CTC SENTINEL

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Contents

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The Philippines' Continued Success Against Extremists

By Peter Chalk

Humvees with U.S. soldiers on board secure a bombing site in Jolo in the southern Philippines on July 7, 2009. - STR/AFP/Getty Images

THE EXTREMIST ENVIRONMENT in the Philippines continues to improve. The main organizations that have traditionally been at the forefront of national security concern are either exhibiting a continued readiness to engage in negotiations with the government in Manila or are variously suffering from battlefield losses, criminalization or reductions in popular support. Although there has been an increase in kidnappings by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), this is actually a sign of the group's weakness and declining capabilities. Moreover, the United States and Australia remain committed to underwriting assistance packages to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP), both of which continue to make steady advances in the struggle against violent extremism.

This article will outline the domestic security environment in the Philippines by examining the current state of three main organizations: the Abu Sayyaf Group,[1] the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)[2] and the New People's Army (NPA).[3] The article will then discuss the main parameters of U.S.

1 The ASG is a self-styled Moro jihadist group that seeks the creation of an exclusive Islamic State of Mindanao (MIS). It has been tied to regional and international terrorist movements, including Jemaah Islamiya and al-Qa`ida.

2 The MILF is the largest Moro insurgent group in Mindanao. For much of its existence the movement sought the creation of an independent Muslim state in Mindanao, but moderated its demands to enhanced autonomy following the death of Hashim Salamat—the MILF's hard line founder—in 2003. The group is currently engaged in sporadic peace negotiations with Manila.

3 The NPA acts as the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Its stated aim is to replace the existing Filipino political and economic structure with a socialist system through a protracted strategy of people's war.

and Australian security assistance to the Philippines and identify some of the main shortfalls that continue to hamper the overall effectiveness of Manila's counterterrorism efforts.

Abu Sayyaf Group

Despite occasional bombings and attacks against infrastructure, the ASG's current threat level is the lowest in years. As of April 2009, the group was estimated to have no more than 100 hardcore militants (and less than 350 weapons) at its disposal, supplemented by at most 200 part-time militants and maybe 30 foreign terrorists (predominantly Indonesians associated with Jemaah Islamiya's "pro-bombing" faction).[4] According to sources in the PNP, these members are split between at least 18 separate cells across Sulu, Basilan and Zamboanga and lack any sense of organizational, much less operational, cohesion.[5] The ASG has yet to select an *amir* (leader) that is accepted by the entire group. Radullah Sahiron is the closest person to such an individual. He is old, however, and suffers from acute diabetes and commands the loyalty of only approximately 60% of the group's fighters.[6]

The ASG's return to criminal enterprise, namely kidnapping for ransom, reflects the relative decline of the group and its capacity to perpetrate violence against the state. Western analysts in Manila believe this reflects a diminution in the group's ideological focus with the main aim now being purely financial in nature (allegedly to underwrite the campaigns and agendas of co-opted local politicians).[7] The AFP and PNP both view this development as "positive" in the sense that cadres motivated by money are far easier to bribe and "turn" than those who remain firm in their religious convictions.[8] Certainly this has been the experience in Colombia and is considered to be one of the main

factors accounting for Bogota's success in infiltrating the highest echelons of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.[9]

Moro Islamic Liberation Front

As of April 2009, the MILF's overall strength remained at levels on par with those of 2007-2008. According to the AFP, the group could count on 11,600 members equipped with around 7,700 weapons.[10] The overwhelming majority of the MILF believe that a final peace settlement and autonomous rule in Mindanao is still possible; indeed, in June 2009 the Front's political

> "The ASG has been reduced to isolated pockets of militants scattered across the outlying islands of Mindanao with no apparent leader or unified ideological agenda to tie the group together."

spokesman, Ghazali Jaafar, specifically described the peace process environment as "getting better," confirmed that the group accepted the government's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration policy and voiced hope that negotiations would resume soon.[11]

The rejectionist faction within the MILF remains at 30%, or approximately 3,400 of the group's total membership. It presents a challenge to any peace deal. The mainstream elements cooperating with the government, however, will likely inhibit any splinter faction's ability to disrupt a final settlement.[12] Obviously the rejectionists will need to be monitored—3,400 militants could cause considerable instability— although with the mainstream of the MILF cooperating, they will have less

latitude to engage in disruptive attacks than they otherwise might enjoy.

As with the ASG, there are also signs of an increasing criminal element creeping into the Front's activities. The MILF's current budget is estimated to be in the vicinity of Ps107 million (approximately $2.2 million), of which Ps100.8 million (approximately $2.1 million) comes from extortion.[13] As in the case of the ASG, it is more manageable to deal with an economically-motivated group than one driven by strict ideological convictions. The MILF's increase in criminal activity could work to the direct advantage of the AFP.

New People's Army

In June 2009, the AFP estimated the NPA's combined strength to be 4,874 guerrillas organized across approximately 60 fronts. This is the lowest number of guerrillas since the mid-1980s.[14] In addition, the organization is finding it difficult to procure advanced weaponry, which is greatly hindering its ability to undertake concerted operations against the military.[15] Reflective of these dynamics, the majority of the communist campaign now takes the form of political (as opposed to military) struggle, consuming as much as 90% of the movement's overall resources.[16] In broad terms, the main priorities appear to be solidifying popular support, generating income and de-legitimating the Philippine state (through the so-called "oust Arroyo campaign").[17]

Problematically for the NPA, however, its political wings—the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP, which is illegal) and the National Democratic Front (NDF, which is legal)—are encountering significant challenges in attracting high-caliber recruits from traditional hubs such as the University of the Philippines (UP), Ateneo de Manila and Delasalle. Academics in Manila believe these difficulties reflect

4 Personal interviews, AFP officials, Manila, June 2009.

5 Personal interviews, PNP officials, Manila, June 2009.

6 Personal interviews, AFP officials, Zamboanga, January 2008. See also Peter Chalk, Angel Rabasa, William Rosenau and Leanne Piggott, *The Evolving Terrorist Threat to Southeast Asia: A Net Assessment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), p. 52.

7 Personal interview, Western official, Manila, June 2009.

8 Personal interviews, AFP and PNP officials, Manila, June 2009.

9 Personal interviews, Colombian police officials, Bogota, March 2009.

10 Personal interviews, AFP officials, Manila, June 2009.

11 "Mindanao: Peace Process Getting Better: MILF," *Sun Star*, March 9, 2009.

12 Personal interviews, AFP and PNP officials, Manila, June 2009. See also Chalk et al., pp. 40-42.

13 Personal interviews, AFP officials and Philippine analysts, Manila, June 2009.

14 "Current NPA Strength Down to Lowest Level Since the '80s," *Philippine Star*, June 28, 2009.

15 Personal interview, Philippine academic, June 2009.

16 Personal interviews, PNP officials and Philippine academics, June 2009.

17 Personal interviews, PNP officials, Manila, June 2009. See also Chalk et al., p. 86.

dramatic reductions in tuition assistance packages to the extent that it is now only the middle and upper classes who can afford to attend these institutions—neither of which have a natural affinity to the communist message. As a result, recruitment efforts have increasingly been focused on second- and third-tier universities, leading to an influx of cadres who are not as gifted in terms of effectively convincing local populations to support the CPP/NDF agenda. The inevitable consequence has been a gradual but growing reduction in the communist base.[18]

The AFP asserts that it is on track to achieve a strategic victory over the NPA by 2010—meaning a 75% reduction in the group's current strength and influence. Although independent commentators question the ability of the army to meet this target on the basis of its current tempo—at least 50 guerrilla fronts would have to be fully dismantled in less than a year—they believe that it could be achieved by 2011.[19] The larger problem may be how to effectively reintegrate those who agree to enter into government-sponsored amnesty programs and ensure that they have sufficient opportunity to support their livelihood in a civilian context.[20] With the current global economic downturn having a significant negative impact on the Philippines, Manila's ability to successfully support the transition of NPA fighters, possibly at the same time as having to manage a similar process with regard to the MILF, cannot be taken for granted.

U.S. Security Assistance to the Philippines
In rough terms, most U.S. security aid to the Philippines is allocated to the AFP while Australian support focuses primarily on the PNP. In both cases, however, the majority of assistance is directed toward facilitating the campaign against the ASG. This disposition reflects Manila's general reluctance to accept external help in mitigating the NPA threat—which it

regards as a purely domestic issue—and awareness that any such involvement would significantly complicate the ongoing peace process with the MILF.

Washington's support to the AFP continues to be channeled through the Joint United States Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) and is primarily aimed at supporting the Philippine's own initiatives to foster a holistic, all of government (AOG) approach to its counterterrorism strategies.[21] The general consensus is that these efforts have borne considerable dividends in not only balancing kinetic and non-kinetic responses to the ASG threat, but also institutionalizing responses that have been able to draw on the combined expertise of the governmental, private sector, civil and military communities.[22]

Through these endeavors, the AFP has been able to win over large (but not all) segments of local populations in terrorist "hot spots." Furthermore, by employing Moro Muslims as the "eyes and ears" of the security forces, the AFP has substantially augmented the scope of its own surveillance efforts on the ground. Indeed, the Philippine model has been so successful that officials are now looking at whether it could be replicated in other conflict zones. Although there are no active discussions yet, one place where it could have particular relevance is southern Thailand.[23]

Despite the gains made in the AFP's counterterrorism strategy, several problems remain. First, comparatively little effort has been devoted to developing an overall strategy that is directed against militant groups as a whole. The emphasis has rather been on intensifying local offensives in particular areas. The utility of such an approach makes little sense given the army's limited resources and the fact that degrees of tactical cooperation are believed to take place between the ASG and renegade MILF commands, as

well as between Moro and communist militants (in areas where they operate in close proximity to each other).

Second, insufficient focus has been given to improving civil local governance comprehensively. This is a significant gap as perceptions of administrative abuse are one of the main catalysts for joining the ASG (as well as the MILF and NPA).

Third, the army remains the lead agency in terms of counterterrorism. This is not only further stretching already limited resources, but it is forcing the military to undertake roles for which they are not trained (a fact that has been very apparent in the failure to ensure the sanctity of forensic evidence at crime scenes).

Finally, the balanced AOG approach to counterterrorism is not shared by all AFP senior officers, a number of whom continue to insist on the primacy of hard responses despite the adverse effect these can have in terms of winning "hearts and minds."[24]

Australian Security Assistance to the Philippines
The bulk of Australia's security assistance has been directed toward the police. The main emphasis has been on capacity building in critical areas such as crime scene management, strategic reporting, intelligence collection, forensic evidence gathering and improvised explosive device "signature-track" analysis. Australia's Federal Police has allocated roughly A$5.5 million ($4.6 million) to these various endeavors since 2006, in addition to helping establish a dedicated bomb data center and integrated case management system.[25]

There are definite indications that the PNP is making progress in these areas. According to Western officials, the police force has developed an enhanced ability to think strategically and is now benefiting from the input and direction of some competent officers. Moreover, a number of fairly innovative structural ideas have been forthcoming. One of the

18 Personal interview, Philippine academic, Manila, June 2009.

19 Personal interviews, Philippine analysts and academics, Manila, June 2009.

20 Under the program, the government offers every NPA cadre who surrenders up to Ps50,000 ($1,040) for the return of their weapons and a single cash payment of Ps20,000 ($415) to help support their livelihood.

21 For an in-depth look at the U.S.-Philippine security assistance relationship, see Peter Chalk, "U.S. Security Assistance to Philippines: A Success Story Against Terrorism," *CTC Sentinel* 1:3 (2008).

22 Personal interviews, AFP and Western officials, Manila, June 2009.

23 Personal interview, Western official, Manila, June 2009.

24 Personal interviews, Philippine analysts and academics, Manila, June 2009.

25 Personal interviews, Australian officials, Manila, June 2009 and Canberra, July 2009.

more notable comes from the current PNP director general who intends to make Mindanao the center of terrorism intelligence collection and analysis. His concept envisages establishing satellite data reporting stations that transmit raw intelligence to a dedicated hub where it can be assessed, analyzed and disseminated back to the originating source. If enacted, this will avail an effective two-way information conduit for counterterrorism intelligence and information. Australian officials laude these efforts and generally believe they are indicative of a bureaucratic cultural context that is now highly receptive to institutional force development and progress.[26]

One significant limiting factor in police reform, however, is the issue of size. Roughly 96% percent of the PNP's budget is allocated on salaries. This leaves little money to underwrite substantive areas of police work such as forensics, investigative techniques and technological platforms. Australia would like to reduce this percentage ratio to around 80%, arguing that this would provide much greater leeway for its own training and support initiatives to take root.[27]

In addition to the basic issue of resources, Australian officials identify several areas where the PNP's counterterrorism effectiveness could be usefully enhanced, namely:

a) Improving coordination of effort—understanding how the actions of one agency will impact on the actions of another;
b) Dealing with corruption and kickback, which is endemic across the force;
c) Increasing the professionalism of the force, especially in terms of respect for human rights;
d) Reducing duplicity of effort;
e) Developing appropriate legislative tools for prosecuting terrorists.[28]

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26 Personal interviews, Australian officials, Manila, June 2009.

27 Personal interviews, Australian officials, Manila, June 2009 and Canberra, July 2009.

28 Personal interviews, Australian officials, June 2009. Although the country has an anti-terrorism law in the guise of the Human Security Act (HSA, which was passed in 2008), the legislation has only been used once on account of the highly draconian penalties for alleged misuse of the statute. Of particular note is the provision that should someone be detained under the HSA subse-

Conclusion

The Philippine terrorist environment appears manageable. The ASG has been reduced to isolated pockets of militants scattered across the outlying islands of Mindanao with no apparent leader or unified ideological agenda to tie the group together. The MILF's mainstream continues to insist that it is prepared to engage Manila in peace talks, and there has been no substantial increase

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in the size of the so-called "renegade commands" despite periodic clashes with the military throughout 2009. Finally, the NPA's strength is at its lowest level since the 1980s, while its political wings—the CPP and NDF—find it increasingly difficult to build a solid mass base. Complementing these positive developments are ongoing improvements in the Philippine military and law enforcement communities, which despite various shortfalls appear to be making progress operationally, organizationally and doctrinally.

Both the United States and Australia have been active in supplying security assistance to the Philippines, and there is little doubt that this support has had a meaningful impact on the AFP and PNP. Future challenges will lie in sustaining and fully institutionalizing the progress achieved thus far and moving to mitigate enduring problems such as corruption.

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quently be found "not guilty," liability and responsibility for financial compensation falls to the individual arresting officer(s) concerned rather than institutionally to the PNP as an organization in its own right.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle to the effective translation of counterterrorism assistance into meaningful action lies with the domestic environment of the Philippines itself. Internal political developments within the state are such that sudden, unexpected shocks to the system are not only possible (indeed, the country is presently grappling with and highly divided over the question of constitutional change[29]), but are also able to quickly and decisively unravel reform attempts in the security sector. As one Western official remarked: "The Philippines is on a knife edge and I don't think either Washington or Canberra fully appreciate how fragile the domestic situation has become."[30] The continued success of security assistance programs cannot be considered a given under these circumstances.

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29 Arroyo is presently seeking to change the Philippine constitution, arguing, in part, that this is necessary to meet Moro demands on ancestral domain—the main sticking point hindering the current peace process with the MILF. Critics, however, charge that the real intention is to abrogate presidential term limits so that she can continue in office after 2010.

30 Personal interview, Western official, Manila, June 2009.

The Evolving Role of Uzbek-led Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan

By Jeremy Binnie and Joanna Wright

UZBEK-LED JIHADIST GROUPS have become important actors in the Afghanistan and Pakistan insurgencies. The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) is increasingly involved in attacks in Afghanistan, likely coordinated with the Haqqani network. The IJU releases regular propaganda statements and videos encouraging Central Asians and Turks to join the fighting. While the IJU's one European terrorist plot in September 2007 may prove to be an anomaly, it is actively trying to reestablish itself in Central Asia. Moreover, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), another Uzbek-led terrorist group, is following the IJU's lead and is now releasing its own propaganda and video statements encouraging Muslims to join the fighting in South Asia. Whereas the IJU is more focused on Afghanistan, the IMU has concentrated its attacks on Pakistan's security forces, likely coordinated with Baitullah Mehsud's militant faction.

The Uzbek-led jihadist groups are useful allies for the Taliban. Many fighters are experienced combat veterans, and newer recruits will also likely have some prior training as conscripts in the Uzbek or other Central Asian militaries. The Uzbek-led fighters have little choice but to remain loyal to their hosts, making them more reliable allies than local tribal groupings.

This article will examine the emergence of the IJU and its escalating activities in Afghanistan, the role that the two Uzbek-led groups play in supporting the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban and evidence that al-Qa`ida has facilitated this process.

The IJU Emerges
The IJU splintered from the IMU in 2002 under the leadership of Najmiddin Jalolov (also known as Abu Yahya Muhammad Fatih).[1] It is speculated that the two groups broke apart because the IJU's Jalolov fell out with IMU leader Tahir Yuldashev (also known as Muhammad Tahir Farooq) over ideological issues after the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Yuldashev wanted to transform the IMU into a regional organization, changing its name to the Islamic Movement of Turkistan, while Jalolov remained focused on conducting attacks in Uzbekistan.[2] Jalolov's group remained unknown until it claimed responsibility for suicide bombings in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in March and July 2004.[3] Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov also mentioned his name in connection with the unrest in the country's Andijan Province in May 2005.[4]

Despite this early domestic focus, the IJU has since eclipsed the IMU in terms of international notoriety, largely due to its role in an alleged bombing conspiracy in Germany. In September 2007, German police arrested three men (two German converts to Islam and a German national of Turkish descent) and seized a large quantity of concentrated hydrogen peroxide, a chemical that can be used to make explosives. The three suspects and a fourth defendant who was extradited from Turkey have been charged with several crimes, including preparing bombings and belonging to a terrorist organization. The IJU did not help the suspects' defense when it issued a statement claiming responsibility for the alleged plot, saying the plans were to attack the U.S. Air Force base at Ramstein—which plays a major role in supporting coalition forces in Afghanistan—as well as Uzbek and U.S. diplomatic buildings in Germany.[5] The statement said that it hoped the attacks would force the closure of the airbase at Termez in southern Uzbekistan, which the German military uses to support its deployments in northern Afghanistan. Since then, however, the IJU has primarily been involved in attacks in Afghanistan.

The IJU's Role in Afghanistan
Since 2008, the IJU has released statements and videos identifying members of the group from various countries who have carried out suicide bombings in Afghanistan, including Turks, Kurds and Azerbaijanis. One of the more recent attacks was carried out by Abu Ismail Kurdi during the night of July 3-4, 2009 in Paktika Province.[6] This seems to correspond with an assault on a base in Zerok district in northern Paktika that involved a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) and rocket fire that left 10 attackers and two U.S. soldiers dead.[7]

The IJU has coordinated attacks with the Haqqani network, an Afghan-led faction that operates autonomously under the Taliban name.[8] The two groups have a close relationship. This coordination was revealed by a March 3, 2008 suicide bombing. During the attack, a suicide bomber drove a VBIED to the Sabari district center in the eastern province of Khost. The bombing killed two U.S. soldiers and two Afghans.[9] It was initially claimed by Zabihullah Mujahid, one of the two Taliban spokesmen who act as conduits for all official communiqués from the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan." The insurgent commander Sirajuddin Haqqani, however, broke with this

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1 Abu Yahya Muhammad Fatih confirmed in an interview dated May 31, 2007 that the group was formed in 2002. The interview can be found at www.sehadetza-mani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1203. The U.S. Department of the Treasury confirmed that Abu Yahya Muhammad Fatih is Najmiddin Jalolov when it black-listed him on February 18, 2008. The state-controlled Uzbek media identified Jalolov as an IMU member as early as October 2000.

2 There are references to the IMU adopting the name Islamic Movement of Turkistan from 2003, and the name change was confirmed by a captured member of the group interviewed by *Moskovskiye Novosti* on November 25, 2005. The group, however, has since reverted to its original name.

3 These claims were issued in the name of the Islamic Jihad Group, which was proscribed as a terrorist group by the United States in May 2005. It seems to have adopted the name Islamic Jihad Union around this time.

4 A transcript of Islam Karimov's televised May 14, 2005 speech can be found using BBC's monitoring services.

5 "IJU Claims Responsibility for Foiled Attacks in Germany," German Federal Ministry of Interior, September 11, 2007.

6 The IJU statement can be found at www.sehadetza-mani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=2154.

7 "U.S. Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan," BBC, July 4, 2009.

8 Regarding the Haqqani network's area of operations, see "Unravelling Haqqani's Net," *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, June 30, 2009. Combined Joint Task Force 82 issued a press release called "Coalition Forces Focus on Haqqani Network" on October 19, 2007 stating that Sirajuddin had taken over from his father. The statement is no longer available online.

9 A U.S. military spokesperson confirmed the details of the attack to the authors.

protocol and telephoned Pakistani journalists to claim that he personally masterminded the attack.[10] A few days later, the IJU released a written statement to Turkish language jihadist websites that claimed credit for the bombing and identified its perpetrator as Cüneyt Ciftci (also known as Saad Abu Furkan), a German national of Turkish descent. The IJU claim was supported by the subsequent release of a video showing Ciftci cheerfully helping to construct his VBIED, heaping bags onto the back of a small truck to disguise the explosives. The video included footage of the explosion.[11]

The video propelled Ciftci into the jihadist "hall of fame" and also shed light on the complexity of the Afghan insurgency. All three of the ostensibly rival claims were accurate. The attack was a joint operation by the IJU and the Haqqani network, and the Afghan Taliban claimed formal responsibility. Since then, with the exception of one attack in Jalalabad, all the suicide bombings claimed by the IJU have been carried out in the Haqqani network's sphere of influence in eastern Afghanistan, demonstrating the continuing close relationship between the IJU and the Haqqani network.

Turkish Connection and Al-Qa`ida's Influence
The IJU's growing international prominence is underpinned by its Turkish language propaganda drive since 2007, which has made the group a focus for Turkish jihadists. This public relations campaign is presumably the work of internet savvy Turkish speakers who translate and republish statements from the IJU and other groups. The IJU and sympathetic websites such as Sehadet Zamani (Martyrdom Time) encourage Turks to join or support the jihad and promote slain fighters as "martyrs" worthy of emulation. It is not clear how these Turkish cyber-jihadists teamed up with the IJU, but there is some evidence that Turks who are arriving in the Pakistani tribal areas to fight with the Taliban are being assigned to the Haqqani network.

This embedding process was outlined by Commander Abu Zer, the leader of a Turkish group called Taifetul Mansura (Victorious Sect). In an interview published by the Elif Media, Abu Zer said his group had been fighting in the North Caucasus for 15 years, but had moved to Afghanistan in early 2009 where it had been assigned *ansar*[12] (local helpers) with whom to work.[13] Another statement released by the same group in June announcing the death of two of its members in Khost suggested that the Haqqani network is the *ansar* in question.[14] While there is no evidence of an explicit link between Taifetul Mansura and the IJU, Turkish volunteers are apparently being channeled toward the Haqqani network's bases in North Waziristan Agency in Pakistan, where there are established contingents that speak their language.[15]

There have been hints of al-Qa`ida's involvement with the IJU-Haqqani alliance, and al-Qa`ida likely considers the IJU's connections to the Turkish jihadist community an asset. The development of operational links between the groups would allow al-Qa`ida to tap into new networks that could be used to facilitate attacks in Turkey and Europe, or allow the IJU to use al-Qa`ida's expertise for its own operations in Central Asia.

The clearest example of al-Qa`ida's connections to the IJU occurred when al-Qa`ida leader Abu Yahya al-Libi appeared alongside IJU leader Abu Yahya Muhammad Fatih in an IJU video dated May 28, 2009.[16] This was the first time an al-Qa`ida leader has

publicly endorsed the IJU. Shaykh Sa`id Mustafa Abu'l-Yazid, al-Qa`ida's "general commander" for Afghanistan, then released a statement on June 10 appealing to Turks for financial support.[17]

When pushed by an al-Jazira journalist to explain al-Qa`ida's support for the Taliban, Abu'l-Yazid said in a recent interview:

> Last year's operation in Khost was reported in the media. It was an attack against the U.S. command headquarters at the Khost airport. God be praised, this was arranged by al-Qa`ida with the participation of our brother Taliban. This was one of the major operations in which we participated. Many of the martyrdom operations that took place in Khost, Kabul and other areas were planned by our brothers and we participated in them.[18]

This is almost certainly a reference to attacks on Forward Operating Base Salerno, a major U.S. base near Khost city, on August 18-19, 2008.[19]

Al-Qa`ida is clearly trying to associate itself with the perceived operational success of the Haqqani network and trying to capitalize on the IJU's ability to mobilize the Turkish jihadist community. It seems plausible that al-Qa`ida has played a role in networking between the Uzbeks, Turks and the Haqqani network, but there is insufficient open source evidence to conclude that al-Qa`ida was instrumental in developing the IJU into a repository for non-Arab fighters joining the Taliban.

10 Regarding the Taliban's claims, see "Taliban Attack US Military Camp in Kost," *The News*, March 4, 2008.

11 The video can be found at www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1911.

12 The word *ansar* is a reference to the citizens of Yathrib/Medina who helped the Muslim exiles from Mecca, known as the *muhajirin*, during the *hijra* (622 AD). Contemporary jihadists use the words *ansar* for local forces and *muhajirin* for foreign fighters.

13 The interview can be found at www.elifmedya.wordpress.com/2009/05/29/17/.

14 The statement can be found at www.elifmedya.wordpress.com/2009/06/22/zulum-son-buluncaya-kadar-savasacagiz/.

15 It is not clear how this process is organized. Some likely arrrive in Peshawar where they are eventually directed to Turkish speakers in North Waziristan. Others are probably led in by facilitators. For example, see Paul Cruickshank, "The 2008 Belgium Cell and FATA's Terrorist Pipeline," *CTC Sentinel* 2:4 (2009).

16 The video can be found at www.sehadetzamani.com/reklam_detay.php?id=79.

17 The Turkish translation of the Arabic statement can be found at www.taifetulmansura.com/71811_Seyh-Ebu-Yezid'den-Mesaj-Var.html.

18 The interview was broadcast by al-Jazira on June 21, 2009.

19 Personal interview, U.S. military intelligence source, FOB Salerno, Afghanistan, February 2009. For more details of the attack, see "Unravelling Haqqani's Net." The incident was also mentioned in a document summarizing the interrogation of Bryant Neal Vinas, a U.S. al-Qa`ida recruit captured in Pakistan in November 2008. Vinas said it was planned by al-Qa`ida's leaders and that it went badly. He identified one of the suicide bombers as a Turk, although the IJU does not seem to have claimed him as one of its own.

Separately, the IJU proved it is more than a Taliban proxy by carrying out an attack in its homeland on May 26, 2009. Uzbek authorities confirmed that a police checkpoint was attacked near Khanabad on the border with Kyrgyzstan early in the morning and that a suicide bomber blew himself up later that day in Andijan. The IJU claimed responsibility for the incidents in its May 28 video, thereby proving that it was still determined to carry out attacks in Uzbekistan that are completely unrelated to the insurgency in Afghanistan.

The IMU Avoids Being Overshadowed
Like the IJU, the IMU now appears to be heightening publicity for its operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In January, March and April of 2009, it released its own videos featuring Germans encouraging their fellow countrymen to join them in Afghanistan.[20] On July 11, 2009, the IMU released an Uzbek-language video claiming that one of its members carried out a suicide bombing on April 4 in Miran Shah in Pakistan's North Waziristan Agency. This corresponds to an incident that reportedly killed one Pakistani soldier and seven civilians.[21] This seems to be the first time that the IMU has explicitly claimed a suicide bombing.[22] That video identified militants from various countries, including China, Germany, Russia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

The location of the suicide bombing claimed by the IMU reflects the targeting priorities of its host. While the IJU is likely embedded with the Haqqani network and has focused on Afghanistan, the IMU has been fighting for Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud's faction since April 2007 when it was evicted from the Wana area of South Waziristan by rival Taliban commander Maulvi Nazir.[23] Baitullah's

faction and its allies have been engaged in an escalating war with the Pakistani state, during which the Uzbeks have earned a reputation as loyal and capable fighters. The IMU also operates in Afghanistan's northern Zabul Province and southern Ghazni Province.[24]

Conclusion
Both the IMU and IJU are competing to showcase their international memberships and their enthusiasm for carrying out suicide bombings. The IJU apparently has permission to claim attacks independently of the established Taliban propaganda system: as the group's hosts, the Haqqanis would be in a position to end the IJU claims if they disproved of them. This is probably a reflection of the perceived usefulness of the propaganda campaign in recruiting more volunteers to carry out similar attacks, thereby ensuring a steady supply of ideologically committed bombers.

The IMU now seems to be pursuing a similar strategy, and can be expected to claim more suicide bombings. It will probably claim bombings carried out on behalf of the Pakistani Taliban and targeting security forces, rather than civilians, to ensure the attacks are widely perceived as legitimate. If it continues to emulate the IJU, the IMU will also look to return to action in Central Asia, thereby demonstrating to its core audience that it can confront the regimes of the former Soviet republics.

For al-Qa`ida's part, it will continue to associate itself with the IJU in an attempt to gain access to the group's network in Europe and Turkey and to achieve propaganda gains from the IJU's increased frequency of attacks.

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Tribal Dynamics of the Afghanistan and Pakistan Insurgencies

By Hayder Mili and Jacob Townsend

THERE IS A RENEWED public appreciation for the role of tribal allegiances and tribal governance in the Afghanistan and Pakistan insurgencies. This is indicated by the U.S. government's announcement of an inter-agency effort to study the insurgencies' tribes, including a search for "reconcilable" elements.[1] The behavior of most insurgent groups along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border is conditioned by tribal identities, allegiances and interests. Some fighters are motivated by pan-tribal or global religious sentiment. Most, however, are strongly influenced by the interests and demands of their tribe. Tribal leaders are often forthright in explaining that their decision to support or undermine the Taliban revolves around tribal interests, not through belief in the insurgency's inherent virtue vis-à-vis the Afghan government or foreign forces.[2] Many young men are committed to the insurgency by their elders, becoming indistinguishable in battle from other fighters who belong to the Taliban "proper" or to the Haqqani network. In theory, these tribal fighters could be separated from the insurgency by persuading tribal leaders to withdraw them.

If attempts to employ tribes against insurgents are to succeed, the emphasis must be on Pashtun tribes. Although other ethnicities participate in the insurgency, their role is in large part defined by their relationship to the Pashtun tribes that saturate the region. This is true of groups such as the Uzbek fighters, whose fortunes and strength have been heavily conditioned by the hospitality of their hosts, such as the Darikhel, Tojikhel and Yarghukhel (sub-tribes of Ahmadzai Wazir in Pakistan's Waziristan).[3]

20　Links to the IMU video released in April can be found at www.ansarnet.info/showthread.php?p=8113.

21　"Eight Killed in Miranshah Suicide Bombing," *Daily Times*, April 5, 2009.

22　Links to the video can be found at www.ansarnet.info/showthread.php?t=1998.

23　The alliance between Baitullah Mehsud and the Uzbek jihadists has been well documented by the Pakistani press and was further evidenced by footage of Hakimullah Mehsud, a key lieutenant of Baitullah at the time, driving a captured Humvee in the IMU's "Soldiers of Allah" video.

24　Personal interview, U.S. military intelligence source, FOB Sharana, Afghanistan, January 2009.

1　Bryan Bender, "US Probes Divisions within Taliban," *Boston Globe*, May 24, 2009.

2　See, for example, Darin J. Blatt et al., 'Tribal Engagement in Afghanistan," *Special Warfare* 22:1 (2009); Jerome Starkey, "Tribal Leaders to Sabotage West's Assault on Taliban," *Independent*, December 4, 2008.

3　Vern Liebl, "Pushtuns, Tribalism, Leadership, Islam and Taliban: A Short View," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*

This article focuses on the intersection of tribalism and insurgency. It provides a history of the three major Pashtun confederations in Afghanistan and Pakistan; examines how the Haqqani network and global jihadists have exploited Pashtun tribalism; and identifies how tribal militias have recently been used to combat the Taliban in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Drifting to the Durrani

Approximately two-thirds of Afghan Pashtuns belong to the Ghilzai and Durrani confederations.[4] The tribes of the smaller Karlanri confederation live in Afghanistan's eastern and southeastern provinces,[5] providing the strongest kinship bridges into Pakistan. Ghilzai and Durrani tribes, however, are numerically dominant in most of Afghanistan. As a general rule, tribal allegiances and systems of governance are stronger among the mountainous tribes of the Ghilzai and among the Karlanri, while Durrani governance rests more on cross-tribal structures of feudal land ownership.[6]

A broad historical view of the Pashtun tribes would depict the Durrani tribes as political leaders and the Ghilzai as providing the fighters.[7] From Afghanistan's founding to the Taliban's ascendancy, all of Afghanistan's rulers have been from Durrani tribes with the exception of the ill-fated Mohammad Noor Taraki (and a brief interlude of nine months in 1929). For some, the

confrontation between the Durrani's Hamid Karzai and the Ghilzai's Mullah Muhammad Omar is a continuation of the confederations' traditional roles as rulers and insurgents, respectively.

Fighting between tribes and sub-tribes of the same confederation is one indication that the confederation level of analysis has never been adequate.[8] A notable shift in the current phase of insurgency, for example, has been the groundswell of Durrani fighters beneath the Ghilzai-dominated Afghan Taliban leadership. Distinguishing cause and effect is difficult, but the increasing prominence of Durrani fighters and commanders

> "The Haqqanis' reliance on Zadran territory is not a fatal vulnerability, but it does offer the possibility of constraining their operational capability."

correlates with the geographical spread of the insurgency through Durrani areas in Helmand, Nimroz, Farah and Herat provinces. Durrani are being recruited at lower-levels and their traditional leaders are becoming insurgent leaders, with varying degrees of integration into the Taliban "proper." Some intra-insurgency tensions appear to be the result of locally-empowered Durrani Taliban commanders disliking the rotation of senior Ghilzai Taliban commanders into "their" territory.[9] Notably, in 2008 such tensions included disagreement over tax revenue, with a specific concern for drug-derived money.[10]

The result is that a government dominated by Tajiks and Durranis is facing off against a Ghilzai-led Taliban that has incorporated significant numbers of Durrani fighters.[11] To the extent that the power bases of the Durrani in government depend on rural constituencies in provinces such as Helmand and Farah, they must balance official interests with maintaining tribal satisfaction in anti-government areas. Moreover, within this mix are the Karlanri tribes, providing major ethnic bridges between the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban by virtue of straddling insurgent strongholds in southeastern Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan.

The Zadran and the Haqqani Network

The Haqqani network is an excellent example of how global jihadists and Taliban fighters have been able to exploit Pashtun nationalism. Jalaluddin and Sirajuddin Haqqani are prominent members of the Pashtun Zadran tribe, and a great deal of their political capital was amassed by Jalaluddin in fighting the Soviets. Former U.S. Congressman Charlie Wilson famously called Jalaluddin "goodness personified"[12] and he received a disproportionate share of U.S. money.[13] The Haqqanis have also been effective in attracting Arab donations due to their tactical efficiency and assisted by Jalaluddin's marital and linguistic connection to the Gulf states.[14] The present strength

18:3 (2007): pp. 492-510.

4   A 1996 estimate suggested that Durrani tribes comprised 29% of Afghan Pashtuns and the Ghilzai 35%. The estimate appeared in "Afghanistan: A Country Study," Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, 1997.

5   Tribes of the Karlanri confederation are demographically strong in Afghanistan's Paktia, Paktika, Logar, Khost, Nangarhar and Kunar provinces.

6   The strength of tribal governance derives from economic, demographic and political circumstances. The Karlanri, for example, tend to inhabit isolated communities with small land-holdings and an overwhelming dominance of a single tribe in each village. See Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign until the Burst of Fire," *International Security* 32:4 (2008); Thomas J. Barfield, "Weapons of the Not so Weak in Afghanistan," in *Hinterlands, Frontiers, Cities and States: Transactions and Identities*, Yale University, February 23, 2007; David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

7   Barfield.

8   The "confederation level of analysis" refers to the notion that the conflict is mainly between Durrani and Ghilzai. As stated by the International Crisis Group, "animosities between particular Durrani tribes far exceed any ill feeling between Durrani and Ghilzai." See International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation," August 5, 2003.

9   Personal interviews, ISAF intelligence officials, May 11, 2009.

10   In previous years, little opium tax actually made it up to the senior leadership. In 2008, there appeared to be a concerted effort to move more revenue to the higher levels. This caused tension for two reasons: 1) low-level commanders use drug tax for subsistence purposes, not

to mention their own enrichment; and 2) tribal leaders–with whom the Taliban have varying degrees of integration–resented efforts to send money out of their communities (for the same reason they resist government taxation that appears to redistribute revenue out of the villages). Personal interviews, ISAF personnel, May 24, 2009. David Mansfield also refers to increasingly antagonistic relations over taxation between insurgents and the population: "it was suggested that this...was a result of many of their fighters in Helmand and Kandahar not being from the local area." See "Sustaining the Decline?" Afghan Drugs Inter-Departmental Unit of the UK Government, May 2009.

11   This evolution has often been described as "neo-Taliban."

12   George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War* (New York: Grove Press, 2007).

13   "Interview: Steve Coll," PBS Frontline, October 3, 2006; Anand Gopal, "The Most Deadly US Foe in Afghanistan," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 31, 2009.

14   "Haqqani Network," Institute for the Study of War, available at www.understandingwar.org/themenode/haqqani-network.

of the Haqqani network owes much to Jalaluddin's fighting prowess, accompanying fundraising skills and the power these skills gave Jalaluddin in the Zadran tribe.

Much of the Zadran population live in Afghanistan's Spera (Khost), Zadran (Paktia) and Gayan (Paktika) districts, which have long histories of resisting foreign influence.[15] The arrival of international forces in 2001 energized a struggle for control over the Zadran between the Haqqanis and Padcha Khan Zadran, a warlord with his power-base in Khost Province. The latter was hardly pro-government, but he positioned himself as anti-Taliban and utilized foreign assistance.[16] In that sense, Padcha Khan was an old-style leader who placed tribal power and independence over external allegiances and interests.[17] Since 2002, the Haqqanis' reversion to jihadist-aligned resistance has leveraged Jalaluddin's continuing fame and obtained protection from the Zadran in much of their territory. By contrast, Padcha Khan has entered the *Wolesi Jirga* (Afghanistan's upper house of parliament) and his power-base has narrowed, a move supported by Hamid Karzai in an effort to neutralize his anti-government appeal.[18] By cooperating with the Karzai government, Padcha Khan has allowed the Haqqanis and, by extension, al-Qa`ida and the Taliban to become the Zadran's main option for resisting international and government influence.

The Haqqani network's solid control of Miran Shah in Pakistan and most Zadran districts in Khost, Paktika and Paktia in Afghanistan[19] gives it an effective base for operations in Afghanistan. The Haqqanis have consistently pledged their allegiance to the Taliban, but United Nations and ISAF sources agree that the Haqqanis have demonstrated greater imagination, intent and capability for complex attacks than regular Taliban commanders.[20] While difficult to confirm, the Haqqanis have also been credited for driving the growth of suicide bombings in Afghanistan.[21]

The Haqqanis' continuing effectiveness draws on and reinforces their long-standing relationship with al-Qa`ida's leaders. Historically, this was demonstrated in Usama bin Ladin's choice of Haqqani territory for al-Qa`ida's first significant training camps in Afghanistan.[22] Currently, Western and Afghan intelligence officials assess that al-Qa`ida places greater trust and accompanying funding in the Haqqani network to execute complex attacks.[23]

The Haqqanis' reliance on Zadran territory is not a fatal vulnerability, but it does offer the possibility of constraining their operational capability. Jalaluddin's apparent implacability and Sirajuddin's turn toward greater radicalism[24] make it highly unlikely that Zadran areas can be pacified through engagement with the Haqqanis. A better strategy would work from the ground up, particularly in Paktia, where leaders combine affection for Jalaluddin with an often stronger concern for the local welfare of their tribe.[25] In the short-term, the most realistic accomplishment would be to increase the reluctance of Zadran community leaders to allow direct access to and through their villages by the Haqqani network. As in other "pro-insurgent" areas, some Zadran communities would prove willing to cooperate with the government when enjoying an ongoing security presence and constructive engagement to support self-policing and immediate reconstruction benefits.

Lashkars and Arbakees

The Afghanistan and Pakistan governments have also tried to leverage tribal networks to support their objectives. Both countries have armed and supported anti-insurgent tribes to combat the Taliban, the Haqqani network and al-Qa`ida. In FATA, this has taken the form of *lashkars*, tribal militias formed either within one tribe or through an alliance of several tribes following a *jirga* decision.

The Mamond tribes and the Salarzai tribe (a small sub tribe of the Tarkani Pashtuns who live in two valleys of Bajaur Agency) have raised their own *lashkars* and can be legitimately considered anti-Taliban/al-Qa`ida.[26] The price has been high and scores of tribal elders have been assassinated since the start of the movement. For example, in November 2008 four "elders" of the Mamond tribe and several Mamond *lashkar* members were killed after a suicide bomber detonated at a tribesman's house in Bajaur.[27] Other tribes that reportedly raised *lashkars* are the Orakzai of Orakzai Agency in FATA.[28] This has naturally created tensions between the Orakzai and more militant tribes such as the Mehsud in South Waziristan.[29]

15 A CIA assessment in 1980 noted Paktia as an area of strength for the insurgency, drawing on "the most traditionally minded" tribes. See CIA Directorate of Intelligence, "The Soviets and the Tribes of Southwest Asia," CIA Declassification Release, September 23, 1980.

16 Michael Hirsh and Scott Johnson, "A Defiant Warlord Threatens to Sink the New Afghan Leader," *Newsweek*, February 13, 2002; Michael V. Bhatia, "Paktya Province: Sources of Order and Disorder," in Michael V. Bhatia and Mark Sedra eds., *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2008).

17 At one point, Padcha Khan was fighting Tani tribal leaders, resisting the government's writ and attempting to undermine Haqqani's influence over the Zadran. See Illene R. Prusher, Scott Baldauf and Edward Girardet, "Afghan Power Brokers," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 10, 2002.

18 Personal interview, Western intelligence official, Kabul, June 16, 2009.

19 UN assessment of district-level control, provided in a briefing to the author in May 2009.

20 Personal interviews, UN and ISAF officials, Kabul, June 2009.

21 Gopal; *Haqqani Network*; Jonathon Burch, "Q+A: Afghanistan – Who are the Haqqanis?" Reuters, March 23, 2009.

22 Marc W. Herold, "The Failing Campaign," *Frontline* 19:3 (2002).

23 This appears to be a generalized trust, however, instead of one requiring consultations with al-Qa`ida on targets and tactics. Personal interviews, UNAMA, ISAF and ANDS officials, Kabul, May-June 2009.

24 *Haqqani Network*; Burch; Imtiaz Ali, "The Haqqani Network and Cross-Border Terrorism in Afghanistan," *Terrorism Monitor* 6:6 (2008).

25 Personal interviews, UNAMA officials, May 2009. While the Haqqanis receive widespread respect as warriors, this does not necessarily translate into obedience from tribal leaders who must answer directly to their

communities. In the words of one village elder in Herat Province, speaking to the author on July 16, 2009, "they [Taliban leaders] have respect for being good fighters, but fighting does not always bring us bread." In southeastern Afghanistan, Darin Blatt and colleagues suggested that "all the tribes are concerned mostly with providing for their immediate future." See Blatt.

26 It should be noted, however, that individuals belonging to these same tribes have joined the Taliban.

27 *Dawn*, November 18-24, 2008.

28 Shaheen Buneri, "Pashtun Tribes Rise Against Taliban In Pakistan Tribal Area," AHN, July 19, 2008.

29 Shazadi Beg, "The Ideological Battle: Insight from Pakistan," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2:10 (2008).

Overall, however, these efforts have not resulted in any significant losses for the Taliban. In fact, until the recent forays by the Pakistani military against the Taliban, the Taliban encountered relatively little tribal resistance as they quickly and brutally established their hold across FATA and the NWFP. The tribes in FATA are quite scattered and little unity exists, particularly against a Taliban movement recruiting from almost every tribe (excluding Shi`a Turis). This failure was most obvious in North and South Waziristan when

> "As Afghanistan's and Pakistan's insurgent conflicts drag on, the stress on tribal structures will continue, pressured by jihadists and the international community alike."

the *lashkars* of 2003 and 2007 were effectively impotent.[30] Nevertheless, the *lashkars* have had some positive effects in pressuring the Taliban; for example, Taliban spokesman Maulvi Omar's August 2009 arrest was credited to the work of a *lashkar* in Mohmand Agency.[31]

Another region where Pashtun tribal militias have been utilized is in southeastern Afghanistan's Loya Paktia, the area encompassing Paktika, Khost and Paktia provinces.[32] In this region the Afghan equivalent of *lashkars* exists. Apparently an institution limited to Loya Paktia,[33] the *arbakee* (guardians) are the traditional tribal security of the

southeast. The *arbakees* (like the *lashkars*) do not exist permanently in every district, but are an ad hoc and reactive force. The *arbakee* is also used by the *jirga* as a law enforcement tool, which makes the *jirga* in this region far more powerful than in southern and eastern Afghanistan where this tradition does not exist.[34]

The capacities of Afghan military and law enforcement are minimal in Loya Paktia and they often count on the support of *arbakees*. The tribal elders identify those citizens who will be used to support the police to ensure effective interventions. According to the Tribal Liaison Office, a European-funded NGO,

> Despite the fact that each *arbakee* has a clear leader (*amir*), accountability goes back to the tribal council (*jirga* or *shura*) that called upon the *arbakee*, which in turn is accountable to the community. Furthermore, *arbakees* only function within the territory of the tribe they represent. Their fighters are volunteers from within the community and are paid by the community. This emphasizes again that their loyalty is with their communities and not an individual leader.[35]

One important demonstration of the government's reliance on *arbakees* was the continuous funding until at least 2007 for 40-60 *arbakee* members in each district in the southeast, including a sizeable expansion of force numbers to secure the 2004-2005 elections.[36]

Conclusion

As Afghanistan's and Pakistan's insurgent conflicts drag on, the stress on tribal structures will continue,

pressured by jihadists and the international community alike. Both antagonists have a long-term interest in undermining tribalism, but both also have an interest in using tribalism to support immediate military aims.

For the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan and their international supporters, this implies a difficult trade-off. Immediate military interests in bargaining with tribes require subordination of interests in issues such as human rights and good governance. Notably, as the *arbakee* tradition illustrates, a resort to tribally-mediated security structures implies a continuing devolution by the central government of its core responsibilities. This may be functional in the short-term, but will likely leave unchanged the uneasy relationship between relatively progressive governments and conservative tribal traditions—an uneasiness that proved fertile ground for jihadism in the first place.

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

31 Noor Mohmand, "TTP Mouthpiece Nabbed," *Nation*, August 19, 2009.

32 Masood Karokhail, "Integration of Traditional Structures into the State Building Process: Lessons from the Tribal Liaison Office in Loya Paktia," Tribal Liaison Office, 2006, available at www.tlo-afghanistan.org/fileadmin/pdf/SchAfgahnEn.pdf.

33 In Paktia specifically, the tribal structures were preserved and have emerged more or less intact from communist rule and years of conflict. This includes a functioning system of traditional justice.

34 Karokhail.

35 Karokhail. This cooperation between tribal levees and Afghanistan's "proper military" has a long tradition. Indeed, the 1929 rebellion was catalyzed by the government's attempt to change the system and recruit the army on a national basis, cutting through the role of tribal leaders in organizing self-defense. The ANA is considered a relative success partly because it is recruited and rotated nationally, yet few Pashtuns in the ANA come from the areas in which *arbakees* are common.

36 B. Schetter et al., "Beyond Warlordism: The Local Security Architecture in Afghanistan," *Internationalie Politik und Gesellschaft* 2 (2007).

A Review of Reconciliation Efforts in Afghanistan

By Joanna Nathan

TO ACHIEVE STABILITY in Afghanistan, there is a growing emphasis on political solutions with insurgents. The reality, however, is that such efforts so far have been fragmented and often contradictory. There remains no agreement within the Afghan government and international community, or between them, on what the concept is, who it is aimed at, and most importantly its place within wider stabilization strategies. Amidst an increasingly violent insurgency, the temptation has been to attempt local or grand bargains with insurgent leaders. Even if desirable, this strategy is unrealistic because amorphous anti-government elements show no desire for such deals. It further dangerously distracts from enduring political solutions—aimed at the Afghan people rather than at insurgents—of ensuring better governance and more equitable representation.

This article offers a short summary of post-2001 "reconciliation" and "outreach" efforts. It examines how since 2001 the international community and Afghan government have failed to pursue a coherent policy even in deciding which strata of the Taliban should be targeted, isolated or engaged. Furthermore, reconciliation efforts have for the most part been narrowly premised on a paradigm of amnesty and surrender rather than true peace-building. Moreover, operating distinctly from wider nation-building programs, they have failed to tackle underlying dynamics.[1] Given that the insurgents are widely perceived to have the strategic momentum, having a demobilization program for fighters as a centerpiece of such efforts is redundant at best. Political solutions must not be treated as a quick exit strategy when the aim is ongoing stability. Success will require a far greater commitment to coordination by all players, a nuanced understanding of the complex nature of the insurgency

and political system, and a focus on strengthening broader governance activities to cut off potential community support for the insurgency rather than rewards for violent actors.

The Early Years: Lack of Coherence

In 2001, the treatment of individuals associated with the Taliban regime proved remarkably arbitrary. In many cases, the use of airpower or arbitrary detentions was the result of information provided to U.S. forces by new allies seeking to settle old scores, the very randomness (and/or inaccuracy) of action contributing to early alienation.[2] Taliban camp cooks were reported to be on trial while a former international spokesman went to Yale.[3] Some former Taliban leaders were detained at Guantanamo Bay, while others worked for the government with no transparent criteria for such decisions.

There was never a legal bar on regime members taking public roles. For example, a former Taliban deputy minister and a former envoy of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (a former Taliban rival whose faction of Hizb-i-Islami has joined the insurgency in a loose alliance) were appointed to the Senate. In the 2005 National Assembly elections, at least two former regime members were elected to the lower house.[4] Soon afterward, a group of Hizb-i-Islami claiming to have split with Hekmatyar registered as a political party (Hizb-i-Islami Afghanistan), boasting more

than 30 supporters in the lower house (of 249 seats). Many other "former" members of Hizb-i-Islami, a grouping always dominated by professionals and technocrats, took powerful positions in the administration. These examples highlight the complex web of overlapping identities and shifting allegiances that has characterized the post-2001 government.

Amidst a highly personalized, patronage-based system, the administration has jealously guarded its primacy in "reconciliation" efforts, but has failed to provide a serious strategic approach to more equitable and responsive systems. Instead, there has been continued public rhetoric offering succor to the Taliban's top leadership and attempts at opaque behind-the-scenes deal-making with individuals. The disjointed programs—such as the Allegiance Program and "Takhim e-Solh"—often seem largely aimed at capturing donor funding or entrenching favored networks rather than strengthening government institutions and tackling sources of alienation.[5]

Members of the international community have also not acted cohesively. They have undertaken a series of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral efforts despite the theoretical lead of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The latter holds a specific mandate to

> provide good offices to support, if requested by the Afghan government, the implementation of Afghan-led reconciliation programs, within the framework of the Afghan Constitution with full respect for the implementation of measures introduced by the Security Council in its resolution 1267 (1999).[6]

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1 Regional issues will not be included in this article for reasons of space and focus. Indeed, while realigning external equations is essential to long-term stability, this has too often been used as an excuse to distract from necessary internal measures.

2 International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation," August 5, 2003; Martine Van Bijlert, "Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles: Taliban Networks in Uruzgan," in Antonio Giustozzi, *De-Coding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field* (London: Hurst and Co., forthcoming). Van Bijlert provides a detailed account of one province—Uruzgan—and how such events helped drive some commanders (back) into the arms of militants.

3 "Guantanamo Prisoner says Taliban Forced him to be a Cook," Associated Press, August 11, 2005; Chip Brown, "The Freshman," *New York Times*, February 26, 2006. In this case, the suspect was apparently accused before the U.S. military tribunal of being an assistant cook.

4 The winners were Zabul commander Mullah Salam Rocketi and the former Taliban Bamiyan governor Mohammad Islam Mohammadi (later murdered). Among those who stood but lost out were former Taliban foreign minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, former deputy interior minister Mullah Khaksar (also later murdered) and head of the Taliban vice and virtue department, Mawlawi Qalamuddin.

5 For more on the current political set-up, see Martine Van Bijlert, "Between Discipline and Discretion: Policies Surrounding Senior Subnational Appointments," Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), May 2009; Antonio Giustozzi and Dominique Orsini, "Centre-Periphery Relations in Afghanistan: Badakhshan between Patrimonialism and Institution Building," *Central Asian Survey*, March 2009. For an account of how community exclusion can feed directly into the conflict, see Graeme Smith, "Inspiring Tale of Triumph over Taliban Not All it Seems," *Globe and Mail*, September 23, 2006.

6 See UN Security Council Resolution 1868 (2009).

In fact, Resolution 1267,[7] which institutes a travel ban, asset freeze and arms embargo on listed members of the Taliban, has remained cut off from efforts on the ground. Originally created in response to al-Qa`ida-directed bombings in Africa and the Taliban's refusal to hand over the suspects, it is now unclear whether it is supposed to be a fixed list of past regime members under continuing sanction or, as the current 1267 committee chair wants, "a dynamic list that addresses the evolution of the threat posed by Al-Qaida and Taliban."[8]

Currently it is neither, with many member states not ensuring enforcement nor aiding its update. Hekmatyar was listed in 2003, but there has been only minimal change to the Taliban entries. Of the major powers, only Russia has demonstrated a definite policy—blocking the removal of any names, even the dead. Today, the list of 142 individuals associated with the Taliban is disconnected from both the current fight and the current political framework.[9] Abdul Hakim Monib, who acted as Uruzgan governor in 2006-2007,[10] and others who have long worked with the government remain on the list while a new generation of fighters is largely absent. By October 2007, only two listed individuals were in the top 12 wanted insurgent figures on separate lists developed by international and Afghan security agencies and only 19 among the 58 considered current "key leaders."[11]

The 2005 Allegiance Program and Program Takhim e-Solh

An early specific Taliban "reconciliation" effort by the U.S. military was the Allegiance program launched in 2005. One of the few open source references by then chief of staff of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, Colonel David Lamm, stated that after briefing the ambassador and gaining Afghan government approval,

> the command rapidly developed a reconciliation program for former Taliban, and began a release program of 80 former Taliban each month from U.S. detention facilities, again involving the Afghan government in a central role.[12]

A contemporaneous newspaper report quoted Lamm as saying that he expected most of the Taliban's rank and file, whom he estimated to number a few thousand, to take up the amnesty offer by summer.[13]

Its Afghan government successor, launched the same year in close coordination with the U.S. military, was Program Takhim e-Solh (Strengthening Peace, commonly known as PTS) headed by Sibghatullah Mujaddedi, a religious elder and leader of President Hamid Karzai's wartime faction.[14] Mujaddedi was quoted stating there was no bar to the inclusion of even Mullah Omar and Hekmatyar for reconciliation: "our terms are if they lay down their weapons, respect the constitution and obey the government, we don't have big conditions for them."[15] While he

quickly backtracked, President Karzai has publicly repeated such offers.[16]

In practice, however, the main focus of both programs was grassroots fighters and the release of detainees, with PTS claiming some 4,599 "reconciled" individuals by September 2007.[17] Since monthly individual "reconciliations" are the main yardstick of progress, there has been a strict focus on the short-term; a small-scale UN survey apparently found

"Both the Allegiance and PTS programs suffered an absence of monitoring and follow-through."

that 50% of "reconcilees" were not genuine fighters.[18] This supports tales from the southern and eastern insurgent heartlands of returning refugees and others being induced or threatened to sign up to boost numbers.[19]

Indeed, PTS' multimillion dollar budget, provided by various Western countries, has been the source of continuing allegations of malfeasance. Internal British correspondence wryly observed the opening of a bank account for one of the program's 11 provincial offices: "Whilst this in normal terms this would not be seen as an achievement, in the case of this project i[t] should be viewed as a considerable one."[20]

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7 For more information, see "Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1267 (1999) Concerning al-Qaeda and the Taliban and Associated Individuals and Entities," available at www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/index.shtml.

8 "Statement by the Chairman of the [1267] Committee Delivered at Briefing to Member States," United Nations, July 1, 2009, available at www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/latest.shtml.

9 The list was always fairly ad hoc, focused on those who held administrative rather than military positions in the regime. For instance, Mullah Dadullah, who destroyed the Bamiyan Buddhas and massacred local Hazara communities, became the Taliban's southern commander after 2001, yet he was never included on the list.

10 See, for instance, Colum Lynch, "UN, US actions Sometimes at Odds over Afghan Policy," *Washington Post*, July 5, 2007.

11 "Letter Dated 13 May 2008 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1267 (1999) Concerning al-Qaeda and the Tal-

iban and Associated Individuals and Entities Addressed to the President of the Security Council," United Nations, available at daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/341/88/PDF/N0834188.pdf?OpenElement.

12 Colonel David Lamm, "Success in Afghanistan Means Fighting Several Wars At Once," *Armed Forces Journal*, November 2005.

13 Victoria Burnett, "US Extends an Olive Branch to Taliban 'Moderates,'" *Boston Globe*, January 2, 2005.

14 Both programs are discussed in Carlotta Gall, "The Taliban's Rocky Road Back to Afghan Reconciliation," *New York Times*, March 21, 2005.

15 "Amnesty Offer to Taliban Leader," BBC, May 9, 2005. While the PTS program does not have an official website, the online biography of Mujaddedi states: "Since its establishment, the commission has had remarkable success in convincing thousands of Taliban supporters and their allies to lay down their arms. In addition the

commission has also secured the release of hundreds of Afghan prisoners from jails and detention centers in Afghanistan and abroad. Those who had reconciled and denounced violence lead a peaceful life today." See "Biography of Professor Sibghatullah Mujaddedi," available at www.mojaddedi.org.

16 Ron Synovitz, "Karzai Confirms Amnesty Offer is for all Willing Afghans," Radio Free Europe, May 10, 2005.

17 "Information Relating to British Financial Help to Afghan Government in Negotiations with the Taliban," Foreign and Commonwealth Office, July 8, 2008, p. 1.

18 Ibid., p. 13.

19 Personal interviews, civilians, Jalalabad and Kandahar, 2007 and 2008.

20 It continues: "Initially when the PTS Commission was established in May 2005 a bank account was opened but donors instead preferred to provide funding in case in U.S. dollars. This has resulted in many problems with accountability and transparency." See "Information Relating to British Financial Help to Afghan Government in Negotiations with the Taliban," p. 8.

Both the Allegiance and PTS programs suffered an absence of monitoring and follow-through. Long-standing conspiracy theories in southern Afghanistan that the Taliban are working with the Americans appear to have been fueled by English-language identification cards, provided to at least some reconcilees, presumably useful in case of returning to the battlefield.[21] Otherwise, given the prevailing security situation there has been little real incentive, with around 1,500 afghanis (about $30) on offer to individuals to give up arms. Senior PTS staff have been keen to extend this to housing, cars and salaries, although how this could be achieved without pushing more people to take up arms in the hope of such rewards and alienating those who have chosen not to is unexplained.[22]

Conflicting Programs, Lack of Links

To mitigate against such perverse incentives and the perception of special rewards, it is crucial that such programs be linked with wider disarmament efforts. For example, Mujaddedi's PTS has been entirely autonomous of the Disarmament and Reintegration Commission (DRC) headed by Vice President Karim Khalili. The latter offers community development projects in districts where (non-insurgent) "illegal armed groups" are deemed to have disarmed, although in reality is all but moribund. This is largely because of the reluctance by other groups to disarm in the face of the insurgency— yet another reason for harmonization.

Reconciliation efforts for insurgents have also been largely premised on a militarized/security agenda, developing separately from transitional justice initiatives emerging from a human rights perspective. For instance, the wide-reaching but largely overlooked Peace, Reconciliation and Justice Action Plan launched in December 2006 actually has reconciliation as its fourth pillar. It is stated that

> as a first step, the transitional justice strategy aims to realize peace and national reconciliation, to restore co-existence and co-

operation, to heal the wounds and pain of the victims and to reintegrate citizens into a peaceful life in society.

In seeking a more cohesive approach across all eras of violence, an obvious focus would be common standards of vetting. Currently, even as it is widely agreed that impunity and a lack of justice contribute to the insurgency, the only standard for deal-making with insurgents appears to be potential "co-optability."

Such complete impunity was explicitly stated in the 2007 Amnesty Resolution by the Afghan parliament, driven largely by those members who as (former) warlords and commanders feared for their own fate. Extraordinarily, this held out full, ongoing amnesty to

> those individuals and groups who are still in armed opposition with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and who will end their opposition after this charter is in effect, join the national reconciliation process and respect and observe the Constitution and other laws of the country.[23]

Fighters could simply continue the battle until they felt it was not in their interests, secure in the knowledge that there would be no consequences. While there was widespread international condemnation of the National Assembly, in reality this remains the conceptual framework for such efforts. As stated by one analyst,

> the worst of all worlds would be to not only employ violent and predatory commanders to wage the war on terror, but also to welcome back—without conditions—the

most violent Taliban commanders in order to "win the peace."[24]

Finally, the most recent grassroots effort outreach, the 2008 Afghanistan Social Outreach Program (ASOP), similarly lies outside broader governance efforts. ASOP, launched in Wardak and Helmand provinces, appoints district councils to

> ensure stability and security through addressing the gap between people and the State and to strengthen traditional leadership roles and relations to the government and help prevent the destruction posed by insurgents.[25]

ASOP, however, is not part of the overarching governance framework of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), despite being overseen by the very same agency.[26]

Nationwide constitutionally-mandated district council elections, which could allow representative local voices to be heard and provide legitimate outlets for opposition, are currently scheduled for 2011, although few of the necessary preparations appear to be underway. In contrast, these parallel ASOP councils, appointed by the district governors "temporarily" in "priority" provinces,[27] appear a continuation of top-down patronage rather than true outreach. Afghan respondents to an assessment of the program in Wardak also questioned the wisdom of starting such projects in the most violent areas, pointing out that "the gap between people and the state is widespread and it is not only limited to insecure areas of the country." They urged that the initial focus be "to rescue the semi- and relatively secure areas from falling into the hands of insurgents."[28]

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21 Personal interviews, civilians, Kandahar and Lashkar Gah, 2006 and 2007.

22 Personal interviews, senior PTS officials, Kabul and regional offices, 2007 and 2008.

23 See Amnesty Resolution, Article 3 (ii). The exact status of this bill/resolution remains unclear, with the Afghan government stating in a May 2009 submission for the United Nations Human Rights Council: "Although the National Assembly approved the National Reconciliation Bill, the President did not sign the bill. The bill has caused some misunderstandings and as a result this program was not implemented in 2008." See "National Report Submitted in Accordance with paragraph 15(A) of the Annex to the Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1," (Universal Periodic Review), United Nations Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, (A/HRC/WG.6/5/AFG/1), p. 10.

24 Van Bijlert, "Unruly Commanders."

25 "Assessment Report on Afghanistan Social Outreach Program," The Asia Foundation, November 10, 2008.

26 See "Draft Subnational Governance Policy," Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, May 20, 2009.

27 The assessment notes: "In two such instances even the very high ranking government officials (ministers or higher) were involved in recommending the Community Council members. Based on the political sensitivity of the issue and the nature of the report they have not been named here." See "Assessment Report on Afghanistan Social Outreach Program."

28 Ibid.

What the people are highlighting is the broader issue that the insurgency is being treated as the disease rather than as a symptom of wider malaise. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic, multi-regional state that has been in an almost perpetual state of conflict driven by, and exacerbating, multiple fissures and fractures for more than three decades. The current focus is too much on reacting to violence where it manifests itself rather than tackling the underlying conditions.

It is often stated that in fighting an insurgency military efforts must focus on protecting the population and not the insurgents. The same logic of concentrating outreach and empowerment efforts on local communities rather than violent actors has yet to be applied to so-called political approaches.

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The Absence of Shi`a Suicide Attacks in Iraq

By Babak Rahimi

IT IS WIDELY RECOGNIZED that the rise of suicide attacks in Iraq since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 has been predominately a Salafi-jihadi phenomenon.[1] While some suicide attacks are also strategically used by other insurgent factions (both Islamist and nationalist Iraqi groups), most of the known perpetrators are non-Iraqis who are globally recruited or voluntarily come from neighboring countries (such as Saudi Arabia) or other parts of the world.[2] Despite a decline of attacks since 2008—partly due to the U.S.-led "troop surge" and the bolstering of the state armed forces—Iraq remains a breeding ground for suicide operations. These operations are organized by either Sunni Iraqi groups (Islamists and nationalists) who use such military tactics against U.S. and Iraqi forces, or the global jihadist groups such as al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) that mainly target the Shi`a civilian population to weaken the Shi`a-dominated government in Baghdad by deliberately creating a sectarian or communal conflict.[3] In the context of the U.S.-led occupation and the ensuing sectarian violence, however, one question has remained largely ignored by analysts: Why has Iraq not experienced suicide violence on the part of the Shi`a?

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1 On the globalization of al-Qa`ida-led suicide attacks, see Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008).

2 For a quantitative study of suicide attacks in Iraq between 2003 and 2006, see Mohammed M. Hafez, "Suicide Terrorism in Iraq: A Preliminary Assessment of the Quantitative Data and Documentary Evidence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29:6 (2006). For a more updated study, see Brian Fishman, *Bombers, Bank Accounts & Bleedout* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008).

3 Although the wave of suicide attacks has recently shifted toward the Kurdistan region, especially the city of Mosul, many Shi`a-dominated urban regions have remained the main target of al-Qa`ida in Iraq. Sadr City in Baghdad and the shrine city of Samarra, a target of two major attacks in 2006 and later in 2008, have played a critical role in the sectarian conflict in the post-war period.

Given the dearth of evidence regarding suicide attacks by Shi`a militants in Iraq, this article examines possible reasons for the strategic logic of Shi`a abstinence from suicide operations. Such preliminary analysis provides reflection on why Shi`a Iraqi militants have refrained from the use of suicide attacks against a perceived internal enemy (Sunnis or other rival Shi`a) or a foreign occupying force (the United States).

Understanding the Lack of Shi`a Suicide Attacks

Unlike Sunni Islam, Shi`a theology is famous for promoting a cult of martyrdom—a discursive-mythical paradigm that is symbolically rooted in the multifaceted narrative of the self-sacrifice of the Prophet Muhammad's beloved grandson, Husayn, who is believed to have died a "noble" death at the plains of Karbala at the hands of the "evil" army of Caliph Yazid in 680 AD. When Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army battled against the United States and, later, Iraqi forces between summer 2004 and spring 2008, "martyrdom operations," known for their Shi`a Lebanese origins, played no role in the militia's anti-occupation campaigns. Moreover, various militant Mahdist groups—some of which are offshoots of the Mahdi Army—vying for power over the Shi`a leadership between 2006 and 2008 abstained from the use of suicide attacks against other more powerful Shi`a militias such as the Badr Brigade or the Shi`a-dominated Iraqi armed forces. There are four explanations for the lack of Shi`a suicide attacks in Iraq.

First, the pivotal element of Shi`a militias' strategy of confronting Baghdad and U.S. forces has remained and continues to be political. While forging alliances of convenience through party politics based in Baghdad, Shi`a militias have largely avoided military confrontation and, therefore, relied heavily on the political wing of their factions to advance their position within the state apparatus and the larger Iraqi society. With the fall of the Sunni-led Ba`athist regime and the subsequent rise of Shi`a politics since 2003, the militia branches of the political organizations have usually played an auxiliary role of reinforcing the political status of the movement in Baghdad and

within the Shi`a community—although competition between factions has, periodically, led to major outbreaks of violence since 2004. Moqtada al-Sadr's militia, largely entrenched within the Shi`a community, and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim's Badr Brigade have used their

"Suicide attacks are not necessarily a consequence of territorial occupation."

respective military organizations to advance their political position with their constituencies, rather than challenging the central state through insurgent activities.

Lesser known militant groups, such as the Mahdist groups based in Karbala and other southern cities, have played a peripheral role in Shi`a politics. This is primarily because of the clerical establishment's dominant influence over the popular culture of the Shi`a community, which has successfully limited the growth of the cult of the Mahdi and its related apocalyptic tendencies toward warfare. Najaf has also contained the growth of splinter Mahdi Army factions, especially since al-Sadr has come under increasing influence of Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani since 2007.[4]

Second, the Najaf-based clerical establishment has and continues to play a critical role in de-legitimizing suicide operations in post-Ba`athist Iraq. Unlike Sunni Islam, the relative hierarchical system of clerical authority among the Shi`a enjoys considerable sway over a believer's correct response to problems of daily life, including how a certain

military operation can be perceived to be morally justified in the context of changing circumstances. In this sense, major high-ranking clerics such as Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Qom-based cleric Ayatollah Kadhim Haeri, the successor to Ayatollah Sadeq al-Sadr, Moqtada's father, have refrained from sanctioning suicide operations for various theological and pragmatic reasons. Unlike Lebanon in the 1980s, when clerics provided legitimization for "self-martyrdom" operations against Israeli forces, Najaf and to a certain extent Qom have instead focused on the political process while steering clear of sectarian conflict and seeking to enhance Shi`a influence through voting ballots rather than suicide bombs.[5]

This stands in sharp contrast to the Sunni clerical establishment, which has provided legitimization for suicide bombings in Palestine, Iraq and other regional conflicts through the idiom of defending property, honor and the religious identity of the Muslim community against an invading infidel force—although variation in their theological discourse of violence also exists. Among the leading Sunni clerics who have supported suicide operations, especially in Iraq, are Grand Shaykh Mohammad Sayyed Tantawi of al-Azhar University in Cairo and Imam Mahdi al-Sumayadi, a high-ranking Iraqi cleric, who have justified this form of violence as a necessary means of confronting foreign occupation.

Third, Iran may have also played a role in preventing Shi`a suicide attacks in Iraq. This is largely because Shi`a-led suicide attacks would bring unnecessary attention to Iranian influence in Iraq, possibly undermining Tehran's interest to advance its influence in Baghdad where Shi`a parties are most dominant. In many ways, the official Iranian stance on Sunni-led suicide attacks has been in lockstep with the Shi`a-led government in Baghdad, namely identifying such attacks as "terrorism." As a result, it is likely that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) active military backing of Shi`a militias has been limited to training in low-intensity warfare, with a particular focus on

supplying weapons to Shi`a insurgents. Unlike in the 1980s when the IRGC supported Hizb Allah's martyrdom operations against Israel, Tehran has instead relied heavily on the patronage of a number of Shi`a political factions—especially the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and the Sadrists—to diminish Washington's influence in Baghdad.

The fourth and final reason for the absence of Shi`a suicide operations involves what Marcel Hénaff calls the symbolic logic of "the production of a spectacular image."[6] The images of suicide strikes on civilians in major urban areas of the country have created a highly negative perception of these military tactics among the greater Shi`a Iraqi population since 2003. Mainly associated with the Salafi-jihadists,

"Unlike Sunni Islam, the relative hierarchical system of clerical authority among the Shi`a enjoys considerable sway over a believer's correct response to problems of daily life, including how a certain military operation can be perceived to be morally justified in the context of changing circumstances."

suicide attacks are shunned by Shi`a militants who seek to promote a more "civilized" self-image of their Shi`a community for the broader global audience—one juxtaposed to the brutality displayed by the Sunni insurgency. As a Mahdi militant explained,

> We don't do these acts [suicide attacks] because they create a negative image for our cause. It is like the *fatwa* against the self-injurious *latam* (self-mortification rites during the Muharram rituals in commemoration of the

4 The relationship between the two has been one of asymmetrical partnership, in which Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani plays the superior partner, guiding the younger and less experienced Moqtada al-Sadr in his quest for becoming a legitimate leader of the Shi`a Iraqi community. In doing so, al-Sistani has tried to tame al-Sadr by bringing him into the mainstream Najaf establishment to form a united Shi`a front against extremist Sunnis and the United States since late 2006. In return, al-Sadr, who lacks religious credentials, has been using al-Sistani's support to legitimize his religious authority and expand his influence in southern Iraq. The relationship has been mutually opportunistic but also pragmatic, since the two Shi`a figures have not been able to ignore each other.

5 For the case of Lebanon, see Martin Kramer, "Sacrifice and 'Self-Martyrdom' in Shi'ite Lebanon," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3:3 (1991).

6 Marcel Hénaff, "Global Terror, Global Vengeance?" *Substance* 37:115 (2008).

martyrdom of Imam Hussain); these actions make us like animals (*haiwan*) or like the Sunnis.[7]

In this statement, the Islamic ruling against *latam* highlights the clerical influence over ethical behavior in the course of warfare. Such rejection of suicide attacks, however, has less to do with a complex theological doctrine and more with a pragmatic attempt to preserve the face of "civility" for the Shi`a Iraqi community. In such a public relations strategy, more conventional forms of asymmetrical warfare have, accordingly, given militias strategic depth in the heart of the Shi`a Iraqi community, which translates into a legitimacy factor. This is especially true for a younger generation inspired by the story of Husayn's martyrdom in regular warfare at the battlefield of Karbala.

Conclusions

On an analytical-theoretical level, an in-depth study of the dearth of Shi`a suicide attacks in Iraq would require a multidimensional approach across individual, organizational, cultural and structural levels of analysis.[8] In this short study, however, three broad conclusions can be drawn.

First, suicide attacks are not necessarily a consequence of territorial occupation—although such military operations continue to play a significant role in the anti-government and anti-occupation activities of a number of non-al-Qa`ida Sunni insurgencies.[9] Depending on the strategy of insurgent groups and their changing relations with the state, suicide attacks can also be a liability for a militant faction seeking to legitimate its political authority through an electoral process of a transitional democratic state.

A second preliminary finding is that local politics and shifting alliances in the context of a competitive political landscape play an important role in the emergence and thus also the absence of suicide attacks. Contrary to the Hizb Allah-Amal conflict in Lebanon during the 1980s, when suicide attacks were used as a way for the factions to outbid each other to gain more popularity and legitimacy within the Shi`a community, the Iraqi case of Sadr-ISCI rivalry has hardly given way to the emergence of suicide military campaigns. This is primarily because the nature of Sadr-ISCI competition within local Iraqi politics differs greatly from that of their Lebanese counterpart: while Iraqi militias already held relative political power within the Iraqi state in the post-war period, the two Lebanese groups lacked political authority due to a weak state and the highly marginalized and then-minority status of the Shi`a community within Lebanese society.

A third aspect is the role of religious doctrine. Ideas matter insofar as they can be strategically interpreted by individuals, groups or elites in response to shifting conditions on the ground. The key is the discursive process of interpretation and how an idea or a tradition can be reconstructed to justify action (suicide attack) for a particular objective in a given moment. By avoiding certain discursive arguments in favor of suicide attacks within the framework of classical Shi`a traditions of martyrdom, Shi`a clerics, along with various non-clerical leaders of Shi`a militias, have successfully prevented the Muharram narratives of self-sacrifice to attain a suicidal military significance. Unlike the Iranian martyrdom operations by the Basiji militias during the Iran-Iraq war, largely inspired by the story of Husayn's martyrdom in Karbala narrated by mid-ranking clerics in the early years of the 1979 revolution, Shi`a Iraqis have focused more on the narrative of Muharram in the medium of ritual commemorations of Ashura, with its performances made legal after 2003. Whereas in the Iranian case the narrative of Muharram was externally reenacted in a perceived military battlefield against the Ba`athist army, the Shi`a Iraqi case has shown how noble sacrifice can be symbolically internalized through ritual action performed in the communal public spaces.

By and large, what the absence of Shi`a suicide attacks brings to light is not merely the significance of strategic ways by which actors, organizations and elites can select or choose not to conduct suicide operations in the shifting context of local politics, but how symbols and ideologies can be reconstructed to promote particular behaviors at a given moment. The two key factors to understand in this context are "situation" and "agency," not only on an individual level, but also on collective-institutional levels. Indeed, future comparative studies examining the relationship between Sunni and Shi`a manifestations of suicide attacks (or lack thereof) are likely to prove a fruitful area of research.

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7 Personal interview, Mahdi militant, Najaf, August 4, 2005.

8 See Ami Pedahzur, *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Mohammed M. Hafez, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29:2 (2006).

9 This claim ultimately undermines Robert Pape's famous argument that suicide terrorism is mainly a strategic response to foreign occupation.

Factors Affecting Stability in Northern Iraq

By Ramzy Mardini

IRAQ ENTERED A NEW security environment after June 30, 2009, when U.S. combat forces exited Iraqi cities in accordance with the first of two withdrawal deadlines stipulated in the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). Signed in December 2008 by President George W. Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, the SOFA concedes that December 31, 2011 will be the deadline for the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. President Barack Obama, however, has signaled his intention to withdraw U.S. combat forces by August 2010.

Iraqi Security Force (ISF)-capability has improved remarkably since the 2007 implementation of the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy. Nevertheless, successfully pacifying Iraq without the ground presence of U.S. forces is contingent on a number of factors, not all related to ISF-readiness. This article highlights an array of critical factors that are likely to shape the new security challenges facing Iraq: the current unstable political and security environment in Mosul, rising Arab-Kurdish tensions over disputed territories and the possible politicization of the upcoming January 2010 parliamentary elections.[1]

Continued Violence in Mosul

The withdrawal and relocation of U.S. combat forces outside of Iraq's cities represents a major change in the country's security environment. With a less proficient ISF patrolling Iraq's streets, "deterrence by denial" is less of an effective strategy; dissuading insurgents from challenging the government by demonstrating that they hold a grim likelihood for success is less credible absent U.S. forces. For this reason, insurgents are testing the ISF on its capability, resolve, and credibility as a fair and non-sectarian institution.

This litmus test is most likely to occur in Mosul, the capital of Ninawa Province. In its current political and security context, the city is best situated for insurgents to make early gains in propagating momentum. Geographically located 250 miles north of Baghdad along the Tigris River, Mosul is Iraq's second largest city with a population of 1.8 million.[2] Described as an ethnic tinderbox, the city is approximately 70% Sunni Arab and 25% Kurd. The remaining population is composed of Shi`a, Turcoman, Yezidis, and Christians.[3] The city's large Sunni Arab population makes it an attractive base for recruiting Sunni insurgents. Before Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, for example, Mosul was home to a sizeable Ba`athist presence, with some estimates suggesting that as many as 300,000 inhabitants were willing to contribute to military, security, and intelligence efforts under Saddam Hussein.[4]

In 2008, as much of Iraq reached an improved level of stability, Mosul continued to witness a high level of violence. On January 23, 2008, for example, a massive 20,000-pound bomb killed and wounded more than 300 people.[5] The next day, during inspections of the bombing site, a suicide bomber killed Ninawa's police chief.[6] As a result, al-Maliki sent additional Iraqi forces to the city in January 2008 to engage in a "decisive" battle against the remnants of al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI).[7] Al-Maliki's "decisive" battle, however, achieved questionable success against AQI and other terrorist elements. In March 2008, the chief of special operations and intelligence information

for Multi-National Force-Iraq called the city the "strategic center of gravity" for AQI.[8] Months later, in a new Mosul offensive directly commanded by al-Maliki called "Lion's Roar," the lack of resistance among insurgents disappointed some commanders who were expecting a decisive Alamo-style battle.[9]

Today, AQI and affiliated terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State of Iraq, still possess a strategic and operational capacity to wage daily attacks in Mosul.[10] Although the daily frequency of attacks in Mosul dropped slightly from 2.43 attacks in June 2009 to 2.35 attacks in July 2009, the corresponding monthly death tolls have increased from 58 to 79.[11] This can be attributed to AQI's motive of executing more high-profile attacks since June 30.[12] On August 7, for example, a suicide bomber in a vehicle killed 38 people in front of a Shi`a mosque just outside the city.[13] A second attack near Mosul in Khazna village brought the total number of killed and injured to 400 in the Mosul-area in a 10-day period.[14] Speaking to Pentagon reporters via satellite at the time, Army Major General Robert Caslen suggested that the increased violence in Mosul was a sign that AQI had reconstituted its capability in the city:

> What has increased, however, is the capability (of al-Qaeda and its allies) to conduct the high-profile attacks…So you see an increase in the numbers of casualties post-30 June.[15]

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1 Iraq has other major problems, including power shortages, unemployment, corruption, crime, and the many political disagreements, such as on a national oil law. The factors stated here, however, are considered most critical for affecting Iraq's new security environment because of their influence in potentially contributing toward nationwide destabilization and Iraqi death rates. One major security factor not discussed in this article is the slow government integration of the Sons of Iraq into the Iraqi security and civil sectors. For recent reporting on the latter issue, see "Slow Sunni Integration a Risk to Iraq Security – US," Reuters, July 31, 2009.

2 Eric Hamilton, "The Fight For Mosul," Institute for the Study of War, April 2008.
3 Ibid.
4 Eric Hamilton, "The Fight for Mosul," Institute for the Study of War, June 2008.
5 Ibid.
6 Sam Dagher, "Al Qaeda Goes North: Police Chief Killed in Mosul," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 25, 2008.
7 Joshua Partlow, "Maliki Sending Troops to Mosul," *Washington Post*, January 26, 2008.

8 William Selby, "Coalition Focuses on Clearing Mosul Terrorist Networks," American Forces Press Service, March 4, 2008.
9 As one report indicated, "the lack of significant resistance among the hardened fighters who had been operating in Mosul suggested the insurgency was offering Maliki and his American backers a message of their own: we fight on our terms, not yours." See Mark Kukis, "Maliki's Mosul Offensive," *Time Magazine*, May 16, 2008.
10 Jane Arraf, "Stabilizing Iraq: Why Mosul is a Special Case," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 24, 2009.
11 For statistics, see "Mosul Remains As Violent As Ever," Ground Truth, August 11, 2009.
12 This was the reasoning offered by U.S. Major General Robert Caslen. See "Al Qaeda Shows Resilience in N.Iraq-US Commander," Reuters, August 11, 2009.
13 Qassim Khidhir, "Talks Between Kurds and Hadba End Unsuccessfully," *Kurdish Globe*, August 14, 2009.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.

It is likely that insurgents have altered their methods and adapted to the U.S. counterinsurgency posture. Open urban warfare has become less of an advantage for insurgents because the switch toward population-protection has motivated local Iraqis to collaborate and share information with the U.S. military. In response, political assassinations might become a more attractive tool for insurgents in undermining opponents, instead of battlefield engagements with the goal of taking and holding territory.[16] Suicide attacks have also increased since the United States withdrew from Iraq's cities.[17]

Only by demonstrating quick and decisive victories and denying the enemy success in Mosul can the ISF deter the sprout of insurgents elsewhere. If the ISF does not quickly establish itself as a capable and non-sectarian institution, perceptions about its weakness could solidify and gain momentum in the minds of insurgents throughout Iraq.

Rising Ethnic Tensions in the North
A second major factor affecting stability in Iraq is continued ethnic tensions between Arabs and Kurds. In late July 2009, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, General Ray Odierno, told reporters that tensions between Arabs and Kurds is the "No. 1 driver of instability" in Iraq.[18] The conflict is concentrated over the issue of "disputed territories," to which UN Representative to Iraq Staffan de Mistura claimed had "infected almost every aspect of the political scene."[19] The Kurds demand the political execution of Article 140, a constitutional provision seeking the reversal of past Ba`athist "Arabization" campaigns committed in northern Iraq.[20]

Through a legal procedure of normalization, census and referendum, residents will determine whether the area under dispute will be under the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Arbil or remain under the authority of the federal government in Baghdad. The oil-rich city of Kirkuk is at the heart of the dispute. Yet al-

> "A power-sharing agreement between Kurds and Arabs in Mosul and in the Ninawa provincial government is crucial to the stability of northern Iraq."

Maliki has purposefully delayed the implementation of Article 140 while maneuvering to escape his political dependency on the Kurds by courting Sunni Arab nationalists and southern Shi`a tribes.[21]

Today, Kurdish leverage over al-Maliki is waning. They fear that U.S. withdrawal will permit al-Maliki to behave more assertively in marginalizing them, even by violent means. As Dr. Fuad Hussein, chief of staff to KRG President Massoud Barzani, asserted: "If the problems which exist now cannot be resolved in one or two years, the withdrawal of the American army will lead to unrest

in Baghdad and perhaps a return of sectarian fighting."[22] After a January 22, 2009 military move by al-Maliki to send the army's 12th division north toward Kirkuk, many Kurds viewed it as an operation to militarily encircle and cut off the city from being influenced by the surrounding Kurdish provinces.[23] By February 2009, fearful rhetoric suggested the possibility of an Arab-Kurdish civil war.[24] The debate over Article 140 would not be as problematic if the disputes were over an issue other than territory. According to one report, the Kurds claim somewhere between 30-40 disputed territories inside Iraq.[25] To date, not one has been resolved.

Growing tensions in Mosul between Kurds and Sunni Arabs is another major concern.[26] As Philip Zelikow, former counselor of the State Department, stated in February 2009:

> As important as Anbar is in the "Sunni story," Mosul may turn out to be much more significant for the future. The United States could find itself caught in the middle between Kurdish friends, local Sunni nationalists, and a central government in Baghdad that might be tempted to win Sunni friends by "dealing" forcefully with the Kurds.[27]

Violence in Mosul has increased since the provincial elections of January 31, 2009. The results of the elections in Ninawa Province shifted the balance of power away from the Kurdish parties toward the majority Sunni Arabs, the latter of whom had largely boycotted the previous provincial elections in January 2005. The winning Arab nationalist coalition, al-Hadba, has refused to appoint Kurds to any cabinet

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16 See the story on the recent political assassination of Harith al-Ubaydi, head of the Sunni parliamentary bloc, the Iraqi Accord Front: Rod Nordland and Abeer Mohammed, "Sunni Lawmaker Assassinated in Iraq," *New York Times*, June 12, 2009. For information on the rise of assassinations in Iraq, see Arraf. Also see Fatih Abdulsalam, "Assassinations Become Trademark of Iraq's New Political Epoch," *Azzaman*, June 14, 2009.

17 Omar al-Mansouri, "Suicide Bombers' Comeback Unnerves Iraqi Government," *Azzaman*, August 14, 2009.

18 Anne Gearan, "Gates: Kurd-Arab Friction Top Problem in Iraq," Associated Press, July 29, 2009.

19 Staffan de Mistura, "Challenges on Iraq's Election Day," *Washington Post*, January 31, 2009.

20 The Ba`athist Arabization campaigns were policies adopted by the Baghdad government to reduce the num-

ber of Kurdish inhabitants in areas deemed of strategic and economic value. Beginning in 1963 and commencing again in 1974 and 1984, hundreds of thousands of Kurds were systematically deported or killed and replaced with outside Arab families. The Kurdish language and other forms of Kurdish culture were outlawed and replaced with Arabic.

21 In August 2007, al-Maliki's government was saved from political paralysis by the formation of a Quartet Alliance, which involved along with al-Maliki's Dawa Party the two main Kurdish parties and the Shi`a Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. For al-Maliki's political maneuvering to escape his dependency on the Quartet Alliance, see Anthony Shadid, "New Alliances in Iraq Cross Sectarian Lines," *Washington Post*, March 20, 2009; Scott Weiner, "Maliki Makes a Play for the Southern Tribes," Institute for the Study of War, November 6, 2008; Jeremy Domergue and Marisa Cochrane, "Balancing Maliki: Shifting Coalitions in Iraqi Politics and the Rise of the Iraqi Parliament," Institute for the Study of War, June 2009.

22 Eli Lake, "Kurds Anxious Over U.S. Withdrawal," *Washington Times*, April 17, 2009.

23 Ramzy Mardini, "Rising Arab-Kurdish Tensions Over Kirkuk Will Complicate U.S. Withdrawal From Iraq," *Terrorism Focus* 6:6 (2009).

24 Rahmat al-Salaam, "Kurdish Officials Warn of Potential Kurd-Arab War," *Asharq Alawsat*, February 19, 2009.

25 "Article 140 Must be Adhered To, Say Kurdish Officials," *Kurdish Globe*, December 4, 2008.

26 "Kurdish-Sunni Tensions In Nineveh," *Entrepreneur*, May 25, 2009.

27 Philip Zelikow, "The New Strategic Situation in Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, February 9, 2009.

positions even though the Kurdish party carried one-third of the vote.[28] In response, Kurdish officials, including Ninawa mayors, have withdrawn from their posts in boycott.[29] The Kurds have refused to recognize the authority of the newly-elected Sunni governor Atheel al-Nujaifi over all of Ninawa.[30] They are concerned about his connections to powerful Arab tribes, members of the Ba`ath Party, and allegedly insurgents.[31] Some areas within the province are under the control of *peshmerga* (Kurdish militia) forces because Kurds have labeled them "disputed" territories under Article 140. Yet al-Nujaifi has denied them the right to administer those areas, claiming in a February 2009 interview:

> The existence of disputed areas in the province does not imply that the Kurdish Region can put them under its control until a resolution is reached. These areas should be under one authority, that of Ninawa Province, which is controlled by the central authority in the capital city of Baghdad.[32]

In May 2009, Kurdish forces prevented the governor from entering Bashiqa, a town northeast of Mosul that was administered by Kurds. Al-Nujaifi claimed the Kurds had issued a "shoot to kill" order on him if he were to enter the area.[33] A similar episode occurred when Kurdish forces stopped the Ninawa police chief from crossing a bridge into a disputed territory.[34] A statement released by the KRG blamed the al-Hadba leadership for the recent deaths of 2,000 Kurds in Ninawa, claiming that they were "adopting a policy of national, sectarian and religious cleansing in Ninawa."[35] According to *Azzaman*, an Iraqi news source, Arab parties in Ninawa have decided to form a joint

anti-Kurdish front to "deny Iraqi Kurds a say in the forthcoming parliamentary elections."[36]

In attempting to lower the heightened tensions in northern Iraq, on August 17 General Odierno proposed a tripartite deployment of U.S., ISF, and *peshmerga* forces to disputed areas in Ninawa.[37] Holding insurgents accountable for the upsurge in violence, Odierno blamed AQI for exploiting the discord between Arabs and Kurds. The deployment was described to be short-lived and directed toward protecting the local population and serving as a trust and "confidence-building measure" between the ISF and *peshmerga*.[38] The proposal, later to be discussed in high level meetings in September, comes at the backdrop of a January 2010 national referendum to be held on the continued U.S. presence stipulated in the SOFA, essentially making the redeployment of U.S. forces in Ninawa a complicated balancing act.[39]

The Unstable Shadow of Elections
Another source of instability is the current period leading to the parliamentary elections in January 2010. The domestic challenge presented by this circumstance is two-fold: 1) the risk that securitization might be politicized by al-Maliki's government; and 2) the possibility that violence is used among political factions in hopes of undermining the other's electoral prospects. Unfortunately, both have occurred in the past.[40]

Today, al-Maliki has staked his 2010 electoral prospects on two performance goals in the eyes of the Iraqi public: 1) stabilizing and providing security to facilitate reconstruction and economic growth; and 2) solidifying his status as the national leader by ending the U.S. occupation. Iraq's former precarious environment, however, had placed these two goals in zero-sum terms: security was only maintained when U.S. forces remained engaged in Iraqi neighborhoods while patrolling the streets. The current decrease in violence inside Iraq has allowed al-Maliki to rapidly consolidate and centralize his power at the expense of parties advocating federalism, such as the two main Kurdish parties—the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party—and the Shi`a Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) headed by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim.[41] Al-Maliki's first place finish in nine out of the 14 provinces that took part in the January 2009 provincial elections have instilled deep concern among Kurds and some Sunni and Shi`a parties over their waning ability to check al-Maliki's growing strength.[42]

One concern amidst increasing violence in Mosul and elsewhere is that al-Maliki may be hesitant to call for the assistance of U.S. troops stationed outside Iraqi

28 Quil Lawrence, "Arab-Kurd Conflict Deepens in Mosul," National Public Radio, July 2, 2009.

29 Ibid.

30 Sam Dagher, "Tensions Stoked Between Iraqi Kurds and Sunnis," *New York Times*, May 18, 2009.

31 Ibid.

32 Adel Kamal, "New Ninawa Governor Rejects Kurdish Allaince," *Niqash*, February 24, 2009.

33 Dagher.

34 Ibid.

35 "KRG Blames Hadbaa for Murder of Kurds, Displacement of Christians in Mosul," *Aswat al-Iraq*, August 14, 2009.

36 Jareer Mohammed, "Arabs Form Anti-Kurdish Bloc in Iraq's Mosul," *Azzaman*, August 10, 2009.

37 According to an Associated Press report, Odierno "said the deployment of the U.S.-Iraqi-Kurdish protection forces would start in Ninevah province, which includes the volatile city of Mosul, and then extend to Kirkuk and to Diyala province north of the capital." See Kim Gamel, "U.S. Iraq Boss Wants Troops in Disputed Land," Associated Press, August 18, 2009.

38 Liz Sly, "U.S. Troops May be Sent to Iraq's Arab-Kurdish 'Trigger Line,'" *Los Angeles Times*, August 18, 2009.

39 Odierno has not stipulated the number of U.S. soldiers to be deployed in the new proposal. If the Iraqi people do not approve the SOFA in a referendum held on the same day as the January 2010 parliamentary elections, U.S. soldiers will be forced to leave a year earlier than the December 31, 2011 deadline agreed to in the SOFA. For recent reporting on the referendum, see Ernesto Londoño, "Iraq May Hold Vote On U.S. Withdrawal," *Washington Post*, August 18, 2009.

40 The use of the Iraqi Army has been suspected of serv-

ing al-Maliki's political goals in the past. In August 2008, al-Maliki gave direct orders for the Iraqi Army to enter the disputed city of Khanaqin, forcing out *peshmerga* forces from the area and raiding offices belonging to Kurdish political parties. Kurdish observers viewed the maneuver as an attempt to marginalize Kurdish influence in Diyala Province ahead of the 2009 provincial elections. For al-Maliki's suspicious and political use of the army, in particular before the 2009 provincial elections, see "Kirkuk and Khanaqin on Alert," *Kurdish Globe*, January 22, 2009. For more information on the standoff between the government and the Kurds in Khanaqin, see Ramzy Mardini, "Iraqi Military Operation in Diyala Province Risks Renewal of Kurdish-Arab Conflict," *Terrorism Focus* 5:33 (2008).

41 Al-Hakim's interest in federalism is based on the desire to form a semi-autonomous Shi`a region, similar to that of the Kurdish region, consisting of nine southern Shi`a provinces.

42 Iraq has a total of 18 provinces, but only 14 participated in the January 2009 provincial elections. The three provinces belonging to the semi-autonomous Kurdish region conducted their own provincial elections on July 25, 2009. Because of the political sensitivities surrounding the disputed city of Kirkuk, its province had not commenced provincial elections. The national parliament has yet to come to agreement on an election law for Kirkuk.

cities. Hoping to stay consistent with his campaign message of achieving both security and sovereignty, such a situation forces the prime minister to make an unattractive trade-off: security versus credibility. As suggested by one U.S. military officer, "The last thing we want is to see this area fail because of some question of Arab pride in not being able to ask for our help."[43]

Reports already indicate that al-Maliki will leave his political bloc—the Shi`a United Iraqi Alliance, which is dominated by the federalism-advocate ISCI—in hopes of establishing a national coalition with Sunni Arab tribes and Shi`a parties devoted to a strong central government.[44] A broad-based alliance in the new 2010 parliament will decrease the chance of the Council of Representatives removing al-Maliki from power if he seeks further centralization.

Parties from all major ethnic groupings may come to believe that with the exiting of all U.S. combat forces in August 2010, elections earlier that year may become the last credible chance at balancing al-Maliki. The consequences that may result from the elections offer an enormous incentive for challengers threatened by Baghdad's drift to a strong central government to undermine the prime minister. Without the U.S. active in patrolling Iraqi cities, electoral politics may revert back to Iraq's violent politics when politicians engaged one another via militias on the urban battlefield.

Conclusion

Although violence has decreased significantly since the 2006-2007 highs, Iraq remains a fragile state riddled with poor institutions and intense subgroup identities. The security environment is no longer characterized by the constant presence of the "American pacifier." Today, the prospect for stability in Mosul and elsewhere are determined by an array of volatile factors.

The critical factor, however, toward satiating the power gap inherited in the new security environment is not only the capability and readiness of the ISF, but their integrity as a national and unitary institution dedicated toward the protection of all Iraqis. The local population's collaboration and trust in the ISF is critical for continuing a successful counterinsurgency campaign. Yet political developments in Mosul, rising Arab-Kurdish tensions, and conflicting interests—both foreign and domestic—toward the upcoming parliamentary elections risk politicizing ISF missions by suggesting them as a means for achieving political ends. Such prospects will permeate mistrust between the different ethnic segments of the population and the government. This could cause a security dilemma leading back to sectarian violence.

To alleviate the influence such factors could have, the United States must play the central mediating role. In particular, a power-sharing agreement between Kurds and Arabs in Mosul and in the Ninawa provincial government is crucial to the stability of northern Iraq. Even if a provincial power-sharing agreement is accomplished, however, northern Iraq is unlikely to remain stable if the problems surrounding Article 140 remain unresolved. In general, bringing about reconciliation between the contentious parties is the only guarantee of long-term stability absent the presence of U.S. forces.

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Training for Terror: The "Homegrown" Case of Jami` at al-Islam al-Sahih

By Jeffrey B. Cozzens and William Rosenau

NO MAJOR TERRORIST attacks have taken place in the United States since September 11, 2001, but the country has not been immune from terrorist plots involving jihadist activists.[1] During the past eight years, authorities have prosecuted so-called "homegrown" U.S. terrorists—U.S. citizens or residents with few, if any, meaningful operational ties to terrorists abroad—in California, New Jersey, New York, and elsewhere.[2] Most recently, in July 2009 six U.S. citizens and one U.S. resident were indicted in North Carolina on charges that they were supporting and participating in violent jihad in the Middle East, southeastern Europe, and South Asia.[3]

Although all of these cases were widely reported, there has been little systematic attention to some of the most salient issues surrounding homegrown U.S. violent extremism. Today, paradoxically, more is known about violent extremism overseas than about the phenomena in the United States. Gaps in knowledge about U.S.-based jihadist terrorism are particularly large in three areas: training, target selection and tactics. To date, the most significant research on this inter-related set of issues has focused on European jihadists.[4] To help

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43 Arthur MacMillan, "US Army Commanders Say Pull-out From Mosul Mired in Confusion," Agence France-Presse, June 18, 2009.

44 For recent reporting, see Ammar Karim, "Iraq PM Set to Break with Shiite Coalition in January Polls," Agence France-Presse, August 13, 2009. For further reading about al-Maliki's strategy for a national coalition, see Shadid; Weiner; Domergue and Cochrane.

1 This article defines jihadist activism as high-risk behaviors involved with supporting or plotting violence motivated by a militant Islamist worldview. For more, see Jeffrey B. Cozzens, "The Culture of Global Jihad: Character, Future Challenges, and Recommendations," *The Future Actions Series* (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2008).

2 This definition is drawn from Edward J. Valla and Gregory Comcowich, "Domestic Terrorism: Forgotten, But Not Gone," in Jeffrey N. Norwitz ed., *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2008), p. 173. The authors recognize the difficulties inherent when applying this term to global jihadist activists, but the term is widely accepted in the above context.

3 Campbell Robertson, "Arrests in Terror Case Bewilder Associates," *New York Times*, July 29, 2009.

4 See, for example, Petter Nesser, "How Did Europe's Global Jihadis Obtain Training for their Militant Causes?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20:2 (2008).

fill these gaps, this article considers the case of Jami`at al-Islam al-Sahih (Assembly of Authentic Islam, or JIS), a group that plotted to strike Jewish-American, Israeli, and U.S. military targets in and around Los Angeles, likely in September and October 2005.[5] While not terribly sophisticated in organizational or operational terms—there was not the meticulous planning or the employment of explosives associated with al-Qa`ida-inspired terrorism, for example—U.S. law enforcement officials consider the JIS conspiracy the post-9/11 homegrown jihadist plot that came closest to reaching violent fruition.[6]

Research into homegrown U.S. terrorism is often hindered by the inaccessibility of court records and other primary sources. With JIS, however, primary sources are relatively rich and available, making it possible for researchers to develop a more textured understanding than is generally the case. Using court documents and media sources, this article examines the two phases of JIS training, how these phases helped shape the group's target selection and finally how training influenced the cell's operational art.

The JIS Conspiracy
Inspired by Kevin James, an imprisoned militant convert to Islam turned spiritual leader, two fellow African-American converts, Levar Washington and Gregory Patterson, and one Pakistani national, Hammad Samana (a U.S. resident), plotted a set of attacks using firearms. The cell discussed acquiring and using standoff explosives—typically devices that can be activated from a distance using remote detonators—but members dismissed this mode as too difficult. The conspirators robbed a dozen gas stations to finance the plot—perhaps the most overt example of the

confluence of terrorism and criminality in the United States. The plotters were apprehended after they dropped a cell phone at the scene of their last robbery, leading authorities to their apartment. At the apartment, police discovered jihadist paraphernalia, including posters of Usama bin Ladin, evidence of online targeting of the proposed attack sites, and several documents that outlined their operational plan. The plotters all had sworn oaths of loyalty to Kevin James and maintained sporadic contact with him in prison, primarily using letters smuggled out of prison, as well as face-to-face meetings.[7]

JIS' small-arms training in preparation for the attack was conducted in a park near Los Angeles, and it appears to be limited to a single day on July 4, 2005. This involved Samana, Patterson, and Washington firing a shotgun, a semi-automatic rifle, and performing calisthenics and martial arts in the park. The limited session in the park is best understood as the second and final phase of a training program that began years earlier in prison.

Phase 1: Forging the JIS "Method"
The first training period, which ran from 1997-2005, included several dozen inmates incarcerated at Sacramento's New Folsom County Prison. This phase included a JIS indoctrination program,[8] which consisted of learning Arabic, becoming familiar with the "Hadith of Jibreel," relying heavily on texts written by a cleric named Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo,[9] identifying enemies, reading literature "required" by Kevin James, developing an organized and

tiered movement structure, devising recruitment strategies, and practicing operational security.[10]

Two documents were at the center of JIS indoctrination efforts: the rambling, largely theological "JIS Protocol," which James authored in 1997, and the 2002 addendum to this original document called the "Jama'at Ul-Islami As Sahih Tutorial Protocol for Prisoners."[11]

> **"U.S. law enforcement officials consider the JIS conspiracy the post-9/11 homegrown jihadist plot that came closest to reaching violent fruition."**

Martial arts training was also part of the curriculum for the 15 or so committed JIS members,[12] and took place before or after Muslim prayer services—allegedly even when the prison chaplain was present.[13] Besides his writings and demonstrated religious piety, James' false claim that he was a veteran of Sudanese jihadist training camps likely furthered his role as the charismatic leader within the group; it also enabled him and his deputies, such as his New Folsom cell mate, Peter Martinez, to frame and promote the JIS worldview more effectively.[14]

At the time, James, a former 76th Street Crip from Gardena, CA who rejected his father's Nation of Islam leanings, also became aware of Levar Washington's

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5 See remarks by FBI Director Robert S. Mueller at www.fbi.gov/pressrel/speeches/mueller042606.htm.

6 The JIS cell "was closer to going operational than any we have seen post-911," according to a senior Los Angeles Police Department official quoted in "Two Plead Guilty to Domestic Terrorism Charges of Conspiring to Attack Military Facilities," Reuters, December 14, 2007. Abdul-hakim Mujahid Muhammad's admitted shooting of two soldiers in Arkansas on June 20, 2009 might prove to be the first U.S.-based jihadist strike since the 9/11 attacks. Muhammad, however, is apparently linked to Yemeni extremists, and so does not fit squarely into the "home-grown" category.

7 The U.S. Department of Justice's March 2009 overview of the plot is available at losangeles.fbi.gov/dojpressrel/pressrel09/la030609ausa.htm.

8 Evidence of a phased curriculum is available at "Jama'at Ul-Islami As-Sahih Tutorial Protocol for Prisoners," NEFA Foundation, December 14, 2007.

9 Shaykh Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo's "He Came to Teach You Your Religion" is an English-language commentary on the hadith of Gabriel that was noted as a "must read" in the "JIS Protocol." Zarabozo, a European convert to Islam living in the United States, is a California-educated economist turned popular cleric. He has been a frequent target of the Saudi religious establishment for his independent *fatawa* and willingness to engage more credentialed scholars in debate. It is unlikely that Zarabozo knew anything about JIS. For more, see Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 163-164.

10 Ibid.; Also see also Mark S. Hamm, *Terrorist Recruitment in American Correctional Institutions: An Exploratory Study of Non-Traditional Faith Groups*, U.S. Department of Justice Commissioned Report #220957, December 2007.

11 The JIS Protocol and the 2002 addendum, the "Jama'at Ul-Islami As-Sahih Tutorial Protocol for Prisoners," is available at nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/U.S._v_James_JISManifesto.pdf.

12 At the time of writing, it does not appear that any individuals besides James, Washington, Patterson, and Samana will face charges in connection with the plot. As Mark Hamm notes, however, as of late 2007 there remained "about a dozen hard core (JIS) members" in the California prison system.

13 Hamm, p. 44.

14 Ibid., p. 42.

potential utility as a "soldier." Given Washington's impending parole (scheduled for November 2004), eager embrace of the JIS curriculum, and parallel biography—that of a street-wise gang member turned Sunni Islamic convert like most of the JIS members—James judged Washington suitable for the task of building an operational cell outside of prison.[15] James influenced Washington to the degree that the latter allegedly swore *bay`at* (an oath of allegiance) to James as his "shaykh."[16] Like other JIS members, it is believed that Washington also agreed to the "90 day reporting rule," in which all members were required to make contact with James every three months.[17]

Washington then began to recruit outside of prison for what would develop into the JIS plot. Washington met Samana and Patterson—by all accounts trusting and naïve individuals without criminal histories from decent families—at an Inglewood, CA mosque in May 2005. Only Patterson's recent conversion to Islam and Samana's status as a Muslim immigrant to the West would have suggested personal vulnerabilities to recruitment into terrorism. Indeed, by the end of May all three were sharing a run-down apartment in south-central Los Angeles, discussing the Iraq war and Guantanamo Bay, and what needed to be done in Islam's defense.[18] As in other Western cases, the importance of socially reinforced attitudes, values and beliefs; charismatic leadership; group interpretations of geopolitics; and adventurous attempts to re-shape individual identities appear foundational to the cell's turn to violent activism.

The end of the first training phase is marked by James' 2004 publication of the "Blue Print 2005," a training pamphlet that should be seen as the

ultimate, "kinetic" end of James' earlier ideological and organizational writings.[19] This document also provides a window into the intentions of the cell, as it bridges JIS' unique jihadist ideology[20] and operational methods. Likely written with Washington in mind, James exhorted the JIS recruits

> ## "JIS was focused on striking political, military, and religious targets, which have received relatively less official attention than U.S. critical infrastructure, such as electrical and transportation systems."

to learn Arabic; recruit other members (felony free, ideally), who would in turn receive training in Islam and the "JIS Protocol"; conduct "covert" operations; and acquire firearms and explosives training. Additionally, James instructed JIS recruits to "become legitimate," which entailed obtaining a driver's license, marriage, school or regular employment, avoiding any overt signs of extremism in dress or behavior. Moreover, recruits were to adhere strictly to guidelines for living in *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of War).[21]

A later document, "Notoriety Moves," also authored by James, built on "Blue Print 2005" by mentioning potential JIS targets: the Nation of Islam; followers of Warith D. Muhammad; Muslims who "trash" the four schools of Islam and qualified Sunni scholarship; Shi`a Muslims and Iran; Muslims who support and/or join the U.S. military; Muslims who are employed by "non-Islamic governmental institutions… blatantly in opposition to the laws and religion of Islam"; and Jewish and non-Jewish supporters of "an Israeli state."[22] An unknown amount of this curriculum was also provided to Patterson and Samana, who, in James' opinion, became "true believers."

Phase 2: Operational Training and Attack Preparation

The second training phase ran from May through June 2005, when the three-man cell of Washington, Patterson, and Samana robbed gas stations to finance the JIS plot. Washington, the operational leader, was a former "Rolling 60s" gang member who likely imparted a modest amount of operational knowledge to the others, as they did not have criminal backgrounds. During his sentencing, Washington told the court that gas stations were targeted because oil was a political symbol of U.S. oppression in the Muslim world.[23] This phase, in which Patterson and Samana committed the bulk of the robberies, helped the two non-convicts develop a modest measure of operational experience already possessed by Washington. Perhaps more importantly, the robberies demonstrated the devotion of the new JIS members—Samana and Patterson—and bolstered their intent to commit the planned acts of terrorism.

Target Selection

The intended targets of the proposed September 11, 2005 JIS operation were listed in "Modes of Attack," a document written by Samana and recovered in the cell's apartment. The proposed targets, all within a 20-mile radius of Patterson's and Washington's apartment, included an El Al ticket counter at Los Angeles International Airport, the Israeli

15 Ibid., p. 41; Also see Rob Harris, "Kevin James and the JIS Conspiracy," PBS Frontline, October 10, 2006.

16 "Man Who Formed Terrorist Group That Plotted Attacks on Military and Jewish Facilities Sentenced to 16 Years in Federal Prison," U.S. Department of Justice, Central District of California, March 6, 2009.

17 See Kevin James, "Blue Print 2005," available at nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/U.S._v_James_Blueprint2005.pdf.

18 Hamm, pp. 45-46. Hamm's account provides a robust narrative of the cell's radicalization and recruitment processes.

19 "Blue Print 2005."

20 Although JIS emphasizes the methodology of violent jihad to combat "heretical" strains of Islam such as the Nation of Islam, 50%-ers, and the Shi`a, and lists the U.S. military and Jews among its targets, there are subtle ideological differences separating it from "mainstream" global jihadism as practiced by al-Qa`ida. First, as indicated by the *Protocol's* content and its suggested reading list, JIS is strongly Shafi'i and promotes Sufism (*tawassuf*). The broader Salafist trend de-emphasizes overt reliance upon single schools of Sunni jurisprudence and generally considers Sufism an innovation. Second, the JIS manifesto labels jihad *fard kifayah* (a collective obligation), rather than *fard `ayn* (an individual obligation), the latter of which is al-Qa`ida's view. Contrary to perhaps the central jihadist position articulated in the modern era by the Palestinian theoretician Abdullah Azzam, this view implicitly disregards the individual's "duty" of defending Islam where it is besieged. This topic warrants deeper analysis, as does the study of ideological currents within North American Islamic extremism generally.

21 Ibid.

22 Kevin James, "Notoriety Moves," available at nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/U.S._v_James_ClaimResponsibility.pdf.

23 H.G. Reza, "Man Sentenced To 22 Years in L.A.-Area Terror Plot," *Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 2008.

Consulate on Wilshire Boulevard, 16 U.S. Army recruitment centers and offices in and around Los Angeles, and a U.S. military base in Manhattan Beach.[24] The prison and post-prison indoctrination and training phases appear to have shaped this target set. The data suggest these targeting catalysts included:

The JIS Manifesto and Other "Required" Readings
These documents identify the U.S. military and emblems of the State of Israel as enemies of Muslims. They are viewed as corrupting, persecuting influences that "authentic" Sunni Muslims must combat, and impediments to the establishment of Islamic law. Accordingly, JIS was to "sit back, build and attack…Western forces of the US and their Kufr (unbelieving) [sic] society." Serbia, Britain, and Russia are also identified as targets of JIS.

The "Hothouse" Prison Atmosphere
This almost certainly reinforced the JIS literature that "legitimized" the target selection. It is also noteworthy that James urged the study of Arabic and promoted the notion that membership in the global Islamic community (the *umma*) supersedes individual identity. By adopting the language and suffering of the *umma*, the local context took on a global significance for JIS, and the Los Angeles targets aligned with those of the global jihadist movement.

Gas Station Robberies
For the JIS cell members, robbing gas stations served two purposes. The robberies were expected to generate revenues for JIS operations. Moreover, the acts were conceptualized as jihad itself. Patterson, according to a Federal Bureau of Investigation affidavit filed in August 2005, claimed that the gas station hold-ups "were part of a jihad against the U.S., particularly against American oil companies who are stealing from 'our countries,'" that is, Muslim lands.[25]

Prolonged Interaction Among the Conspirators
This interaction involved discussions about violent jihad, mistreatment of Muslims, and the Iraq war. In the view of JIS cell members, the abuses of detainees at Guantanamo Bay, U.S. military attacks on Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan, and U.S. policies toward the Muslim world more generally required that the United States suffer for its actions. In his December 2007 plea agreement with federal prosecutors, James said the JIS plot was motivated by the wish to retaliate "for the policies of the United States and Israeli governments toward Muslims throughout the world." Levar Washington, according to the August 2005 FBI affidavit, argued that something had to "be done to punish the United States," and Samana, his co-conspirator, agreed.[26] The natural outgrowth was the target list, which was also approved by the imprisoned James through "kites"—letters smuggled from prison.[27]

Tactics
How did the training phases help determine how attacks would be conducted? First, James' "Blueprint 2005" established a baseline plan for waging a limited insurgency that would be devised around operational security, the use of standoff improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and firearm assaults upon selected human targets. Later documents such as "Notoriety Moves" and "Modes of Attack" echo this assessment. The cell's behavior and planning appeared to follow this logic despite its failure to acquire explosives.

The influence of these documents (and James' leadership) in the cell's choice of tactics is evident, especially its de-emphasis on immediate suicide attacks. Although at least two members of the operational JIS cell took oaths of loyalty to James "until victory or martyrdom"—and Patterson admitted to authorities that his ultimate goal was to "die for Allah in jihad"—like James' documents, where there are only limited references to martyrdom, the culture of the cell was not built around suicide methodologies.[28] Very different from many al-Qa`ida-linked

writings, this can be attributed in part to the criminal pasts—and thus possible interest in self-preservation—of some of the conspirators. In other "strains" of the global jihadist movement, martyrdom in jihad is believed to provide atonement even for criminals—a neglected theme in this case which emphasizes the importance of James' writings and leadership in the selection of non-suicide methods.

It is also clear that logistical and organizational variables during the training phases influenced the selection of tactics. Difficulty in acquiring explosives, the cell's lack of expertise and training in their handling, and the considerable ease of acquiring and using firearms made small-arms the weapons of choice, furthering the decision to rule out other, more exotic tactics. Samana's testimony in the affidavit filed by FBI Special Agent James Clinton Judd supports this view, as he detailed plans to assault U.S. military targets with a semi-automatic rifle and a shotgun.[29] Moreover, these tactics would not likely result in the initial martyrdom of the cell, and would eventually allow for James' "Notoriety Moves" publicity plan to take effect.

It appears that the JIS "curriculum," the cell's lack of tactical training, and the conspirators' apparent disinclination toward martyrdom operations at the outset led them to make the operational choices they did. Firearms—the preferred weapons of amateur thugs—would likely kill many soldiers and Jewish Americans and would potentially afford the cell another day to fight.

Conclusion
The JIS case is instructive on a number of levels. First, it suggests a strong correlation between terrorists' training curriculum, authoritative ideological framing (in James' case) and target selection in the United States—a linkage that should be explored in subsequent research on other terrorist plots.

Second, it is clear that JIS was focused on striking political, military, and religious targets, which have received relatively less official attention than U.S. critical infrastructure, such as electrical and transportation systems.

24 See Samana's "Modes of Attack" at nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/U.S._v_Washington_TargetList.pdf.

25 Quoted in "The L.A. Plot to Attack U.S. Military, Israeli Government, and Jewish Targets," NEFA Foundation, January 2008.

26 Ibid., p. 9.

27 Hamm, p. 42.

28 *U.S.A. v. Samana*, (C.D. CA), No. 05-16662M, affidavit filed August 2, 2005.

29 "The L.A. Plot to Attack U.S. Military, Israeli Government, and Jewish Targets."

Third, the case demonstrates that JIS—a group with no explosives expertise or experience—sought to maximize its operational potential by using what was at hand and what was familiar, namely robbery and firearms. This might also help explain why other U.S.-based jihadist cells without tangible connections to, or significant online liaison with, foreign extremists were similarly inclined to choose firearms over explosives.

Finally, although there is no evidence that JIS attempted to forge international ties, James' writings make passing references to working with "Islamic movements" committed to the purification of Sunni Islam worldwide and struggling against the global forces opposing it. Cooperation with foreign jihadist networks could have bolstered the capabilities of the cell and pushed JIS to consider suicide methods against a wider target set.

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Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

July 1, 2009 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on an al-Qa`ida supporter and three leaders of Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LeT). The al-Qa`ida supporter was identified as Fazeel-A-Tul Shaykh Abu Mohammed Ameen al-Peshawari. The three LeT leaders were identified as Arif Qasmani, Mohammed Yahya Mujahid and Nasir Javaid. – *AFP, July 1*

July 1, 2009 (PAKISTAN): According to a new poll, most Pakistanis consider the Pakistani Taliban and al-Qa`ida as critical threats to the country. The WorldPublicOpinion.org poll found that 81 percent of respondents consider Islamist militants and local Taliban as critical threats to Pakistan. The poll also found, however, that "the U.S. is resented just as much as before, despite the U.S. having a new president." The poll found that 62% of respondents had low or no confidence that President Barack Obama would do the "right thing" in world affairs. – *Reuters, July 1*

July 2, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): The U.S. military announced that a U.S. soldier was captured by Taliban insurgents in eastern Afghanistan. According to reports, the soldier was then "sold" to the clan led by insurgent warlord Sirajuddin Haqqani. Three Afghan soldiers were also captured. The U.S. soldier went missing on June 30. – *CNN, July 2; The Australian, July 3*

July 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber on a motorcycle exploded next to a bus carrying workers from Pakistan's main nuclear facility in Rawalpindi, wounding 29 people. – *Minneapolis Star Tribune, July 2*

July 3, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suspected improvised explosive device killed two U.S. soldiers in Paktika Province. – *AFP, July 3*

July 3, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A Pakistani military helicopter crashed on the border between Orakzai and Khyber agencies of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing 26 security personnel. The Taliban later claimed credit for downing the helicopter, although the Pakistani military rejected those claims

and attributed the crash to a "technical fault." – *AFP, July 3*

July 3, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected U.S. unmanned aerial vehicles launched missiles at Tehrik-i-Taliban positions in South Waziristan Agency, killing at least six people. – *Washington Post, July 3*

July 3-4, 2009 (MALI): Malian soldiers and suspected al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb militants engaged in two gun battles that left 20 soldiers missing near Tessalit in northern Mali. Malian military sources were unsure whether the 20 missing soldiers were dead or taken as hostages. – *Reuters, July 6*

July 4, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Two U.S. soldiers were killed after Taliban militants launched a multipronged attack on a U.S. base in Zerok district in southeastern Paktika Province. The attack involved small-arms fire and an attempted truck bombing. The militants also reportedly used a mortar round that contained white phosphorous. Some reports placed the number of militants at 100. Approximately 30 of the militants were killed after troops called in airstrikes. – *Reuters, July 4; Los Angeles Times, July 5*

July 4, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Gunmen abducted 16 mine-clearing personnel working for the United Nations as they traveled between Paktia and Khost provinces. – *AP, July 5*

July 6, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide car bombing at Kandahar airport killed two people. – *CNN, July 6*

July 6, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb exploded in Kunduz Province, killing four U.S. soldiers and two Afghan civilians. – *New York Times, July 6*

July 6, 2009 (EGYPT): An Egyptian newspaper reported that authorities foiled an al-Qa`ida-affiliated plot to target gas lines running between Israel and Egypt. Egyptian security forces reportedly arrested three Belgians, a Frenchman, a Briton, two Palestinian brothers and five Egyptian nationals. The men were all arrested in northern Sinai. They reportedly had in their possession anti-tank rockets, car bombs and other weapons. – *UPI, July 6*

July 6, 2009 (MALI): Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure announced a "total struggle against al-Qa`ida." His statement comes after an incident on July 3 and July 4 in which 20 Malian soldiers went missing during clashes with al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. – *AFP, July 7*

July 7, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters attacked government buildings in Barg Matal district in Nuristan Province. During the fighting, eight police were killed and another eight kidnapped. Officials said that 21 Taliban fighters were also killed. – *Reuters, July 8*

July 7, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial vehicle destroyed a compound in the Zangara area of South Waziristan Agency, killing 16 foreign and local militants. The target was described as a former office for Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. – *AFP, July 7*

July 7, 2009 (PAKISTAN): An anti-Taliban tribal elder, Malik Zardad Khan, was kidnapped and murdered in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Malik Zardad Khan was forming a *lashkar* (tribal militia) to combat the Taliban. – *AFP, July 8*

July 7, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): A bomb exploded in a commercial area of Jolo Island in the southern Philippines, killing six people. Two hours later, a car bomb exploded next to a parked military jeep in Illigan city, also in the southern Philippines, wounding seven people. A third bomb was found at the Mount Carmel Catholic cathedral on Jolo Island, although it was defused and did not cause any damage. Authorities blamed the attacks on the Abu Sayyaf Group, although it was not clear if the group claimed responsibility for the bombings. – *The Age, July 7; AFP, July 6*

July 8, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A Pakistani Army spokesman announced that the military had "credible" information that Pakistani Taliban leader Maulana Fazlullah, who commands fighters in the Swat Valley, had been wounded during an offensive against the group. On July 22, however, Pakistani Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan said that Maulana Fazlullah was alive and unharmed. – *al-Jazira, July 9; Reuters, July 8; Reuters, July 23*

July 8, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected U.S. unmanned aerial vehicles fired six missiles at Pakistani Taliban targets in South Waziristan Agency. There were no immediate casualty counts. – *Reuters, July 8*

July 8, 2009 (BANGLADESH): Security forces in Bangladesh shot and wounded a would-be suicide bomber, who was suspected of being a member of Jamaatul Mujahidin Bangladesh. The militant took two people hostage at a government building and exchanged gunfire with security officers. A bomb was attached to his body, although it did not explode. – *Reuters, July 8*

July 8, 2009 (MALI): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) released an online statement claiming that it had killed 28 Malian soldiers during a July 3 and July 4 clash with security personnel. AQIM also said it took three soldiers captive. The Malian military denounced the claim as propaganda. – *Reuters, July 8; AFP, July 8*

July 9, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Explosives on a timber truck killed at least 24 people in Logar Province. Sixteen of the dead were children. According to reports, residents found the timber truck overturned on the road with a punctured tire. When authorities arrived to clear the truck from the road, it exploded. Some officials believe that the truck bomb may have been intended for use in Kabul, which is located 30 miles north on the highway. – *BBC, July 9; Washington Post, July 10; New York Times, July 9*

July 9, 2009 (IRAQ): Two suicide bombers executed a coordinated attack in Tal Afar, Ninawa Province, and killed 34 civilians. The first bomber entered the home of a counterterrorism officer and blew himself up, causing the house to collapse. When neighbors gathered at the scene, the second bomber detonated his explosives among the crowd. Both bombers were reportedly disguised in police uniforms. – *Washington Post, July 10*

July 9, 2009 (IRAQ): An improvised road mine exploded near a market in Baghdad's Sadr City. One minute later, another mine was detonated approximately 100 yards away. The two blasts killed seven people. – *Washington Post, July 10*

July 9, 2009 (IRAQ): Two roadside bombs targeted a police patrol near a market in a Shi`a area of northern Baghdad, killing nine people. – *Washington Post, July 10*

July 9, 2009 (LIBYA): The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) released a statement reversing a 2007 decision to merge with al-Qa`ida's movement. The group criticized al-Qa`ida's "targeting of civilians" and "indiscriminate bombings." The group's statement said that the 2007 decision to join with al-Qa`ida was made without the "agreement of the majority" of its ruling council. – *Telegraph, July 9*

July 9, 2009 (EGYPT): Egyptian authorities announced the arrests of 25 people accused of plotting attacks on oil pipelines and ships in the Suez Canal. Authorities said the group had ties to al-Qa`ida and consisted of mostly Egyptian engineers and technicians, although their leader was a Palestinian. – *AP, July 9*

July 9, 2009 (SOMALIA): A new audiotape from Abu Mansur al-Amriki, an American who left the United States to join Somalia's al-Shabab militant group, appeared on Islamist web forums. Al-Amriki criticized President Barack Obama, stating that "let this not come as a surprise to those who are mesmerized by Obama's speech in Cairo, our positions…have not changed in the least." He further said that President Obama's speech came "not because he loves the Muslims he lived with in Indonesia as a boy, but rather it is because the only way to defeat the Muslims is by distracting them with this temporary life." – *Fox News, July 9*

July 10, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Mohammed Abdullah Warsame, a 35-year-old Minneapolis man of Somali descent, received a 92-month prison sentence in federal court on one count of conspiring to provide material support to al-Qa`ida. According to UPI, "Court documents reveal that Warsame traveled from Pakistan to al-Qaida terrorist camps in Afghanistan in 2000 to undergo weapons and martial arts training." He allegedly met Usama bin Ladin and other al-Qa`ida leaders. – *UPI, July 10*

July 10, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani Taliban militants attacked a security checkpoint near Khar in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing three local tribal policemen. – *BBC, July 10*

July 10, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected U.S. unmanned aerial vehicles bombed a communications center for Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud, killing at least three people. The center is located in the Painda Khel region of South Waziristan Agency. – *AP, July 10*

July 12, 2009 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) released Werner Greiner, a Swiss national who had been held by the group since January 22, 2009. Greiner—who was abducted in Niger but held in Mali—was the last of six Western hostages to be released by the group. One of the hostages, Briton Edwin Dyer, was executed in May. – *BBC, July 12*

July 12, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Abu Sayyaf Group militants finally released Eugenio Vagni, an Italian foreign aid worker who was taken hostage in the southern Philippines on January 15, 2009. Vagni, who worked for the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), was the last of three abducted ICRC workers to be released. The other two workers were released on April 2 and April 18. – *GMANews.tv, July 12*

July 13, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Rajab Khan, the district police chief of Jalriz in Wardak Province, was killed just south of Kabul when a roadside bomb destroyed his vehicle. Three of his bodyguards were also killed in the blast. – *AFP, July 12*

July 13, 2009 (YEMEN): A Yemeni court sentenced six suspected al-Qa`ida militants to death for their role in a series of deadly attacks on government and Western targets in Yemen. Another 10 defendants, including a Saudi and four Syrians, received sentences ranging from eight to 15 years in jail on the same charges. The group was convicted of carrying out the January 2008 attack that killed two Belgian female tourists, a March 2008 attack that targeted the U.S. Embassy in Sana`a, and a rocket attack on a compound housing U.S. oil workers. The men were all accused of

having ties to al-Qa`ida. – *AFP, July 13; Guardian, July 13*

July 13, 2009 (JORDAN): A military court sentenced Mohammed Ahmed Youssef al-Jaghbeer to death for his involvement in the killing of U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley in October 2002. The sentencing marked al-Jaghbeer's third re-trial. He is said to have ties to al-Qa`ida. – *al-Jazira, July 14*

July 14, 2009 (SOMALIA): Two French security advisers were kidnapped from their hotel in Mogadishu. The men were involved in training Somalia's new presidential guard. Various reports stated that the men were posing as journalists as a cover for their mission. Approximately 10 armed men—with some reports identifying them as "disgruntled government soldiers"—driving a truck arrived at the Sahafi Hotel in Mogadishu and went directly to the Frenchmen's rooms, bringing them out of the hotel at gunpoint. Later reports stated that after negotiations broke down, the men were handed over to the opposition groups Hisbul Islamiyya and al-Shabab, with each group holding one hostage. Later, however, both hostages ended up in the hands of al-Shabab. - *New York Times, July 14; Telegraph, July 14; ABC News, July 16; BBC, July 18*

July 14, 2009 (THAILAND): The Thai government extended emergency rule for three months in its troubled southern provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala. – *AFP, July 14*

July 15, 2009 (GLOBAL): A new audio message attributed to al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri appeared on Islamist web forums. In the message, al-Zawahiri urges "every Muslim in Pakistan to rise up to fight" the Americans. According to al-Zawahiri, "the Americans are today occupying Afghanistan and Pakistan." He also claims that the United States is trying to "break up this nuclear-capable country [Pakistan] and transform it into tiny fragments, loyal to and dependent on the neo-crusaders." – *al-Jazira, July 15; Guardian, July 15*

July 15, 2009 (IRAQ): An improvised explosive device blew up at the entrance of a funeral tent in a predominately Shi`a district of Baghdad, killing five people. – *New York Times, July 15*

July 15, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber driving a minibus targeted Iraqi security forces in Ramadi, Anbar Province. One policeman and five civilians were killed. – *AP, July 16*

July 16, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan Taliban commander Mawlavi Sangin said that his forces are holding a missing U.S. soldier, who disappeared in Paktika Province on June 30. Sangin said that the "soldier is fine and safe and our leadership council will decide about his fate." – *Reuters, July 16*

July 16, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber rammed a car into a police convoy in Nimroz Province, killing three policemen. – *AFP, July 16*

July 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A UN refugee agency official was shot to death during a failed kidnapping attempt near Peshawar, in northwest Pakistan. Four armed men tried to abduct the Pakistani official, who was shot in the chest several times. A security guard was also killed during the incident. – *BBC, July 16*

July 17, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial vehicle killed four alleged militants in North Waziristan Agency. – *BBC, July 17*

July 17, 2009 (INDONESIA): Two bombs ripped through the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta, killing at least seven people. The two hotels were approximately 50 meters apart, and the attacks were coordinated as they occurred within five minutes of each other. Both of the blasts were the work of suicide bombers. Police later said that they believe the architect of the attack to be Noordin Mohamed Top, an alleged terrorist tied to Jemaah Islamiya. – *USA Today, July 16; Wall Street Journal, July 24*

July 17, 2009 (THAILAND): A car bomb killed a special task force deputy chief and his aide in southern Thailand's Yala Province. – *Bangkok Post, July 18*

July 17, 2009 (KYRGYZSTAN): Domestic media in Kyrgyzstan reported that security forces arrested 18 people accused of coordinating a logistics supply network for Taliban fighters in nearby Afghanistan. The group included citizens of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The men apparently used to fight alongside the Taliban. – *Reuters, July 18*

July 17, 2009 (MAURITANIA): Police in Mauritania arrested two suspects in the June killing of American teacher Christopher Ervin Leggett. One of the men was wearing an explosives belt at the time of arrest. Both were accused of having ties to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. – *AP, July 24*

July 18, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A U.S. soldier captured by the Afghan Taliban on June 30 appeared in an insurgent video posted on Islamist websites. The Pentagon confirmed that the man in the video is the captured U.S. soldier. The U.S. Defense Department has identified the soldier as Pfc. Bowe R. Bergdahl. – *AP, July 18; AP, July 19*

July 18, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber driving a car filled with explosives rammed into an Afghan army vehicle in Zabul Province, killing three Afghan soldiers. – *AFP, July 18*

July 18, 2009 (SOMALIA): A senior member of al-Shabab announced that two French military advisers held captive by the group will be tried according to Shari`a, which carries a possible death penalty. The men are charged with spying and working for the enemies of Islam. – *Voice of America, July 18*

July 19, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed two police officers and a civilian during an attack on a police post at the Torkham border crossing, which connects Afghanistan and Pakistan. – *Reuters, July 19*

July 19, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): A spokesman for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) announced that the AFP plans to defeat the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) by the end of 2009. The spokesman said that the ASG has been weakened to only 300 members: "Their ranks have gone down and while they have some new recruits, it is mostly young boys lured by the promise of monetary rewards and the bearing of arms." – *AFP, July 19*

July 20, 2009 (MALI): The main group of Tuareg ex-rebels in Mali agreed to assist the Malian military in combating al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). According to the BBC, "The Tuareg know how to operate in the desert perhaps better than anyone else

and could be the government's best hope of beating al-Qaeda in the region." The BBC report further stated that "under the deal special units of fighters from the [Tuareg] Alliance for Democracy and Change are to be sent to the desert to tackle al-Qaeda." – *BBC, July 20*

July 21, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Five Taliban suicide bombers attacked government centers in Gardez, Paktia Province. The complex attack targeted the provincial governor's compound, the intelligence department and the police department. Five bombers and five Afghan security forces were killed. – *CBS News, July 21*

July 21, 2009 (IRAQ): Two improvised explosive devices were detonated seconds apart near a sidewalk in Baghdad's Sadr City, killing four people. Hours later, another bomb exploded at a crowded sheep market in Sadr City, killing three people. – *New York Times, July 21*

July 21, 2009 (IRAQ): Two bombs exploded at a popular market in northern Baghdad's Husseiniya neighborhood, killing five people. – *New York Times, July 21*

July 22, 2009 (UNITED STATES): According to newly unsealed court papers, Bryant Neal Vinas, a 26-year-old U.S. citizen from Long Island, was charged with giving al-Qa`ida details about the New York City transit system and the Long Island Railroad, in addition to firing rockets at U.S. troops in Afghanistan. Vinas was also accused of receiving military training from al-Qa`ida in 2008. He pleaded guilty on January 28 in a closed hearing. Vinas remains in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. – *Reuters, July 22*

July 22, 2009 (LEBANON): The Lebanese army recently arrested 10 people accused of plotting attacks against United Nations peacekeepers in southern Lebanon. The suspects are accused of belonging to a terrorist cell with connections to al-Qa`ida. – *Australian Broadcasting Corporation, July 22*

July 23, 2009 (GLOBAL): A report in U.S. National Public Radio (NPR), citing U.S. intelligence sources, said that one of Usama bin Ladin's sons, Sa`ad bin Ladin, was possibly killed

in a U.S. missile strike earlier in 2009. The intelligence official told NPR that they were "80 to 85 percent" certain that Sa`ad bin Ladin was dead. – *Reuters, July 23*

July 25, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): At least six suicide bombers tried to attack the main police station in Khost, but were killed in a gun battle with security forces. A seventh militant was killed after detonating his explosives in a vehicle outside an old military hospital in the city. At least 17 people were wounded in the overall attack. – *BBC, July 25*

July 25, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): The Afghan government forged a cease-fire deal with Taliban insurgents in remote Badghis Province, which is located near the border with Turkmenistan. Afghanistan's presidential spokesman was described as saying that the government wanted to "make similar deals with the Taliban in other parts of the country in a bid to improve security for the August 20 presidential election." – *Reuters, July 27*

July 26, 2009 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed at least four people outside a funeral tent near Falluja. The funeral was being held for a police officer who was killed in another bomb attack. – *Reuters, July 26*

July 26, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Officials announced the arrest of Sufi Muhammad, a radical cleric who brokered a failed peace deal in the Swat Valley. He was arrested for encouraging terrorism and violence. Sufi Muhammad is also the father-in-law of Taliban leader Maulana Fazlullah. – *BBC, July 26*

July 26, 2009 (RUSSIA): A suicide bomber in Russia's Chechnya republic killed six people outside a theater in Grozny. The bomber detonated his explosives when he was stopped by police before he could enter the concert hall. – *Voice of America, July 26*

July 26-27, 2009 (NIGERIA): Islamist militants and authorities clashed in northern Nigeria, resulting in the deaths of more than 100 people. Much of the violence occurred after militants belonging to an Islamist fringe group, known as Boko Haram, attacked police stations. Most of the dead were militants. – *BBC, July 27*

July 27, 2009 (UNITED STATES): U.S. national Ahmed Omar Abu Ali was sentenced to life in prison for conspiring with al-Qa`ida in a plot to assassinate then-President George W. Bush. Abu Ali was previously sentenced to 30 years for the plot in 2006, but that sentence was overturned by an appeals court for being too lenient. Abu Ali was arrested in 2003 by authorities in Saudi Arabia before being extradited to the United States. – *AFP, July 27*

July 28, 2009 (GLOBAL): U.S. Special Envoy to Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke told European Union officials in Brussels that Taliban militants are receiving more funding from sympathizers abroad—mostly from the Persian Gulf—than from Afghanistan's illegal drug trade. Holbrooke said the United States is creating an interdepartmental task force to address the issue. – *AP, July 28*

July 28, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Salah Osman Ahmed, a Minnesota Somali man, pleaded guilty to one count of providing material support to terrorists. Ahmed went to Somalia in December 2007 with the intention to fight against Ethiopian troops. He said that he began attending secret meetings in Minneapolis in October 2007, and he knew that the group was connected to al-Shabab, a U.S. designated terrorist organization. Ahmed faces up to 15 years in prison as part of his plea deal. – *AP, July 28*

July 28, 2009 (MOROCCO): Abdelkader Belliraj was sentenced to life in prison for planning terrorist attacks in Morocco, robberies in Europe, arms trafficking and large-scale money laundering. Belliraj, who is a dual Moroccan-Belgian national, was charged with 34 co-defendants. The group has been called the "Belliraj Cell." – *AP, July 28*

July 29, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani Taliban gunmen entered the home of a pro-government militia leader and shot him to death. The leader, Khalilur Rehman, was confronted by more than 50 Taliban fighters at his home in Shangla District in the North-West Frontier Province. He was the leader of a *lashkar* (tribal militia) that had provided logistics support to groups fighting against the Taliban. – *AFP, July 29*

July 29, 2009 (ALGERIA): Militants attacked a convoy of Algerian soldiers in Tipaza Province, killing 14 of them. – *Reuters, July 29*

July 29, 2009 (INDONESIA): An internet message appeared on Islamist web forums claiming responsibility for the July 17 suicide bombings at the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta. The message was from "al-Qa`ida Indonesia" and was purportedly signed by Noordin Mohammed Top, a key Jemaah Islamiya-linked terrorist leader in Southeast Asia. Authorities and analysts could not confirm the authenticity of the message. – *AP, July 29; CNN, July 29*

July 30, 2009 (IRAQ): A bomb exploded inside the headquarters of the Sunni Reform and Development Party in Diyala Province, killing eight people. – *Voice of America, July 30*

July 30, 2009 (YEMEN): Al-Qa`ida militants ambushed an army truck in Yemen's Marib Province, killing two Yemeni soldiers and seizing military ammunition and equipment. Authorities then stormed the militants' hideout and killed A'ed Saleh al-Shabwani, one of the militant leaders. A soldier was also killed in the fighting. – *AFP, July 31*

July 30, 2009 (NIGERIA): Mohammed Yusuf, the leader of a group known as the "Nigerian Taliban," died in police custody. Yusuf and his Boko Haram sect are blamed for the violence that engulfed northern Nigeria in late July. Police claim Yusuf was shot after he tried to escape from custody. – *AP, July 31*

July 31, 2009 (IRAQ): Five Shi`a mosques across Baghdad were struck by bombs, killing at least 28 people. – *Reuters, July 31*