapons program."<sup>28</sup> After relocating to Kandahar, Sufaat continued the work of Abdul Rauf at a laboratory at the Haji Habash hospital.<sup>29</sup> Anthrax is an endemic disease in cattle in Afghanistan and it could have been possible for a microbiologist (Sufaat only had a BS degree) to isolate a pathogenic strain of *B. anthracis* from infected animals.<sup>30</sup>

Judith Miller, "U.S. has New Concerns about Anthrax Readiness," *New York Times*, December 28, 2003; Maria A. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia* (New York: Free Press, 2003), pp. 78-80; *U.S.A. v. Zacarias Moussaoui*, Eastern District of Virginia, 2006.

25 KSM contacted Hambali at the request of Muhammad `Atif. Hambali had started collaborating with KSM in 1994. After 1998, he also started dealing with `Atif. See *The 9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 149-152.

26 Leitenberg, *Assessing the Biological Weapons and Bioterrorism Threat*, p. 33.

27 *The 9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 151, 490.

28 Tenet, p. 278.

29 The U.S. Department of Defense presented a centrifuge and an "oven" as the equipment that al-Qa`ida had reserved for the production of BW. For more, see Judith Miller, "Threats and Responses: Terrorist Weapons, Lab Suggests Qaeda Planned to Build Arms, Officials Say," *New York Times*, September 14, 2002; Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Says it Found Qaeda Lab being Built to Produce Anthrax," *New York Times*, March 23, 2002.

30 A non-pathogenic strain, used in the production of vaccines, was available in Kabul at a facility supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). See, for example, Kathy Gannon, "Taliban Showed Interest in Anthrax Research Lab," *Boston Globe*, November 22, 2001. This article, however, shows

With the U.S.-led coalition's intervention in Afghanistan in October 2001, however, al-Qa`ida was forced to abandon its laboratory in Kandahar and the BW program fell into temporary disarray. Sufaat moved to Karachi and, upon the advice of Hambali, relocated to Bogor in Indonesia.<sup>31</sup> Sufaat approached a relative of Hambali at the microbiology division of an Indonesian institute to restart the anthrax program.<sup>32</sup> He refused to cooperate, however.<sup>33</sup> Sufaat was finally arrested in December 2001 by the Malaysian Special Branch (MSB), but was released in November 2008. Malaysian authorities stated that "he had shown remorse and repentance after almost seven years of rehabilitation."<sup>34</sup>

### A Third Phase?

A terrorist group that decides to start a program with *B. anthracis* spores must be capable of: obtaining a pathogenic strain of the agent; producing spores on a large scale (an act that in the first instance could seem easy once the procurement stage is completed, but which has proven to be a difficult task even in military BW programs);<sup>35</sup>

some confusion when differentiating between pathogenic *B. anthracis* strains and non-pathogenic strains used in the production of animal vaccines. In accordance with a January 2007 Agence France-Presse report, Nangarhar's governor had stated that in the dwelling where Taliban spokesman Muhammad Hanif had been arrested, "packets of anthrax powder" had been found. See "Taliban Official Said Found With Anthrax," *Global Security Newswire*, January 17, 2007. This information does not seem too credible and no other media organization has reported on the said "packets" or on how Afghan authorities determined that they contained *B. anthracis*.

31 This information is based on the authors' interviews with members of the intelligence service involved in the arrests and debriefings of Sufaat and Hambali.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Lourdes Charles, "Suspected JI Terrorists Released from ISA," *Star* [Kuala Lumpur], December 10, 2008.

35 A U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) 2002 report states that production of *B. anthracis* spores is "not an exact science. The yield and quality of each batch is variable even when produced legitimately in a highly sophisticated facility." See *Diffuse Security Threats: Information on U.S. Domestic Anthrax Attacks*, U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), December 10, 2002, p. 4. Also, adequate drying and milling methods are needed to obtain particles with appropriate size so that spores are retained by the lower respiratory tract, giving way to infection. For example, Iraq unsuccessfully tried to obtain a spray dryer between 1989 and 1990 by attempting to import and adapt dryers available in Iraq and even manufacturing

refining the spores and storing them appropriately; and disseminating them in an efficient way (if the objective is to cause a large number of casualties).<sup>36</sup> All these stages require the terrorist group to be capable of recruiting a multidisciplinary team with the adequate level of expertise, apart from having facilities to handle the agent safely. Even BW programs in the United States and the former Soviet Union had remarkable multidisciplinary teams; nonetheless, they still encountered significant issues that in many cases entailed the failure of some lines of research. Al-Qa`ida would need strong support from other affiliate groups or sponsors that would enable it to acquire the required materials and personnel for a successful BW program.

In the case of local autonomous cells without links to each other, the probability of establishing these multidisciplinary teams with the explicit and tacit knowledge of producing *B. anthracis* spores is much lower. As for jihadist manuals available on the internet, these publications virtually fail to cover biological agents and focus on toxic chemicals and useless procedures to obtain some toxins, basically ricin and botulinum toxin.<sup>37</sup> Autonomous cells would be virtually limited to the possibility of having access to an already-produced agent, either by means of some

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its own. See Charles Duelfer's report to the director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency on Iraq's WMD, *Comprehensive Report, Volume 3: Biological Warfare*, September 30, 2004, pp. 9, 20. Also see United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), "The Biological Weapons Program," in *Compendium of Iraq's Proscribed Weapons Programs in the Chemical, Biological and Missile Areas*, June 2007, p. 879.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, *Diffuse Security Threats*, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ricin extraction procedures are discussed in René Pita et al., "Extracción de ricina por procedimientos incluidos en publicaciones paramilitares y manuales relacionados con la red terrorista al-Qaeda," *Medicina Militar* 60:3 (2004): pp. 172-175. The procedure for the production of botulinum toxin is an absurd one that involves mixing animal meat and feces in anaerobic conditions. This procedure is taken from the cookbook titled "The Poisoner's Handbook." For a detailed study of electronic jihadist chemical and biological manuals, see Sammy Salama and Lydia Hansell, "Does Intent Equal Capability? Al-Qaeda and Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Nonproliferation Review* 12:3 (2005): pp. 615-653; Anne Stenersen and Brynjar Lia, *Al-Qaida's Online CBRN Manuals: A Real Threat?* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2007).

biological defense program, or through states with offensive programs.<sup>38</sup> In this case, the possibility exists of having a proliferating state sponsor the terrorist organization. The main restriction for a state when sponsoring a terrorist group by supplying it a biological warfare agent is that it would face the risk of massive retaliation by or on behalf of the threatened or attacked state (if the sponsorship is discovered). Until now, there is no evidence of any state that has supplied a BW to a terrorist group.

The apocalyptic cult Aum Shinrikyo, responsible for the sarin attacks in 1994 and 1995 in Japan, is a clear example of how difficult it is to produce a biological warfare agent and an efficient dissemination system, especially taking into account that the cult had adequate financial resources and technological means. The cult also benefited from the 1951 Religious Corporation Law that grants tax exemptions to religious organizations in Japan, and protection against possible interference of the state in their activities.<sup>39</sup> They were, however, only able to acquire a non-pathogenic strain of *B. anthracis* used for the production of vaccines. They tried to disseminate it during June and July 1993 from the top of a building in Kameido (Tokyo). Moreover, the liquid preparation had a very low concentration of spores and was too thick; therefore, drops tended to land on the ground right after they were disseminated.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Acquisition through the black market should not be ruled out, as it can provide access to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) materials, especially in "failed states."

<sup>39</sup> This advantageous situation allowed Aum Shinrikyo, when it started its chemical and biological weapons programs, to enjoy a position that would be similar to that within a proliferating state—where there is no need to hide these activities from the security forces because the program is integrated within government activities—rather than a terrorist organization. For more, see René Pita, *Armas químicas: la ciencia en manos del mal* (Madrid: Plaza y Valdés, 2008), pp. 438-439.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Keim et al., "Molecular Investigation of the Aum Shinrikyo Anthrax Release in Kameido, Japan," *Journal of Clinical Microbiology* 39:12 (2001): pp. 4566-4567; Hiroshi Takahashi et al., "Bacillus anthracis Incident, Kameido, Tokyo, 1993," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 10:1 (2004): pp. 117-120; Masaaki Sugishima, "Aum Shinrikyo and the Aleph," in Richard F. Pilch and Raymond A. Zilinskas eds., *Encyclopedia of Bioterrorism Defense* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Liss, 2005), pp. 45-49.

## Conclusion

Al-Qa`ida's transnational terrorism threat requires intensive international cooperation for intelligence collection that leads to counterterrorism operations that disrupt the transfer of personnel and material resources that could be used in a BW program. Cooperation between intelligence services is especially needed in countries where al-Qa`ida enjoys popular sympathy. The efforts of the international intelligence community must also be combined with increased security in facilities that work with biological select agents and toxins (BSAT). In fact, what characterized al-Qa`ida's anthrax program were its unsuccessful attempts to recruit Pakistani and Indonesian scientists who had access to microbial culture collections. Better intelligence and biosecurity measures are essential to disrupt al-Qa`ida's future attempts to acquire pathogenic biological agents.

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## The Limits of Iranian Influence Among Gulf Shi`a

By Laurence Louër

IRAQ'S REGIME CHANGE in 2003 provided Iran the unexpected opportunity to extend its influence in the Arab Middle East. It now has a direct presence in Iraq, where it exercises considerable pressure on the various Shi`a movements competing for power. In nearby Lebanon, the Shi`a Islamist group Hizb Allah also gives Iran an important space of intervention in Middle Eastern geopolitics. In addition to Iraq and Lebanon, Iran considers the Gulf region a natural area of influence. In the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Gulf monarchies, which Ayatollah Khomeini considered as corrupt regimes tied to the United States, were among the main targets of Iran's policy of exporting the revolution. In the Gulf countries of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait—which all host significant Shi`a populations—local Shi`a Islamic movements supported by Tehran did not hesitate to resort to violence to make their ideals prevail. Although harshly suppressed, they managed to survive and even develop, and today they are unavoidable actors in Gulf local politics. The Shi`a remain a sizable minority in Kuwait (around 25%), a strategically located small minority (around 8%) in Saudi Arabia where they represent a third of the population in the oil-rich Eastern Province, and a large majority in Bahrain where estimates place them at 70% of the national population.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, when compared with Iraq and Lebanon, Iranian influence in the Gulf is much more constrained, especially when considering its concrete impact on the general dynamics of Shi`a politics in these countries. This article

1 Since there is no census that takes into account which current of Islam one follows, these numbers are only estimates based on Shi`a self-evaluation as well as on that of other observers. Only the size of the Saudi Shi`a population is a matter of controversy. Saudi Shi`a often say they represent as high as 20% of the kingdom's population, which seems rather excessive. A recent study by the Saudi National Security Assessment Project (SNSAP), led by Nawaf Obaid, used the data provided by the 2004 census and reached the conclusion that the Shi`a represent 8% of the population.

explains why Iran will have difficulty increasing its influence in the Gulf. This is especially true in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, where most Shi`a political actors campaign against submitting to Iranian influence in the hopes that this will expand their political freedoms at home.

### A Bipolarized Shi`a Political Arena

Gulf Shi`a Islamic movements were born before the Iranian revolution. They were a result of the diffusion of two Iraqi Shi`a movements, al-Da`wa and the Message Movement, which were emanations of competing centers of religious authority. While al-Da`wa was the political expression of the traditional religious institution based in the city of Najaf, the Message Movement was the political arm of the al-Shirazi clerical family based in Karbala, who contested the domination of the Najafi religious establishment. Under the spiritual leadership of Ayatollah Mohammed al-Shirazi, they soon came to be known under the nickname of "Shiraziyyin" (the "partisans of al-Shirazi").

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the two movements extended to the Gulf region. Using transnational networks long established by the Najafi clerical class, al-Da`wa took roots in Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. Compelled to leave Iraq in the early 1970s in the context of the Iraqi regime's quelling of Shi`a Islamic movements, the bulk of the Shiraziyyin first sheltered in Kuwait and then established bases in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Oman. Once there, they entered in systematic confrontation with al-Da`wa activists. As a result, by the early 1970s a pattern of bipolarization of the Shi`a Islamic political scene was established.<sup>2</sup> During this period, the differences between al-Da`wa and the Shiraziyyin were small in terms of political mission and ideology. Both wanted to mobilize the Shi`a on the basis of a Shi`a version of political Islam. In essence, their dispute was first and foremost about religious and political influence.

2 Unless otherwise mentioned, the information provided in this article on the Gulf Shi`a Islamic movements is the result of extensive fieldwork conducted by the author among Gulf Shi`a Islamic activists between 2002 and 2007. It is to be found in more detail in the book Laurence Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics. Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf* (London: Hurst, 2008).

With the advent of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, this pattern of bipolarization was further reinforced but its meaning was reinterpreted. In the direct aftermath of the revolution, al-Da`wa and the Shiraziyyin competed to present themselves as the most enthusiastic and efficient propagandists of Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas. While al-Da`wa was content with propaganda, the Shiraziyyin, who had established close contacts with Khomeini and his aides long before their accession to power, became the main subcontractors of exporting the revolution. Exiled in

**“This pattern of bipolarization between pro- and anti-Iranians is one of the reasons why Iranian influence has been limited in the Gulf: the Islamic Republic no longer has an ideological monopoly over the Gulf’s Shi`a Islamic movements and now represents one of the major fracture lines dividing these activists.”**

Iran, Bahraini and Saudi militants, aided by their Iraqi mentors, attempted to destabilize the regimes with Iranian logistical support. Nevertheless, as early as 1982, when the Iranian regime began to establish its own network of so-called “liberation movements” independent from the pre-established Iraqi networks, the al-Shirazi network was progressively marginalized in Iran. They were eventually suppressed when Mohammed al-Shirazi not only criticized the dictatorial tendencies of the Islamic Republic, but also challenged the religious authority of Khomeini and his successor, Ali Khamenei, whom he refused to recognize as the sole leaders of the Shi`a world.

Many al-Shirazi activists were imprisoned and sometimes tortured, while the bulk had to leave Iran for Syria and Western Europe. Together with his sons and one of his brothers,

Mohammed al-Shirazi remained in Qom, where he lived under house arrest until his death in 2001.

#### The Iranian Model as a Fracture Line

It is the transformation of the Shiraziyyin's relationship to Iran that entailed the reinterpretation of their initial dispute with al-Da`wa. As a result, the two factions compete today over Iran's role, both as a state and a political model. While the Shiraziyyin have developed their own alternative conception of clerical political rule,<sup>3</sup> most Gulf al-Da`wa activists display full support for the doctrine of *wilayat al-faqih* (the rule by the specialist in religious law) on which the Islamic Republic's legitimacy rests. Together with younger activists socialized politically after the Islamic revolution, al-Da`wa activists today form the so-called "Hizb Allah" or "Imam's Line"<sup>4</sup> trend. This pattern of bipolarization between pro- and anti-Iranians is one of the reasons why Iranian influence has been limited in the Gulf: the Islamic Republic no longer has an ideological monopoly over the Gulf's Shi`a Islamic movements and now represents one of the major fracture lines dividing these activists. This is most evident in Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

#### Bahrain

In the Gulf, the Shiraziyyin are leading the movement of criticism toward Iran. They are sometimes isolated in this respect, as is the case in Bahrain. In Bahrain, for example, the Shiraziyyin have a political society of their own named the Islamic Action Society. Some of its members have joined al-Wifaq (the Concord), a Shi`a mass party gathering all the Shi`a Islamic currents present in the country. The Bahraini Hizb Allah trend, which is pro-Iranian, is not structured into a fully-fledged political party but is embodied by a constellation of individuals who sometimes have a wide political and religious audience. It is the case of Shaykh Isa Qasem, for example, the founder of al-Da`wa

in Bahrain in the late 1960s who now supports the *wilayat al-faqih* doctrine and Ali Khamenei's pretension to lead the Shi`a world. As for the other influential political activists who do not follow the Iranian line, such as Shaykh Ali Salman who heads al-Wifaq, they prefer to focus on local political problems rather than transnational ones and have not entered in the debate about the Iranian model.

#### Kuwait

In Kuwait, the Shiraziyyin are particularly vocal in denouncing Iranian policy. Nevertheless, they are a small political faction with only one member of parliament, Saleh Ashur. The stronger Hizb Allah faction, which is known officially in Kuwait as the Islamic National Alliance, has three members of parliament. In an excessively fragmented Shi`a political scene, however, the Shiraziyyin have succeeded in gathering all the other Shi`a societies—a total of five, not including the Hizb Allah faction—into a coalition (the National Coalition of the Assemblies), the political positioning of

**“In the 1990s, the emergence of a strong Sunni Islamic opposition helped alleviate the pressure on Shi`a Islamic activists, who no longer appeared as the major threat to the monarchical regimes.”**

which almost systematically contradicts that of Hizb Allah on local political matters. The National Coalition of the Assemblies is close to the government, which supports its candidates during the elections. One of the favorite tools of the Kuwaiti Shiraziyyin when fighting their adversaries is to denounce their leanings to Iran, describing the Hizb Allah Islamic National Alliance as the Trojan horse of Iranian influence in Kuwait. The National Coalition of the Assemblies has yet to constitute into a coherent political organization, however, and has been unable to match the Islamic National Alliance's political strength. The latter, indeed, benefits

from a long history of mobilization in favor of a better representation of the Shi`a at the parliamentary level, with some of its members of parliament having been elected in almost all the elections since 1981. As an opposition movement moreover, they recently benefited from the Kuwaiti population growing dissatisfied with the government.

#### Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, the Shiraziyyin, although increasingly divided due to different views of what strategy to adopt toward the Saudi regime, are the dominant political actors among the Shi`a population. This is largely due to the skillfulness of their historical leader, Shaykh Hasan al-Saffar. In Saudi Arabia, the Hizb Allah trend is institutionalized in the framework of the Hijazi Hizb Allah. It is only a small radical group that, to date, has not been able to challenge the Shiraziyyin effectively. While mainly concentrated on local matters, Saudi Shiraziyyin are also leading the debate about the Iranian model and, overall, Shi`a relations to Iran. In November 2008, while on a trip to Bahrain, a Saudi al-Shirazi delegation declared that it was time for the Shi`a to say loudly that they are not pledged to Iran and are loyal citizens of their respective nation-states.<sup>5</sup>

#### Gulf Regimes' Politics of Recognition

The pattern of bipolarization between pro- and anti-Iranians is the result of the Shi`a Islamic movement's own historical dynamic. As a factor of containing Iranian influence, Shi`a bipolarization has been reinforced by the evolution of the Gulf regimes' attitude toward their Shi`a populations overall, and their political representatives specifically. In the 1980s, the regimes tended to consider their Shi`a citizens as a fifth column of Iranian expansionism and reacted by restricting any form of Shi`a political—and incidentally religious—expression. From the 1990s onward, however, they adopted more subtle strategies in the context of a major reshaping of the geopolitical framework.

In 1990, the legitimacy of Gulf ruling dynasties was shaken by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and also by the weakening of their redistribution

3 Mohammed al-Shirazi is a proponent of the so-called *shurat al-fuqaha* (council of the jurists) theory. This means that the government of the state should be run by a council of the most learned clerics as opposed to a single one, as in Khomeini's doctrine of *wilayat al-faqih*.

4 The "Imam" refers to Ruhollah Khomeini, to which many Shi`a activists refer to as "Imam Khomeini" to point at his leading religious and political role.

5 This trip was reported in the Saudi-funded newspaper *al-Hayat* in its November 21, 2008 edition.

capacity in the context of the drop in oil prices and a demographic boom. To renew the basis of their legitimacy, they launched policies of political liberalization implying various forms of participation. The Shi`a movements benefited from this general context, but also from the appeasement of the Gulf monarchies' relationship with Iran, the foreign policy of which entered a more pragmatic phase. Also in the 1990s, the emergence of a strong Sunni Islamic opposition helped alleviate the pressure on Shi`a Islamic activists, who no longer appeared as the major threat to the monarchical regimes. As a result, they were able to settle official reconciliation with them and return from exile.

On the eve of the deposition of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Bahraini and Kuwaiti Shi`a Islamic movements had become legitimate political actors in the framework of more open political systems. In Saudi Arabia, they were still clandestine, but most of the al-Shirazi historical leaders had been granted some space to continue to exist on Saudi soil. Iraq's 2003 regime change accentuated this trend of normalization as opposed to reversing it. Shi`a activists used Gulf regimes' fear of Iran's new influence to renegotiate the Shi`a's social position, explaining to the rulers that the best way to deflect the Shi`a from serving Iranian interests was to grant them more rights. In Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, for example, this meant more visibility in the public sphere and the end of the impediments to the free practice of their rituals. The Shi`a Ashura rituals, which include processions in the streets, have been tolerated in both countries since 2004. In 2005, Kuwaiti Shi`a also obtained the creation of an administration of their religious endowments distinct from the Sunni ones, while the same year their Saudi co-religionists obtained a complete reform of their religious court system. These were not new demands. This time, however, the regimes responded positively. Of course, Sunni/Shi`a equality is far from being achieved, especially in Saudi Arabia, but there has been unprecedented progress.

Bahrain, however, stands as an exception for a few key reasons. Bahrain has a Shi`a majority, yet is ruled by a family dynasty from the Sunni minority. Moreover, the Shi`a in Bahrain always

enjoyed almost total religious freedom since the creation of the state in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; their demands do not essentially pertain to religious matters but rather concentrate on political participation. In brief, what they want is a genuine democratization of the political system, which would mean the end of rule by the Sunni al-Khalifa family. This, of course, is totally unacceptable for the ruling class and it is the main reason why the Bahraini democratization process is and will remain at a standstill. This does not necessarily mean that Bahraini Shi`a will turn to Iran to support their struggle. Indeed, mainstream Shi`a political actors are aware that such a move would be counterproductive. To date, they have rather sought to convince the international community that they are not an Iranian fifth column, but a genuine democratic movement. They are also probably aware that although Iran is eager to have influence in Bahrain, the tiny archipelago does not stand on the top of its priorities and that it would never deploy important efforts to establish a pro-Iranian regime there.

#### Conclusion

The Gulf regimes' new positive attitude toward their Shi`a citizens is no doubt part of a strategy to contain Iranian influence. Yet it must also be seen in a wider perspective, as one manifestation of the general reshaping of state/society relations in the Gulf monarchies in the context of a sometimes deep crisis of legitimacy. To assess the real possibility of Iran significantly influencing the Gulf monarchies' internal balance of power, one has to look not so much at what Iran is doing, but at the Gulf states' lengthy process of transformation. This is precisely what is at stake in the events that shook the Saudi Shi`a community in February and March 2009, after a handful of Shi`a were manhandled by religious police during a pilgrimage to the tombs of their imams at the Baqi cemetery of Medina.<sup>6</sup> These events occurred a few days after King Abdallah excluded some conservative figures from key institutions.<sup>7</sup> These

conservative figures see the Shi`a as being among King Abdallah's best allies in his reformist endeavor, and targeting them in this particular moment was clearly a way to send him a message. In brief, the main issue behind these events was not so much Shi`a religious malpractice, but rather the pursuit of the reforms.

Overall, despite Iran increasing its level of influence in Iraq and Lebanon, there is no impending Iranian-led Shi`a crescent descending upon the Middle East. In particular, the Shi`a populations in the Gulf countries—especially Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain—are making an effort to distance themselves from Iran. If the Gulf regimes want to help their Shi`a citizens avoid looking to Iran as a possible political protector, they have to achieve a genuine transformation of their relations with their Shi`a populations.

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<sup>6</sup> See the article by the Paris-based journalist Habib Trabelsi (who heads the team of [www.saudiwave.com](http://www.saudiwave.com)), of which an English version can be found at Habib Trabelsi, "Heightened Shiite-Sunni Tension in Medina," Middle East Online, February 24, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> King Abdallah dismissed the head of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vices, the

religious police well-known for its regular harassment of the Shi`a. Abdallah also reshuffled the cabinet, excluding some of its more conservative elements and appointing more liberal-minded figures, most notably at the Supreme Council of Justice.



## The Funding Methods of Bangladeshi Terrorist Groups

By Paul Cochrane

BANGLADESH RECEIVES MINIMAL attention in counterterrorism circles, the international media and academia despite the large amount of Islamist violence in the country. Occasionally, however, it enters the spotlight when major incidents occur, such as the mutiny by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) in February 2009.<sup>1</sup> August 17, 2005 was another day that grabbed international attention: 459 bombs were detonated in 63 out of 64 district towns within seven minutes. It was an extraordinary act of terrorism that was logistically impressive, disciplined and deadly.

The incident triggered a marked shift in the Bangladeshi government's stance on terrorism. After initially blaming external forces for the attacks—including Israel's Mossad and India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)—the administration of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia admitted, for the first time, the presence of Islamist militants in the country, declaring Jamaatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB)<sup>2</sup> responsible for the blasts.<sup>3</sup> Some 743 suspects were apprehended, and the leadership of the JMB and its affiliated party Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) were arrested and executed.<sup>4</sup>

1 The BDR is responsible for Bangladesh's 2,750-mile long border with India and Myanmar. On February 25, 2009, more than 1,000 BDR soldiers mutinied in Dhaka, killing 56 officers. For 36 hours, as the revolt spread to 12 other towns and cities, the BDR fought the regular army before surrendering.

2 Jamaatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB) was created in 1998 by Shaykh Maulana Abdur Rahman, with the aim of capturing power through arms and implementing Islamic law. The Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) is an offshoot of JMB, founded in 2003 following clashes with the police. Both organizations overlap in structure and personnel; JMB activists are often JMJB members.

3 Haroon Habib, "17 August 2005: Milestone of Terror," in Jaideep Saika, *Bangladesh: Treading the Taliban Trail* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 2006), p. 252. The JMB left leaflets at the blast sites, declaring: "We're the soldiers of Allah. We've taken up arms for the implementation of Allah's law the way the Prophet, Sahabis and heroic mujahidin have done for centuries...it is time to implement Islamic law in Bangladesh."

4 The six leaders were hung on April 30, 2007. See the

Today, Bangladesh faces threats from not only JMB, but from a number of Islamist terrorist groups.<sup>5</sup> These organizations are resurgent with financing coming from numerous sources, most notably non-governmental organizations (NGO). While legislation exists to curb illicit financing, it faces numerous obstacles. This article will outline the various Islamist militant groups in Bangladesh, and then address the known and suspected financing methods of such groups and the obstacles faced in countering terrorist financing.

### Bangladeshi Terrorist Groups

Nearly four years since the August 2005 bombings, JMB has resurfaced under new leadership. Raids by the armed forces in Dhaka and elsewhere have regularly uncovered JMB arms caches, ammunition, and literature.<sup>6</sup> Out of the country's 29 to 33 possible terrorist groups,<sup>7</sup> only four are officially banned: JMB, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), JMJB, and Shahadat-e al Hikma.<sup>8</sup> More than 100 Islamic political parties and organizations exist.<sup>9</sup>

*Bangladesh Assessment 2008* at the South Asia Terrorism Portal, located at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org). For information on the arrested suspects, see "Intelligence Focused Only on Accused JMB Men," *Bangladesh News*, October 28, 2008.

5 "Lack of Policy Affecting Fight Against Militancy in Bangladesh," Indo-Asian News Service, October 26, 2008. A detailed list of the organizations can be found in *Bangladesh Awami League Newsletter* 4:4 (2005).

6 According to *The Daily Star* in Dhaka, 35 out of the 50 most wanted JMB cadres are still active in four northern districts.

7 "Lack of Policy Affecting Fight Against Militancy in Bangladesh." A detailed list of the organizations can be found in *Bangladesh Awami League Newsletter* 4:4 (2005).

8 Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), a Deobandi group, is affiliated with the Pakistan-based HuJI, and was formed by 17 Bangladeshi mujahidin that returned from Afghanistan, allegedly with financial help from al-Qa`ida. Shahadat-e al Hikma (SAH) announced in 2003 that it planned to launch an armed struggle to turn Bangladesh into an Islamic state. It was promptly banned. Its chief, Sayed Kawsar Hussain Siddiki Raja, stated at the time that SAH had 10,000 "commandos" and 25,000 fighters. SAH has since gone underground.

9 Shakhawat Liton, "Islamic Parties Boom after 1976 Ban Lifting," *The Daily Star* [Dhaka], August 29, 2006. A constitutional ban on religious parties was repealed in 1976. Liton notes that there are no exact figures on the number of parties with either the government or the Election Commission.

The Indian government, on the other hand, claims that there are 50 Islamic militant groups operating in Bangladesh, and has accused Dhaka of harboring 148 arms training centers.<sup>10</sup> "The level of operational terrorism is as active as a few years back; we've had extensive levels of terrorism," explained Major General (Rtd.) Muniruzzaman, the

**"A further \$7 billion, however, is estimated to enter Bangladesh illegally through the hundi system, an illegal alternative remittance system similar to the hawala network that operates in the Middle East."**

president of the Bangladeshi Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies (BIPSS) in Dhaka. "People who say we don't have a problem are in a state of denial."<sup>11</sup>

While militant groups have carried out terrorist attacks within Bangladesh—although none on the scale of the 2005 bombings—there has been increased activity in India in recent years, as well as links to Indian groups.<sup>12</sup> HuJI-B, which has ties to al-Qa`ida,<sup>13</sup> is allegedly carrying out contract activities in India to garner international recognition and obtain funds, explosives and

10 Personal interview, Colonel Satinder Saini (rtd.), Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, September 24, 2008.

11 Personal interview, Major General Muniruzzaman (rtd.), Dhaka, November 24, 2008 and April 22, 2009.

12 India's Union Home Ministry in its 2007-2008 Annual Report stated: "The hand of Pakistan-based terrorist organizations—Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)—and, increasingly of the Bangladesh-based HuJI, known to have close links with the Inter Services Intelligence, has been observed in most cases" of terrorist attacks in India. New Delhi has also accused HuJI of providing grenades to the LeT in India, in addition to coordinating attacks in India with the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), the LeT and JeM.

13 Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2003), p. 219; Bruce Vaughn, "Islamist Extremism in Bangladesh," Congressional Service Report, January 17, 2007.

munitions.<sup>14</sup> Reports in the Indian press have also indicated Bangladeshi links to terrorist attacks in Bangalore and New Delhi,<sup>15</sup> as well as the Mumbai attacks on November 26, 2008.<sup>16</sup>

Yet while the Bangladeshi and Indian authorities have continued to crack down on militant organizations operating in and out of Bangladesh, this has been largely confined to the more immediate: raids, arrests and intelligence gathering. Stopping the financiers and income generating techniques of Bangladesh-based terrorist organizations remains a great challenge, with Bangladesh lacking the infrastructure as well as the political resolve to curb terrorist financing.

#### Funding Methods

Bangladesh is plagued by illicit financial transfers. It is suspected that militants regularly tap into these illegal money flows to fund their operations. More than \$1 billion in taxable goods is smuggled into the country from India, and analysts believe that some of this money ends up in the hands of terrorist groups. This is also the case with small arms sales, drugs and counterfeit U.S. dollars that enter Bangladesh from neighboring Myanmar and the Golden Triangle. Money laundering is also a prime way of generating funds, estimated to account for 12-13% of the country's GDP at \$3.4 billion.<sup>17</sup> Some 90% of revenue from smuggling is laundered: 30% of bribes, 60% of the retail sector, 35% of import-export, and 25% in tax evasion.<sup>18</sup>

14 Personal interview, Major General Muniruzzaman (rtd.), Dhaka, November 24, 2008 and April 22, 2009.

15 "Delhi Police Launches Drive to Deport Illegal Immigrants," *Press Trust of India*, July 13, 2008.

16 Personal interview, Major General Muniruzzaman (rtd.), Dhaka, April 22, 2009. According to one report, the Thuraya satellite phone recovered from the fishing trawler the terrorists used to reach Mumbai contained records of a conversation between Lashkar-i-Tayyiba chief Yusuf Muzammil in Muzafarabad, Kashmir, and "Yahya," a point man for LeT and HuJI in Bangladesh. Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency committee report also has a reference to HuJI's involvement, and there are indications that mobile SIM cards were purchased in Kolkata by Bangladeshis on behalf of the perpetrators.

17 These figures are based on research carried out by Abul Barkat, Professor of Economics at Dhaka University, in the report titled "The Economics of Fundamentalism and the Growth of Political Islam in Bangladesh."

18 Ibid.

Remittances from expatriate Bangladeshis working in the Middle East, the United Kingdom and elsewhere are a further area of concern. Currently estimated at \$7 billion a year through banks, remittances surged from only \$2 billion in 2006 as a result of financial institutions improving their delivery time and including value-added services.<sup>19</sup> A further \$7 billion, however,

**"The Green Crescent case highlights the lack of oversight by the authorities in regulating charities and NGOs—in Britain as well as in Bangladesh—and indicates what analysts have long suspected: NGOs are a major source of funding for militant groups."**

is estimated to enter Bangladesh illegally through the *hundi* system,<sup>20</sup> an illegal alternative remittance system similar to the *hawala* network that operates in the Middle East.<sup>21</sup> Sources at the Bangladesh Bank, the country's central bank, said the government is loathe to legalize *hundi*—which would increase oversight—as it would divert capital away from the official banking sector and the financial system.<sup>22</sup>

While there is a broad consensus that such techniques are used by militant organizations, the levels of funding generated are mere speculation. Several raids on JMB safe houses in Dhaka have revealed that the properties were rented by expatriate workers in Saudi

19 Personal interviews, members of Bangladesh Bank, Dhaka, November 25, 2008.

20 *Hundi*, or *hawala*, is an alternative remittance system (AMS) widely used in the Middle East and South Asia, particularly by expatriate workers, to send money via official or unofficial brokers with minimal (or no) paperwork involved. Many countries are trying to better regulate AMS.

21 Ibid.

22 Personal interviews, members of Bangladesh Bank, Dhaka, November 25, 2008.

Arabia.<sup>23</sup> In the case of remittances, research by the BIPSS has indicated that large volumes of money are sent from members of the Bangladeshi community in London,<sup>24</sup> and that there are increasing signals of a diaspora link to incidents in Bangladesh. One of the most significant links to funding from the diaspora was unearthed in March 2009 when a *madrasa* in Bhola in southern Bangladesh was raided by an anti-terrorist division, turning up 10 firearms, 2,500 rounds of ammunition and radical Islamic literature.<sup>25</sup> Investigations revealed that the *madrasa* was funded by the British-registered charity Green Crescent, and that the founder, British citizen Dr. Faisal Mostafa, had close links to the JMB and its current leader, Saidur Rahman.<sup>26</sup>

The Green Crescent case highlights the lack of oversight by the authorities in regulating charities and NGOs—in Britain as well as in Bangladesh—and indicates what analysts have long suspected: NGOs are a major source of funding for militant groups. There are some 2,500 officially registered NGOs operating in Bangladesh, but potentially as many as 100,000, with smaller initiatives registered locally.<sup>27</sup> "No one has an exact number," said Iftikhar Zaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh. Given that authorities are not even clear how many exist, monitoring and regulating NGOs has proven difficult. The Saudi Arabia-based al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, banned internationally by United Nations Security Council Committee 1267, has come under suspicion, along with other charities from the Middle East, for financing terrorism in Bangladesh. NGOs and charities have also been linked to the rise of Islamic extremism in the country, with the Kuwait-based Revival

23 Personal interview, Major General Muniruzzaman (rtd.), Dhaka, November 24, 2008 and April 22, 2009.

24 There are an estimated 500,000 British citizens of Bangladeshi origin.

25 James Brandon, "UK Charity Funding Arms and Training for Bangladeshi Terrorists," *Terrorism Monitor* 7:9 (2009).

26 "Faisal Now Admits Ownership of Arms," *The Daily Star* [Dhaka], April 16, 2009. Faisal was arrested in Bangladesh on April 6, 2009.

27 Personal interview, Iftikhar Zaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, Dhaka, November 26, 2008.

of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS)<sup>28</sup> and the Saudi Arabian organization Hayatul Igachha (HI) connected to funding for some 650 mosques that have been used by terrorist organizations such as Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh (AHAB)<sup>29</sup> and the JMJB.<sup>30</sup>

#### An “Economy within an Economy”

Financing for legitimate Islamic political groups—such as the country’s largest, Jamaat-i-Islami Bangladesh (JIB), and others such as the Islami Oikya Jote<sup>31</sup>—are believed to stem from what has been called an “economy within an economy.”

Abul Barkat,<sup>32</sup> a professor of economics at Dhaka University, states that Islamic political parties have invested in 13 different economic sectors, including finance, insurance, retail, education, real estate, communication, media, health care and pharmaceuticals. “They earn to the tune of \$300 million a year in net profits, and invest 10-20% for political purposes, anywhere from \$30-\$60 million, including paying salaries to up to one million full timers,” he said.<sup>33</sup> Muniruzzaman of the BIPSS thinks the amount is much higher than Barkat indicates. “They probably run a parallel economy,” he said. Yet while front companies are undoubtedly linked to Islamic organizations, not all are militant, although the rise of an alternative economy does present further opportunities for militant groups to generate funds.

28 The RIHS registration was canceled in 2007, but is still operating. The head of a local wing of the RIHS, a Sudanese national, was arrested in March 2009 for using the charity to train militants.

29 Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh (AHAB) is a similar party to the JMB and JMJB, often working closely together, and has been linked to Jamaat-i-Islami Bangladesh (JIB).

30 Hiranmay Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan?* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).

31 Islamic political party Islami Oikya Jote was part of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party’s four-party ruling coalition from 2001-2006.

32 Personal interview, Abul Barkat, professor of economics, Dhaka University, November 27, 2008.

33 Following the publication of “The Economics of Fundamentalism and the Growth of Political Islam in Bangladesh” in Dhaka University’s *Social Science Review* journal, Barkat told the author that he received some 70 death threats. In JIB newspaper *Shagram*, Barkat was subjected to character assassination, but his economic statistics and findings were not refuted.

The JIB is a case in point. The largest Islamic political organization in the country, the JIB was a member of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led government coalition from 2001-2006. Yet while the JIB claims they have no links to militant groups, not everyone is convinced. Both JMB leaders who were executed in 2007, Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, were active members of the JIB’s student wing, the Islamic Chhatra Shibir.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the JMB draws its ideology and political support from JIB.<sup>35</sup> There are also allegations that support for the JMB and the JMJB extended to the higher echelons of the BNP government and the JIB.<sup>36</sup> These links are attributed to the government’s half-hearted response to Islamic extremism and violence, and initial refusal to blame the JMB for the August 2005 bomb blasts.

The questions over the JIB and its plans for the future have Bangladeshi analysts concerned about the growth of the Islamist economy, believing it is a means to build up economic power as a way of gaining political power over time. “The Jamaat [JIB] works with long term plans unlike [the major two political parties] the BNP and Awami League,” said Iftikhar Zaman, of Transparency International Bangladesh. “They have infiltrated the administration, bureaucracy, the army, media and increasingly, even NGOs.”<sup>37</sup> The JIB also controls the largest bank, the Islamic Bank of Bangladesh, six universities throughout the country, and a think tank in Dhaka. Moreover, with the fundamentalist economy registering higher annual growth (7.5% to 9%) than the mainstream economy (4.5% to 5%), “it means that if it grows higher, there might be a time in 15 years where their economy will be difficult to fight in a monetary sense,” warned Barkat.

34 The Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) is the JIB’s student wing, operating in most universities (but banned at Dhaka University). The ICS has been involved in violence and has connections to the banned Students’ Islamic Movement of India (SIMI).

35 Wilson John, “The Bengali Taliban: Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh,” *Terrorism Monitor* 6:10 (2008).

36 For a detailed account, see Karlekar.

37 Personal interview, Iftikhar Zaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, Dhaka, November 26, 2008.

#### Enforcement and Reality

In the immediate months after a military-led emergency government seized power in January 2007, a number of enforcement initiatives were put into place. A Financial Intelligence Unit was immediately established, the Money Laundering Prevention Act was re-enacted in April 2008, and an Anti-Terrorism Ordinance was passed in June 2008.<sup>38</sup> Yet continuous political undermining of the legal process,<sup>39</sup> in addition to coercion, bribery and corruption, has made the country’s anti-money laundering (AML) and counterterrorist financing (CTF) measures “confined to regulations we have printed.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the government lacks effective knowledge

**“The Bangladesh Bank is also struggling to implement regulations, lacking the manpower and finances to investigate foreign and domestic transactions passing through the financial system.”**

and training to curb money laundering and terrorist financing. “At a recent workshop of 50 people from the financial sector, law enforcement and key ministries, the people most related to CTF and AML said, frankly, that they didn’t have a clue on this sector and are comparatively weak in knowledge and implementation,” explained Muniruzzaman.

The Bangladesh Bank is also struggling to implement regulations, lacking the manpower and finances to investigate foreign and domestic transactions passing through the financial system.

38 For details, see the Bangladesh Bank’s Anti Terrorism Ordinance #28 (2008) and Money Laundering Prevention Ordinance #12 (2008).

39 Politicians have continuously undermined the judiciary through bribery and applying pressure on the judiciary to drop cases linked to political parties and prominent businessmen.

40 Personal interview, Major General Muniruzzaman (rtd.), Dhaka, November 24, 2008 and April 22, 2009.

Sources at the bank have admitted as much, conceding that some of the country's six Islamic banks are "not properly run." The country equally lacks reporting agencies, such as on car dealerships and precious stones, raising concerns that such businesses could be used to launder money and finance terrorism.

The NGO bureau is of more concern considering the thousands of NGOs and charities in the country, and a total lack of transparency by the sector in the usage of funds.<sup>41</sup> Sources at the Bangladesh Bank said the bureau has insufficient human resources to regulate the whole sector, further highlighted by the Green Crescent case in March 2009. A thorough investigation of charities and NGOs has also been suggested by the Bangladeshi media, pointing out that the bureau was run by the Ministry of Social Welfare, which was held by the JIB from 2001-2006.<sup>42</sup> Given the claims that JIB has links to the JMB, there is speculation that some of the 473 local and 25 foreign NGOs licensed during this period were not properly regulated.

### Conclusion

Curtailling financing for Bangladeshi terrorist groups is a significant challenge for the authorities. Given groups such as HuJI's growing reach in South Asia, and links to expatriates as far away as the United Kingdom, the issue is increasingly of international concern. Tackling terrorist financing is but one of the multipronged techniques needed on the ground. Yet, with a weak state it is problematic unless substantial financial and professional assistance is provided to the central bank to implement a more proactive AML and CTF regime and better regulate the financial sector.

The mutiny by the BDR suggests that the democratically-elected government of Sheikh Hasina faces an uphill struggle in retaining power. The mutiny has shaken the military establishment and left the country's borders porous and vulnerable. Claims that leaders of the mutiny were members of the JMB are also of concern. Furthermore, although the JIB did not garner as many seats in

the December elections as in previous governments, the percentage of JIB voters actually increased, indicating a shift in society toward support for more fundamentalist Islam.<sup>43</sup> The rapid growth of the Islamist "economy within an economy" is equally an area of concern for the country's political future. Furthermore, corruption is on the rise again in Bangladesh. The new civilian government criticized the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) established by the emergency government in 2007, for example, and the chairman resigned in protest.<sup>44</sup>

Bangladesh clearly faces a tortuous road ahead. Given the weakness of the state, high poverty levels, widespread corruption, and the bipartisan nature of politics, the situation in Bangladesh warrants more attention from the international community.<sup>45</sup>

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43 Personal interview, Major General Muniruzzaman (rtd.), Dhaka, November 24, 2008 and April 22, 2009.

44 The creation of the ACC led to the arrests of 200 officials and businessmen, and the seizure of \$30 million. Two former prime ministers—Khaleda Zia of the BNP and Sheikh Hasina Wajed of the Awami League—both had charges brought against them but were dropped as part of a political compromise in the lead-up to the elections. Bangladesh ranked 147 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Index in 2008.

45 Recent proposals to establish Joint Working Groups on Counterterrorism with the British, American, Australian and Russian governments are a move in the right direction.

## Avoiding Suicide Terrorism in Bangladesh

By Ryan Clarke and Shafqat Munir

THE RECENT MUTINY within the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) border security force sparked concern about escalating instability in Bangladesh. The possibility that Jamaatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB)<sup>1</sup> may have been involved in the rebellion heightened worries about the growing terrorism problem in Bangladesh. A series of events since the 2005 serial bombings point to a steady escalation in the terrorist campaign of not only JMB, but also Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam Bangladesh (HuJI-B).<sup>2</sup> Although dismissed by many as only locally-focused terrorist groups vulnerable to decapitation strategies and lacking transnational linkages and support networks, many in Bangladesh and the region have learned the hard way that both JMB and HuJI-B are formidable outfits that have taken advantage of the government's security weaknesses to establish firm roots in the country. Furthermore, they are attempting to employ their own "ink blot strategy"<sup>3</sup> by building their support base and cadre strength district by district. Their goal is to institute a strict interpretation of Islamic law in Bangladesh.

This article will examine the transnational linkages between Bangladesh's terrorist groups and more violent groups in Pakistan; speculate on whether these groups may move toward

1 Jamaatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB) is one of the two major terrorist organizations operating in Bangladesh. Founded in 1998, the group unleashed a reign of terror in the northwest of the country in 2003-2004. JMB also carried out coordinated serial bomb blasts in August 2005.

2 Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam Bangladesh (HuJI-B) is an al-Qa`ida-affiliated terrorist organization operating in Bangladesh. HuJI-B was reportedly set up with direct assistance from al-Qa`ida and Usama bin Ladin. HuJI-B carried out a deadly attack on August 21, 2004 at a political rally of the Awami League (the current ruling party in Bangladesh) in which several people died and Sheikh Hasina, the incumbent prime minister of Bangladesh, was wounded. HuJI-B was declared a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. State Department in March 2008.

3 An "ink blot strategy" means controlling a piece of terrain, stabilizing it and then gradually expanding it.

41 Zaman.

42 "Terror-Financing NGOs Remain Unscathed," *The Daily Star* [Dhaka], November 26, 2005.

suicide attacks; and finally assess what steps the Bangladeshi government should take to undercut and weaken Islamist terrorist groups active in the country.

#### Transnational Linkages

The senior leadership of Bangladeshi terrorist outfits such as JMB and HuJI-B took an active part in the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup> It was during this time that they came into close contact with individuals who later assumed important leadership positions in militant groups across the South Asian region and beyond.<sup>5</sup> For around a decade, these individuals fought side by side against a common enemy driven by a common ideology. The relationships formed on the battlefields in Afghanistan did not fade following the Soviet withdrawal; in fact, HuJI-B cadres received military training in Afghanistan during the 1990s when the Taliban were in power.<sup>6</sup> In addition to JMB and HuJI-B, the senior leadership of the vast majority of Islamist terrorist groups in South Asia still include individuals who fought in the Afghan jihad.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, there is a possibility that Bangladeshi terrorist leaders will leverage the long-term relationships they have forged with their comrades in arms from South Asia and possibly the Middle East, and translate this into a strong collaborative operational relationship between their groups. Such linkages could have a dramatic impact on the modus operandi of Bangladesh's terrorist groups and encourage them to adopt the use of suicide bombing.

HuJI-B and JMB have undoubtedly been watching developments in Pakistan with much interest. The effective use of suicide bombing by several Pakistani groups, including Tehrik-i-Taliban

Pakistan (TTP), have likely played a role in forcing Islamabad to call off several military operations and to even implement Shari`a law in Malakand. Furthermore, HuJI-B and JMB have latecomers advantage in that they have witnessed the successes and failures of previous groups in the use of suicide bombing and could avoid some potential pitfalls. Causing high civilian casualties and not adhering to local traditions can drain the oxygen out of a movement, an outcome that al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) learned the hard way. For this reason, the overall security community is concerned that these outfits will begin to incorporate strategic suicide attacks into their repertoire since suicide bombers are generally able to penetrate more secure areas and carry out precise strikes that are more likely to hit their intended target and minimize "collateral damage."

#### Suicide Terrorism Concerns

In February 2009, several captured JMB militants were paraded in front of media cameras along with their seized weapons in the town of Tongi near the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka. Mamunur Rashid, one of the arrested individuals and a full time member of JMB, picked up a grenade, pulled the pin and threw it in a small room full of journalists, security personnel, as well as his fellow comrades.<sup>8</sup> Thirteen people sustained injuries but no one was killed. The incident caused concern about suicidal tendencies that characterize other terrorist groups in South Asia.

The JMB also allegedly created the Shahid Nasrullah Arafat Brigade.<sup>9</sup> This specialized group within JMB reportedly received advance military training in high risk operations such as bomb making and suicide attacks.<sup>10</sup> Several JMB militants detained in the aftermath of the serial bomb blasts on August 17, 2005 confessed to their membership in the outfit, explaining that the squad had been created by combining members

of JMB and its splinter organization Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB),<sup>11</sup> mainly for carrying out IED attacks.

Moreover, the various other Bangladeshi groups that have mutated from JMB, such as Allahr Dal,<sup>12</sup> have carried out bomb attacks in the past.<sup>13</sup> It can be

**“In the event that Bangladeshi terrorist groups escalate their activities, however, Dhaka may feel the temptation to resort to military action. That would likely increase the support base of HuJI-B and JMB, alienate potential local allies, and cause further escalation.”**

argued that while JMB or HuJI-B may not want to carry out a suicide attack using the name of their organization in order to protect their image, they may use smaller splinter organizations for this purpose. An example of this tactic can be seen in the attack on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad in September 2008. Although investigations allege that TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud planned the operation,<sup>14</sup> following the attack he denied any role, reportedly saying that his group “does not believe in killing

4 Amitava Mukherjee, “Bangladesh: Anatomy of the BDR Mutiny,” *Mainstream* 47:13 (2009). Bangla Bhai, the founder of JMJB, fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan, as did the original leader of JMB, Abdur Rahman. For details, see Julfikar Ali Manik and Shamim Ashraf, “Rahman had Training on Arms in Afghanistan,” *The Daily Star* [Dhaka], March 6, 2006.

5 Wilson John, “The Bengali Taleban,” *Terrorism Monitor* 6:10 (2008).

6 For more information, see the South Asia Terrorism Portal file on Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam Bangladesh, located at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

7 B. Raman, “Funds for BD Blasts Came from UK,” South Asia Analysis Group, March 3, 2006.

8 Kailash Sarkar, “Handcuffed JMB Man Blasts Grenade at Press Meet,” *The Daily Star* [Dhaka], February 21, 2009.

9 Reports about the brigade began to surface in late 2005. For more, see “Bomber Admits to Aug 17 Role,” *The Daily Star* [Dhaka], October 5, 2005.

10 John. For information on the suicide squads, see “MB Suicide Squads Mounted Attacks on Courts,” *The Independent* [Dhaka], October 3, 2005.

11 Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) was a sister organization of JMB. Led by Siddiqui Islam (also known as Bangla Bhai), who was executed in 2007, it unleashed a reign of terror in Bagmara in Rajshahi district in north-west Bangladesh.

12 In 2007, after the executions of the JMB leadership, reports started appearing about “Allahr Dal” (The Army of Allah). The group initially appeared to be operating in the south of Bangladesh. It is widely believed that JMB members regrouped and formed this outfit subsequent to the crackdown on their activities by the government.

13 “Oct 3 blasts at courts planned by Abdur Rahman’s brother,” *The Daily Star* [Dhaka], October 9, 2005.

14 Bill Roggio, “Al Qaeda-linked Suspects Emerge in Islamabad Marriott Attacks,” *The Long War Journal*, September 25, 2008; Isambard Wilkinson, “Baitullah Mehsud: The ‘Good Taliban’ Who Became One of Pakistan’s Most Wanted Men,” *Telegraph*, March 31, 2009.

so many locals.”<sup>15</sup> Instead, the attack was claimed by a previously unknown outfit called Fidayeen-e-Islam.<sup>16</sup> A similar tactic could be employed in Bangladesh.

#### Drivers of Suicide Attacks in Bangladesh

In order for a conflict to escalate to the point where suicide bombings are employed, there is usually multiple, consistent drivers. In the cases of JMB and HuJI-B, both groups have a serious grievance with the secular nature of the Bangladeshi state, especially its court system, and the moderate role that Islam plays in everyday life. These groups want to see a much more Islamic Bangladesh governed entirely by Shari'a law where parliament and other man-made governing mechanisms are nonexistent. For instance, HuJI-B's famous axiom is *Amra Shobai Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghan* (We are all Afghans, Bangladesh will be Afghanistan).<sup>17</sup> It is possible that Bangladeshi terrorist groups may decide that to begin the process of bringing about such a radical change, they must resort to more radical tactics.

Another driver could be the desire to escalate their campaign in the country; suicide terrorism could actually be viewed as part of a natural evolution of the aforementioned ink blot strategy. If key strategists have assessed that the use of suicide terrorism in other conflicts, namely Pakistan, has been successful, it may become a component of a strategy to elicit concessions from Dhaka. Such events would hardly be unprecedented in the region. As such, it is possible that initial uses of the tactic could be experimental in nature in order to gauge public and governmental reactions as well as operational effectiveness.

The critical component of a suicide attack is not the violent act itself, but the exploitation of it afterward. Although many groups, including those in Bangladesh, have their own forms of media, they still rely on mainstream media to communicate with the greater

public and the audience that they ultimately aim to win over. Failure to maintain a consistent profile in the mass media often leads to irrelevance and eventual extinction. For example, JMB has recently received a disproportionate amount of media coverage compared to HuJI-B, as the former has been more active in Bangladesh. The use of suicide terrorism by HuJI-B could rapidly reverse this current trend.<sup>18</sup> It should be noted, however, that even though JMB is currently in the spotlight, available evidence suggests that HuJI-B and JMB are more collaborative than competitive at this point in time. Nonetheless, if these groups become more confident and, inevitably, ambitious, there is nothing to suggest that this preference for cooperation over confrontation will last.

Suicide attacks can be fatal for a terrorist group unless they can capture market share after its execution. The TTP has largely justified many of its suicide attacks on the grounds that they are a response to attacks by the Pakistani security forces and by U.S. unmanned aerial vehicles.<sup>19</sup> TTP also fights in Afghanistan against what many in Pakistan perceive as foreign occupiers with multiple objectives. Similarly, groups such as Lashkar-i-Tayyiba and Jaysh-i-Muhammad that carry out *fidayin* attacks (in which the death of the gunman is nearly guaranteed)—such as those witnessed in Mumbai in November 2008—draw much of their legitimacy from the Kashmir dispute and the claim that they are fighting against a hostile “Hindu India.” JMB and HuJI-B, however, enjoy no source of legitimacy at present as they are not involved in a major way in any external conflict theater

<sup>18</sup> This is most evident in the examples of Hamas and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Both the LTTE and Hamas were able to distinguish themselves from the myriad of other terrorist groups that were operating in their respective conflict theaters through the use of suicide bombing. In the case of LTTE, the field was extremely saturated with rival Tamil groups, and suicide bombing played a crucial role in allowing the LTTE to rise in prominence. For more information, see Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Baitullah Mehsud justified the recent suicide attack on an Islamabad police station by claiming that it was in response to U.S. drone attacks on his territory. For more, see Barry Newhouse, “Pakistani Taliban Claim Responsibility in Lahore Police Attack,” *Voice of America*, March 31, 2009.

nor are they subject to a destructive military crackdown. Indiscriminate strafing and bombing, poorly planned military operations, and a complete lack of a counterinsurgency strategy helped establish the legitimacy of TTP; the similar use of more indiscriminate tactics, such as aerial bombardment, has greatly bolstered the Afghan Taliban as well. In addition, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, an initially Punjab-based Sunni extremist outfit, did not begin to use suicide bombings consistently until it relocated to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and faced the brunt of several military operations. Without these types of events taking place, it will be difficult for Bangladeshi terrorist groups to justify suicide bombings.<sup>20</sup>

#### Dhaka's Response and Future Directions

Thus far, Dhaka has been wise in viewing terrorism through a police/law-and-order paradigm as opposed to a military-centric one like several of its neighbors. In the event that Bangladeshi terrorist groups escalate their activities, however, Dhaka may feel the temptation to resort to military action. That would likely increase the support base of HuJI-B and JMB, alienate potential local allies, and cause further escalation. By engaging in more indiscriminate military operations, Dhaka could potentially further alienate Bangladeshis in more far-flung, grossly underdeveloped regions who are already dissatisfied with the central government. This would increase the recruitment pool for terrorist groups while also undermining any future counterinsurgency efforts as strong ties with Dhaka could become a liability for local leaders. In turn, such actions could lead to further radicalization and a greater propensity for terrorist groups to incorporate suicide bombing into their repertoire. They would seek to justify this tactic by claiming that Dhaka escalated first and that they had no choice but to respond. Such a scenario is avoidable.

Recruitment and training hotspots, such as remote and impoverished areas

<sup>20</sup> For example, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto by a suicide bomber dealt a blow to the image of TTP in Pakistan even though its involvement has not been confirmed. Further, the use of the tactic by al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) played a role in alienating fellow Sunni insurgents that were once AQI's allies.

<sup>15</sup> “Taliban Denies Role in Hotel Attack,” *al-Jazira*, September 22, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Amir Mir, “Fidayeen-e-Islam is a Cover Up?” *The News*, September 24, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see the South Asia Terrorism Portal file on Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam Bangladesh, located at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

in the northwest and south, need to be actively targeted with increased meaningful development work and information operations (IO) to weaken the recruitment efforts of these groups. Furthermore, the terrorist groups' failure to provide an effective governance or development plan needs to be emphasized in order to clearly communicate that economic conditions, though not ideal at present, would become much worse under a government headed by Islamist extremists. IO must utilize multiple sources because the medium of communication for Bangladeshis varies greatly.

In Dhaka and other urban areas, it is advisable to focus on the internet as part of the IO effort, especially when attempting to reach the target audience of 18-25-year-old males, the group most susceptible to the messages espoused by terrorist groups. In the countryside, however, a shift to radio and word-of-mouth is necessary as internet connectivity and literacy levels are lower. In regard to the word-of-mouth approach, the local leaders tasked with delivering the message must be carefully analyzed in order to avoid exacerbating the issue. Dhaka must also strive to be as invisible as possible in these efforts to maintain the credibility of local leaders that is largely hinged on the perception of independence. Nonetheless, this is not to say that discreet financial and logistical support for facilities such as radio stations is not in order.

The government should initially concentrate on high visibility development efforts, even though these projects are not always the most sustainable. Such projects help to establish positive momentum in order to build enough goodwill and patience to carry out the more long-term agriculture projects such as irrigation programs, farmer-to-market schemes, the development of new produce markets, and the provision of seeds. Also, light industry often helps to create long-term employment provided that it produces goods and services that are adequately intertwined with the development needs of the local area. These enterprises will initially require external assistance until enough management expertise and skilled labor is developed to make them viable on their own. Medium-profit enterprises tend to be labor

intensive thus soliciting greater local participation and a stake in its future survival. This concept is often referred to as "sweat equity," and if combined with an effective IO campaign could put an irreparable dent in the recruitment efforts of HuJI-B and JMB as well as their ability to scale up their operations throughout the country.

Large-scale military operations, however, could lead to a major trust deficit between Dhaka and at-risk communities. This would inhibit any efforts to put a joint development-IO strategy in place. In addition, it could prompt at least experimentation with suicide terrorism in order to test public receptiveness. Bangladesh has traditionally been a moderate society, and while radical groups are actively trying to win support, the vast majority of Bangladeshis still abhor violence, especially when it uses religion as a justification. Therefore, strengthening and reinforcing the social resilience among Bangladesh's populace will perhaps be one of the best deterrents against the use of suicide terrorism.

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## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

April 1, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid responded to a U.S. offer of "honorable reconciliation" by calling the notion a "lunatic idea." The spokesman said that the withdrawal of foreign troops was the only way to end the conflict: "There is no other way. We want our freedom and respect for our independence." - *Reuters, April 1*

April 1, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Thirteen people, including senior government officials, were killed when four suicide attackers stormed provincial council offices in Kandahar city. According to reports, the assailants drove up to the offices in a four-wheel drive vehicle. Three of the men got out of the car, while the fourth detonated explosives in the vehicle, killing himself but blowing open the gate to the compound. The three militants then entered the compound and opened fire. Security forces shot dead two of the assailants; the remaining militant blew himself up. Witnesses claim that the militants wore Afghan military uniforms. - *AFP, April 1*

April 2, 2009 (UNITED STATES): A U.S. federal judge ruled that the government can continue to detain Hedi Hammamy—a Tunisian charged with supporting al-Qa`ida—at Guantanamo Bay. The U.S. government alleges that Hammamy fought with the Taliban and al-Qa`ida in the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan, in addition to belonging to an Italy-based terrorist cell. Hammamy was apprehended in Pakistan in April 2002. - *Washington Post, April 3*

April 2, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants attacked a police post on the border with Iran, reportedly killing one policeman and three civilian customs office clerks. The attack occurred in Herat Province. - *AFP, April 3*

April 2, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) released Mary Jean Lacaba, one of three International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) workers held hostage since January 15. The ASG is still holding Swiss national Andreas Notter and Italian national Eugenio Vagni on Jolo Island in the southern Philippines. - *ABS-CBNNews.com, April 2*

April 3, 2009 (IRAQ): Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said on state-run television that al-Qa`ida fighters and Saddam Hussein loyalists had infiltrated Sunni Arab militias—Awakening (*sabwa*) movements such as the Sons of Iraq. “Our intelligence reports confirm that al-Ba`ath and al-Qa`ida have infiltrated *Sabwas*,” he charged. “It’s not a question of Shiite and Sunni conflict. It’s a question of an organized armed party that is banned and wants to create problems.” – *AFP, April 3*

April 3, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants destroyed nine NATO vehicles at a logistics terminal on the outskirts of Peshawar. The incident was just the latest in the Taliban’s ongoing strategy to attack the supply lines for international forces in Afghanistan. – *AFP, April 2*

April 3, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): An explosion ripped through a public square in Isabela, Basilan Province, in the southern Philippines. At least two people were killed and eight wounded. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. – *GMA News.tv, April 3*

April 4, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan leader Baitullah Mehsud immediately claimed credit for an incident in New York state on April 3, in which a man shot and killed 13 people at an immigrant services center before committing suicide. Mehsud told reporters, “I accept responsibility. They were my men. I gave them orders in reaction to U.S. drone attack.” The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, however, “firmly” discounted Mehsud’s claim. The gunman, moreover, turned out to be Jiverly Wong, an immigrant from Vietnam. – *Reuters, April 4; Los Angeles Times, May 6*

April 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. unmanned aerial drone strike killed at least 11 suspected militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. According to the *New York Times*, those killed in the strike “were loyal to Hafiz Gul Bahadur, a militant leader and ally of [Baitullah] Mehsud’s, and appeared to be Arabs and Afghans.” – *AFP, April 4; New York Times, April 4*

April 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): John Solecki, a U.S. national working for the United

Nations, was released south of Quetta near the Afghanistan border. Solecki had been held hostage since February 2, after he was kidnapped by gunmen in Quetta, Balochistan Province. The gunmen killed his driver during the kidnapping. A previously unknown group called the Balochistan Liberation United Front took credit for the kidnapping, and it demanded that the Pakistani government release from jail Baloch nationalists and separatists. – *New York Times, April 4*

April 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives near a paramilitary checkpoint in Miran Shah, North Waziristan Agency. At least seven people, all reportedly civilians, were killed. – *AFP, April 4*

April 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber walked into a Frontier Constabulary tented police camp in Islamabad and detonated his explosives. Eight members of the security force were killed. The incident occurred in an exclusive, heavily guarded neighborhood. – *AFP, April 4*

April 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani ground forces, helicopter gunships and fighter jets attacked Taliban militants in Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The Pakistani government estimated that at least 18 militants were killed. – *AFP, April 5*

April 5, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a Shi`a mosque in Chakwal, Punjab Province. At least 22 people were killed. – *Guardian, April 5*

April 6, 2009 (IRAQ): Six car bombs ripped through Baghdad, killing at least 33 people. The attacks largely targeted Shi`a areas of the city. The majority of the casualties were civilians. – *CNN, April 6; Reuters, April 7*

April 7, 2009 (IRAQ): A car bomb exploded near a mosque in the Shi`a area of Kadhimiyya in Baghdad, killing eight people. – *New York Times, April 7*

April 7, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide car bomber rammed his vehicle into the armored car of Colonel Saad Abbas al-Shimary, an Awakening Council leader in Garma, Anbar Province. The attack,

which occurred in Garma, failed to kill al-Shimary. One policeman, however, was killed. The assassination attempt was the third on al-Shimary since December 2008. – *New York Times, April 7*

April 7, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants used a remote-controlled bomb to destroy a music shop in Peshawar. There was no loss of life as the bomb exploded during the night. – *AFP, April 6*

April 7, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Authorities announced that Taliban militants killed five people, including three policemen, during overnight clashes between an anti-Taliban tribal force, the police and approximately 60 Taliban fighters. The clashes occurred after the anti-Taliban tribal force, or *lashkar*, attempted to dislodge the Taliban from a mountain top in Buner District of the North-West Frontier Province. – *AFP, April 7*

April 7, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Karachi police arrested five members of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, a Pakistani terrorist group. Police allege that the men were planning to conduct attacks on government offices and security forces in Karachi. – *Daily Telegraph, April 8*

April 7, 2009 (SAUDI ARABIA): Saudi security forces arrested 11 alleged al-Qa`ida militants operating from a hideout near the border with Yemen. The men were allegedly planning to attack police installations, conduct armed robberies and kidnap people in Saudi Arabia. Explosive suicide belts were uncovered during the operation. – *BBC, April 7; Reuters, April 7*

April 8, 2009 (UNITED KINGDOM): UK police arrested 12 men in England on suspicion of plotting a terrorist attack in the country. – *Daily Telegraph, April 10*

April 8, 2009 (IRAQ): A bomb exploded near the Shi`a Musa Kadhim mosque in Baghdad, killing seven people. – *AFP, April 8*

April 9, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed two police officers and three civilians in Lashkar Gah, Helmand Province. The bomber targeted a counternarcotics police brigade. – *New York Times, April 9*



April 9, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Sufi Muhammad, who brokered a cease-fire deal between the government and militants in the Swat Valley in February, pulled out of the peace deal. He said that the government was not serious about implementing Shari`a. Sufi Muhammad's son-in-law is Maulana Fazlullah, who leads Taliban fighters in Swat. - *CNN, April 10*

April 9, 2009 (TURKEY): Turkish authorities detained 28 al-Qa`ida suspects in simultaneous operations in several districts of Eskisehir Province. - *Voice of America, April 9*

April 10, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber drove a truck packed with 2,000 pounds of explosives into the entrance of the main military base in Mosul, Ninawa Province. The large blast killed five U.S. soldiers and two Iraqi soldiers. According to the *New York Times*, "Driving a dump truck, the bomber appears to have passed a number of checkpoints before finally blasting through a final checkpoint guarding a military road that leads to one of the main entrances to the base." - *New York Times, April 10*

April 10, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants destroyed at least six oil tankers in Peshawar used for supplying fuel to NATO troops in Afghanistan. - *RTTNews, April 10*

April 11, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed 12 Sunni militiamen at an Iraqi Army post in Iskandariyya, Babil Province. - *Reuters, April 11*

April 11, 2009 (TURKEY): Turkish prosecutors charged seven people with belonging to a terrorist organization. The seven al-Qa`ida suspects were rounded up during a large counterterrorism operation on April 9. - *AFP, April 11*

April 12, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Sitara Achakzai, a leading female Afghan politician, was gunned down after leaving a provincial council meeting in Kandahar. According to the *Guardian*, Achakzai "was attacked by two gunmen as she arrived at her home in a rickshaw—a vehicle colleagues said she deliberately chose to use to avoid attracting attention." The Taliban claimed responsibility for the killing. - *Guardian, April 13*

April 12, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants destroyed 10 container trucks in Peshawar used for supplying Western forces in Afghanistan. - *Reuters, April 12*

April 12, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A Taliban spokesman told reporters that airstrikes in Orakzai Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas killed between 16 and 20 Taliban fighters. The spokesman said that their commander escaped. It was unclear which country conducted the airstrikes. - *UPI, April 15*

April 12, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine soldiers recovered the body of one of two Christian hostages kidnapped from a Christian community in Basilan Province in the southern Philippines. The murdered hostage, Cosme Aballes, had been beheaded. It is suspected that the Abu Sayyaf Group was behind the kidnappings. - *AKI, April 13*

April 13, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militia publicly executed a young couple who tried to elope. The couple was shot dead in front of a mosque in Nimroz Province. According to the Nimroz governor, "Three Taliban mullahs brought them to the local mosque and they passed a *fatwa* that they must be killed. They were shot and killed in front of the mosque in public." - *AFP, April 14*

April 13, 2009 (PAKISTAN): President Asif Ali Zardari approved Islamic law in the Swat Valley. A spokesman for the Taliban in Swat said in response that "the Taliban will accept the writ of the government. We got what we wanted." - *Bloomberg, April 14*

April 13, 2009 (YEMEN): Yemeni tribesmen released two Dutch hostages who were kidnapped on March 31. It appears a ransom was paid. According to Reuters, "Tribesmen often kidnap Western tourists in Yemen...to pressure the government to provide better services and improve living conditions." - *Reuters, April 13*

April 13, 2009 (SOMALIA): Mortars narrowly missed the plane of U.S. Representative Donald M. Payne from New Jersey, who was visiting Mogadishu. Payne, who is the chairman of the House subcommittee on Africa, was unhurt. Although al-Shabab took credit for the attack, it was unclear

whether Payne's plane was targeted or if it was a routine attack on the airport. The mortar rounds may have killed five civilians on the ground. - *New York Times, April 13; Washington Post, April 14*

April 14, 2009 (IRAQ): U.S. Army Colonel Gary Volesky, commander of American forces in the Mosul area, told reporters that U.S. troops could stay in Mosul after a June 30 withdrawal deadline. "If the Iraqi government wants us to stay we will stay," he said. - *Reuters, April 14*

April 15, 2009 (IRAQ): A car bomb ripped through a bus in Kirkuk, killing 10 policemen. The bomb was detonated remotely, and it targeted policemen heading home from protecting an oil installation. After the attack, police arrested a man who reportedly filmed the attack. - *AFP, April 15*

April 15, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber drove a vehicle into a police checkpoint in Charsadda, near Peshawar in the North-West Frontier Province. The attack killed at least 16 people. At least nine of the dead were police. - *Voice of America, April 15*

April 16, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber attacked an airbase in Habbaniyya, Anbar Province. The bomber wore an Iraqi military uniform. Initial reports claimed that 15 soldiers were killed. Later, however, authorities claimed that only the bomber died. According to the *New York Times*, "One of the three officials who reported 15 deaths suggested that commanders were playing down the toll, perhaps reflecting embarrassment over the security breach." - *AP, April 16; New York Times, April 16*

April 16, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan police announced the arrests of two men accused of the April 12 killing of Sitara Achakzai, a leading female Afghan politician. - *Reuters, April 16*

April 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Maulana Abdul Aziz, the cleric who led militants during the July 2007 standoff between the army and fighters holed up in the Red Mosque in Islamabad, was released on bail. He had been under house arrest in Rawalpindi since July 2007. After his release, he said, "God willing, the day is not far away when Islam will be enforced in the whole of Pakistan.

Our struggle has always been peaceful, and we will continue this struggle for the enforcement of Islamic laws in the country." - AP, April 16

April 17, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Maulana Abdul Aziz, the head of the Red Mosque in Islamabad, led thousands of followers in prayer, and said, "I tell you that you should be ready to make sacrifices for Islam. The day is not far away when Islam will be enforced in the whole of the country...What we have seen in Swat and the tribal areas is the result of the sacrifices at the Red Mosque: the students, the people who were martyred." Aziz was released on bail on April 16. In July 2007, he led militants during a standoff between the army and fighters holed up in the Red Mosque. Approximately 102 people, including 11 security personnel, were killed during the standoff. - AP, April 17

April 18, 2009 (IRAQ): Iraqi authorities announced that they had recently arrested a Saudi national in Basra, accused of being a senior al-Qa`ida member. Three of his aides were also arrested. - AFP, April 18

April 18, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN): A new report in the *Wall Street Journal* claimed that U.S. military and intelligence personnel are attempting to prevent the Taliban from using radio stations and internet websites to intimidate civilians and coordinate attacks. The report stated that the United States will jam unlicensed radio stations in parts of Pakistan near the Afghan border, and block Pakistani jihadist websites. - Reuters, April 18

April 18, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants stormed a police post in Farah Province, killing five policemen. - AFP, April 19

April 18, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide car bomber attacked a Pakistani military convoy in Kohat District of the North-West Frontier Province. At least 20 people were killed, and eight vehicles in the convoy were destroyed. - Reuters, April 18

April 18, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a checkpoint in Hangu District of the North-West Frontier Province, killing 10 people. - AP, April 18

April 18, 2009 (SOMALIA): Somalia's parliament voted unanimously to institute Islamic law. - *New York Times*, April 18

April 18, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine officials announced that the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) released Andreas Notter, a Swiss national and volunteer for the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC). He had been held hostage since January 15, along with two other ICRC workers. The ASG previously released one of the three on April 2. They are still holding Italian Eugenio Vagni. - Reuters, April 17

April 19, 2009 (IRAQ): Iraqi security forces announced that they recently arrested four children who were recruited by al-Qa`ida to conduct suicide attacks in the Kirkuk area. The children, who are all under 14 years of age, call themselves the "Birds of Paradise." According to the AFP, "The name of the group likely comes from the traditional Islamic belief that when children die they become birds in paradise." - AFP, April 19

April 19, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone strike killed three people in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *Voice of America*, April 19

April 20, 2009 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new audio statement on jihadist websites. Al-Zawahiri criticized President Barack Obama's plan for Afghanistan, stating that his decision to deploy more troops will add "more fuel to the fire." He also responded to Obama's attempts to change the Islamic world's perceptions of the United States: "The new President Obama did not change anything of the image of America towards Muslims and the oppressed...It is America that is still killing Muslims in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan. It is America that steals their fortunes, occupies their land, and supports the thieving, corrupt, and traitor rulers in their countries. And, consequently, the problem is not over. Rather, it is likely to deteriorate and escalate." Al-Zawahiri also called on al-Qa`ida in Iraq to "break the borders" of neighboring countries and liberate Jerusalem from the Israeli "crusader invaders." - AFP, April 20; AP, April 20

April 20, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber attacked U.S. military personnel visiting city officials in Ba`quba, Diyala Province. The bomber, who wore an Iraqi special forces uniform, killed four Iraqis when his suicide vest exploded. At least eight U.S. soldiers were injured. - UPI, April 20; AP, April 20

April 20, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber entered the compound of Herat's provincial governor, but was shot by police before he could reach his target. His vest, however, exploded, and three people were wounded. The bomber was reportedly disabled, and he had packed explosives into his artificial leg. - Reuters, April 20; AFP, April 20

April 21, 2009 (UNITED STATES): A federal court in Manhattan heard opening arguments against Ousama Kassir, a Swedish man of Lebanese descent charged with planning to set up an al-Qa`ida terrorist training camp in the United States. Kassir was extradited to the United States from Prague in September 2007. Prosecutors allege that Kassir offered military weapons training for Muslims interested in fighting in Afghanistan. - *Dow Jones Newswires*, April 21; AP, May 11

April 21, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Hundreds of Taliban militants in the Swat Valley crossed into Buner District of the North-West Frontier Province, setting up checkpoints and occupying mosques. Their move into Buner District places them within 68 miles of Islamabad. - AFP, April 21

April 21, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan told reporters that Pakistan's entire legal system is "un-Islamic." He said, "Let the judges and the lawyers go to Islamic university... [After] they learn Islamic rules, Islamic regulation, they can continue to work." - CNN, April 22

April 21, 2009 (TURKEY): Turkish police arrested 37 suspected terrorists in separate locations in the country. The men are suspected of having ties to al-Qa`ida. - *Wall Street Journal*, April 22

April 21, 2009 (SOMALIA): Mohamed Mohamud Jimale, a former leader in the Islamic Courts Union and a supporter of Somalia's new government, was assassinated by three gunmen in

Mogadishu. Media reports speculated that al-Shabab was likely behind the killing. – *UPI, April 21*

April 22, 2009 (UNITED KINGDOM): British authorities released all 12 men arrested during a counterterrorism sweep on April 8. Authorities said there was not enough evidence to keep them in custody. Officials are now trying to deport 11 of them to their native Pakistan. – *Los Angeles Times, April 23*

April 22, 2009 (GERMANY): The Berlin trial opened for four members of an alleged Islamist terrorist cell accused of plotting to kill dozens of Americans and Germans; their alleged goal was to force Germany to withdraw its soldiers from Afghanistan. The defendants include three Germans and one Turkish national. The cell was broken up by police in September 2007. – *Washington Post, April 23*

April 22, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives inside a Sunni mosque in Salah al-Din Province, killing at least five people. – *Reuters, April 22*

April 22, 2009 (MALI): Two Canadian diplomats and two European tourists were released in Mali by al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The Canadians were kidnapped in December, while the tourists were kidnapped in January. Canadian Robert Fowler, a United Nations envoy to Niger, was one of the released hostages. AQIM is still holding two Westerners hostage. – *Reuters, April 22; Bloomberg, April 22*

April 22, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine troops clashed with Abu Sayyaf Group fighters who have been holding an Italian Red Cross worker hostage since January. Authorities said that the clash occurred when about 50 ASG fighters tried to escape from a jungle area on Jolo Island in the southern Philippines. There were no details on casualties. – *AFP, April 22*

April 23, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a restaurant in Muqdadhiyya, Diyala Province, killing at least 47 people. The bomber apparently targeted a group of Iranian Shi`a pilgrims who had stopped to eat at the restaurant before reaching their destination of Karbala. – *Bloomberg, April 23*

April 23, 2009 (IRAQ): A female suicide bomber detonated her explosives at a food distribution center in Baghdad's Rusafa neighborhood, killing 28 people. The woman reportedly held a child's hand as she detonated her explosives. – *Bloomberg, April 23; New York Times, April 23*

April 23, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives as a vehicle carrying a local Awakening Council leader passed by. Five people were killed, including the council leader. – *New York Times, April 23*

April 23, 2009 (IRAQ): The Iraqi military claimed to have captured the head of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi. The U.S. government, however, could not confirm the report. Al-Baghdadi has been falsely reported captured or killed multiple times in the past. – *AFP, April 23*

April 23, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistan sent approximately 100 paramilitary troops to Buner District in the North-West Frontier Province, and they quickly came under attack by Taliban militants who swept into the province on April 21. – *Reuters, April 23*

April 23, 2009 (SOMALIA): Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys, a former hard line member of the Islamic Courts Union, reportedly returned to Mogadishu. Aweys had been living in Eritrea since Ethiopian troops dislodged the Islamic courts from power in December 2006. He has been accused of having ties to al-Qa`ida. Aweys currently leads a faction opposed to the new government of Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad. – *Voice of America, April 24*

April 24, 2009 (PAKISTAN): General David Petraeus told the U.S. Congress that Pakistan should concentrate its resources on the Taliban and other extremists within its borders, rather than on India. "The most important, most pressing threat to the very existence of their country [Pakistan] is the threat posed by the internal extremists and groups such as the Taliban and the syndicated extremists." – *AP, April 24*

April 24, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants who swarmed into Buner District of the North-West Frontier Province on April 21 began withdrawing back to the Swat Valley. – *AP, April 24*

April 24, 2009 (SOMALIA): Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys called on African Union peacekeepers to leave Somalia. Aweys returned to Somalia on April 23, after living in exile in Eritrea since Ethiopian troops dislodged the Islamic courts from power in December 2006. He has been accused of having ties to al-Qa`ida. – *Voice of America, April 24*

April 25, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Three suicide bombers attacked the governor's compound in Kandahar Province, killing five policemen. – *Voice of America, April 25*

April 25, 2009 (SOMALIA): Militia fighters launched mortars at a building where Somalia's legislators were meeting, killing at least eight people. No legislators were injured. – *Reuters, April 25*

April 25, 2009 (SOMALIA): Insurgents attacked two African Union peacekeeping bases in Mogadishu. Soldiers managed to repulse the insurgents, although approximately three civilians may have been killed. – *AP, April 26*

April 26, 2009 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) threatened to execute a British hostage unless the British government releases a Muslim cleric, Abu Qatada, from detention. AQIM gave the British government 20 days to release Qatada. Although AQIM released four hostages on April 22, it is still holding a British national and a Swiss national. – *AFP, April 26*

April 27, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan President Hamid Karzai announced that he will run for reelection in the country's upcoming elections, scheduled for August 20. – *AFP, April 27*

April 27, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters attacked a government building in northern Baghlan Province, and possibly abducted 10 officers. At least one policeman was killed in the attack. – *Reuters, April 27*

April 27, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari ruled out the possibility that his country's nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of the Taliban. "I want to assure the world that the nuclear capability of Pakistan is under safe hands," he said. – *Reuters, April 27*

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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.

April 28, 2009 (UNITED KINGDOM): A British court acquitted three men on charges of helping to plot the July 7, 2005 terrorist attacks in London that killed 52 people. According to the *New York Times*, "the men were found not guilty of conspiracy to cause explosions, but [two] were convicted on a second charge of conspiring to attend a terrorist training camp in Pakistan...The jury's decision on Tuesday meant that no one had been convicted in the July 7 attacks, leaving survivors and relatives of the dead frustrated." - *New York Times*, April 28

April 28, 2009 (INDONESIA): Mohammad Hasan bin Saynudin, a Singaporean, was sentenced to 18 years in jail by an Indonesian court on charges of killing an Indonesian teacher and plotting an attack on a bar frequented by non-Muslims. Saynudin was arrested on the island of Sumatra in July 2008. He claimed to have met Usama bin Ladin "countless times." - *The Press Association*, April 28

April 29, 2009 (UNITED STATES): President Barack Obama said that al-Qa`ida and the Taliban are the "single most direct threat" to U.S. national security. - *Reuters*, April 29

April 29, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Australia announced that it will send an additional 450 troops to Afghanistan to help train the Afghan army and provide security for the upcoming presidential elections in August. Taking into account the new troop deployment, Australia will have 1,100 troops in Afghanistan. - *Voice of America*, April 29

April 29, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives next to a German military patrol in Kunduz Province in northern Afghanistan. Five German soldiers were injured. The incident occurred shortly after German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier landed in Kunduz for an unannounced visit to Afghanistan. - *UPI*, April 29

April 29, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani commandos retook Dagggar, the main town in Buner District, and began linking up with police and security forces in the area. Buner District of the North-West Frontier Province was overrun by Taliban militants on April 21, but they partially withdrew from

the district on April 24. Helicopter gunships and fighter jets also bombed Taliban targets in the area. - *AP*, April 28

April 29, 2009 (TURKEY): Nine Turkish soldiers were killed when a bomb ripped through their armored vehicle in the mainly Kurdish southeast. It was widely suspected that the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was behind the attack. - *Guardian*, April 29

April 30, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri pleaded guilty before a U.S. district judge in Peoria, Illinois, admitting to one count of conspiring to provide material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization. Accused of being an al-Qa`ida sleeper agent, al-Marri has been held by authorities since 2001. His sentencing is scheduled for July 30, and he faces up to 15 years in prison. - *USA Today*, April 30

April 30, 2009 (IRAQ): U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said that the recent uptick of attacks in Iraq is "an orchestrated effort on the part of al-Qaida to try and provoke the very kind of sectarian violence that nearly tore the country apart in 2006...They are clearly trying to take advantage of our drawdown, and particularly our drawing back away from the cities, to try and provoke a renewed round of sectarian violence." - *Voice of America*, April 30

April 30, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Al-Qa`ida commander Abu Yahya al-Libi posted a message on Islamist web forums calling on Pakistanis to rise up against their government to perform the duty of "fighting the Pakistani army and the rest of the apparatus that are the pillars of their tyrannical state...The criminals in the Pakistani government and its army have not only been a cover for the occupying crusader infidels in Afghanistan, they have directly helped them in committing all their crimes in Afghanistan and elsewhere." - *Reuters*, April 30