

Following the merger, al-Qa`ida has prioritized attacks in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states²⁰ in an attempt to make itself regionally relevant. For al-Qa`ida, this is the logical extension of its development to date in Yemen. Al-Qa`ida first wanted to rebuild in Yemen, and then it aimed to make itself relevant within the country. Now that it has accomplished both goals, it is taking the next step by expanding regionally.

This process has followed a familiar pattern: each new phase of activity begins with al-Qa`ida announcing its rather ambitious goals and then working to meet those goals. The attack on Muhammad bin Nayif was an early attempt to accomplish this, but it is unlikely to be the last. AQAP currently feels little pressure in Yemen. It has both the time and space to plot and launch attacks throughout the region from its base in the country. This is not to say that the organization will no longer carry out attacks in Yemen, but rather that these attacks are no longer its top priority. Al-Qa`ida has reached the point where it is no longer satisfied with local activity. It has its sights set on something bigger.

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A Profile of Pakistan's Lashkar-i-Jhangvi

By Arif Jamal

LASHKAR-I-JHANGVI (LJ) IS one of the world's most secretive terrorist groups. Little information exists on the organization, even though it is an al-Qa`ida affiliate that is regularly blamed for terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Although the LJ was formed as the armed wing of Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), it has morphed into the collective armed wing of various Deobandi terrorist groups. Statements about the LJ from the Pakistani government and media suggest that the group is the most deadly Islamist terrorist organization in the world outside the Indian-controlled state of Jammu and Kashmir. This description, however, is not completely accurate, and it has served both the handlers of jihadist groups in the Pakistani military as well as other Islamist terrorist groups who benefit by blaming the LJ for most terrorist attacks in Pakistan outside the tribal areas.

The LJ does exist as a dangerous organization, but not in the form often portrayed by the Pakistani media and government. Most terrorist attacks blamed on the LJ were in fact carried out by several Deobandi¹ terrorist groups, of which the LJ is only one. Research into 40 terrorist incidents in Pakistan between September 11, 2001 and September 2007 show that police and other sources were quoted in various newspapers often attributing a terrorist attack to multiple Deobandi terrorist groups. During this period, it was not uncommon for the same terrorist act to be blamed on the SSP, the LJ, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam, Jundallah, or another Deobandi group.² Different authority figures blamed different

groups. Moreover, Pakistani police were unable to differentiate between the groups. In many cases, one militant had overlapping allegiances and belonged to multiple groups at one time.

This article will discuss the LJ's foundation, ideology, and organizational structure. It will also show why the LJ is blamed for a disproportionate number of terrorist incidents in Pakistan.

The Creation of the LJ

To understand the formation of the LJ, it is necessary to outline the creation and ideology of Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan. In 1984, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, a firebrand and astute Deobandi cleric from the Punjabi town of Jhang and a member of Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam (JUI), founded Anjuman-i-Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (ASSP). Inspired by the Islamist and jihadist policies of

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General Zia-ul-Haq, Jhangvi created the group to fight the growing influence of the Iranian revolution among both Sunni and Shi`a youth. Jhangvi dreamed of uniting all Sunni sects under one banner to oppose Shi`a Muslims and Iran; his goal was to establish a Sunni state in Pakistan and later in the rest of the world.

For almost a year, the ASSP failed to attract attention to its cause. Its members spent their time writing graffiti such as “*Kafir, kafir—Shi`a kafir*” (Shi`a are infidels), and the group largely stuck to promoting this slogan. A shrewd cleric, Jhangvi soon understood that he would not succeed unless he found supporters in Islamabad. By 1985, he had renamed the group “Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan” (Soldiers of the Companions of the Prophet) and became a regular visitor to Islamabad. In Islamabad, he frequented

²⁰ AQAP has not yet been found responsible for attacks in other Gulf states. Its statements and some circumstantial evidence, however, imply that it is plotting such operations.

¹ Deobandis are a sub-sect of the Hanafi sect, which in turn is one of the four major Sunni schools of jurisprudence in Islam. The other major sub-sect of the Hanafi sect are the Barelvis who represent more mystical Islam. Deobandis can also be described as the politicized Hanafi sub-sect as they came into being in mid-19th century British India. Their principal objective at that time was to purify Islam of the accumulated *bid`a* or religious innovation to gain freedom from the British colonial power.

² This information is based on the author's accumulation of press reports from Pakistani newspapers and media during the stated period.

Arab embassies, particularly those of Iraq and Saudi Arabia.³ He failed to convince Iraqi diplomats that his group could fight an Iraqi proxy war against Iran in Pakistan, but he did succeed in winning over the Saudis to do the same.⁴

At the time, there were not many Wahhabis among the Pakistani population, so the Saudis patronized Deobandi parties and groups as their proxies. Nevertheless, none of these groups were prepared to fight a proxy war against Iran in Pakistan. The Saudis were particularly interested in establishing Sunni terrorist infrastructure—such as military training camps—along the Pakistan-Iran border so that terrorists could carry out attacks inside Iran to incite the Sunni population against the Shi`a regime; after conducting attacks, they could flee back across the border to their sanctuaries in Pakistan. The Saudis even invited some Kashmiri commanders from Indian-controlled Kashmir to Saudi Arabia and offered them large sums of money to abandon jihad in Kashmir and establish terrorist infrastructure in Baluchistan on the Iranian border.⁵ None of these commanders, however, accepted the role as a proxy army for the Saudis.⁶

The SSP, however, did accept the role, and became one of the first terrorist groups to establish sizeable infrastructure in Baluchistan.⁷ The Saudi money gave the SSP a “shot in the arm” and allowed it to establish terrorist infrastructure.⁸ As a result,

3 Personal interviews, Arab diplomats, late 1980s.

4 One reason for this failure is that Iraqi diplomats were sensitive after the Z.A. Bhutto government raided the Iraqi Embassy in Islamabad in the mid-1970s and uncovered arms and ammunition. The weapons were allegedly for Baluch rebels. The Iraqis did not want a replay of the same incident. The Saudis, on the other hand, emerged as close allies of the Pakistani military, which was managing the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan with U.S. and Saudi money.

5 Personal interview, Kashmiri Salafi-jihadi commander who had participated in several discussions with Saudis, September 17, 2000.

6 Ibid.

7 During visits to Baluchistan since the mid-1980s, the author observed that the SSP had a visible presence in most villages along the Pakistan-Iran border. One of the SSP's favorite tactics was to write anti-Shi`a and anti-Iran graffiti on the trains that went in and out of Iran.

8 Personal interviews, Arab diplomats, Islamabad, Pak-

the SSP achieved tremendous growth in both numbers and influence during its early years. By 1990, it had plotted to assassinate Iranian diplomats along with Pakistani Shi`a Muslims. The SSP tried to kill Iranian diplomats in Lahore, Karachi and Multan.⁹ SSP members such as Riaz Basra¹⁰ and Shaykh Haq Nawaz Jhangvi (not to be confused with its founder) gained notoriety after they succeeded in killing Iranian diplomats.¹¹ Their operations did not come without resistance. For example, the SSP's founder, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, was gunned down in 1990, allegedly by Shi`a militants. Moreover, a group of Shi`a militants created their own terrorist group in the mid-1990s—known as Sipah-i-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP)—and began retaliating against Deobandi Muslims in Pakistan. The SMP assassinated various Deobandi clerics.

The SSP's killings of Iranians in Pakistan brought tremendous embarrassment and pressure on the Pakistani government. General Zia-ul-Haq had died, and an elected government was in power in Islamabad. The Benazir Bhutto-led government began to apply pressure on the SSP. The SSP at the time was also playing a role in electoral politics and wanted to use parliament to further its agenda. Yet it could not accomplish this because its involvement in terrorist operations barred it from becoming a legitimate political party.

Therefore, during the mid-1990s the SSP decided to create an underground terrorist group that would take orders from SSP leaders but operate independently. This group became Lashkar-i-Jhangvi.

LJ Splinters from the SSP

As part of the SSP's strategy, the LJ was established in the mid-1990s with the objective of executing terrorist attacks against Shi`a Muslims and Iranian nationals. Its early leaders included Riaz Basra, Akram Lahori and Malik Ishaq. The real leader of the group, however,

istan, April 1990.

9 These incidents were widely reported in the Pakistani media during the time.

10 Riaz Basra was involved in hundreds of sectarian terrorist attacks, including the murder of Iranian diplomat Sadiq Ganji in December 1990.

11 Ibid.

was Maulana Alam Tariq, the brother of Maulana Azam Tariq, the latter of whom later became the head of the SSP and an elected member of parliament.¹² The LJ was named after the SSP's martyred founder, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi.

The LJ established a training camp in Afghanistan's Sarobi district. They also trained in the Harkat-ul-Mujahidin (HuM) training camp “Khalid Bin Walid” in Afghanistan. Among the LJ's leaders, Riaz Basra¹³ emerged as one of the most ruthless terrorist operatives. He was allegedly responsible for most anti-Shi`a terrorist attacks. Basra was also responsible for making threatening phone calls to police officers charged with investigating the LJ's terrorist acts.¹⁴ The calls were effective, and police officers became reluctant to investigate the LJ's terrorist acts out of fear of reprisals. When authorities would interrogate an SSP or LJ terrorist, they concealed their identities with face masks to prevent possible LJ retaliation, a trend that continues to this day. The LJ made it a policy to assassinate police officers who investigated terrorist acts or interrogated their members. One of the most significant of these assassinations was the senior superintendent of police in Gujranwala, Ashraf Marth, who was gunned down in May 1997 after he investigated the LJ's infrastructure.¹⁵ Investigations into the SSP and LJ were halted after his death.¹⁶

The SSP continued to kill Shi`a Muslims under the name of the LJ during the second half of the 1990s.¹⁷

12 Personal interviews, SSP leaders, Jhang, Pakistan, December 2001. Maulana Alam Tariq resurfaced to take over the leadership of the SSP when his brother was assassinated outside Islamabad. He lost the power struggle, however, to Maulana Ludhianvi.

13 Riaz Basra was killed on May 14, 2002. Lahori succeeded him.

14 Many police officers told the author that they had received threatening phone calls from individuals calling from public phones and claiming to be Riaz Basra.

15 Ashraf Marth was gunned down in the city of Gujranwala as he came out of his official residence to go to his office.

16 Personal interview, senior police officer who investigated the murder, Islamabad, Pakistan, July 2003.

17 The SSP never claimed responsibility for these killings; the purpose of creating the LJ was so that the SSP could deny involvement in terrorist attacks. This information is based on the author's various interviews and investigations into the SSP and LJ.

To gain resources from the Pakistani military, the SSP/LJ also joined the jihad in Kashmir. The date of this decision is not known, but according to one interview the LJ had lost more than 100 fighters in the Kashmir conflict by the late 1990s.¹⁸ By joining the jihad in Kashmir, SSP/LJ militants received significant military training and expertise from different Deobandi terrorist groups, particularly from Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam and Jaysh-i-Muhammad. These factors raised the profile of the SSP/LJ significantly and the group curried favor with Pakistan's military establishment.¹⁹

Post-Coup Period

General Pervez Musharraf's October 1999 military coup posed one of the biggest challenges to the SSP/LJ. The organization was faced with the decision of continuing to kill Shi'a Muslims, which would have destabilized Musharraf's military regime, or remain peaceful under the new government.

The hardliners such as the LJ's Basra—even though they supported the military coup—wanted to continue their mission of killing Shi'a in Pakistan. A smaller group led by the LJ's Qari Abdul Hayye wanted to restrain their sectarian violence to achieve their larger interests of building an organization that could eventually take power in the country by cooperating with the military. These differences caused a split in the group in 2000. One faction was led by hardliner Riaz Basra. The other, more moderate faction was led by Qari Abdul Hayye (also known as Qari Asadullah, or Talha), who was the *amir* of the training camp at Sarobi.

The Basra group maintained the policy of killing Shi'a even after General Musharraf took power. Government support, however, was not forthcoming. The killings of Shi'a in the early period of General Musharraf's regime destabilized the government, and it ultimately cracked down on the LJ's activities. In what was a replay of Prime

Minister Nawaz Sharif's efforts to rein in terrorists, Musharraf's interior minister, Lt. General Moinuddin Haider, visited Afghanistan in March 2001 to extradite some LJ terrorists back to Pakistan. The Taliban refused. They also refused to sign any extradition treaty with

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Pakistan. This came as a surprise to the military; they expected the Taliban to be more compliant considering they helped install the regime to power in Kabul.

The links between the SSP and the LJ once again came into the open when the SSP ran a campaign in February 2001 to save LJ terrorist Shaykh Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, who was to be hanged for murdering an Iranian diplomat. Jhangvi confessed to the crime in spite of pressure by the SSP to plead “not guilty.” Jhangvi refused to lie before the court and was hanged. The SSP resorted to widespread violence across the country, with SSP workers storming the streets in several urban centers. They destroyed public and private property.

Despite this violence, relations between the Musharraf regime and the SSP remained positive. The Musharraf regime, for example, rewarded the SSP by helping to elect SSP chief Maulana Azam Tariq to the National Assembly in the 2002 elections.²⁰ Maulana Tariq returned the favor by casting

²⁰ The 2002 general elections were rigged and manipulated in several ways, before and during the electoral process, to bring in Islamists to counter the democratic political forces, particularly the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Although General Musharraf's regime had formally banned the SSP and LJ before the 2002 general elections, the group was allowed to function freely under a different name. As the democratic candidates were disqualified to run for elections, Islamists were encouraged to unite and replace them. The bulk of the Islamists were elected under the umbrella of Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA). The SSP refused to join the MMA and decided to contest elections as a separate party and sent Maulana Azam Tariq to parliament.

his crucial vote in favor of General Musharraf's candidate for the office of prime minister, Mir Zafarullah Jamali, who won by one vote. Later, Maulana Tariq boasted that only his support sustained General Musharraf's prime minister in power. When Member of the National Assembly Maulana Azam Tariq was assassinated in October 2003 just outside Islamabad, the Musharraf regime refused to support another SSP candidate in the by-elections; it was exasperated with the group's blackmailing.

Post-9/11 Period

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, the LJ faced another dilemma: whether or not to support General Musharraf's decision to join the United States in its “war on terrorism.” Like most jihadist groups, the LJ hardliners led by Basra again chose to oppose General Musharraf's decision. The hardliners in other Deobandi jihadist groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam, Jaysh-i-Muhammad, and Harkat-ul-Mujahidin also opposed the Pakistani military.

The post-9/11 situation forced the SSP/LJ and other Deobandi jihadist groups to forge closer cooperation, such as in the killing of the *Wall Street Journal's* Daniel Pearl.²¹ The unity among Deobandi terrorist groups led to unprecedented violence in Pakistan. Most terrorist acts in Pakistan since 9/11 have been carried out by Deobandi or quasi-Deobandi terrorist groups, together or alone, but the LJ has almost always been blamed.

If the government were to blame jihadist groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam and Jaysh-i-Muhammad for violence in Pakistan, it would bring a bad name to the jihad in Kashmir, and eventually discredit the government's often-used policy of using jihadists as an instrument of policy. It is much easier for the Pakistani government to scapegoat the LJ for most terrorist acts in Pakistan outside of the tribal areas.

²¹ A prominent case of cooperation among Deobandi terrorist groups was the kidnapping and murder of *Wall Street Journal* journalist Daniel Pearl. Terrorists from several groups were involved in the operation. Along with Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam and Jaysh-i-Muhammad terrorists, Qari Ataur Rehman (also known as Naem Bukhari) of the LJ was implicated in Pearl's murder.

¹⁸ Personal interview, an SSP leader, Peshawar, Pakistan, April 2001.

¹⁹ Since the 1970s, the military has used various Islamist groups to achieve political goals, and in this case the military used militant Islamist parties to destabilize the democratically-elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the post-Kargil period.

From the LJ to the TTP

Today, the LJ is still involved in terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Little is known about the group's current activities, and it is not completely clear how the two factions of the LJ—the Basra group and the Qari Hayye group—have evolved. Both factions likely still exist, although different leaders are in charge. The Basra group, for example, is now part of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and contributes to its jihadist operations. LJ operatives probably help facilitate the TTP's terrorist acts in Punjab Province, where the LT/SSP has an established base.²²

In fact, a similar paradigm is now occurring with the TTP. The Pakistani government blames the TTP for nearly every terrorist attack in Pakistan, some of which likely had little to do with the organization. Yet just like the LJ, it is easy to scapegoat the TTP rather than reveal the true extent of jihadist violence in Pakistan and the many groups and actors involved.

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The Failure of Salafi-Jihadi Insurgent Movements in the Levant

By Bilal Y. Saab

IT IS REMARKABLE THAT the Levant, a sub-region plagued by internal and external crisis conditions that are generally conducive to terrorism and political violence, has been free from any insurgent¹ Islamist group with verifiable material ties to al-Qa`ida's central leadership.² The two ambitious attempts by Arab Salafi-jihadis to create insurgent forces in the Levant occurred in Lebanon in May-September 2007 when Fatah al-Islam³ violently emerged in the northern part of the country, and on August 15, 2009 in Gaza when Jund Ansar Allah⁴ declared war on Hamas. These two attempts sought to radically change the existing socio-political orders in Lebanon and Gaza through the use of religiously-inspired insurgent violence. Both attempts failed, however. Although al-Qa`ida has been tied to

terrorist plots in the Levant, it does not appear responsible or interested in the few Islamist insurgent movements that have arisen in the region.⁵

This article assesses why the Levant has been a less attractive place for global Salafi-jihadis and a more challenging environment for them to mobilize and conduct operations. It attributes these failures to the existence of well-established mainstream Islamic movements in the Levant that see the violent and extreme Salafi-jihadis as a threat to their interests; the distinct historical and socio-political circumstances in the Levant that make it less hospitable to Salafi-jihadi ideology; the relative success of the region's security and intelligence services to prevent the Salafi-jihadi threat from inflating; the subduing effect of Iran's dominant influence in the Levant; and finally the lack of material support from al-Qa`ida's central leadership to Salafi-jihadi insurgent groups in the region.

Al-Qa`ida's Lack of Allies in the Levant

Other than Jund al-Sham⁶ and Fatah al-Islam (and the now crushed Jund Ansar Allah), al-Qa`ida does not have allies in the Levant that could effectively help project its influence and ideology into the region and to serve its various strategic objectives.⁷

Jund al-Sham's lack of organizational coherence, discipline, and fighting capabilities make it an unreliable partner for al-Qa`ida in the Levant.⁸ Far from

1 The emphasis on the word "insurgent" is deliberate and used to differentiate from the word "terrorist." While there are a number of analytical and practical differences between an insurgent group (or insurgencies) and a terrorist group (or cell), this article only focuses on four: one, insurgent groups enjoy a certain level of support from a segment of society, whereas terrorist groups usually work alone and do not need indigenous support; two, insurgent groups are usually bigger and better armed than terrorist groups; three, insurgent groups work overtly, whereas terrorist groups operate most effectively in a clandestine fashion; four, insurgent groups find it essential to seize territory for the realization of their revolutionary objectives, while terrorist groups generally do not.

2 Very few comprehensive studies have been written on al-Qa`ida's presence and influence in the Levant. For a commendable paper on the subject, see Hassan Mneimneh, *The Jihadist International: Al-Qa`ida's Advance in the Levant* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, April 8, 2009).

3 Fatah al-Islam is a militant Sunni Islamist group that is inspired by al-Qa`ida's ideology. Its members are mostly Arabs from various Middle Eastern countries. It emerged in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon in November 2006. Its goals are unclear but include the establishment of an Islamic state in northern Lebanon.

4 Jund Ansar Allah was founded in southern Gaza in November 2008 as an armed Sunni Islamist group with strong Salafi-jihadi credentials. Its goals include the establishment of an Islamic state in Gaza.

5 No hard evidence on direct material ties between these two groups and al-Qa`ida's central leadership has ever emerged, even though they appear to share the same ideological agenda.

6 Jund al-Sham is a title claimed by several Sunni Islamic extremist entities, all or none of which may be connected. These entities mostly operate in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, and their goals include the establishment of an Islamic caliphate throughout the Levant.

7 For instance, without the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan or the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat in Algeria, al-Qa`ida would have found it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to expand and operate in South Asia or the Maghreb. More examples where al-Qa`ida relied on local support to expand its influence and pursue its goals in various regions around the world include al-Shabab in Somalia, al-Qa`ida in Iraq, and the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines.

8 There are three groups—Hizb al-Tahrir, Jaysh al-Islam, and Jaysh al-Umma—in the Palestinian Territories that claim to be inspired by al-Qa`ida's ideology, but they

²² Hassan Abbas, "Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network," *CTC Sentinel* 2:4 (2009).