

Another U.S. national recruited to al-Shabab, Omar Hammami (also known as Abu Mansur al-Amriki), has emerged as a high-profile media representative, appearing in numerous al-Shabab propaganda videos and providing a foreign face to the group.<sup>25</sup>

### Conclusion

Each of these attributes—an increasingly radical agenda, a centralized leadership structure, refined propaganda machinery, and a foreign support network—suggests that al-Shabab will continue to evolve into a greater regional threat. Indeed, on July 15, 2010, al-Shabab threatened further attacks against Uganda and Burundi in an audio statement aired on Mogadishu radio stations, in which al-Shabab insisted that “what has happened in Kampala was only the beginning. We will keep revenging what your soldiers remorselessly did to our people.”<sup>26</sup>

Concurrently, however, al-Shabab’s evolution into a more overtly internationalist organization has undercut some of its appeal and support base within Somalia.<sup>27</sup> Al-Shabab’s hard line interpretation of Islam (in which it is attempting to impose religious uniformity on Somali society at the expense of traditional clan structures and beliefs) has failed to resonate with many Somali citizens.<sup>28</sup> In addition, while al-Shabab’s increasingly brutal operational tactics—specifically suicide bombings targeting civilians—have enabled it to retain territory in central and southern Somalia, such tactics have also caused public outrage and alienated supporters, even in traditional al-Shabab strongholds.<sup>29</sup>

Al-Shabab is also coming under increasing pressure from other Somali factions, particularly Hisbul Islamiyya (another of Somalia’s Islamist organizations that emerged from the collapse of the ICU). Tensions between the two groups intensified in October 2009 when Hisbul Islamiyya and al-Shabab militants fought each other for control of the strategically important town of Kismayo.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, al-Shabab’s efforts are now largely focused on re-establishing its political and military credentials, and vying for influence alongside other factions in Somalia’s Islamist movement.

As such, while al-Shabab’s successful execution of sporadic, large-scale attacks abroad seems quite feasible in the future, a protracted foreign campaign—in which al-Shabab develops and retains external networks responsible for launching attacks against Ugandan and Burundian targets—appears beyond the group’s present capabilities.

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## The Punjabi Taliban: Causes and Consequences of Turning Against the State

By Ben Brandt

THE KIDNAPPING AND murder of former Inter-Services Intelligence officer and Usama bin Ladin confidant Khalid Khwaja in March 2010 generated a wave of analysis throughout the counterterrorism community.<sup>1</sup> Although analysts have offered a variety of theories regarding both the nature of the “Asian Tigers” group that executed Khwaja and their motives in killing him, most have correctly noted that the incident is symbolic of a broader splintering between Punjabi militants espousing allegiance to the Pakistani state and a younger generation that has aligned itself with al-Qa’ida and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), turning their guns on the Pakistani government and the West. It is important to understand the manifestations of this fracture, as well as its causes and potential consequences, to better gauge the threat posed to the United States by what is frequently called the “Punjabi Taliban.”<sup>2</sup>

### Various Manifestations of Anti-State Sentiment

Khalid Khwaja’s execution is perhaps the most graphic manifestation of a trend that has been occurring for some time, particularly within terrorist groups that had previously designated India or rival Muslim sects as their targets. One of the best documented fissures within a Pakistani terrorist group dedicated to jihad against India is that which occurred within Jaysh-

25 Andrea Elliott, “The Jihadist Next Door,” *New York Times*, January 31, 2010.

26 Mohamed Olad Hassan, “Al-Shabab Leader Threatens More Uganda Attacks,” Associated Press, July 15, 2010.

27 “Somalia’s Divided Islamists.”

28 The International Crisis Group (ICG) has documented numerous instances of public disaffection at al-Shabab’s attempts to impose its extreme vision of Islam on Somali society. ICG researchers also note that public disillusion with al-Shabab is being further fueled by its poor governance record in southern Somalia. See “Somalia’s Divided Islamists.”

29 Ibid.; Mark Landler, “After Attacks in Uganda, Worry Grows Over Group,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2010.

30 Stig Jarle Hansen, “Faction Fluctuation – The Shifting Allegiances within Hizbul Islam,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, March 11, 2010. Tensions between Hisbul Islamiyya and al-Shabab commanders have continued, with clashes between the two groups occurring into mid-2010.

1 For details, see Rahimullah Yusufzai, “The Kidnapping and Execution of Khalid Khwaja in Pakistan,” *CTC Sentinel* 3:5 (2010); Nicholas Schmidle, “How Did A Pakistan Ex-Spy End Up Dead?” *The New Republic*, May 4, 2010.

2 Hassan Abbas has defined the Punjabi Taliban as “a loose conglomeration of members of banned organizations of Punjabi origin” that work with Tehrik-i-Taliban to execute attacks inside Pakistan. Abbas described the Punjabi Taliban as being primarily composed of members of the groups Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, and Jaysh-i-Muhammad; disaffected anti-statist members of several other groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam, Lashkar-i-Tayyiba, and Harkat-ul-Mujahidin may be considered part of the Punjabi Taliban as well. For details, see Hassan Abbas, “Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network,” *CTC Sentinel* 2:4 (2009).

i-Muhammad (JM) in 2002-2003. In 2002, members of JM were implicated in a number of attacks targeting Pakistani Christians in Punjab, while in 2003 Masood Azhar, the founder of the group, expelled a dozen ranking JM members after revelations that they had organized attacks against Western and Christian targets in Pakistan without his authorization.<sup>3</sup> In July of the same year, he reportedly informed the Punjab governor that he had made the expulsions, that he should not be held responsible for the actions of the expelled members, and that the expelled members should be arrested.<sup>4</sup>

Azhar's decision caused a major schism within the group, as members deserted Azhar and joined the expelled individuals to form Jamaat-ul-Furqan (JuF).<sup>5</sup> Members of JuF were consequently arrested in connection to an assassination attempt against then-Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in 2004, and Rashid Rauf, who helped mastermind the 2006 liquid explosives plot that targeted trans-Atlantic flights, was described by an intelligence source as having utilized cooperation from members of JuF.<sup>6</sup> Today, JuF is thought to constitute part of the so-called Punjabi Taliban, which has executed attacks throughout Pakistan; Maulana Abdul Jabbar, who previously served as Azhar's deputy, is described as being involved with training fighters for JuF in North Waziristan.<sup>7</sup>

Other Pakistani terrorist groups focused on Kashmir have exhibited noteworthy fissures as well. A group calling itself Harkat-ul-Mujahidin al-Alami (HuMA) emerged from Harkat-ul-Mujahidin (HuM) in 2002, executing a string of attacks in Karachi against Western businesses, the U.S. Consulate, and then-President Pervez Musharraf.<sup>8</sup>

3 Amir Mir, "The Maulana's Scattered Beads," *Outlook India*, September 1, 2003.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 For more information, see the South Asia Terrorism Portal file on "Jaish-e-Mohammed (Army of the Prophet)," located at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

7 Amir Mir, "South Punjab Threat," *The News International*, October 25, 2009; Asif Shahzad, "Pakistani Militancy Spreads to Country's Heartland," Associated Press, June 16, 2010.

8 For more information, see the South Asia Terrorism Portal file on "Harakat-ul-Mujahideen Al-alam

The sectarian group Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) has also seen members leave to attack targets associated with the Pakistani state and the West.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that most Punjabi militants sympathetic to al-Qa`ida and the TTP move away from their parent groups in less dramatic fashion than JuF and HuMA, and many appear to maintain links with both their original organization and al-Qa`ida and the Pakistani Taliban. A report last year

**"The July 2007 storming of Lal Masjid (Red Mosque), a notorious center of Deobandi militant activity in Islamabad, is frequently and correctly noted as an important catalyst in Punjabi militants' decision to strike the state."**

chronicled the saga of a JM commander wounded in a drone strike while meeting with Taliban leaders. He was protected from arrest by his men while recuperating in Bahawalpur<sup>10</sup> and was later believed to have sought refuge in a JM seminary.<sup>11</sup> His case shows the overlapping memberships that many individuals hold in the region.

In the case of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HuJI), the group's leadership appears to have been involved in the decision to turn against the state. *Amir* Qari Saifullah Akhtar and operational commander Ilyas Kashmiri currently reside in Waziristan and enjoy strong

(HuMA)," located at [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org). There is some debate as to whether Harkat-ul-Mujahidin al-Alami represented a true splinter faction of Harkat-ul-Mujahidin, or was merely a ruse used by the group to stage attacks. Given the Asian Tigers' recent vilification of Harkat-ul-Mujahidin and its long-time commander Fazlur Rahman Khalil as "proxies" of the ISI, however, it appears reasonable to assume that it represents a genuine splinter.

9 Shahzad; Schimle.

10 Bahawalpur is a major hub for Jaysh-i-Muhammad; Masood Azhar was born in the city and currently resides there.

11 Matthew Rosenberg, "Taliban Wages War on Police in Pakistan," *Wall Street Journal*, May 28, 2009.

ties to al-Qa`ida and the TTP.<sup>12</sup> The status of the sectarian group Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ) appears to be similar to that of HuJI, as many of LJ's *amirs* have been implicated in plotting attacks against the state.<sup>13</sup>

The role of Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LT, or LeT), perhaps Pakistan's most prominent terrorist group following the 2008 Mumbai attacks, is less clear. Although the LT's leadership has remained relatively loyal to the Pakistani military, members of the group have broken away to assist in attacks against the state. An example of this can be seen in the case of Umar Kundi, an LT member who left after quarreling with the group's leadership over its subservience to the Pakistani government and later assisted in attacks against Pakistani law enforcement and intelligence facilities.<sup>14</sup> LT's decision to establish a presence in Pakistan's tribal areas and interact with al-Qa`ida and TTP members operating there has likely facilitated this process.<sup>15</sup>

A 2009 LT plot to attack the U.S. and UK embassies in Dhaka, Bangladesh has given rise to rumors about the emergence of a faction within the group advocating open attacks against Western interests. The fact that a retired Pakistan Army major affiliated with LT helped David Headley plot a terrorist attack in Denmark last year further amplifies these concerns.<sup>16</sup> If elements within LT continue to plot increasingly brazen attacks against Western interests, it could force an open schism within the group, and drive members espousing an anti-Western agenda into greater conflict with LT's leadership and the state.

12 Bill Roggio, "Top Al Qaeda Leader Linked to 5 Americans on Trial in Pakistan," *The Long War Journal*, April 17, 2010.

13 LJ is closely affiliated with the SSP. For details, see "Obituary: Qari Mohammad Zafar," BBC, March 2, 2010.

14 Sabrina Tavernise and Waqar Gillani, "Frustrated Strivers in Pakistan Turn to Jihad," *New York Times*, February 27, 2010.

15 Stephen Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba in Perspective: An Evolving Threat," New America Foundation, February 2010.

16 *U.S.A. v. Abdur Rehman Hashim Syed*, "Criminal Complaint," Northern District of Illinois, 2009.

### Causes for Splintering Among Punjabi Militant Groups

Various factors have caused fissures within Punjabi terrorist groups and between these groups and the state. The July 2007 storming of *Lal Masjid* (Red Mosque), a notorious center of Deobandi militant activity in Islamabad, is frequently and correctly noted as an important catalyst in Punjabi militants' decision to strike the state.<sup>17</sup> This point is graphically illustrated by the massive increase in mass casualty terrorist attacks in Islamabad, Lahore, and Rawalpindi since mid-2007. According to data provided by the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, for example, terrorist attacks in Lahore killed a total of 30 people from May 2004-July 2007, yet have killed approximately 229 people from August 2007-June 2010.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, terrorist attacks in Islamabad killed 25 people from July 2004-July 2007, yet 171 people since.<sup>19</sup> The significance of the attack on *Lal Masjid* is also illustrated by the attack on the Manawan Police Training School outside Lahore in March 2009, where attackers reportedly shouted "Oh red mosque attackers, we have come" during their assault.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the Ghazi Force, which has staged several attacks against the Pakistani state, was named for Abdul Rashid Ghazi, one of the two brothers who served as heads of *Lal Masjid*.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the likely role of the *Lal Masjid* assault in furthering breaches between militants, other factors have contributed as well. Journalist Nicholas Schmidle

has noted that Abdul Rashid Ghazi stated two months prior to the storming of the mosque that organizations such as SSP and JM were experiencing an increasing number of defections among their ranks.<sup>22</sup> Multiple assassination attempts against Musharraf in December 2003 and other members of Pakistan's military and government by members of Punjabi terrorist groups prior to July 2007 also illustrate this phenomenon.

The relationship between many Punjabi terrorist groups and the former Taliban government of Afghanistan is another cause for the ongoing rifts within Pakistan's jihadist community. During the Taliban's rule of Afghanistan, a large number of Deobandi terrorist groups established strong relations with al-Qa`ida and the Taliban government (which shared their adherence to Deobandi Islam<sup>23</sup>), established training camps in the country, and fought alongside the Taliban against the Northern Alliance and ethnic minorities such as the Hazara.<sup>24</sup> The tight linkages between the Pakistani groups and the Taliban regime were exemplified by HuJI's Qari Saifullah Akhtar's reported status as political adviser to Mullah Omar, as well as by Masood Azhar's visit to Mullah Omar following his release from an Indian prison.<sup>25</sup> The U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 engendered strenuous resistance by many Punjabi terrorist groups; Amjad Farooqi (a member of HuJI later tied to an assassination plot against Musharraf) reportedly led fighters into Afghanistan to battle NATO forces.<sup>26</sup>

Anger among members of Punjabi terrorist groups was compounded by the Musharraf government's acquiescence to the U.S. invasion, as well as its decision to assist the United States by curtailing militant operations in Kashmir to improve relations with India.<sup>27</sup> Members scorned the corresponding acquiescence of many leaders of terrorist groups to Musharraf,<sup>28</sup> despite their previous fiery denunciations of the United States.<sup>29</sup> One particularly cutting comment on this subject came from ranking JM member Abdullah Shah Mazhar, who gave as his reason for leaving the group: "Maulana [Masood] Azhar has nothing to do with jihad anymore and that was why we broke away from him."<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah has stated that when leaders of SSP and LJ were flown in to negotiate with former members of their groups when the latter attacked the Pakistan Army's general headquarters last year, the leaders were reportedly told, "You are traitors, you have left the right path."<sup>31</sup>

A final factor that may cause splintering among Punjabi terrorist groups is the influence of al-Qa`ida, which has

17 The Deobandi militant groups reacted more vehemently to the storming of *Lal Masjid* than did LT. First, because LT is an Ahl-e-Hadith organization and therefore was not as well-connected to the pro-Taliban Deobandi elements at *Lal Masjid*. Second, because of its Ahl-e-Hadith identity and organizational history of abjuring attacks in Pakistan, LT was also less involved with the Deobandi actors who constituted the already brewing insurgency. This information is based on personal interview, Stephen Tankel, July 2010.

18 Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, accessed June 16, 2010.

19 Ibid.

20 Sabrina Tavernise, Waqar Gillani, and Salman Masood, "Rampage in Pakistan Shows Reach of Militants," *New York Times*, March 30, 2009.

21 Abdul Rashid Ghazi was killed in the security assault on *Lal Masjid*. For details, see Animesh Roul, "Little-Known Ghazi Brigade Now a Major Player in the Punjabi Jihad?" *Terrorism Monitor* 8:28 (2010).

22 Schmidle.

23 LT did not enjoy similarly close ties to the Taliban leadership due to its adherence to the Ahl-e-Hadith sect, but did train in the Afghan provinces of Kunar and Nuristan during the 1990s. For details, see Daan Van Der Schriek, "Nuristan: Insurgent Hideout in Afghanistan," *Terrorism Monitor* 3:10 (2006).

24 See, for example, Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Peter Bergen, *Holy War Inc.* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Kanchan Lakshman, "Deep Roots to Pakistan's Sectarian Terror," *Asia Times Online*, July 9, 2003.

25 Amir Mir, "HUJI Chief Still at Large," *The News International*, September 23, 2008.

26 Bill Roggio, "Taliban Claim Responsibility for Attack on Pakistan Army Headquarters," *The Long War Journal*, October 10, 2009.

27 Amir Mir, "The Jihad Lives On," *Asia Times Online*, March 11, 2005; Tim McGirk, "The Monster Within," *Time Magazine*, January 19, 2004. Musharraf noted in his autobiography, *In the Line of Fire*, that Mohammed Jamil, a suicide bomber who attempted to kill him in 2003, swore an oath against him after becoming embittered after fighting NATO forces in Afghanistan. Ahmed Rashid described Jamil as a member of Jaysh-i-Muhammad in his book *Descent into Chaos*. Some reports also suggest that members of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi joined with al-Qa`ida due to Musharraf's decision to ban Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and engage in a major crackdown on the group. For details, see Lakshman.

28 One example is Azam Tariq, then-*amir* of Sipah-i-Sahaba, who was released from prison and allowed to sit in Pakistan's National Assembly, providing political support to Musharraf's government until Tariq's assassination by a Shi`a activist in 2003.

29 According to the Indian government, Azhar called for "jihad" against the United States upon his release from an Indian prison. Similarly, Fazlur Rahman Khalil of Harkat-ul-Mujahidin was a signatory of Bin Ladin's 1998 *fatwa* that called upon Muslims to kill Americans. Also see Steve Coll, "Time Bomb," *New Yorker*, January 28, 2008.

30 Muhammad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal Books, 2004).

31 Shahzad. Amir Mir reported that Fazlur Rahman Khalil of HuM and Mufti Abdul Rauf, younger brother of Masood Azhar, were flown in to negotiate as well.

preached violence against both the West and the Pakistani government.<sup>32</sup> As noted previously, members of Punjabi terrorist groups developed ties to al-Qa`ida during their sojourns in Afghanistan, interacting with and training alongside each other and thus creating an opportunity for ideological cross-fertilization.<sup>33</sup> Lashkar-i-Tayyiba possesses additional bonds with al-Qa`ida, such as its adherence to the Salafi-like sect Ahl-e-Hadith, and the reported role of al-Qa`ida-affiliated individuals in its founding.<sup>34</sup> Additional personal ties were forged during the exodus of jihadists from Afghanistan following Operation Enduring Freedom. It is reported that Amjad Farooqi developed ties with al-Qa`ida operations chief Abu Faraj al-Libi in this period, later leading to the two working together in attempts to assassinate Musharraf.<sup>35</sup> Al-Qa`ida's uncompromising adherence to struggle against the United States and its allies in the Pakistani government likely proved attractive to Pakistani militants frustrated with the relative inaction of their own leadership.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, al-Qa`ida's call for a global jihad against the West gained stronger resonance when Punjabi groups operating in

Afghanistan were directly affected by the U.S. invasion in 2001.

#### Consequences and Future Trends

Various outcomes can be anticipated from splintering within Punjabi terrorist groups and the alignment of many of their members with al-Qa`ida and Pakistani Taliban groups. The mainline factions of groups wishing to avoid conflict with the state will likely become marginalized as they continue to hemorrhage members to anti-statist groups. A recent estimate from a minister in Punjab estimated that between 10-20% of JM, SSP, and LJ members have joined the Punjabi Taliban.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, many dissidents may remain involved with their former organizations to some extent, and attempt to co-opt their resources and personnel.<sup>38</sup> The extensive training of many members of Punjabi terrorist groups and their access to the resources of their former organizations helps augment the ability of al-Qa`ida to train Westerners for attacks overseas, and may help it mitigate the effects of drone strikes that have killed many of the group's most experienced operational commanders.<sup>39</sup> As illustrated by the aforementioned LT plot against the U.S. and UK embassies in Dhaka, Punjabi militants aligned with al-Qa`ida could potentially use their organizations' resources to strike against Western interests throughout South Asia.

At the same time, many analysts have argued that al-Qa`ida's involvement with Pakistani militants engaged in bloody attacks against Muslims has strained its relationship with its longtime allies among the Haqqani network and the Afghan Taliban.<sup>40</sup> If this is true, al-

Qa`ida risks further alienating these groups by drawing closer to anti-statist elements. Al-Qa`ida's affiliation with the TTP and Punjabi militants has also significantly damaged its image in the eyes of Pakistanis: the Pew Research Center recorded that the number of Pakistanis who viewed al-Qa`ida favorably dropped from 25% in 2008 to 9% in 2009.<sup>41</sup> This affiliation could potentially erode the group's credibility among Muslims worldwide as well, particularly if the Punjabi militants aligning themselves with al-Qa`ida are granted official permission to use the al-Qa`ida brand. A precedent for this can be seen in the group's previously unpopular affiliation with Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi in Iraq.<sup>42</sup>

The consequences of the decision by many Punjabi militants to turn against their state sponsors and frequently away from their own militant organizations will continue to play out in the months and years to come. Although the activities of these groups and individuals may weaken al-Qa`ida's global appeal in the long-term, they pose challenges to Pakistan's internal stability and to the security of the United States in the interim.

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32 Usama bin Ladin reportedly called for Musharraf's overthrow in 2002, and Ayman al-Zawahiri did so in 2003, four months before twin assassination attempts against Musharraf.

33 As is well known, a 1998 cruise missile strike against training camps in Afghanistan associated with Bin Ladin killed a number of Harkat-ul-Mujahidin members, while Nicholas Schmidle reports that Qari Saifullah Akhtar arranged a meeting between Bin Ladin and Maulana Abdullah of *Lal Masjid* in 1998.

34 These include, for example, Usama bin Ladin's mentor `Abdullah `Azzam and Bin Ladin associate Abu Abdul Aziz "Barbaros." For details, see Bill Roggio, "Pakistani Court Orders Release of Lashkar-e-Taiba Leader," *The Long War Journal*, June 2, 2009; Evan F. Kohlmann, "Expert Witness: Synopsis of Testimony from Regina v. Mohammed Ajmal Khan, Palvinder Singh, and Frzana Khan," NEFA Foundation, undated.

35 Roggio, "Taliban Claim Responsibility for Attack on Pakistan Army Headquarters."

36 The leadership of some groups, however, was involved in tacitly assisting al-Qa`ida directly after 9/11. LT's leadership directed elements within the organization to provide safe houses and other forms of logistical support to foreign fighters, including members of al-Qa`ida, fleeing Afghanistan after 9/11. Personal interview, Stephen Tankel, July 2010. Tankel is conducting research for his book, *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba*.

37 Shahzad. It should be noted that the minister in question, Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanuallah, has been criticized for his ties to Sipah-i-Sahaba.

38 There is precedent for this form of cooption in the decision of many Pakistani terrorist groups to recruit at the annual *ijtema* of the apolitical Deobandi movement Tablighi Jama`at. Similar trends have been spotted in other theaters of operations as well: Noordin Top exploited his connections with Jemaah Islamiya to build his splinter group al-Qa`ida in the Malay Peninsula.

39 The impressive tradecraft displayed by both David Headley's reconnaissance efforts and by the subsequent LT assault on Mumbai are indicative of the skills Punjabi militants could conceivably leverage on behalf of al-Qa`ida.

40 Anand Gopal, Mansur Khan Mahsud, and Brian

Fishman, "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in North Waziristan," New America Foundation, April 2010; David S. Cloud and Julian S. Barnes, "Some U.S. Officials See a Growing Taliban-Al Qaeda Rift," *Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 2010.

41 "Pakistani Public Opinion," Pew Global Attitudes Project, August 13, 2009.

42 "Confidence in Osama bin Laden," Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2009.