



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

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## About the CTC Sentinel

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

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# The ISIL's Theft of WMD Components in Iraq

By Stephen Hummel



Rebels from the Islamic Front, Syria's largest rebel coalition, clash with the ISIL near Aleppo on July 13, 2014. - Ahmed Deeb/AFP/Getty

THE CONTROL OF RADIOACTIVE materials and chemical weapons has long been safely in the hands of state actors.<sup>1</sup> Recent world events, however, illustrate a contemporary environment where non-state actors, specifically terrorist organizations, have acquired such materials. In June 2014, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)<sup>2</sup> reportedly seized control of nuclear material controlled by the Iraqi government at the University of Mosul.<sup>3</sup> The ISIL also entered the

al-Muthanna project site located 60 miles north of Baghdad near the town of Samarra where the "remnants of the former [Iraqi] chemical weapons program were kept."<sup>4</sup>

The al-Muthanna site is a 100-square-kilometer complex that has been the center of Iraq's chemical weapons program since the 1970s. Before 1986, the site was known as the State Establishment for Pesticide Production (SEPP), a front company dedicated to the production of chemical weapons. During the 1980s, the site produced hundreds of tons of Sarin, VX, and mustard agents.<sup>5</sup> Aerial bombing during Desert Storm destroyed the research and production

1 There are a few exceptions to this rule, but the sheer expense of developing and maintaining such materials and weapons has been prohibitive to anyone but state actors.

2 In June 2014, the ISIL shortened its name to the "Islamic State." This article, however, still refers to the group by its more common name, the ISIL.

3 Ambassador Mohamed Ali Alhakim, "Letter Dated 30 June 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General,"

United Nations Security Council, 2014.

4 Ibid.

5 "Al Muthanna Chemical Weapons Complex," Central Intelligence Agency, April 23, 2007.

facilities at al-Muthanna and ended its ability to produce chemical weapons. The exact contents of the two bunkers that the ISIL entered are not generally known, but according to Michael Luhan, the communications chief for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), “the two bunkers contained chemical weapons which are pre-1991.”<sup>6</sup>

The ISIL’s entry into al-Muthanna appears to have been an isolated incident, and the lack of security around a remote chemical weapons site in Iraq pales in comparison to the ready accessibility of radioactive materials. Radioactive materials are used in a variety of research fields and medical treatments globally. Such materials are generally tightly controlled and monitored at institutions such as hospitals, which are required to undergo inspections and report radioactivity. These measures alone, however, do not always ensure the security of the materials. In December 2013, for example, a truck carrying radioactive waste from a hospital in Tijuana to a storage site near Mexico City was stolen.<sup>7</sup> The material on the truck was cobalt-60, which emits both beta and gamma radiation. The radioactivity levels that make cobalt-60 a source of radiotherapy also make the material a potential candidate for use in a dirty bomb.<sup>8</sup> The radioactive material in Mexico was rapidly recovered by Mexican security forces and its theft was attributed to “common crime and not related to terrorism.”<sup>9</sup> In Iraq, however, the state does not control the nearly 40 kilograms (88 pounds) of uranium or 0.125 kilograms (0.28 pounds) of thorium stolen from the University of Mosul, and the thieves are part of a known terrorist organization.<sup>10</sup>

6 Awad Mustafa, “Experts Assessing ISIL’s Seizure of Iraqi Weapons Facility,” *DefenseNews*, July 2, 2014.

7 Randal C. Archibold and Paulina Villegas, “6 Arrested in Theft of Truck with Radioactive Waste,” *New York Times*, December 6, 2013.

8 A dirty bomb is a combination of radioactive material and explosives such that the radioactive material is dispersed over a large area and exposes a large number of people to its damaging effects.

9 Archibold and Villegas.

10 Ambassador Mohamed Ali Alhakim, “Letter Dated 08 July 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-Gener-

The lack of control of radioactive materials and former chemical weapons agents in Iraq is a concern, but the requisites to make the stolen materials into a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) are currently lacking. This article provides important technical context surrounding the capture of radioactive materials and the possible theft of decaying chemical weapons by the ISIL in Iraq. It finds that while such incidents are a threat in the immediate and long term in the Middle East, the potential for mass casualties is currently low due to scientific and technical challenges faced by the ISIL.

#### Are the Stolen Materials WMD Capable?

The stolen radioactive and chemical weapons materials clearly pose a potential threat, but could the ISIL easily transform them into a WMD?

Uranium is relatively inert despite the fear the name often instills. This fear stems from the role uranium plays in nuclear weaponry and the destruction demonstrated when “Little Boy” was detonated on August 6, 1945, over Hiroshima with the equivalent of 16,000 tons of TNT. “Little Boy” contained 64 kilograms of uranium-235.<sup>11</sup> The process to separate the uranium isotopes during World War II was accomplished through gaseous diffusion, an extensive process that required nearly one-seventh of the electrical power in the United States at the time.<sup>12</sup>

Thorium is more abundant than uranium, and like uranium is only slightly radioactive. Thorium itself is not a fissile material; however,

al,” United Nations Security Council, 2014.

11 Uranium naturally occurs in three isotopes: uranium-234, uranium-235 and uranium-238. Uranium-235 is the fissile (material capable of sustaining nuclear fission) isotope (form) of uranium yet composes only one percent of the naturally occurring isotopes. To have enough fissile uranium to form a nuclear weapon, the one percent of the uranium is separated from the other 99% of the isotopes in a complex process commonly referred to as enrichment. There are additionally 26 artificially made isotopes of uranium.

12 This vast amount of energy was required to power the Y-12 where workers used calutrons to refine uranium and at the K-25 plant where the uranium was enriched. At the height of production during World War II, nearly 100,000 workers toiled to produce the material used in the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan. See Alan Taylor, “The Secret City,” *Atlantic*, June 25, 2012.

it is considered a “fertile” material, meaning it can absorb neutrons and transmute into uranium-233.<sup>13</sup> This artificially produced uranium can then be chemically separated from thorium and used as nuclear fuel.<sup>14</sup> Uranium-233 produced from thorium was used

**“A dirty bomb laced with the materials stolen by the ISIL would be akin to blowing up a ceramic brick. The initial explosion would cause damage, but the effects of the radioactive material would be extremely limited.”**

with plutonium-U-233 devices tested in 1955.<sup>15</sup> The yield of the detonation was less than anticipated.<sup>16</sup> The process of transmuting thorium and then separating the produced uranium-233 is complex and not one that the ISIL would easily be able to accomplish while on the move in Iraq.

By definition, the chemical weapons and precursor material stolen from the al-Muthanna site are already WMD, but the current state of the material is questionable. Even in ideal conditions, such as those in specially equipped “igloos” that maintain temperature, humidity, and pressure, chemical weapons leak as seals decay. Conditions at the al-Muthanna site for the past two decades have been far from ideal. In conjunction with the damage sustained during both Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as the inability of the government to rebuild the complex due to United Nations sanctions, it seems likely that the chemical weapons were stored in bunkers that were not temperature or humidity controlled.

13 Transmutation is the process of changing from one element to another through nuclear bombardment or disintegration.

14 “Thorium,” World Nuclear Association, March 2014.

15 Oliver Tickell, “The Promise and Perils of Thorium,” James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, October 31, 2012.

16 Ibid.

Chemical weapons agents are frequently found as liquids and stored either in ammunition rounds or rockets for immediate use, or in separate containers. The colligative properties of the viscous liquid are designed to absorb heat and protect the function group of the agent when the rounds detonate.<sup>17</sup> The liquid of a chemical weapon is analogous to a glass of salt water—left in the open, the water will evaporate leaving behind remnants of the original solutes. The harsh environmental conditions in Iraq likely left the chemical weapon rounds empty with the exception of a residue immediately covering the rounds. In the absence of the viscous liquid, the chemical agents would be subject to chemical reactions that could potentially make the agent inert. Reconstituting the chemical agents would require tremendous effort to include tightly controlled laboratory conditions and a plethora of reagents.

#### What Are The Potential Uses?

Modifying the radioactive materials and chemical weapons into a functional WMD would require materials, specific laboratory conditions, and technical expertise currently not available to the ISIL. Despite ostensibly controlling a large swath of land across Iraq, the ISIL does not possess the infrastructure to create WMD using limited resources. If the ISIL actively sought to convert the materials into a WMD, they would likely smuggle them into Syria where, despite the ongoing civil war, a greater level of expertise and infrastructure—especially near the universities—exists.

Immediate uses, however, reside in the form of chemical or radioactive dirty bombs. A dirty bomb laced with radioactive material would not detonate like a nuclear weapon; instead, the unconventional dirty bomb would disperse radioactive material over a detonation area. Moreover, uranium and thorium have relatively long half-lives, which means that the dispersed material would remain radioactive for a longer period of time.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless,

<sup>17</sup> The viscous solution contains particles designed to alter the boiling point, vapor pressure and other properties of the solution so that it can absorb heat. The solution and its colligative properties are akin to coolant in a car radiator.

<sup>18</sup> A half-life is the time required for one half of the atoms

according to the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, the most abundant isotope of uranium, U-238, emits both alpha particles and weak gamma rays. As a result, as long as the isotope is not inhaled or ingested, there is little to no effect on humans.<sup>19</sup> The risks of thorium exposure and radiation poisoning are similar to that of uranium.<sup>20</sup> As long as the materials are not ingested or inhaled, there is little to no increased risk for the population since these naturally occurring elements are present in everyday life. Both elements are also dense. If released into the air via a dirty bomb, they would rapidly resettle to the ground, limiting the potential for inhalation exposure.

Consequently, a dirty bomb laced with the materials stolen by the ISIL would be akin to blowing up a ceramic brick. The initial explosion would cause damage, but the effects of the radioactive material would be extremely limited.<sup>21</sup>

Similar to the radioactive dirty bomb, an explosive device containing the remnants of the chemical weapons from the al-Muthanna project site would have almost no chemical agent fallout. Since the viscous protective fluid that is used in chemical weapons has likely evaporated over the past two decades, any effects of the agent in an explosive device would likely be insignificant.<sup>22</sup> VX, for example, decomposes at a rate

of a radioactive substance to disintegrate. Uranium, for example, has a half-life of 4.45 billion years. For details, see "Uranium: Its Uses and Hazards," Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, December 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "Thorium," Environmental Protection Agency, February 28, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> The detonation would cause the brick to fragment and then settle back to the ground. The stolen materials would act in a similar fashion. The remnants of the chemical weapons agents would be destroyed in the explosion instead of aerosolized. The stolen radioactive materials would not cause a secondary explosion or radioactive plume. The dust and pieces of the material generated in the explosion would settle and be indistinguishable to the eye from other debris.

<sup>22</sup> The chemical weapons potentially stolen from the al-Muthanna site are likely highly degraded due to the difficulty in maintaining the weapons and the difficulty in ensuring the proper environment, especially through bombings and wars. According to the CIA, the site sustained heavy damage over the years. For more details, see "Al Muthanna Chemical Weapons Complex."

of 5% per month at 71 degrees celsius,<sup>23</sup> hence two decades or 240 months in a non-environmentally controlled bunker would leave little, if any, chemical agent. The destructiveness of the device would be limited to the explosive nature of the device itself and not the remnants of the chemical weapon agent.

If the chemical weapons were in better condition than assumed, long distance transport of the weapons would be difficult. Seals on the chemical weapons containers would naturally degrade and break down, making transport difficult and a danger to those moving the weapons. If the ISIL sought to transport the weapons via aircraft, the pressure change would push the agent through whatever seal remained. Transporting the weapons via ground would also cause similar problems as the jarring transport of a truck along unpaved and pothole-filled roads would likely cause the degraded seals to leak, affecting those transporting the weapons.

#### What Are The Immediate Risks?

As the fighting continues in Iraq and Syria, the risk of the stolen chemical and radioactive materials being turned into a WMD is extremely low. Perhaps the greatest threat to civilians would be if the ISIL attempts to poison or contaminate water or food supplies. To employ such a tactic, the ISIL would need to attack a specific target or group since such a method of attack on a reservoir or large water source would simply dilute the material. If the material were too diluted, then there would be no noticeable effect. It could cause a higher long-term rate of cancer in the affected population, but it would not be debilitating or impact the ISIL's fight either in Iraq or Syria.

The most dangerous course of action is not enveloped in the immediate uses and risks of the stolen materials. If the materials are smuggled out of Iraq and likely into Syria, then the ISIL could begin the slow purification process of the radioactive material or attempt to regenerate the deadly properties of the remnants of the chemical weapon agents. Reconstituting the chemical weapons is scientifically and

<sup>23</sup> "Potential Military Chemical / Biological Agents and Compounds," *Field Manual 3-11.9*, U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, January 2005, pp. II-27



technically easier than the radioactive material, but still not trivial. Both require expertise, chemical reagents, and, perhaps most importantly, they require time.

### Conclusion

The theft of the radioactive material and chemical weapons agents mostly illustrates the ISIL's bold aggression in the Middle East. Despite raising safety concerns and the unsettling notion of the ISIL controlling any components from WMD, the reality is that the ISIL's members put themselves at risk of exposure via inhalation and ingestion in the acquisition, storage, and transportation of the material. The psychological effects of detonating a dirty bomb laced with either the chemical weapon agents or the radioactive materials would also be minimal since there would be little to no visible evidence of the materials' presence in those people affected by the blast.

There are two great lingering concerns regarding the stolen materials. What is the ISIL planning to do with the material since their immediate effects in Iraq and perhaps Syria are limited? What other materials are vulnerable in either Iraq or Syria that could be used to greater effect?

Radioactive materials such as uranium and thorium are "dual purpose" in the sense that they can be used for good in efforts such as medical treatment, or for ill in their conversion to a deadly unconventional weapon. Assessing and ensuring the security of these materials is paramount, and should be a concern not only in Iraq and Syria, but throughout the region.

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*The views presented are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Defense, the U.S. Army, or any of its subordinate commands.*

## The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's Role in Attacks in Pakistan

By Anne Stenersen

IN THE EVENING hours of June 8, 2014, 10 gunmen attacked the old terminal of Jinnah International Airport in Karachi. They were armed with rifles, rockets, grenades and suicide vests. They carried backpacks with food and water, indicating they were prepared for a long operation. They battled with security forces for five hours, set buildings ablaze and forced a temporary shutdown of international air traffic. The attack left 34 people dead, including the 10 assailants.<sup>1</sup>

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed the attack, but it soon emerged that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) had provided the assault team for the operation. Uzbek militants have been implicated in a string of similar attacks in Pakistan, most notably on Mehran Naval Base in May 2011, Minhas Airbase at Kamra in August 2012 and Peshawar Airbase in December 2012.<sup>2</sup> This raises the question of whether the IMU has become a strategic asset to the TTP, with the capability to strike high-value targets in urban centers of Pakistan.

The IMU's role in Pakistan has so far only been superficially treated in the existing literature. Recent studies tend to focus on the potential threat from the IMU against Central Asia and the West after NATO forces leave Afghanistan in 2014.<sup>3</sup> There is general agreement that the IMU keeps supporting Pakistani militant groups because they are dependent on the sanctuaries provided to them by the TTP and because "they are

foreigners and have no choice."<sup>4</sup> A few studies suggest that the IMU's original aims and goals have been diluted and the organization has been dispersed, due to heavy targeting of the IMU's leadership since 2009.<sup>5</sup> The existing literature, however, fails to explore the role played by the IMU in recent high-profile attacks in Pakistan.

This article seeks to fill this gap. It critically examines claims of the IMU's involvement during the Karachi airport attack and other high-profile militant operations against hard targets in Pakistan. It is based on press reports, official statements and the IMU's own propaganda. These sources are often biased, but together they may paint a fuller picture than has been provided so far.<sup>6</sup> The article finds that the strength and cohesiveness of the IMU in Pakistan tends to be conflated. The IMU has a small footprint outside of its traditional sanctuary in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and it is dependent on local networks to operate in places such as Sindh and Punjab. There are so far few indications that IMU officials have been involved in masterminding attacks on Pakistani soil. Their role seems limited to recruiting and training suicide squads,<sup>7</sup> while local commanders from the TTP, former Kashmiri networks, or occasionally al-Qa`ida select targets and timing for attacks. This does not mean that the IMU should be dismissed as a

4 Fitz, p. 11; Peter Sinnott, "Peeling the Waziristan Onion: Central Asians in Armed Islamist Movements in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 7:4 (2009): p. 47.

5 Ibid.; Matthew Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and its Impact on Central Asia and the United States," Foreign Military Studies Office, January 2013.

6 Press reports may not distinguish accurately between the IMU, al-Qa`ida and other militant groups in Pakistan. Pakistani authorities may have an interest in conflating the role of the IMU and other external actors to achieve popular support for military campaigns in FATA. The IMU's own publications are an invaluable and rather under-exploited source of information, but must be read as strategic communication, the aim being to attract new recruits and financing to the organization.

7 In this article, suicide squads refer to both suicide bombers (fighters who wear suicide vests and who intend to blow themselves up during battle), and "fidayin" (fighters who are not wearing suicide vests, but who nevertheless expect to die during a confrontation with security forces).

1 "Karachi Airport Attack Signals Tactical Shift by Taliban," Reuters, June 12, 2014.

2 "TTP Using Uzbeks to Conduct Terrorist Attacks," *The News International*, December 18, 2012.

3 Luke Falkenburg, "On the Brink: The Resurgence of Militant Islam in Central Asia," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24:3 (2013): pp. 375-393; David Witter, "Uzbek Militancy in Pakistan's Tribal Region," Institute for the Study of War, January 27, 2011; Jacob Zenn, "The Indigenization of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," *Terrorism Monitor* 10:2 (2012); Duncan Fitz, "Central Asian Militancy: A Primary Source Examination," Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 2014; "Pakistan's 'Fanatical' Uzbek Militants," BBC, June 11, 2014.

serious threat in the future. The IMU has demonstrated its capability to carry out deadly and relatively sophisticated attacks compared with many other groups operating in the same theater. The IMU's primary weakness in Pakistan is not its lack of capability, but its lack of coherent leadership and dependence on local networks to operate.

### The Karachi Airport Attack

The Karachi airport attack was ambitious, well-planned and relatively well-executed, compared to similar attacks claimed by the TTP in the past. The attackers entered the airport from at least two sides, wearing uniforms and using fake identification cards to pose as Airport Security Force (ASF) personnel.<sup>8</sup> Once inside the airport, they reportedly operated in pairs.<sup>9</sup> The large number of weapons and other equipment found on the dead militants speaks to the high ambitions of the attack.

The fighting took place in and around an old terminal building, which is rarely used for civilian air traffic. This led some observers to claim that the attack had failed because the assailants did not manage to reach the civilian passenger terminal. The original aim of the attack, however, is not known. The TTP's and the IMU's own statements about the objectives of the attack differ, and in any case cannot be taken at face value.<sup>10</sup> The large number of petrol bombs carried by the militants indicates they were going to cause material damage,

8 Some reports indicated that they were not successful in deceiving security guards, and that they therefore had to enter the airport by force. According to one source, the militants raised suspicion because they were wearing the wrong type of shoes. See "Karachi Airport Attack Signals Tactical Shift by Taliban"; "Assault on Pakistan Airport Signals Taliban's Reach and Resilience," *New York Times*, June 9, 2014; "At Least 18 Pakistanis Killed by Assailants Who Stormed Karachi Airport," *Washington Post*, June 9, 2014.

9 "More Than Two Dozen Dead as Taliban Assault Pakistan's Main Airport," Reuters, June 9, 2014.

10 The TTP said that the goal of the attack was to hijack aircraft and hold passengers hostage, while the IMU's statement said that the operation targeted "fighter jets, American drones and other military planes" in a special section of the airport, and that it did not intend to target civilian passengers. See "Statement Regarding the Martyrdom Operation in Karachi Airport," Jamia Hafsa forum, June 10, 2014; "What's Behind Karachi Airport Attack?" CNN, June 9, 2014.

presumably to aircraft.<sup>11</sup> This would follow the pattern of previous attacks on military bases in Pakistan. In the attack on Mehran Naval Base in Karachi in 2011, two P-3C Orion surveillance aircraft were destroyed.<sup>12</sup> The attack on Minhas Airbase in Punjab in 2012 also resulted in damage to aircraft worth millions of dollars.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, operational planners must have known that any attack on the airport, even the old terminal, would lead to a temporary shutdown of international air traffic to and from Pakistan's busiest airport, causing economic damage and great embarrassment to the country's political leadership. In that sense the attack was a success, although the militants likely hoped for the siege to last longer than five hours.

Both the TTP and the IMU issued statements claiming responsibility for the Karachi airport attack. They were not competing claims—rather, it was presented as a joint operation.<sup>14</sup> The IMU's statement of responsibility contained pictures of 10 individuals claimed to be the assault team.<sup>15</sup> This was supported by eyewitnesses in the Karachi airport who stated that the attackers looked like Uzbeks or other Central Asians.<sup>16</sup>

### Who Was The Karachi Mastermind?

The claim that the IMU provides manpower for suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan is not new. More interesting, however, is the identity of the mastermind behind the attack. Initially, some Pakistani media claimed that the mastermind was an IMU member with the *nom de guerre* Abu Abdur Rehman Almani.<sup>17</sup> If true, it

11 This view was also presented by the interior minister in a press conference shortly after the attack. See "Seven Bodies Recovered From Karachi Airport's Cold-Storage Facility," *Dawn*, June 10, 2014.

12 "10 Pakistani Troops Killed in Gun Battle at Naval Base," CNN, May 23, 2011.

13 "Tax-Payers Kept in the Dark about Loss of Plane Worth \$250m," *The News International*, February 9, 2013.

14 "Statement Regarding the Martyrdom Operation in Karachi Airport"; "Assault on Pakistan Airport Signals Taliban's Reach and Resilience."

15 "Statement Regarding the Martyrdom Operation in Karachi Airport."

16 "As it Happened: Karachi Airport Attack," BBC, undated.

17 "Karachi Airport Attack Mastermind Killed in N Wa-

would signal a dramatic evolution in the IMU's role and importance in Pakistani militancy. While the IMU is known to provide manpower and training to operations planned by other groups, there has so far been little open source evidence that they contribute on the level of strategic planning.

The allegations about Almani, however, could not be independently verified. The only information in the case comes from anonymous sources in the Pakistan Army, who stated that Almani was killed in an air raid against militant hideouts in North Waziristan Agency on June 15, 2014.<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that the claim about Almani's death came in the midst of a state-run propaganda campaign to gather popular support for Operation Zarb-e-Azb—a long-awaited, but controversial military operation against militant hideouts in North Waziristan. The media also could not agree on the exact role played by "Almani" (the nickname suggests he is of German origin)—he was variably described as a "key commander," "mastermind," or "expert on improvised explosive devices."<sup>19</sup>

The IMU has so far not commented on the claim. The only individual in the IMU known to use the nickname "Abdur Rehman" appeared in a propaganda video about a joint TTP-IMU attack on Bannu prison in April 2012.<sup>20</sup> If this is the same individual who the Pakistan Army claimed to have killed on June 15, he can hardly be described as a "mastermind." The individual in the video presented himself as a foot soldier and cameraman in the prison raid, and did not appear to possess any of the skills necessary to plan high-profile attacks on behalf of the TTP.<sup>21</sup>

ziristan: Sources," *Dawn*, June 15, 2014.

18 The Pakistan Army's official statement said that the air raid had killed "foreign and local terrorists" who were linked to the planning of the Karachi airport attack. See *ibid.*; "Press Release No PRI23/2014-ISPR," Inter Services Public Relations, June 15, 2014.

19 "Karachi Airport Attack Mastermind Killed in N Waziristan: Sources"; "Troops Chasing Panicked Militants in Far and Wide of NW Agency," *Pakistan Observer*, June 19, 2014.

20 "Operation Bannu-Jail," Jundullah, May 2012.

21 In the video, Abdur Rehman claims that he was not informed of the attack plan beforehand. When describing the attack, he made repeated references to his "commander," indicating that he himself played a subordinate

Others have suggested that Adnan Rasheed, a former Pakistani Air Force airman who was freed in the Bannu prison break, was the mastermind of the Karachi airport attack.<sup>22</sup> After Rasheed's escape in April 2012, there were fears that he would plan attacks for the TTP against Pakistani Air Force bases across the country.<sup>23</sup> There were at least two such attacks after Rasheed's escape—against the Kamra Airbase in August 2012 and Peshawar Airbase in December the same year. Media speculated that Rasheed was involved in both of these attacks.<sup>24</sup> This seems to be based on the assumption that as a former airman, he must have had insider knowledge of Pakistani Air Force bases. Rasheed may have contributed with advice to operational planners, but it is questionable how operationally valuable his information would be after an eight-year absence from these bases. Moreover, the Peshawar Airbase attack in 2012 was a tactical failure—hardly testimony to Rasheed's operational genius, if he was at all involved.<sup>25</sup>

There is reason to treat claims of Adnan Rasheed's operational role in the TTP and IMU with some skepticism. Rasheed was radicalized while working as an airman in the Pakistani Air Force in the late 1990s. He was arrested in 2003 due to his involvement in an assassination attempt against General Pervez Musharraf. From jail, he largely acted as an activist and propagandist.<sup>26</sup> He has continued in this role after his release, for example by authoring a highly publicized letter to Malala Yousafzai, the schoolgirl who was shot by the Taliban in Swat in October 2012.<sup>27</sup> He does not fit the profile of a

role.

22 Amir Mir, "Khaki-Turned-Jihadi Adnan Rasheed Masterminded Karachi Attack," *The News International*, June 11, 2014.

23 Syed Adnan Ali Shah Bukhari, "Pakistan's New Most Wanted: A Short Sketch of Adnan Rasheed," *Militant Leadership Monitor* 3:5 (2012).

24 "Chechen Militants Behind Peshawar Airport Attack," *Pakistan Today*, December 26, 2012

25 The attack was a tactical failure because the militants failed to breach the perimeter wall of the base, despite having access to several suicide bombers and at least one vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. See "Uzbek Militants Behind Peshawar Airport Attack," *The Nation*, December 17, 2012.

26 Bukhari.

27 "Malala Yousufzai Attack: Taliban Commander Ad-

high-level strategic planner due to his lack of operational experience, except for what he might have gained in FATA since his escape in mid-2012.

On the other hand, Rasheed fits perfectly into the TTP's and the IMU's strategic messaging campaigns. The plight of Muslim prisoners is a recurrent theme in jihadist militant propaganda and freeing a relatively well-known figure like Adnan Rasheed from jail must be seen as a victory. The IMU did not hesitate to exploit this fact in their propaganda. In their highly publicized video about the Bannu prison break, Rasheed stated that he specifically requested the IMU to free him.<sup>28</sup> Yet the IMU's role in the prison break should not be overstated. There are clear indications that the operation was planned and largely executed by local Taliban militants, not by the IMU. Even the IMU's own propaganda acknowledges this fact.<sup>29</sup>

Adnan Rasheed's appointment in February 2013 as leader of Ansar al-Aseer, a TTP-IMU unit tasked with freeing militants from jail, should be viewed in the same strategic messaging context.<sup>30</sup> While he appears to be the perfect public face for such a unit, it does not necessarily make him an important strategic planner.

The planner of the Karachi airport attack is more likely to be a person unknown to the public—someone with extensive guerrilla warfare experience or someone who worked as a special forces commando in the past. This is a common characteristic of high-ranking operational planners who previously worked with Pakistani militants. Ilyas Kashmiri, who probably masterminded the Mehran Naval Base attack in 2011, was a former special forces commando trained by the Pakistan Army.<sup>31</sup> Zaki

nan Rasheed Regrets Assault On Pakistani Teen," *Huffington Post*, July 17, 2013.

28 "Operation Bannu-Jail."

29 The IMU cameraman interviewed in the IMU's video, Abu Abdurahman, said that the operation was planned by the *ansar* (supporters)—a common way for foreign fighters to refer to local militants. See "Operation Bannu-Jail."

30 Bill Roggio, "Taliban, IMU Form Ansar al Aseer to Free Jihadist Prisoners," *The Long War Journal*, February 5, 2013.

31 Bill Roggio, "Ilyas Kashmiri was a Pakistani Army

ur-Rehman Lakhvi, the operational commander of Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LeT) and the purported mastermind behind the Mumbai attacks in 2008, had extensive guerrilla warfare experience dating back to the Afghan-Soviet war.<sup>32</sup>

It cannot be ruled out that the IMU might have such candidates among their ranks. The IMU is known to recruit people from Russia and the former Soviet Union.<sup>33</sup> It is not unthinkable that their ethnic and linguistic profile may attract people with a Russian/Soviet Army or even special forces background, as claimed by some media reports.<sup>34</sup> The IMU's military commander Juma Namangani, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2001, was himself a former paratrooper in the Soviet Army.<sup>35</sup> An individual named Eldar Magomedov, arrested on terrorism charges in Spain in 2012, was described as a former Russian special forces soldier who traveled in Waziristan in 2008-2011. He was linked to al-Qa`ida and the Islamic Jihad Union, an IMU offshoot.<sup>36</sup> It is impossible to confirm, however, whether this is a widespread phenomenon. If the IMU possessed such a critical capability, they would be unlikely to reveal it in official propaganda.

An examination of the IMU's role in the Karachi airport attack seems to leave more questions than answers, in particular with regards to the strategic planning capacity of the IMU. It is therefore necessary to look at the IMU's role in other high-profile attacks in Pakistan.

Commando," *The Long War Journal*, September 20, 2009.

32 Wilson John, *The Caliphate's Soldiers: The Lashkar-e-Tayyiba's Long War* (New Delhi: Amaryllis, 2011), p. 144.

33 See, for example, "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: The Martyrs of the Year 1431H," *Jamia Hafsa* forum, December 25, 2010.

34 "Pakistan's 'Fanatical' Uzbek Militants," *BBC*, June 11, 2014.

35 Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2002), p. 138.

36 "3 Suspected Islamist Terrorists Arrested in France," *CNN*, March 1, 2013.



### The IMU's Role in Previous Attacks in Pakistan

The IMU may have been involved in three key operations claimed by the TTP during the last five years: the attack on Mehran Naval Base in May 2011, Minhas Airbase in August 2012 and Peshawar Airbase in December 2012. In all three cases, media speculated that "Uzbeks" or other foreigners had been involved in the execution of the attack.<sup>37</sup> A closer examination, however, suggests that there is no clear pattern regarding the IMU's involvement, either on a tactical or a strategic level.

The attack on Mehran Naval Base (PNS Mehran) in Karachi occurred on May 22, 2011. It started in the late evening, and lasted for around 16 hours. Four attackers entered the base by climbing a perimeter wall. The ensuing gun battle resulted in the deaths of 10 soldiers and the destruction of two P3-C Orion patrol aircraft.<sup>38</sup> While several militant outfits were blamed, it appears, in the end, that it was masterminded by the notorious Pakistani militant Ilyas Kashmiri, who at the time worked with al-Qa`ida and the banned militant group Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HUJI).<sup>39</sup> Al-Qa`ida's media agency al-Sahab later issued a video showing the perpetrators of the attack.<sup>40</sup> Their real identities were never revealed but they were described as foreigners or Uzbeks by media and eyewitnesses. It was later discovered that the TTP may have provided the attackers with a safe house in Karachi.<sup>41</sup>

37 "TTP Using Uzbeks to Conduct Terrorist Attacks," *The News International*, December 18, 2012; "Chechen Militants Behind Peshawar Airport Attack"; Jacob Zenn, "The Growing Alliance Between Uzbek Extremists and the Pakistani Taliban," *Terrorism Monitor* 11:5 (2013).

38 "10 Pakistani Troops Killed in Gun Battle at Naval Base," CNN, May 23, 2011.

39 "Al-Qaeda Had Warned of Pakistan Strike," *Asia Times Online*, May 27, 2011.

40 "New Al-Qaeda Video Urges Rebellion In Pakistani Army, Reiterates: Dr. Warren Weinstein Kidnapped to Secure Release of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui," Middle East Media Research Institute, March 13, 2012. Some reports also suggest that al-Qa`ida's Saif al-Adl was involved in the attack: "Pakistan: Involvement of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in Mehran Naval Base Attack Suspected," Karachi Ummat, May 25, 2011.

41 "Woman Confesses to Involvement in Mehran Base Attack," *Dawn*, December 14, 2011; "Punjabi Taliban Behind Major Attacks," *The News International*, December 15, 2011.

On August 16, 2012, nine militants dressed as airmen attacked the Minhas Airbase at Kamra (PAF Kamra). The base is situated in Punjab Province, some 50 miles west of Islamabad. The attack resulted in a two-hour gun battle in which two security force members were killed.<sup>42</sup> More importantly, the attackers succeeded in destroying a Saab 2000 aircraft with Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) capability.<sup>43</sup> Reports differ with regards to the perpetrators, but most local media as well as official sources stated they were Pakistani nationals, rather than Uzbeks.<sup>44</sup> Investigation into the incident focused on arresting suspects in Punjab Province.<sup>45</sup>

On December 15, 2012, there was an attempt to attack Peshawar Airbase. A group of militants fired rockets at the airport, which killed a total of five people. There was an attempt to explode a car bomb, but this apparently failed.<sup>46</sup> The attack lasted around three hours.<sup>47</sup> In the morning after the attack, police carried out a raid on an apartment in Peshawar that resulted in the deaths of five more militants who were described as part of the attack cell.<sup>48</sup> Several sources claimed that the attackers were Russian or Central Asian.<sup>49</sup> One source said that a group led by Abdul Samad Shishani (the name indicated a Chechen background) had carried out the attack, presumably on behalf

42 "10 Killed in Pakistani Air Base Attack," CNN, August 16, 2012; "Taliban Claim Attack on Minhas Base; Nine Militants Killed," *Dawn*, August 16, 2012.

43 "Tax-Payers Kept in the Dark about Loss of Plane Worth \$250m."

44 "Pakistani Military Improve Security, Observers Say," *Central Asia Online*, August 29, 2012; "Kamra Attack: 3 Attackers Identified, PCNS Told," *Express Tribune*, September 7, 2012; "All Terrorists in Kamra Attack Were Pakistanis: Malik," *The News International*, August 19, 2012.

45 "Kamra Airbase Attack Suspects Picked Up," *Dawn*, September 26, 2012.

46 "Uzbek Militants Behind Peshawar Airport Attack," *The Nation*, December 17, 2012.

47 "5 Militants Wanted in Fatal Airport Attack Killed in Pakistan Police Raid," CNN, December 17, 2012.

48 "Assault on PAF Base Peshawar: Six of 10 Attackers Were Foreigners, PA Told," *Dawn*, December 18, 2012; "Heretics Liable to be Slain, Says Note Found on Militant's Body," *Dawn*, December 18, 2012.

49 "Heretics Liable to be Slain, Says Note Found on Militant's Body."

of the TTP. The attack was poorly planned and executed, compared with the other attacks outlined above. This fits the theory that the assault team was from a breakaway faction and not from the IMU proper.<sup>50</sup>

In sum, there are few patterns with regards to the IMU's actual involvement in the three attacks. There are indications that Uzbeks or other Central Asians were indeed part of the

**"It does not appear that the IMU has become an essential strategic asset to the TTP. The IMU continues to have a small footprint outside its sanctuaries in FATA, and they are dependent on local networks to operate."**

assault teams in the Mehran Naval Base attack and the Peshawar Airbase attack. It is unclear, however, whether these militants belonged to the IMU, fought under other Central Asian commanders, or were simply freelancers. The IMU did not issue any official claims of responsibility in any of the three cases.

The IMU have claimed involvement in other attacks in Pakistan. Their most publicized claim was their role in the attack on Bannu prison on April 15, 2012, in which several hundred inmates were freed. As noted above, it is questionable whether the IMU played a leading role in the attack. It was likely planned by militants from the Mehsud faction of the TTP.<sup>51</sup> Another attack often attributed to the IMU is the attack on the Dera Ismail Khan prison in 2013.<sup>52</sup> The two prison breaks had many similarities. Both attacks were carried out by a large group of fighters (more than 100) and succeeded in freeing

50 "Chechen Militants Behind Peshawar Airport Attack."

51 Bill Roggio, "Pakistani Taliban Release Video of Bannu Jailbreak," *The Long War Journal*, May 17, 2012.

52 Sarah Khan, "Taliban's Attack on D.I.Khan Prison Was Not Possible Without Pakistan Army's Connivance," *Let Us Build Pakistan* blog, August 2, 2013.

hundreds of prisoners. The jailbreaks appeared well-planned, suggesting that the operational planners had access to insider information. The assault group was divided into several teams, each with their specialized task. It is possible that the IMU participated in the attacks, performing one or several specialized functions. Due to the large participation of local fighters, however, it is unlikely that they played an overall planning or coordinating role.

### Conclusion

It does not appear that the IMU has become an essential strategic asset to the TTP. The IMU continues to have a small footprint outside its sanctuaries in FATA, and they are dependent on local networks to operate. The IMU continues to be a fragmented organization, operating as a loose network of criminals, urban terrorist cells and religiously motivated insurgents. While the IMU has some strategic value to the TTP, it would be wrong to view the IMU as a potent threat to Pakistani national security.

The IMU in Pakistan, however, should not be dismissed. The IMU are vehemently opposed to negotiations with the Pakistani government. They are willing to support groups in Pakistan who do not follow “mainstream” militancy, such as the TTP or other breakaway factions. In spite of being heavily targeted in recent years, the IMU has the potential to re-emerge in the region after NATO withdraws from Afghanistan in 2014. Moreover, the Karachi airport attack demonstrated that the IMU has the potential to act as a spoiler in future peace processes in Pakistan.

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## Swiss Foreign Fighters Active in Syria

By Daniel Glaus and Lorenzo Vidino

SWITZERLAND HAS TRADITIONALLY experienced little domestic jihadist activity. Unlike other Western European countries, no successful terrorist attack of jihadist inspiration has been perpetrated on its territory and there is no publicly available information indicating that concrete plans for an attack in Switzerland were ever made.<sup>1</sup> Less than a dozen individuals have been tried for terrorism-related crimes, all of them involving non-violent activities of material support and propaganda. The number of Swiss residents who have traveled abroad to join jihadist groups is also estimated to be significantly lower than in other European countries.

Yet Swiss authorities are not complacent, and they argue that “Switzerland is not an island.”<sup>2</sup> Counterterrorism officials have consistently warned that there is ample evidence suggesting that some of the same radicalization trends that have long characterized other Western European countries also exist in Switzerland, albeit on a smaller scale. Recent developments, for example, indicate that a small contingent of Swiss citizens and residents have traveled to Syria to join various militant groups.

This article first provides a general overview of the jihadist scene in Switzerland. It then analyzes a number of known cases of Swiss-based individuals who have fought in Syria. The article finds that, as authorities have long claimed, a comparatively small but, by Swiss standards, alarmingly large number of citizens and residents have recently traveled to Syria. These subjects appear to be mostly “homegrown,” with a sizeable percentage of them tracing their roots to the Balkans. It is debatable whether

1 Potentially the only exception could be the plans discussed by a cluster of Swiss-based North African militants to attack Israeli El Al aircraft at Zurich airport in 2005. The militants reportedly conducted surveillance of the airport, but it is debatable whether their preliminary activities could be qualified as a plot.

2 Christiane Imsand, “La Suisse n’Est pas une Ile,” *Le Nouvelliste*, June 22, 2012.

Switzerland possesses an adequate legal framework to mitigate this threat.

### A Small, Underdeveloped Scene

Throughout the 1990s, small networks of mostly North African militants used Swiss territory to raise funds, spread propaganda and provide other support activities to organizations operating outside of Europe.<sup>3</sup> The largely laissez-faire attitude of Swiss authorities (an approach, it should be noted, not dissimilar to that of most European countries at the time) and convenient geographic position at the heart of Europe made the country an ideal permanent or temporary location for jihadists.

The attacks of September 11, 2001, changed the Swiss government’s approach toward jihadist networks. While still correctly assessing that Switzerland was not a likely target for attacks and did not have a large jihadist presence, authorities began to monitor jihadist activities in the country more closely and, in some cases, took action.<sup>4</sup> Yet throughout the mid-2000s, Swiss authorities experienced difficulties with successfully bringing terrorism charges against members of networks they suspected to be funding various terrorist groups through petty crime.<sup>5</sup> Given the challenge of bringing charges against them for any terrorism-related offense, Swiss authorities often opted to charge them with regular criminal offenses or, more frequently, deported them.<sup>6</sup>

3 “DAP Annual Report,” Swiss Service for Analysis and Prevention, 2002, p. 38.

4 Ibid.

5 The first such case was the so-called “affaire Saoud,” an operation triggered by the discovery that various Swiss phone numbers had been in possession of one of the masterminds of the May 12, 2003, bombings in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Swiss authorities subsequently uncovered a sophisticated document-forging network led by a Biel-based Yemeni businessman that smuggled into Switzerland illegal immigrants including, it was suspected, terrorists. Yet the terrorism charges against the network largely fell apart in court, and the members of the network were only convicted for minor illegal immigration violations. See “Summary of Legal Proceedings,” Dossier SK.2006.15, Federal Criminal Tribunal, Bellinzona, 2006.

6 That was the case, for example, with a network of North African militants involved in theft to fund the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and suspected of potentially planning to blow up an El Al



The only exception is the conviction of Moez Garsallaoui and Malika el-Aroud in 2007.<sup>7</sup> Garsallaoui was a Tunisian-born member of Hizb al-Tahrir who received asylum in Switzerland in 1997. He met el-Aroud, the widow of

**“In May 2014, the Swiss intelligence agency publicly stated that it believes that up to 15 Swiss residents have gone to Syria to fight, although it could only confirm five cases.”**

Abdessatar Dahmane—the al-Qa`ida militant who killed Afghan Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud two days before the September 11, 2001, attacks—in a chat room.<sup>8</sup> After getting married, the two began running various jihadist websites out of an apartment near Fribourg.<sup>9</sup> Operating in an era

airliner in Zurich. See Sebastian Rotella, “Theft, Fraud in Europe Fund Terrorist Group, Police Say,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 2007; Sylvain Besson, “Cellule Terroriste en Suisse: Le Parcours d’un Delinquant Devenu Islamiste Radical,” *Le Temps*, July 3, 2006; “DAP Annual Report,” Swiss Service for Analysis and Prevention, 2007, p. 16; “Swiss Deport Last Suspect Held in Plot to Blow up Israeli Airliner,” Associated Press, July 16, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> The couple did not serve time in Switzerland and moved to Belgium, where they were soon charged with recruiting local young Muslims to travel to Pakistan. In the subsequent trial, a Belgian court sentenced both el-Aroud and Garsallaoui to eight years for recruiting for al-Qa`ida, although the latter only in absentia as he had managed to flee the country before Belgian authorities could swoop in. Garsallaoui continued his activities from the tribal areas of Pakistan. In 2008, he published an open letter inviting Swiss people, government and security forces to convert to Islam, and threatening revenge against them. He also became involved in Jund al-Khilafa and other jihadist groups operating in the Pakistani tribal areas, providing training in various weapons, bombmaking, document forging and use of the internet. Thanks to his skills, Garsallaoui became one of the top trainers and handlers for recruits coming from the West and particularly from the French-speaking world. According to various French media reports, Mohammed Merah had been one of his recruits. Garsallaoui was killed in a U.S. drone strike in October 2012.

<sup>8</sup> “L’Islamiste Refugie a Fribourg Tue par un Drone au Pakistan,” *Le Temps*, October 18, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> “Summary of Legal Proceedings,” Dossier SK.2007.4, Federal Criminal Tribunal, Bellinzona, 2006.

in which online social networks were in their infancy, their sites played a crucial role in connecting like-minded French-speaking individuals, spawning an informal community of militants that has operational implications today, almost 10 years after the pair’s demise.<sup>10</sup>

By the late 2000s, Swiss authorities began to observe that an increasing number of terrorism-related activities involved individuals who were either born or at least had grown up in the country, replicating the homegrown dynamic seen throughout Europe. This phenomenon gained the attention of the Swiss public with the case of Majd N., a 19-year-old high school student from Biel who was arrested in May 2012 in Kenya and accused of having fought with the al-Qa`ida-linked al-Shabab.<sup>11</sup>

The case reinforced the argument long made by Swiss authorities that Switzerland is “not an island,” but rather experiences radicalization dynamics similar to those of neighboring countries, just on a significantly lower scale.<sup>12</sup> Structured

<sup>10</sup> Several individuals who met through the sites created by el-Aroud and Garsallaoui have been involved in terrorist activities during the last 10 years. In several cases, their mobilization took place through connections first made on said sites. For an Italian example, see Lorenzo Vidino, *Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalization Dynamics* (Milan: Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale, 2014), p. 52. For connections in the French-speaking world, see Sylvain Besson, “Fin de Parcours pour Garsalloui, ex-Refugie en Suisse Tue par un Drone,” *Le Temps*, October 18, 2012; Benjamin Ducol, “Uncovering the French-speaking Jihadisphere: An Exploratory Analysis,” *Media, War & Conflict* 5:1 (2012).

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Glaus and Marie Maurisse, “La Descente aux Enfers de Majd N., le Biennois Apprenti Terroriste,” *Le Matin Dimanche*, November 18, 2012; Daniel Glaus and Marie Maurisse, “Le Dangereux Voyage de Majd pour Devenir Combattant Islamiste,” *Le Matin Dimanche*, November 25, 2012; *Quand Al Qaida Recrute en Suisse*, RTS, November 8, 2012; Samuel Jaberg, “Un aller sans Retour pour la Guerre Sainte,” *Swissinfo*, July 4, 2012; “Un Gymnase de Bienne Inculpe pour Liens avec les Shebab,” *Le Temps*, March 25, 2004; “Abu Sa`ad al-Urduni or the Improbable Matches - Episode II,” Geneva Centre for Training and Analysis of Terrorism, December 5, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> As in any other Western European country, radicalization by jihadist inspiration seems to affect only a statistically marginal segment of the Swiss Muslim population. But radicalization in Switzerland appears to be a limited phenomenon also when compared to other European countries. Four factors can explain this differ-

ence: 1) lack of an “infecting cluster”: Switzerland never hosted an openly jihadist mosque or high profile jihadists, elements that in other countries have been crucial in spreading jihadist ideology; 2) good degree of social, economic and cultural integration of most Muslims living in Switzerland, rendering them more resilient to extremist narratives; 3) demographic characteristics of the Swiss Muslim population: some 80% to 90% of Swiss Muslims trace their origins to the Balkans or Turkey, where the vast majority of Muslims traditionally espouse forms of Islam that are more tolerant and apolitical; 4) Switzerland’s foreign policy, whose largely neutral stance does not provide a source of grievances. While these concurrently operating factors can potentially explain the low levels of jihadist radicalization in Switzerland, none of them is a guarantee. Each, in fact, presents weaknesses and exceptions.

Despite these actions, the number of Swiss-based jihadist sympathizers and the intensity of their activities are substantially smaller than in most Western European countries, including those with a comparably sized population. The Swiss “mini-scene” is also split along linguistic lines, as French- and German-speaking militants do not seem to frequently interact with one another.<sup>16</sup> Rather, each milieu draws inspiration from the more developed scenes in France and Germany. Swiss-based activists seeking to develop their intellectual or operational involvement, in fact, often travel to other countries or invite foreign personalities to Switzerland. The radicalizing elements from the

ence: 1) lack of an “infecting cluster”: Switzerland never hosted an openly jihadist mosque or high profile jihadists, elements that in other countries have been crucial in spreading jihadist ideology; 2) good degree of social, economic and cultural integration of most Muslims living in Switzerland, rendering them more resilient to extremist narratives; 3) demographic characteristics of the Swiss Muslim population: some 80% to 90% of Swiss Muslims trace their origins to the Balkans or Turkey, where the vast majority of Muslims traditionally espouse forms of Islam that are more tolerant and apolitical; 4) Switzerland’s foreign policy, whose largely neutral stance does not provide a source of grievances. While these concurrently operating factors can potentially explain the low levels of jihadist radicalization in Switzerland, none of them is a guarantee. Each, in fact, presents weaknesses and exceptions.

<sup>13</sup> “DAP Annual Report,” Swiss Service for Analysis and Prevention, 2005, p. 31; “DAP Annual Report,” Swiss Service for Analysis and Prevention, 2006, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Stoll, “Geheimdienst observiert Basler Moschee,” *Sonntagszeitung*, September 2, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, *Jihadist Radicalization in Switzerland* (Zurich: Center for Security Studies, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> These details are based on the monitoring of online social media activities of Swiss Salafists carried out by both authors independently since June 2012. This analysis has been confirmed by interviews with officials in the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service (NDB) and the Swiss Federal Police.

Balkans are particularly influential—an area to which some 60% of Swiss Muslims trace their roots.<sup>17</sup>

### Swiss Foreign Fighters in Syria

In May 2014, the Swiss intelligence agency Nachrichtendienst des Bundes (Federal Intelligence Service, NDB) publicly stated that it believed that up to 15 Swiss residents have gone to fight in Syria, although it could only confirm five cases. Of those five, stated NDB Director Markus Seiler, one has returned and two have died.<sup>18</sup> These numbers are smaller than for most European countries, even in relative terms. Yet they constitute a disturbing trend for Switzerland, as they are higher than any comparable mobilization the country has witnessed in the past.

One of the confirmed cases is that of Mathieu, a 29-year-old convert from a prominent Catholic family from Lausanne. In his early 20s, Mathieu worked odd jobs and developed a keen interest in paragliding. In 2012, he unsuccessfully ran for elections in the small municipality in the Valais canton where he lived in a small chalet.<sup>19</sup> In May 2013, he converted to Islam at a local mosque, and by early fall he was chatting via Facebook with individuals apparently belonging to armed Islamist groups in Syria.

In lightning speed evolution from new convert to aspiring jihadist, by early December 2013 Mathieu told Facebook contacts that he was planning to soon leave for Syria.<sup>20</sup> He went to neighboring France and took a test to pilot Ultra-Light Motorized Airplanes (ULM) on December 18.<sup>21</sup> On the same

day he obtained his license, he posted a message saying: “If all things are destroyed...there still is The Creator of all things. We do not need anything else but Allah, he is our best guarantor.”<sup>22</sup> Days later, he left France for Turkey

### “Clusters of homegrown activists sympathizing with jihadist or militant Salafist ideology are active in Switzerland, often organizing events throughout the country and frequenting online jihadist forums and social media.”

with two fellow aspiring jihadists, one of whom was a 17-year-old French citizen of North African descent whose smartphone was tracked to Turkey.<sup>23</sup> On December 21, he wrote his parents an e-mail with the telling subject line “New life. Hard news for you. Terribly sorry.”<sup>24</sup> In the e-mail, he stated that “in order to best follow Allah’s path, I have decided, because I feel able to both physically...and mentally (even though I know it won’t be easy always), to leave to accomplish the jihad in Syria.”<sup>25</sup>

22 Ibid. The original reads: “*Si toute chose et détruite...Il reste Le Créateur de toute chose. Allah nous suffit il est notre meilleure garant.*” The post was accompanied by a picture showing a bearded and apparently screaming man standing in front of a heavily destroyed and burning house stretching his arms to the sky.

23 Ibid. On December 21, 2013, Mathieu wrote his parents that he had parked his vehicle by Lyon’s airport, where they could pick it up. He also wrote: “I am about to return to Syria, traveling with two French brothers and others who arrived last night. I have many contacts with French jihadists who are already in Syria and who will facilitate our arrival!” (“*Je suis actuellement sur le point de rentrer en Syrie, voyageant donc avec deux frères français, et d’autres arrivés hier soir. J’ai beaucoup de contacts avec des djihadistes français déjà en Syrie, qui nous faciliteront notre arrivée.*”). See also: “Jihad en Syrie: l’inquiétante disparition de Brahim, 17 ans,” *Le Parisien*, January 18, 2014.

24 Ibid. The subject line in French read: “*Nouvelle vie. Dure nouvelle pour vous. Mille excuses.*”

25 Original text: “*De plus, toujours pour suivre au mieux le chemin d’Allah, j’ai décidé, car je m’en estime capable, tant physiquement [ma hanche va vraiment mieux !] que mentale-*

After nearly three months of silence, Mathieu resurfaced online on March 16, 2014.<sup>26</sup> Back in Switzerland, he gave an anonymous interview to Swiss national television station RTS in which he claimed to regret his decision to travel to Syria.<sup>27</sup> “At the time, for me it was a legitimate jihad, to fight against the regime of Bashar who used chemical weapons to massacre his people,” he explained. He recounted how he lodged in a house with “80 to 150 jihadists” in which “the upper floor was for the future fighters, the ground floor for those who wished to blow themselves up. They were about 15, did not get military training and were treated better.”<sup>28</sup> Mathieu did not specify which group ran the house and claimed not to be involved in any fighting. An investigation on Mathieu has reportedly been opened, but no charges have yet been filed against him.<sup>29</sup> He appears to be continuing his paragliding activities in the Alps.<sup>30</sup>

A bloody incident on March 20, 2014, brought to light the case of another jihadist fighting in Syria with Swiss links. Three individuals linked to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)<sup>31</sup> responded to a routine security check by Turkish authorities near the Hatay border crossing by opening fire and throwing a hand grenade, killing a policeman, a non-commissioned gendarmerie officer and a truck driver.<sup>32</sup> One of the three attackers who had crossed from Syria and was heading to Istanbul was Cendrim, a native of Kosovo who had moved at the age of

*ment (bien que je sais que ce ne sera pas facile tous les jours !), de partir pour accomplir le Jihad en Syrie.”*

26 Glaus and Haederli.

27 There are indications that he crossed the border in Akçakale and was stopped by Turkish authorities. It does not appear that he was expelled from Turkey, but that he returned to Switzerland voluntarily.

28 19.30 *le Journal*, Radio Television Suisse Romande, April 4, 2014.

29 E-Mail Statement by Spokesperson of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), April 2, 2014.

30 These pictures were posted on his Facebook page. Apparently he moved from his chalet in Lower Valais back to his parents’ address in Lausanne. The website of his paragliding instruction company is still online.

31 In June 2014, the ISIL shortened its name to the “Islamic State.” This article, however, still refers to the group by its more common name, the ISIL.

32 “Syria Back on Turkey’s Agenda,” *al-Monitor*, March 21, 2014.

17 *Dialogue avec la Population Musulmane 2010* (Bern: Federal Department of Justice and Police, 2011), p. 29.

18 “NDB Annual Press Conference,” Swiss Federal Intelligence Service, May 15, 2014.

19 Daniel Glaus and Alexandre Haederli, “Vom Chalet in den Jihad,” *SonntagsZeitung*, April 6, 2014.

20 Ibid. The authors were able to save most of Mathieu’s Facebook interactions before he erased the more incriminating content. One former Facebook friend confirmed Mathieu mentioned “fighting in Syria.”

21 Ibid. Mathieu wrote his parents: “I took my ULM exam in Lyon on Wednesday and it went well!” (“*Je me suis rendu à mon examen ULM à Lyon mercredi, qui s’est bien passé.*”). Pictures published on his Facebook page indicate he trained on a Zodiac 650-type ULM with a maximum speed of 260 km/h. There are no indications that his training with ULM was related to his militant interests.

seven to Brugg, in canton Aargau.<sup>33</sup> From a young age, Cendrim engaged in various criminal activities, including armed robbery and assault. In 2011, he was imprisoned for 24 months and, upon release, deported to Kosovo.<sup>34</sup> Some reports indicate that Cendrim's radicalization might have begun during his incarceration.<sup>35</sup> In June 2013, shortly after his deportation to Kosovo, he traveled to Syria, where he reportedly joined the ISIL.<sup>36</sup>

Another Swiss-based individual who apparently joined the ISIL in Syria is Valdes, a 33-year-old from the town of Kriens, near Luzern.<sup>37</sup> Valdes married into a family that plays a central role in the Bosnian Islamist networks in Switzerland. His wife is an activist for various Islamist causes, and his father-in-law is well-known for his connections to militants in Bosnia.<sup>38</sup> Until April 2014, Valdes was highly active on Facebook, posting pictures apparently from Syria before deleting his profile.

A six-month-long monitoring of the online jihadist sympathizer scene in Switzerland carried out by Swiss weeklies *SonntagsZeitung* and *Le Matin Dimanche* revealed the existence of other individuals apparently fighting in Syria who seem to be Swiss citizens or residents, but whose real identities cannot be fully verified. Many of them appear to have an Albanian or Bosnian background. Several of the apparent Swiss jihadists use their home country as part of their *kunya*, calling themselves “al-Suisri” or “As-Swissry.” An individual calling himself Abou Suleyman Suissey is tagged in a photo smiling and holding a gun in the company of other armed

militants who call themselves “Team of Shock.”<sup>39</sup> Reportedly a naturalized Swiss citizen of North African descent from canton Vaud, Suleyman told one of the authors that he was “the official recruiter of Al-Qa`ida in Switzerland.” He asked for money to further elaborate on this claim—something the author declined.<sup>40</sup>

#### Conclusion

The number of Swiss jihadists in Syria is small when compared to most other European countries, including those with a similarly sized population. Yet the presence of an undetermined number of its citizens and residents fighting in Syria is a relatively new phenomenon for Switzerland. It demonstrates that Switzerland suffers from radicalization dynamics similar to its neighbors, albeit on a smaller scale.

Moreover, the issue of foreign fighters might be particularly problematic for Switzerland, whose legislation does not possess extensive and precise provisions covering the phenomenon. As of July 2014, Swiss authorities have not filed any criminal cases against individuals suspected of having fought in Syria, including in a case like Mathieu's in which evidence of his ties to jihadist activity is strong.

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33 “Radikalisiert durch Balkan-Prediger,” *SonntagsZeitung*, March 30, 2014.

34 “Aargau muss Genugtuung an Dschihadisten zahlen,” *Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen*, May 14, 2014.

35 “Reaktionen zum Brugger Terroristen Cendrim R.” *Solothurner Zeitung*, March 30, 2014; “Der gewalttätige Gotteskrieger aus Brugg,” *Tages-Anzeiger/Der Bund*, March 27, 2014; “Er war renitent und unzufrieden,” *Blick*, March 31, 2014.

36 “Der gewalttätige Gotteskrieger aus Brugg,” *Tages-Anzeiger/Der Bund*, March 27, 2014.

37 These details are based on the authors' analysis of Valdes' Facebook account in 2013 and 2014.

38 Daniel Glaus and Ursula Zenger, “Im Netzwerk des Attentäters,” *SonntagsZeitung*, November 20, 2011.

39 These details are based on the authors' analysis of Facebook pages. Originally published in French, the photo caption read, “L'équipe de choc... un nouveau et un nouveau départbi idhmillah.” It was published on April 11, 2014, by a French jihadist (also tagged as being in the picture).

40 This conversation occurred in a Facebook chat with the author on March 30, 2014.

## Dutch Foreign Fighters Continue to Travel to Syria

By Samar Batrawi and Ilona Chmoun

AS THE WAR IN SYRIA continues, the Netherlands faces a number of challenges in monitoring Dutch foreign fighters. In a worrying note published in June 2014 by the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), the agency claimed that budget cuts paired with “new dynamics” in the jihadist movement have triggered a serious capacity crisis.<sup>1</sup> The AIVD teams in charge of tracking jihadists are barely coping with the workload, and additional planned budget cuts will reportedly force the agency to drop several of these teams. Nevertheless, the dynamics of the radicalization and recruitment of jihadists in the Netherlands are continuously evolving.

This article addresses recent developments among the Dutch foreign fighter contingent in Syria. It examines a manifesto that describes the motives and goals of the Dutch fighters, reviews these fighters' visibility on social media and profiles two of them, and concludes with an analysis of the measures taken by the Dutch government. It finds that the visibility of and popular concern surrounding Dutch jihadists in Syria has increased, while the government's response remains tepid.

#### The Dutch Foreign Fighter Manifesto

Through social media, the Dutch press and information released by Dutch authorities, the authors have identified 37 Dutch individuals who have fought in Syria. This means that an additional 17 people have been identified since October 2013,<sup>2</sup> including three women and two minors.<sup>3</sup> The general composition of the 17 newly identified fighters does not differ significantly from the 20 fighters

1 “New dynamics” refers to the shift from forums and preachers to the more dynamic platform of social media as the foundation of homegrown radicalization. For more details, see “Veiligheidsdienst AIVD verliest zicht op escalerend jihadisme,” *NRC Handelsblad*, June 20, 2014.

2 See the author's previous article on the Dutch foreign fighter contingent in Syria: Samar Batrawi, “The Dutch Foreign Fighter Contingent in Syria,” *CTC Sentinel* 6:10 (2013).

3 For the full interview, see [www.eenopeen.incontxt.nl/seizoenen/2014/afleveringen/10-04-2014](http://www.eenopeen.incontxt.nl/seizoenen/2014/afleveringen/10-04-2014).



identified in the *CTC Sentinel* in October 2013. The main component is Dutch-Moroccan, while other backgrounds include Turkish, Iraqi, Kurdish, the Balkans, and at least one person with a Somali background. Among these names are two Dutch converts: Anwar Abu Ibrahim al-Rumi<sup>4</sup> from the Hague, and Victor D. “Zakaria al-Holandi”<sup>5</sup> from Heeten, both of whom are in Aleppo. The average age of the additional 17 fighters based on the authors’ dataset is 22-years-old. Most of the fighters are from the Hague, Zoetermeer, Delft and Arnhem. According to an AIVD report, out of a total of 100-150 Dutch jihadists in Syria,<sup>6</sup> two have committed suicide attacks in Syria and Iraq<sup>7</sup>; twelve Dutch fighters have died in Syria<sup>8</sup>; and at least 30 fighters<sup>9</sup> have returned to the Netherlands. Approximately 20 Dutch women<sup>10</sup> are currently in Syria, most of whom are thought to have followed their husbands to the battlefield.

In October 2013, a 150-page manifesto called *De Banier*<sup>11</sup> was published by,

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4 Anwar Abu Ibrahim al-Rumi is a Dutch convert from the Hague fighting with the ISIL who posts a mix of Arabic and Dutch information on his Facebook page, where a picture of him is shown with another Dutch ISIL fighter from the Hague called Abou Hatim La Haye. In Dutch-language comments on several pictures, friends call them “the lions of the umma from the Hagueistan.” For more details, see [www.facebook.com/abu.ibrahiem.96](http://www.facebook.com/abu.ibrahiem.96).

5 *Abdelkarim boning - Interview met Zakariya al Hollandi deel 1*, April 2, 2013, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjK\\_j3OrjCc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjK_j3OrjCc).

6 “Ruim 100 Nederlandse jihadstrijders zijn naar Syrië gereisd,” Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau, July 27, 2014.

7 “Annual Report 2013,” Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service, 2013.

8 These twelve are: Mourad M. (21-years-old) from Delft; Soufian E. (20) from Delft; Yasmine B. (23) from Zoetermeer; Choukri M. (26) from Delft (Mourad’s older brother); Saddek S. (26); Ibrahim A.; Soufian H. (19) from the Hague; Abu Fidaa’ (also known as Abu Jandal) (26) from Delft; Moerad Ö. (“Ibrahim the Turk”) from the Hague; Abu Obayda al-Holandi; Abu Hamza; and Abu Usama al-Holandi al-Maghribi from the Hague.

9 According to the AIVD, as quoted in: “Primeur: jihadist gepakt na reis naar Syrië,” *De Volkskrant*, April 29, 2014.

10 The Dutch newspaper *Trouw* interviewed Fatima’s father in March 2014, who expressed great concern about Fatima’s sister who wanted to follow her sister to Syria. For the interview, see Perdiep Ramesar, “Had ik Fatima maar thuis gehouden,” *Trouw*, March 4, 2014.

11 An online PDF copy of *De Banier* can be found at [www.alminara.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/de-banier3.pdf](http://www.alminara.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/de-banier3.pdf). The document is divided into seven chapters: 1) Capital-

ism; 2) Neocolonial Despotism; 3) The Legendary Conflict; 4) The Shifting Balance of Power; 5) The Future Alternative; 6) The Ethical Fundament; and 7) The Ideological Front.

among others, Abu Fidaa’, the man who called himself the spokesperson of Dutch jihadists in Syria until his death in November 2013.<sup>12</sup> The book opened with a rejection of Western capitalism. Happiness, the manifesto stated, is merely a paradoxical illusion, as the rate of suicides, prisoners and childhood depression is higher in the West than anywhere else. Islam is presented as the solution to these problems, but also as the solution to the moral bankruptcy and double standards of the West, exemplified by U.S. school shootings, the abuse at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghurayb, and the general mistreatment of women.

The next chapters discussed recent political events, which have, in the eyes of the authors, deprived Muslims of Islamic law. The book claimed that Western countries, spearheaded by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), have given the tacit U.S. ally Bashar al-Assad the green light to kill Muslims using any means necessary. As the resistance against al-Assad can mainly be ascribed to foreign fighters and Syrian mujahidin, the authors claimed that they are the fighters on which the Syrian people can rely. Based on a collection of *abadith* (Islamic scriptures), the authors expect the Syrian conflict to become a legendary, decisive war that might trigger a third World War. An alternative to Western democracy is presented in a 13-point chapter, which included topics like economic stability, freedom of religion and women’s rights, all of them based on traditional Islamic principles. The overtone of this alternative is the return of society to the early days of Islam, opposing not only Shi`a Muslims, but “corrupted” and status quo Sunnis as well.

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ist Liberalism; 2) Neocolonial Despotism; 3) The Legendary Conflict; 4) The Shifting Balance of Power; 5) The Future Alternative; 6) The Ethical Fundament; and 7) The Ideological Front.

12 Abu Fidaa’ was the spokesperson whose interview with the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* was quoted in Batrawi. He was a 26-year-old Dutch businessman from Delft. His death was announced by the radical Dutch website De Ware Religie and later confirmed by his family.

### Social Media Presence

Dutch fighters have become more visible in social media and in the Dutch press, especially those who joined the ranks of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).<sup>13</sup> The ISIL and its Dutch fighters also seem to be slightly more active than the al-Qa`ida affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra in spreading Dutch-language propaganda.<sup>14</sup> As part of this larger charm offensive, a group of Dutch jihadists under the name of “Fighting Journalists” uploaded a promotional video on YouTube titled *Oh Oh Aleppo Spookstad* on June 24, which was distributed on the popular Dutch jihadist hubs De Ware Religie and Shaam Al Ghareeba. In the video, jihadists walked through the rubble of Aleppo, and spoke to the viewers while

**“The ISIL and its Dutch fighters also seem to be slightly more active than the al-Qa`ida affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra in spreading Dutch-language propaganda.”**

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shooting from and being shot at in an abandoned apartment. The overtone of the video seemed to be both opposition to the Syrian Arab Army, described as inhumane slaughterers, and the persuasion that jihad in Syria is worth the effort. On the former, the jihadists repeatedly expressed their anger and frustration at Muslims getting killed by al-Assad while the Muslim society remained inactive. Jihadists, they argued, are the protectors of the innocent. On the latter point, they gave the impression of a close, brotherly community of jihadists who support each other when under fire.<sup>15</sup>

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13 In June 2014, the ISIL shortened its name to the “Islamic State.” This article, however, still refers to the group by its more common name, the ISIL.

14 This text can be found on the picture at [www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=247442092112391&set=a.106652169524718.1073741828.100005398058758&type=1&theater](http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=247442092112391&set=a.106652169524718.1073741828.100005398058758&type=1&theater).

15 The full version of the controversial video that shows a glimpse into the lives of Dutch jihadists in Syria is called *Oh Oh Aleppo de Spookstad* (Oh Oh Aleppo the Ghost Town), a reference to the popular Dutch song

This interactive approach became all the more evident in an announced questions and answers session via YouTube published on June 26, 2014, in which viewers could have their questions answered by fighters in Syria. The aim of this session was to debunk the image of the fighters that counterterrorism experts have painted.<sup>16</sup>

*Profile I: Ashraf, the Underage Fighter<sup>17</sup>*

Ashraf, a 16-year-old Dutch-Moroccan boy, became known to the Dutch public after his father held an emotional plea on Dutch television. His father, Farid, was open about the process that resulted in his son's travel to Syria in December 2013. Ashraf's doctor, his school youth

**“On March 28, 2014, Ashraf was online in Turkey, near the Syrian border, where his father suspects he received training before crossing into Syria.”**

protection services, the city council and the police were all involved by the request of his father in an attempt to deradicalize him, yet Ashraf still succeeded in sneaking out of the house in the middle of the night.

According to an extensive media interview with Ashraf's father, Ashraf was a polite yet social boy.<sup>18</sup> His father raised him as a Muslim. Ashraf wanted to become a police officer or work with the Dutch Ministry of Defense. Three months before Ashraf's departure to Syria, he started to change. His father first noticed this when Ashraf started

*Oh Oh Den Haag* (Oh Oh The Hague) and the more recent *Oh Oh Cherso*, the Dutch version of the MTV series Jersey Shore. For the video, see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=miqGbVdj2xQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=miqGbVdj2xQ).

<sup>16</sup> A video titled *Vraag het een Syriëganger!* (Ask a Syrian Foreign Fighter) was published to announce a Q&A session. For details, see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUbuYrRgfsY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUbuYrRgfsY).

<sup>17</sup> This profile is based on the interview held with Ashraf's father in April 2014. For the full interview, see *Farid - vader van minderjarige Syrië-strijder*, Een op Een, April 10, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

locking the door to his room and ceased attending the family's mosque, saying it was full of infidels. His father tried to take him to different imams and gave him names of Muslim scholars who could benefit Ashraf, but his son refused any dialogue. Farid also tried to connect his son with an Islamic psychologist, but Ashraf never showed up to meetings.

Ashraf became so estranged from his father that he started calling him an infidel and a devil. One day, Farid noticed a bearded man in a car waiting outside his house. Farid wanted to know who was influencing his son and started following him. He followed Ashraf to a house where a group of people gathered on a regular basis. After the first gathering, his son exited the house with the same bearded man that Farid had seen outside their home. Farid notified the police of this address immediately. He confronted the man, who insisted they were only discussing some verses from the Qur'an.

Ashraf refused to eat meat anymore—claiming it was not halal enough—and to be in the same room as women. He began criticizing his sisters and telling them what to wear. He grew his hair and beard. Farid tried to prevent his son from going outside, afraid that he would not return. Once, when Ashraf left his computer to use the restroom, Farid went into his son's room and accessed his computer. He found many radical websites, videos of beheadings and pictures of dead bodies. Farid shut off the internet, and after Farid found out that Ashraf was still connecting to other networks, he broke his computer.

On the day that Ashraf left for Syria, he had agreed with his father to see the police and the city council. His father insisted that he hand his passport to them, but Ashraf refused. The police and the city council promised to keep an eye on him but did not force him to hand over his passport. He fled the house that same evening and never returned. On March 28, 2014, Ashraf was online in Turkey, near the Syrian border, where his father suspects he received training before crossing into Syria.

*Profile II: Robbin, the Returned Convert<sup>19</sup>*

Robbin van D., at 18-years-old, found Islam through his Muslim friends in Arnhem, but gradually started to take an interest in more radical Muslim figures such as Malcolm X. He struggled to decide what he wanted to do with his life. He rapped a lot with his friend

**“On June 20, the city of the Hague allowed a pro-ISIL demonstration to take place because it saw ‘no ground’ to prevent it—even though the ISIL is listed as a terrorist organization by the United Nations.”**

Marouane, another Dutch fighter in Syria. He stopped seeing his non-Muslim friends after he converted to Islam, and, halfway through 2013, Robbin and Marouane stopped rapping about girls and started rapping exclusively about Islam. They scored a YouTube hit with the song *Ramadan*.<sup>20</sup>

Robbin, Marouane and another friend named Hakim<sup>21</sup> often went to the Al Fath mosque in Arnhem to pray.<sup>22</sup> The authors of an article on the three friends from Arnhem claimed that they discovered flyers announcing sermons by Dutch Salafist preachers in the mosque, such as Abou Sayfoullah and Al Khattab. Robbin and Marouane also took Arabic lessons at the Omar Al Khattab Foundation in Arnhem.<sup>23</sup> The director of that foundation, Anoire Rharssisse, claims to fully oppose fighting in Syria, although he preaches quite the opposite in social media under the name Aboe Nusaybah.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> This profile is largely based on a detailed report about three jihadist friends from Arnhem. See “Van vrolijke rapper tot jihadist Dag mam, ik ga naar Syrië!” NRC, December 28, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Their music video is available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtXP\\_9nv1d0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtXP_9nv1d0).

<sup>21</sup> Hakim attempted to travel to Syria but was stopped in his car in Germany.

<sup>22</sup> “Van vrolijke rapper tot jihadist Dag mam, ik ga naar Syrië!”

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Robbin and Marouane spent a lot of time in Marouane's room, praying and reading the Qur'an. Images of suffering Syrians touched them, according to Marouane's mother. The friends received pictures from an older friend who was already in Syria, and who they considered a role model. The boys started consulting the Qur'an about the concept of Holy War, and began reading books on the topic as well as manuscripts such as those from Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. They read everything on De Ware Religie, a Dutch extremist website. They also listened to speeches by Fouad Belkacem, the leader of Sharia4Belgium, and became convinced that they were useless for not helping out their Muslim brothers.

Robbin and his friend Marouane crossed the border between Turkey and Syria in November 2013 and both spent time in Aleppo. Robbin returned to the Netherlands in March 2014. His activities since his return are unknown, although he seems apologetic about his decision and claims he fled Syria in secret.<sup>25</sup> Marouane remains in Syria.<sup>26</sup>

#### Government Measures Against (Returned) Fighters

Thus far, in the absence of a collective approach, the Dutch government has only pushed through a few measures against Dutch jihadists. Most concerning is the reported lack of adequate budgeting for intelligence gathering. The Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) has expressed its concern about Dutch jihadists in Syria and has warned about the possibility of new generations of fighters, resulting in a sustainable threat to Europe. Because of the ISIL's recent advancements, the NCTV fears that the popularity of jihadist factions will only increase among radicalized Dutch youth. It recognizes that the Netherlands is not immune to attacks similar to the one in Brussels on May 24, 2014, which was committed by a returned Syrian foreign fighter.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Bart Olmer, "Polderjihadist vlucht voor geweld," *De Telegraaf*, March 13, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> For more details, see [www.facebook.com/MaruOne026?fref=pb&hc\\_location=friends\\_tab](http://www.facebook.com/MaruOne026?fref=pb&hc_location=friends_tab).

<sup>27</sup> Periodical updates on the threat level in the Netherlands are given by the NCTV. This level is mainly determined by developments surrounding Dutch foreign fight-

The NCTV has attempted to force the extremist website De Ware Religie—one of the most important platforms for Dutch jihadists—offline, so far without success.<sup>28</sup> Despite the fear of the ISIL in particular, on June 20 the

**“As the Netherlands struggles to agree upon a unified approach to the fighters, it expresses great concern about its future security, while insisting on upholding a tolerant and inclusive approach—a balance which may be impossible to achieve.”**

city of the Hague allowed<sup>29</sup> a pro-ISIL demonstration to take place because it saw “no ground” to prevent it—even though the ISIL is listed as a terrorist organization by the United Nations.

The Dutch government promised an increase in cooperation between different branches to enhance internal security, and a recent report claims that the AIVD shared a list of names with the Turkish security services to prevent the flow of these people into Syria from Turkey.<sup>30</sup> Yet Turkey's willingness to act on the list is questionable. A visa is not required to cross the Turkish-Syrian border, and the border is easily passed with the aid of recruiters who are present in abundance in Turkey's southern province of Hatay.<sup>31</sup>

ers. See “Actueel dreigingsniveau,” National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism, June 30, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> “Antiterreurbaas treedt op tegen jihadsite,” *De Telegraaf*, June 19, 2014; “Providers gevraagd jihadsites te wissen,” *De Telegraaf*, June 18, 2014.

<sup>29</sup> “ISIS-demonstratie Den Haag mag,” *NOS Journaal*, June 17, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> “AIVD geeft Turkije namen Nederlandse Syriëgangers,” *Novum*, June 16, 2014.

<sup>31</sup> It is possible to travel from the Netherlands to Syria in 48 hours when using the Turkey route. For more details, see “Binnen 48 uur van Nederland naar Syrië,” *De Telegraaf*, June 30, 2014.

One preventive measure that was announced in the Dutch press in February was the denial of passports to 10 men and women who were suspected of planning to travel to Syria for jihad.<sup>32</sup> The legal basis for this was article 23 of the passport law<sup>33</sup> of the Netherlands, which makes it possible to withdraw someone's passport or deny the renewal of it if the person in question wants to go abroad to engage in activities that would endanger the Netherlands or other friendly states. A different measure was taken against two suspected jihadists from Arnhem in February 2014 who were caught in Germany while they were allegedly on their way to Syria. The charges against them were dropped on the condition that they wear ankle bracelets, stay in the Netherlands and refrain from coming near airports.<sup>34</sup>

There have also been individual measures against fighters who remain in Syria. In June, the social welfare of “tens” of Dutch jihadists was stopped.<sup>35</sup> In the same month, it was announced that fighters receiving any student benefits from the Dutch government will have those benefits revoked.<sup>36</sup> Khalid K., a Dutch jihadist who posed with the decapitated heads of five Jabhat al-Nusra fighters, was denied entry to the Netherlands for 20 years, and if he does decide to return after this period, the Dutch Public Prosecution will attempt to charge him with crimes against humanity.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> “NCTV: tien paspoorten jihadgangers geweigerd,” *De Volkskrant*, February 21, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> See the website of the Dutch government at [http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0005212/geldigheidsdatum\\_20-06-2014](http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0005212/geldigheidsdatum_20-06-2014).

<sup>34</sup> “Syriëgangers' onder voorwaarden vrij, maar moeten enkelband dragen,” *De Volkskrant*, February 4, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> “Uitkeringen tientallen Nederlandse jihadstrijders stopgezet,” *Het Parool*, June 17, 2014.

<sup>36</sup> As stated in a written response to parliamentary inquiries about the student benefits that jihadists in Syria receive. For the statement, see “Onderwerp Antwoorden kamervragen over studiefinanciering voor jihadstrijders,” Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice, June 16, 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Suspected individuals appear in a special register which is visible to border security and the city council, both of which can withdraw the passport or choose to reject its renewal. For details, see “Nederlandse jihadist van gruwelfoto mag land niet meer in,” *De Volkskrant*, April 3, 2014.



In November 2013, it was reported that the Dutch city councils were attempting to help rather than punish returned fighters. Delft currently supervises a group of young ex-fighters that it aims to reintegrate into Dutch society by helping them find employment or education and stimulating them to engage in local activities.<sup>38</sup> The idea behind this, according to the city councils, is to avoid further radicalization through isolation and repression.<sup>39</sup> This does not mean that the police and the justice department will not prosecute individuals if any evidence of criminal activity is found; it merely means that on a social level the city councils opt for reintegration.<sup>40</sup>

As rapidly as knowledge about Dutch jihadists in Syria has grown in the past six months, it is far from complete. With the recent developments in Syria and Iraq, the problem of Dutch foreign fighters will continue to escalate. As the Netherlands struggles to agree upon a unified approach to the fighters, it expresses great concern about its future security, while insisting on upholding a tolerant and inclusive approach—a balance which may be impossible to achieve. With the capacity problems faced by the intelligence services, the Netherlands is in danger of falling behind the curve.

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## Boko Haram, the Chibok Abductions and Nigeria's Counterterrorism Strategy

By J.N.C. Hill

DURING THE PAST three months, hundreds of people, mainly women and girls, have been abducted from villages across Nigeria's northeastern state of Borno. To date, only a minority of those kidnapped have regained their liberty, often as a result of their own efforts to escape. The kidnapers, who have identified themselves as members of the terrorist group Boko Haram, have been widely condemned both at home and abroad. Yet so has Nigeria's federal government. Its failure to protect the inhabitants of these villages, slow and ineffective efforts to secure the victims' release, unsympathetic and heavy-handed response to the demonstrations of solidarity organized in Abuja,<sup>1</sup> and unwillingness to accept international assistance or work with foreign partners have all served to tarnish its already battered reputation.

Indeed, the unprecedented global campaign to find and free the 250 girls taken from the village of Chibok was in part directed at the federal authorities. The inexplicable withdrawal of the soldiers guarding the school from which they were taken, Abuja's reluctant and week-late admission that they had been kidnapped, and the security forces' abject failure to pursue what leads they had in a timely fashion gave rise to serious doubts about the federal government's competence and desire to save the girls.<sup>2</sup>

This article considers what these kidnappings reveal about Boko Haram and the federal government's counterterrorism strategy. It finds that Abuja's failure to defeat or even significantly contain the group is due, at least in part, to four significant flaws in its strategy: its overly kinetic focus, limited potential for further escalation, low level of regional cooperation and

confusion with north-south political rivalries.

### Boko Haram and its Continued Development

The kidnappings offer important insights into both Boko Haram and Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy. Since its renaissance as a fighting force in late 2010, Boko Haram has been in a state of perpetual evolution. It has actively embraced innovation and adaptation by constantly changing what it does, where and to whom. Abductions were added to its repertoire only a few years ago, and its early victims were mainly European and North American citizens living and working in northern Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> Ransoms were demanded which, depending on the nationalities of those who were seized, were sometimes paid.<sup>4</sup> These kidnappings were similar to those carried out in the south of the country by groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).<sup>5</sup>

The mass abductions of the past few months, however, are a new activity not only in the north, but in the whole country. Never before have so many individuals been snatched all at once, nor have the victims been ordinary people.<sup>6</sup> Unlike earlier kidnappings, these abductions are motivated less by money since none of the friends and families of those who have been taken can afford to pay significant ransoms. Precedents for these kinds of attacks do exist elsewhere. In a number of

3 Doubts remain over who carried out this abduction. One of the prime suspects is the Islamist terrorist group Ansaru. According to the International Crisis Group, Ansaru is one of six factions which together make up Boko Haram. See "Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency," International Crisis Group, April 3, 2014, p. 22; "Italian Abducted in Nigeria Freed," BBC, June 2, 2012.

4 "Nigerian Kidnappers 'Received Ransom Downpayment,'" *Guardian*, March 11, 2012; "Italian Priests, Canadian Nun Kidnapped in Cameroon," Reuters, April 5, 2014.

5 Although the survival rate of victims seized in the north was lower than for those taken in the south, these abductions were similar as they were motivated, to a significant degree, by the kidnapers' desire to extract ransom payments. See James Bridger, "Kidnapping Resurgent in the Gulf of Guinea Piracy," USNI News, March 14, 2014.

6 Most recently more than 60 women and children were taken in a series of raids mounted by suspected Boko Haram militants. See "Nigeria's Boko Haram 'Seizes Women' in Borno," BBC, June 24, 2014.

38 The original report can be found at "Teruggekeerde jihadi's niet opgepakt maar geholpen," *EenVandaag*, November 6, 2013.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

1 "Nigerian Police Arrest Protest Leader for Girls Abducted by Boko Haram Militants," *Guardian*, May 5, 2014.

2 "Nigeria Refused Help to Search for Kidnapped Girls," *Washington Post*, May 11, 2014.

African countries, young men have been rounded up and pressured into service in guerrilla groups.<sup>7</sup> In Algeria in the 1990s and early 2000s, in a perversion of the religious laws on sex and marriage, women and girls were forced to temporarily marry insurgents before being discarded once the husbands' conjugal rights had been satisfied.<sup>8</sup>

The parallels between what took place in Algeria and what is now happening in Nigeria provide circumstantial evidence of al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) growing influence over Boko Haram.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, and

**“There is a more worrying reason why the federal government’s response to Boko Haram is mainly kinetic: it possesses neither the means nor the inclination to respond in other ways.”**

when considered alongside other developments in Boko Haram's campaign—the expansion of its area of operations, the escalation in the frequency of its attacks, its successful prosecution of more sophisticated assaults, and ever greater presence outside of Nigeria's borders—AQIM's effect appears to be both inspirational and material. It is now beyond doubt that there are links between the groups.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, there is much

7 Alcinda Honwana, *Child Soldiers in Africa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 5.

8 Marina Lazreg, “Consequences of Political Liberalisation and Sociocultural Mobilisation for Women in Algeria, Egypt and Jordan,” in Anne-Marie Goetz, *Governing Women: Women's Political Effectiveness in Contexts of Democratisation and Governance Reform* (New York: Routledge/UNRISD, 2009), p. 47.

9 Jacob Zenn, “Boko Haram and the Kidnapping of the Chibok Schoolgirls,” *CTC Sentinel* 7:5 (2014), p. 5.

10 “Boko Haram: Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, November 30, 2011, p. 2; “Boko Haram: Growing Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, September 13, 2013, p. 3.

about this relationship that remains unknown including the true extent of AQIM's influence and the precise forms it takes.<sup>11</sup>

#### **The Weaknesses of Nigeria's Counterterrorism Strategy**

In contrast, more concrete conclusions can be drawn about Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy. Based on what the federal government has attempted and what has taken place since the introduction of the states of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe just over a year ago, four sobering deductions can be made.<sup>12</sup>

The first is that Abuja's counterterrorism strategy focuses overwhelmingly on kinetic actions. There are a range of reasons for this. The most significant is simple expediency. The introduction of the states of emergency confirmed the federal authorities' own doubts about their ability to effectively confront Boko Haram within the existing legal framework. Abuja's recourse to special measures highlighted its fears that the group was growing more, not less, dangerous (as some senior officers and politicians had claimed), while its decision to continue them for another six months suggests that, despite its extraordinary efforts, the faction still poses a significant threat. In these circumstances, the federal government has little choice but to try to reassert its control.

Yet there is a more worrying reason why the federal government's response to Boko Haram is mainly kinetic: it possesses neither the means nor the inclination to respond in other ways. This much has been confirmed by its decision to close many of northern Nigeria's schools,<sup>13</sup> and periodically suspend the region's mobile phone network.<sup>14</sup> By responding in these ways, the federal

11 Kirk Ross, “Why Boko Haram Wages War Against Western Education,” *USNI News*, May 16, 2014.

12 The states of emergency were declared and renewed in accordance with section 305 of the 1999 constitution: “Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999,” Federal Republic of Nigeria, May 5, 1999, section 305.

13 “Life for Schoolgirls in the North,” *al-Jazeera*, May 15, 2014.

14 “Nigeria: ‘Cut Off’ Under Emergency Rule,” *BBC*, May 27, 2013.

government has not only acceded to one of Boko Haram's core demands and, in so doing, compromised the education of thousands of students, but it has also severed the main means of communication for millions of people. In such circumstances, there is little the armed forces can do other than attempt to crush Boko Haram militarily. Indeed, it was the federal authorities' sustained failure to better address the north's numerous, serious socioeconomic problems that at least contributed to the emergence and radicalization of Boko Haram in the first place.<sup>15</sup>

The second concern is over Abuja's ability to further escalate its campaign if it needs to. In addition to its declaration of the states of emergency, the federal government has increased defense spending significantly over the past eight years with most of the

**“This question makes the federal government’s unwillingness to work more closely with the United States and the United Kingdom even more concerning since these and other international partners could provide valuable if not decisive assistance.”**

extra money spent on the counter Boko Haram campaign.<sup>16</sup> While this action provides further confirmation of the government's determination to confront the group, the palpable lack of progress is concerning. Not only have the bolstered security forces failed to gain a decisive advantage, but they have also failed to greatly reduce Boko Haram's freedom to act or ability to continue developing its armed campaign. With defense spending set to now fall, what

15 Akinola Olojo, “Nigeria's Trouble North: Interrogating the Drivers of Public Support for Boko Haram,” *ICCT Research Paper*, October 2013, p. 6.

16 “Nigerian Defence Spending to Fall for the First Time in a Decade,” *IHS Jane's 360*, January 8, 2014.

more can Abuja do to turn the tide of war in its favor?<sup>17</sup> This question makes the federal government's unwillingness to work more closely with the United States and the United Kingdom even more concerning since these and other

**“Boko Haram is not on the cusp of defeat but continues to mount attacks and evolve. Without a clear and consistent political and military strategy, Nigeria’s forces will struggle at the operational and tactical levels.”**

international partners could provide valuable if not decisive assistance.<sup>18</sup> One of the ways in which these powers could help Abuja is by facilitating closer regional collaboration.

The third major concern is the low level of security cooperation between Nigeria and its immediate neighbors. Over the past four years, Boko Haram units have been actively engaged in Cameroon, Mali and Niger, and the group continues to recruit new members from each of these countries.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, it is believed that some of the missing Chibok schoolgirls are being held in northern Cameroon.<sup>20</sup> Boko Haram's ability to

17 Ibid.

18 It is not entirely clear why Abuja is unwilling to work more closely with either the United States or the United Kingdom. Likely reasons include national pride and a possible reluctance to expose the Nigerian military's operating practices to closer scrutiny. Certainly Nigeria's army has been heavily criticized on occasion for its heavy and indiscriminate use of force. See “Nigeria: Military Raid Destroys Villages and Kills Rebels, Witnesses Say,” *New York Times*, December 24, 2013. Nevertheless, the Nigerian armed forces have, in the past, proved their willingness to work with international partners especially other African states. See Jon Hill, “To Survive or Lead? The Two Sides of Nigeria's National Security,” in Andrew M. Dorman and Joyce P. Kaufman, *Providing for National Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

19 “Fears in Cameroon of Boko Haram Recruitment,” Integrated Regional Information Networks, April 16, 2014.

20 “Chibok Abductions: Nigeria Girls ‘Taken Abroad,’” BBC, April 29, 2014.

exploit national borders has enabled its leaders and forces to plan, prepare and recuperate in relative safety, and avoid detection and neutralization by Nigeria's security forces. Yet there are three major impediments to greater regional collaboration. The first are the inadequate capabilities of some countries. Niger, for example, is poorly equipped to meet the threat.<sup>21</sup> The second is the absence of properly developed mechanisms to enable such collaboration to occur.<sup>22</sup> The third is cultural: the proven reluctance of Nigeria's various agencies to work with each other, let alone with those of other countries.<sup>23</sup>

The final significant flaw in the federal government's counterterrorism strategy is its confusion with Nigeria's north-south politics. Since the restoration of civilian rule in 1999, political life has been guided by the unconstitutional convention of power-sharing and rotation.<sup>24</sup> According to this agreement, the president and other senior government members must be replaced by candidates from other parts of the country. Yet ever since President Umaru Yaradua's untimely death in May 2010, this convention has been in disarray to the considerable unhappiness of many northerners who feel that one of their own should be president rather than the southerner Goodluck Jonathan.<sup>25</sup> Domestic analysis of and official statements about Boko Haram cannot be separated from northern opposition to Jonathan's presidency, as events like the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls are heavily politicized to attack or defend President Jonathan's administration.

21 “Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency,” p. i.

22 Mechanisms such as properly established and resourced headquarters and their necessary staff.

23 “Army, Police Clash in Minna,” *Daily Times*, December 20, 2013.

24 The rotation of power between politicians from different regions is established practice but is not required by the constitution. In fact, it is anti-constitutional as Nigerian voters should be free to select whomever they chose regardless of which region they come from. See J.N.C. Hill, *Nigeria Since Independence: Forever Fragile?* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 58-59.

25 This regional divide also mirrors Nigeria's main religious divide as the northerners are predominantly Muslim and southerners Christian. There are, however, significant numbers of Christians living in the north and Muslims in the south.

At the very least, therefore, this north-south rivalry undermines trust between the presidency and the northern state governors and military commanders.<sup>26</sup>

**Conclusion**

During the past three months, hundreds of people have been kidnapped from their homes in a series of raids mounted by Boko Haram. The abductions have generated a great deal of international concern, not least because they raise serious questions about the efficacy of the Nigerian federal government's counterterrorism strategy. Indeed, and contrary to at least some official reports, the war against Boko Haram is not going well. Boko Haram is not on the cusp of defeat but continues to mount attacks and evolve. Without a clear and consistent political and military strategy, Nigeria's forces will struggle at the operational and tactical levels.

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26 These tensions have been fueled by accusations of collusion between northern politicians, most notably Ali Modu Sheriff, and Boko Haram. See “Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency,” p. 11.



## Contrasting the Leadership of Mullah Fazlullah and Khan Said Sajna in Pakistan

By Daud Khattak

SINCE ITS FORMATION in 2007, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), often referred to as the Pakistani Taliban, has executed hundreds of domestic attacks in Pakistan. Internal differences have long existed within the TTP over issues of clan, tribe, ideology and negotiations with the Pakistani government. These differences remained private while the TTP's founder, Baitullah Mehsud, was in command. Yet when a U.S. drone strike killed Baitullah in August 2009, some of the TTP's private disputes became public after two TTP leaders—Hakimullah Mehsud and Waliur Rahman Mehsud—temporarily clashed over the issue of succession.<sup>1</sup> Eventually, the Afghan Taliban reportedly intervened,<sup>2</sup> and the two leaders agreed to share power, with Waliur Rahman relegated to Hakimullah's deputy.

In 2013, a U.S. drone strike killed both Waliur Rahman Mehsud and Hakimullah Mehsud in a six-month period. As a result, internal divisions within the TTP reemerged. After Waliur Rahman's death in May 2013, Khan Said "Sajna," Rahman's deputy, declared himself the leader of Rahman's faction, yet he reportedly took this action without the consent of TTP chief Hakimullah Mehsud.<sup>3</sup> After Hakimullah's own death later that year, the Khan Said faction expected to take over the reins of the TTP leadership, but the TTP's *shura* (council) instead appointed Mullah Fazlullah, a prominent non-Mehsud Pakistani Taliban commander, in November 2013.

Fazlullah's elevation to the top position in the TTP proved the final straw for Khan Said and his supporters. TTP fighters from the Mehsud tribe, who mostly supported Khan Said's bid for TTP leadership, showed their

disapproval by withdrawing from TTP operations.<sup>4</sup> In early 2014, Khan Said's faction engaged in clashes and retaliatory assassinations with Fazlullah loyalists, including some Taliban members from the Mehsud tribe led by Shehriyar Mehsud.<sup>5</sup> In a bid to put an end to months of TTP infighting and to prevent Khan Said from tightening his grip over the Mehsud Taliban, Fazlullah formally sacked Khan Said and handed over the command of both North and South Waziristan to TTP Mohmand chief Omar Khalid Khurasani, another non-Mehsud TTP commander, in May 2014.<sup>6</sup>

On May 28, 2014, Khan Said's faction officially announced their withdrawal from the TTP. Khan Said's spokesman denounced the TTP for their attacks on civilians, kidnappings, extortion, and for targeting Pakistani government installations. Since this formal split, the Fazlullah-led TTP derives the majority of its support from the tribal areas and cities, but Khan Said has gained control of the core base of supporters in the Waziristan region.<sup>7</sup>

This article focuses on the broader implications of this split by discussing the positions of Fazlullah and Khan Said on Pakistan and Afghanistan, their policy toward negotiations with Pakistan, and their affiliation with groups such as al-Qa`ida, the Haqqani network, and sectarian jihadist outfits.

### Position on Afghanistan/Pakistan

After escaping the massive Pakistani military operation in Swat in 2009, Mullah Fazlullah, also known as "FM Mullah" for his illegal FM radio channel, has reportedly been hiding

in Afghanistan's mountainous eastern provinces of Kunar and Nuristan.<sup>8</sup>

A staunch critic of the Pakistani government, Mullah Fazlullah often denounced the Pakistani state, its political system and politicians, called the Pakistani military an "army of infidels," and supported the use of violence to implement Shari`a law in Pakistan. Fazlullah boldly claimed responsibility for killing the commander for the Swat Valley, Major-General Sanauallah Khan Niazi, in a roadside bomb in September 2013.<sup>9</sup> Fazlullah's aide and chief of the TTP in Mohmand tribal district, Abdul Wali (also known as Omar Khalid Khurasani), regularly issues statements stressing the need for armed struggle to remove Pakistan's "infidel" rulers.

Khan Said, on the other hand, recently condemned the Fazlullah-led TTP for its attacks against the Pakistani government and security forces. Although Khan Said was the alleged mastermind of the spectacular jailbreak in Dera Ismail Khan city and the attack on a Pakistan Air Force base in Karachi in 2011,<sup>10</sup> he has not executed any similar attacks in Pakistan since he took over leadership of the Mehsud faction of the TTP in 2013—in what many view as a change in targeting strategy. After Khan Said condemned the TTP for killings, kidnappings, extortion and announced his separation from the TTP umbrella outfit in May 2014, some considered his group relative moderates who favor peace talks with the Pakistani government.<sup>11</sup> Khan Said's predecessor, Waliur Rahman, who was a member of the religious party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) before taking up arms with the Pakistani Taliban, was also considered a relative moderate compared to others in the TTP leadership.<sup>12</sup>

4 Personal interview, Sailab Mehsud, Waziristan-based journalist, June 7, 2014. Sailab Mehsud belongs to the same Mehsud tribe and is respected among Taliban circles as a result of his more than three decades of reporting from the area.

5 "Finally, Taliban Split into Factions," *Daily Times*, May 29, 2014.

6 "Fazlullah Sacks Top Commander to Stop Tribal Infighting," Reuters, May 10, 2014; "Fazlullah Sacks Sajna as TTP Chief of SWA," *The News International*, May 10, 2014.

7 The TTP draws most of its support from the Mehsud tribe, and since Khan Said is also from the Mehsud (unlike Fazlullah), he enjoys more support within the TTP.

8 Qasim Nauman and Safdar Dawar, "Militants Attack Pakistani Troops," *Wall Street Journal*, July 12, 2014; Declan Walsh, "Pakistani Taliban Pick Hard-Liner as Leader, Imperiling Proposed Peace Talks," *New York Times*, November 7, 2013.

9 Amir Mir, "Fazlullah Has Mulla Omar's Backing," *The News International*, November 8, 2013.

10 "Sources: Pakistani Taliban Chooses New Second-In-Command," RFE/RL, May 30, 2013.

11 M. Ilyas Khan, "Pakistan Violence: Mehsud Faction Walks Out of Taliban," BBC, May 28 2014.

12 "Wali-ur-Rehman to Replace Hakimullah Mehsud as

1 "Wali ur-Rehman: Senior Taliban Commander," *Independent*, June 1, 2013.

2 Personal interview, Mushtaq Yusufzai, Peshawar-based journalist, June 8, 2014.

3 Nader Buneri, "Taliban Infighting Picks Up," *The Nation*, April 11, 2014.

Although Mullah Fazlullah was one of 10,000 volunteers who crossed into Afghanistan to fight U.S.-led forces in support of the Taliban in late 2001, he has not issued any statements against the Afghan government or the U.S. presence in Afghanistan since he was forced to flee Pakistan in mid-2009 during a major Pakistani military operation in Swat. Fazlullah's recent silence on the issue, and his reported base in eastern Afghanistan, is one reason that Pakistan's government has alleged that the Afghan government is providing sanctuaries and support to Mullah Fazlullah.<sup>13</sup> In several meetings that took place between top Pakistani and Afghan officials in June 2014, one of the key demands from the Pakistani side was for their Afghan counterparts to take action against Mullah Fazlullah.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to Fazlullah, Khan Said's group supports attacks in Afghanistan, and has joined hands with other groups such as the Haqqani network, Hafiz Gul Bahadar's faction, and some factions in the Punjabi Taliban to carry out attacks inside Afghanistan.<sup>15</sup>

#### Peace Talks with Pakistan

Despite the fact that Fazlullah's branch of the TTP engaged in negotiations with the Pakistani government through pro-Taliban cleric Samiul Haq earlier in 2014, Fazlullah himself never issued a public statement supporting the talks. Instead, his close aide Omar Khalid, who was against the talks from the start,<sup>16</sup> issued statements opposing the peace talks while the process was underway. Fazlullah's TTP even violated the so-called month-long cease-fire by killing nearly two dozen kidnapped Pakistani paramilitary soldiers, showing their beheaded bodies on camera.<sup>17</sup> The act

TTP Head," Reuters, December 6, 2012.

13 Yaroslav Trofimov, "Mullah Fazlullah's Rise Complicates Ties Between Kabul, Islamabad," *Wall Street Journal*, November 13, 2013.

14 "Winning the War," *Express Tribune*, June 28, 2014; K. Iqbal, "Border Management: The Right Focus," *The Nation*, July 7, 2014.

15 Saeed Shah, "Pakistani Taliban Faction Condemns Violence, Breaks Away," *Wall Street Journal*, May 28, 2014.

16 The talks still proceeded because several TTP *shura* members wanted to engage in peace talks.

17 Zahir Shah Sherazi, "Mohmand Taliban Claim Killing 23 FC Men," *Dawn*, February 17, 2014.

was seen as a deliberate move on part of Omar Khalid to scuttle the peace talks.

On the Pakistan Army's list of so-called "bad Taliban," commanders like Mullah Fazlullah and Omar Khalid are considered the most dangerous. Although the Pakistan Army, under pressure from the elected government, had agreed to the now failed peace talks with the TTP, the military leadership had serious reservations about Mullah Fazlullah, an official source in Islamabad told this author. "Fazlullah and Omar Khalid were not going to get amnesty even if the government and Taliban had agreed for a hand-shake as a result of the now failed peace talks," said the official.<sup>18</sup>

Khan Said and his faction, on the other hand, have been in favor of peace talks and recently opposed attacks on Pakistani security forces, government and civil and military installations.<sup>19</sup> In a statement in May 2014, a spokesman for Khan Said's group, Azam Tariq, said that "we consider the bombing of public places, extortion and kidnapping un-Islamic, and since the TTP leaders continued with these practices, we decided we should not share the responsibility."<sup>20</sup>

#### Position on Al-Qa`ida, the Haqqani Network and Sectarian Militant Groups

After the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Mehsud tribesmen in Pakistan played host to al-Qa`ida and later militant groups such as the Haqqani network in North and South Waziristan. After the TTP was formed in 2007, the group provided these fighters support and sanctuaries. Yet years of successive U.S. drone strikes have reduced al-Qa`ida's presence in the Waziristan area.

Khan Said and his group have close ties to the Haqqani network and the Punjabi Taliban.<sup>21</sup> Several Arab

18 Personal interview, Pakistani government official, July 2014.

19 Khan

20 Sailab Mahsud, "Key Group Breaks Away from TTP," *Dawn*, May 29, 2014.

21 After parting ways with the TTP, Khan Said came into the fold of the so-called "good Taliban." The Haqqani network and Gul Bahadar are also considered members of the "good Taliban," from Pakistan's perspective. They

militants belonging to al-Qa`ida as well as leaders of the Haqqani network were targeted in U.S. drone strikes in North Waziristan, an area under the control of the TTP and commanders like Khan Said and Hafiz Gul Bahadar. Moreover, others have suggested that the Haqqani network has provided funding to Khan Said's faction, as the Haqqanis hope to recruit more Mehsud fighters for the war in neighboring Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup>

Fazlullah also hosted al-Qa`ida leaders and sympathizers during his days in Swat before 2009. Yet since it is believed he now operates across the border in Afghanistan, and allegedly with the tacit support of Afghan intelligence,<sup>23</sup> it seems unlikely that he would have al-Qa`ida leaders in his circles due to the risks involved in operating in Afghan territory. Fazlullah's commander in the Mohmand area, Omar Khalid Khurasani, however, has openly called Osama bin Ladin his leader and has called for international jihadist attacks.<sup>24</sup>

Both leaders are hardline Deobandis, but Fazlullah is more inclined toward Salafism, apparently due to the influence of his father-in-law, the cleric Sufi Muhammad, who founded the hardliner group Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (Movement for the Enforcement of Shari`a Law, TNSM) in the Malakand region in northern Pakistan in the early 1990s.<sup>25</sup> Sufi Muhammad led a rag-tag army of volunteers to fight alongside the Taliban following the U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan in late 2001. Many of his fighters were killed, others were captured by the forces of the Northern Alliance, while Sufi Muhammad and his son-in-law Fazlullah were arrested by

do not carry out attacks inside Pakistan, as their focus is Afghanistan. For more, see Qaiser Butt, "Situationer: Sajna's Departure Likely to Exacerbate Divisions within TTP," *Express Tribune*, May 29, 2014.

22 Declan Walsh, "Fractured State of Pakistani Taliban Calls Peace Deal into Question," *New York Times*, April 20, 2014.

23 Michael Georgy and Matthew Green, "Pakistan Accuses Afghanistan of Backing Taliban Enemy," Reuters, August 5, 2012.

24 Amir Mir, "Journalist-Turned-Militant Khurasani Wants to Seize Nukes, Topple Govt," *The News International*, February 18, 2014.

25 Hassan Abbas, "The Black-Turbaned Brigade: The Rise of TNSM in Pakistan," *Terrorism Monitor* 4:23 (2006).

the Pakistani security forces upon their reentry into Pakistani territory.

Both Fazlullah and Khan Said have never denounced sectarian killings and both leaders have supported sectarian leaders and groups in the past.

#### Grassroots Support

Khan Said has strong roots in the Mehsud tribe in Waziristan, a territory that serves as the headquarters for various militant groups. Khan Said, though a veteran of the Afghan jihad, never enjoyed the charisma of his rival, Fazlullah. In fact, very few people outside Waziristan knew his name before he succeeded Waliur Rahman in May 2013.

Unlike Khan Said, Fazlullah is from Swat, a well-developed city and tourist region in Pakistan. Mullah Fazlullah is considered to be a media-savvy commander. During his days in Swat, Fazlullah interacted on a regular basis with the local media.

Fazlullah ran a radio show while living in Swat from 2007 until 2009, and became a local household name. As a result of his charismatic Islamic sermons and demagoguery, he accrued thousands of supporters. These individuals, who were not connected to militants or violent jihad, donated money at Fazlullah's request to construct a large religious complex in Mam Dheri, Fazlullah's native village, on the riverside in Swat.<sup>26</sup> Following his escape from the region in 2009, he is believed to have lost a great deal of local support.

#### Conclusion

Although several Pakistani analysts have interpreted the recent fragmentation of the TTP as the beginning of the end for the group, termination of the organization is unlikely because Khan Said is only leading the Mehsud Taliban, while the rest of the TTP is still united under the leadership of Mullah Fazlullah.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> These details are based on the author's own reporting in the region throughout the years.

<sup>27</sup> That being said, since the majority of the TTP is from the Mehsud tribe, Khan Said likely enjoys more support than Fazlullah in Waziristan, as Khan Said is a Mehsud, while Fazlullah is not.

Fazlullah continues to enjoy the support of the TTP core leadership in Mohmand, Orakzai and Bajaur tribal agencies, besides several cities in Pakistan, including Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi and Malakand. Khan Said's support base is mostly among the Mehsud Taliban in parts of North and South Waziristan and the nearby districts of Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu and Tank. Moreover, despite Khan Said's separation from the TTP, some Mehsud tribesmen under the leadership of Shehriyar Mehsud are still supporting Fazlullah's faction.

The now-failed peace talks, initiated by the Pakistani government in March 2014, further highlighted the differences between these groups, as the Hakimullah group opposed the talks while Khan Said's faction was supportive. Pakistani government efforts to engage in dialogue with these groups, combined with tribal rivalries over leadership, played a role in the final division of the TTP.

The Khan Said faction is now part of the so-called "good Taliban," from the perspective of the Pakistani government, as he is presently focused on attacks in Afghanistan and elsewhere abroad. Other militant factions part of the "good Taliban" include the Haqqanis, the Hafiz Gul Bahadar group and some factions in the Punjabi Taliban, as they are mostly focused on Afghanistan or India. Since Mullah Fazlullah is hiding in Afghanistan and managing most of the "bad Taliban," some analysts have suggested that the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan could trigger a limited proxy war between Afghanistan and Pakistan, with each country leveraging militant groups against the other's interests.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Trofimov; Walsh, "Fractured State of Pakistani Taliban Calls Peace Deal into Question."

## Recent Highlights in Political Violence

June 1, 2014 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine security forces arrested Miraji Bairullah (also known as Mahang), who was wanted for killing two U.S. servicemen in a roadside bomb on Jolo island in September 2009. Bairullah was believed to be a member of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). – *Reuters, June 2*

June 1, 2014 (NIGERIA): Suspected Boko Haram gunmen opened fire on a church service in the remote Attangara village in northeastern Nigeria, killing nine people. – *Reuters, June 2*

June 2, 2014 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed three Turkish construction workers in Nangarhar Province. – *Washington Post, June 2*

June 2, 2014 (TURKEY): Turkey listed Jabhat al-Nusra as a terrorist organization. The United States listed Jabhat al-Nusra as a terrorist organization in December 2012. – *Hurriyet Daily News, June 3*

June 2, 2014 (SAUDI ARABIA): Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) said that they executed four men accused of putting electronic tracking chips in vehicles to help U.S. drone aircraft identify targets. According to Reuters, "The 28-minute video showed what AQAP said were four spies confessing that they had planted devices in vehicles which resulted in the deaths of AQAP fighters two years ago in the southern Shabwa Province." – *Reuters, June 2*

June 2, 2014 (NIGERIA): Boko Haram militants wearing military uniforms reportedly killed at least 200 civilians in three villages in the Gwoza local government district in Borno State in northeastern Nigeria. As reported by the Associated Press, "The militants arrived in Toyota Hilux pickup trucks—commonly used by the military—and told the civilians they were soldiers 'and we are here to protect you all,' the same tactic used by the group when they kidnapped more than 300 girls from a school in the town of Chibok on April 15. After people gathered in the center on the orders of the militants, 'they begin to



shout Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar on top of their voices, then they begin to fire at the people continuously for a very long time until all that gathered were all dead,' said the witness who didn't want to be named for fear for his safety." - *AP, June 5*

June 3, 2014 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed Mohammed Khamis Abu Risha, one of the leaders of Iraq's pro-government Sunni tribal fighters, in Ramadi, Anbar Province. According to Reuters, he was "touring a checkpoint manned by his fighters in Ramadi when a suicide bomber hugged him, said one of his men. Four of Abu Risha's bodyguards were killed in the blast." He was the nephew of Ahmed Abu Risha, who is the formal leader of all pro-government Sunni fighters in Anbar Province. - *Reuters, June 3*

June 4, 2014 (GERMANY): German prosecutors brought terrorism charges against two Lebanese brothers and a German man who are accused of being involved with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. According to the *New York Times*, "German authorities believe some 300 people have left Germany for Syria since the conflict began there, and the authorities worry that the dozen people who they say have returned radicalized pose a threat of increased terrorism. Officials have said those who have returned are capable of building bombs and carrying out attacks, although they have no indications of concrete plans." - *New York Times, June 4*

June 4, 2014 (LIBYA): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle tried to assassinate Khalifa Haftar, a rogue Libyan general who is leading an offensive against Islamist militias, in Benghazi. The explosion failed to injure Haftar. - *AP, June 4*

June 4, 2014 (IRAQ): A car bomb killed at least 14 people near a hospital in the predominately Shi'a Muslim city of Hilla. - *Reuters, June 4*

June 4, 2014 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a military vehicle near Islamabad, killing five people. Two senior army officers were among the dead. - *AFP, June 4*

June 5, 2014 (PAKISTAN): A suspected suicide bomber injured four people outside a mosque in Karachi. - *The News International, June 5*

June 6, 2014 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a convoy of vehicles carrying one of the candidates in Afghanistan's presidential runoff election. The explosion killed six people, but the candidate, Abdullah Abdullah, was not injured. The attack occurred as Abdullah was traveling between hotels in Kabul. The Afghan government alleged that "an intelligence agency of a foreign country and LeT [Lashkar-i-Tayyiba]" were involved in the attack. - *New York Times, June 6; Reuters, June 8*

June 7, 2014 (IRAQ): At least 52 people were killed after a series of car bombs exploded across largely Shi'a neighborhoods in Baghdad. - *Associated Press, June 7*

June 7, 2014 (IRAQ): The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant entered a university in Ramadi, killing three policemen. The militants rounded up students and staff, but they were forced to withdraw after they came under attack by the Iraqi military. - *Telegraph, June 7*

June 8, 2014 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber parked an explosives-laden vehicle near the headquarters of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) party in Diyala Province. After the car bomb exploded, the bomber entered the PUK building and detonated his explosives vest. At least 18 people were killed. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which took responsibility for the attack, claimed that two suicide bombers were involved. - *Reuters, June 8*

June 8, 2014 (NIGERIA): A female suicide bomber killed a Nigerian soldier outside an army barracks in Gombe, located in northeastern Nigeria. - *Reuters, June 8*

June 8-9, 2014 (PAKISTAN): Approximately 10 gunmen disguised as police attacked a terminal at Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, Pakistan's busiest airport. The five-hour siege killed at least 24 people. All 10 militants were also killed. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility. - *AP, June 8; CBS News, June 9*

June 9, 2014 (IRAQ): The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which used to be part of al-Qa`ida, seized control of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city. According to RFE/RL, Iraqi "officials said dozens of heavily armed insurgents seized the provincial capital's headquarters, occupied police stations, overran the airport, and freed prisoners from jails. The governor of the northern province of Ninawa, Athil al-Nujaifi, said the military and police forces abandoned their positions." Residents of the city said that black flags associated with jihadist groups were now flying from buildings in Mosul. - *RFE/RL, June 10*

June 9, 2014 (IRAQ): A roadside bomb exploded at a police checkpoint in Tuz Khurmato in northern Iraq. A suicide bomber then detonated an explosives-laden truck in the same location. The two blasts, which occurred near the office of President Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) party, killed 28 people. - *Channel News Asia, June 9*

June 9, 2014 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber rammed a truck into a military checkpoint in North Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing four soldiers. - *The News International, June 10*

June 10, 2014 (IRAQ): Two bombs exploded near a funeral procession in Ba`quba, Diyala Province, killing 20 people. - *Independent, June 10*

June 10, 2014 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants attacked security forces at Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, the second time in two days. According to the *New York Times*, "the assault, in which at least two gunmen opened fire on a guard post at the airport perimeter, caused no casualties and ended with the gunmen fleeing into a nearby slum. By contrast, at least 36 people died in the first attack on Sunday [June 8], which lasted through the night." - *New York Times, June 10*

June 11, 2014 (IRAQ): The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) took control of Tikrit, the hometown of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. The move comes just two days after the ISIL seized control of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the ISIL has "pushed deeper into

the heart of the country, threatening to create an extremist 'proto-state' in the Middle East, something that U.S. forces fought for eight years to prevent." – *Los Angeles Times, June 11*

June 11, 2014 (IRAQ): The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant seized 49 Turks from the Turkish Consulate in Mosul, including special forces soldiers, diplomats and children. – *Reuters, June 17*

June 11, 2014 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated explosives among a gathering of people inside a tent in Baghdad's Shi'a slum of Sadr city, killing at least 16 people. – *Reuters, June 11*

June 11, 2014 (LIBYA): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle attacked an army checkpoint outside Benghazi, wounding six people. The checkpoint was manned by fighters loyal to Khalifa Haftar, a rogue Libyan general who is leading an offensive against Islamist militias. – *Chicago Tribune, June 11*

June 11, 2014 (MALI): A car bomb killed four United Nations peacekeepers in the northern Malian town of Aguelhoc. As explained by Reuters, "Mali was thrown into chaos in 2012 when al-Qa`ida-linked Islamist fighters taking advantage of a military coup in the capital Bamako hijacked a Tuareg separatist rebellion to seize the West African nation's desert north. A French-led military intervention pushed them back last year, but Islamist fighters are blamed for continuing sporadic violence, including attacks on vehicles with improvised landmines." – *Reuters, June 11*

June 11, 2014 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine security forces arrested Khair Mundos, a senior Abu Sayyaf leader who was on a U.S. government terrorist list. – *Sun Star, June 11*

June 14-15, 2014 (LIBYA): U.S. Special Operations Forces apprehended Ahmed Abu Khatalla south of Benghazi, quickly transporting him out of Libya to a U.S. warship. Khatalla is accused of being a ringleader in the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi in September 2012 that killed four Americans. – *Washington Post, June 17*

June 15, 2014 (EGYPT): An Egyptian court began proceedings against 68 Islamists, including al-Qa`ida chief Ayman al-Zawahiri's brother, on terrorism-related charges. Muhammad al-Zawahiri and the other defendants are accused of establishing a terrorist group to attack Egyptian security forces and members of the Christian minority, as well as other terrorist operations. – *Gulf News, June 15*

June 15, 2014 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed at least nine people outside a store selling army fatigues on a busy road near Tahrir Square in central Baghdad. – *Independent, June 15*

June 16, 2014 (SPAIN): Spanish police arrested eight suspected Islamist militants in Madrid. The militants are accused of recruiting and sending foreign fighters to join the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which is fighting in Syria and Iraq. Spanish officials said that the leader of the cell had been detained in Afghanistan in 2001 and later held at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay. – *CNN, June 16*

June 16, 2014 (IRAQ): The United States is sending up to 275 U.S. military personnel to Iraq to "provide support and security for U.S. personnel and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad." The U.S. government also said that they might send approximately 100 special operations troops as well, to advise the Iraqi military as it fights against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. – *Los Angeles Times, June 16*

June 16, 2014 (IRAQ): The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) seized control of Tal Afar, the latest city in Iraq to fall to the militant group. As explained by the *Los Angeles Times*, "Over the last week, ISIL fighters have captured oil-rich Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, and seized Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown. Better equipped and numerically superior Iraqi army and police units abandoned their posts and fled. Other areas fell with a similar lack of resistance as ISIL fighters swept to within 50 miles of Baghdad." – *Los Angeles Times, June 16*

June 17, 2014 (IRAQ): The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) forced Iraq's largest oil refinery in Baiji to shut down. A senior engineer

at the facility said, "Due to the recent attacks of militants by mortars, the refinery administration decided to evacuate foreign workers for their safety and also to completely shut down production units to avoid extensive damage that could result." Shortly after the announcement, the ISIL laid siege to the refinery, targeting it with mortar shells. – *CBS News, June 17; Los Angeles Times, June 18*

June 17, 2014 (NIGERIA): A suicide bomber on a tricycle taxi targeted a World Cup viewing venue in Damaturu in northern Nigeria, killing at least 14 people. – *Los Angeles Times, June 18*

June 18, 2014 (UNITED STATES): Rahatul Ashikim Khan and Michael Todd Wolfe were arrested in Texas and separately charged with terrorism-related offenses. Khan, who was born in Bangladesh, allegedly wanted to join Somalia's al-Shabab, while Wolfe, from Houston, wanted to fight in Syria. Khan became a U.S. citizen in 2002 and is a full-time student at the University of Texas-Austin. – *ABC News, June 18*

June 18, 2014 (IRAQ): Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari requested that the United States conduct airstrikes against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants who have recently seized control of a number of cities in Iraq. – *RFE/RL, June 18*

June 19, 2014 (AFGHANISTAN): Four Taliban militants attacked a NATO post in eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province, reportedly damaging 37 NATO supply trucks. – *Reuters, June 19*

June 19, 2014 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked the residence of an anti-Taliban militia leader, injuring five people. The incident occurred in the Matan Adezai area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. – *AFP, June 19*

June 20, 2014 (AFGHANISTAN): An improvised explosive device killed three U.S. soldiers and a military dog in Helmand Province. – *RFE/RL, June 21*

June 20, 2014 (IRAQ): The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) reportedly seized control of al-Qaim, a border post on the Iraq-Syria frontier. As explained by Reuters, "Al-Qaim and its neighboring Syrian counterpart Albu

Kamal are on a strategic supply route. A three-year-old civil war in Syria has left most of eastern Syria in the hands of Sunni militants, now including the Albu Kamal-Qaim crossing. The Albu Kamal gate [in Syria] is run by al-Qa`ida's official Syria branch, the Nusra Front, which has clashed with ISIL but has sometimes agreed to localized truces when it suits both sides." – *Reuters, June 21*

June 20, 2014 (SYRIA): The bullet-riddled bodies of three officers in the Free Syrian Army were found two days after they were kidnapped by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. – *AFP, June 21*

June 20, 2014 (LEBANON): A suicide bomber tried to assassinate Lebanese security chief Major General Abbas Ibrahim at a Lebanese security checkpoint in the eastern Bekaa Valley. Ibrahim was unharmed, but one security officer died in the blast. – *al-Jazeera, June 20*

June 21, 2014 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked High Peace Council adviser Mohammad Massom Stanikzai in western Kabul. The adviser was unharmed, but one civilian was killed in the blast. – *Reuters, June 21*

June 21, 2014 (CHINA): A suicide bomber in a vehicle reportedly drove into a police station in Kashgar in China's contentious Xinjiang region. Police returned fire and killed a group of 13 Uighur separatists. – *Australian, June 21*

June 22, 2014 (IRAQ): The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) attacked rival opposition fighters in northern Syria, using U.S.-made military vehicles that they recently captured from neighboring Iraq. – *Reuters, June 22*

June 23, 2014 (NIGERIA): A bomb tore through a college campus in Kano, killing at least eight people. – *Guardian, June 23*

June 23, 2014 (UNITED ARAB EMIRATES): A court convicted six Arabs of forming an al-Qa`ida cell and raising money for Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qa`ida's affiliate in Syria. They were sentenced to seven years in prison. – *AFP, June 23*

June 23, 2014 (TUNISIA): Tunisia's interior minister said that at least 2,400 Tunisian jihadists are fighting in Syria, mostly on behalf of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. – *AFP, June 24*

June 23, 2014 (SOMALIA): The African Union said that Kenyan fighter jets attacked two al-Shabab bases in the Lower Jubba region of Somalia, killing at least 80 militants. It did not specify when the attacks were carried out. – *Reuters, June 23*

June 24, 2014 (SYRIA/IRAQ): U.S. officials said that the Syrian government launched airstrikes against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in western Iraq. – *AP, June 25*

June 24, 2014 (LEBANON): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle killed one security officer near a Lebanese army checkpoint in Beirut. The attack occurred in a mainly Shi`a area of the capital. – *BBC, June 24*

June 24, 2014 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in a vehicle killed at least two soldiers and a civilian in Spinwam village of North Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The militant group Ansar al-Mujahidin claimed responsibility. – *AFP, June 24*

June 25, 2014 (GLOBAL): The U.S. Treasury Department designated the finance chief and a senior public relations official with Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LeT) as "global terrorists." They were identified as Muhammad Hussein Gill and Nazir Ahmad Chaudhry, respectively. The U.S. government already recognizes the LeT as a foreign terrorist organization. – *AFP, June 26*

June 25, 2014 (SYRIA/IRAQ): Jabhat al-Nusra fighters in the Syrian border town of Albu Kamal pledged loyalty to the rival group the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). According to Reuters, "The central leadership of al-Qa`ida has disowned ISIL and proclaimed Jabhat al-Nusra as its official Syrian affiliate. Controlling parts of Syria's Deir al-Zor Province, where Albu Kamal is located, could help ISIL link up its territorial gains across Syria and Iraq, where it overran the main northern city of Mosul on June

10." In other parts of Syria, the two groups continue to clash. – *Reuters, June 25*

June 25, 2014 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed at least six people, including two Kurdish security personnel, in Kirkuk. – *RFE/RL, July 26*

June 25, 2014 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated explosives at an outdoor market in the predominately Shi`a Mahmudiya area of Baghdad, killing 13 people. – *AP, June 25*

June 25, 2014 (LEBANON): A suicide bomber detonated explosives at the Duroy Hotel near the Saudi Embassy in Beirut, wounding three security officers. The bomber was reportedly a Saudi national. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant claimed responsibility. – *Reuters, June 26*

June 25, 2014 (NIGERIA): A car bomb killed at least 21 people outside an upscale shopping mall in Abuja, the Nigerian capital. – *Wall Street Journal, June 25*

June 26, 2014 (PAKISTAN): The U.S. State Department listed the charity Jama`at-ud-Da`wa as a foreign terrorist organization. The charity is widely considered a front organization for the terrorist group Lashkar-i-Tayyiba. – *Reuters, June 26*

June 26, 2014 (YEMEN): Militants attacked an airport in the eastern Yemeni city of Sayun, killing at least one soldier. At approximately the same time, a suicide bomber drove an explosives-laden vehicle into an army base in Hadramawt Province, killing four Yemeni soldiers. – *Reuters, June 26*

June 26, 2014 (JORDAN): A Jordanian military court acquitted radical preacher Abu Qatada of terrorism charges over his alleged role in a 1999 plot to attack an American school in Amman. The court postponed its decision on an additional set of terrorism charges against Qatada, which involve plots in 2000 to attack Americans, Israelis and other Westerners in Jordan. – *Globe and Mail, June 26*

June 26, 2014 (PHILIPPINES): The United States will disband its anti-terrorism task force that was established



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in the Philippines more than 10 years ago. A U.S. official said that the United States would work with Filipino authorities to implement a transition plan that will ensure that "violent extremist organizations don't regain a foothold in the southern Philippines." - *Slate*, June 26

June 28, 2014 (IRAQ): An Iraqi military counteroffensive pushed the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from the center of Tikrit, a city which fell to the ISIL on June 11. - *New York Times*, June 28

June 28, 2014 (YEMEN): Suspected al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula gunmen opened fire on an army position in Hadramawt Province, killing two soldiers. - *AFP*, June 28

June 29, 2014 (IRAQ/SYRIA): The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) declared itself an Islamic caliphate and called on Muslims everywhere to pledge their allegiance. The ISIL also announced that they have shortened their name to the "Islamic State," and that their leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is the new caliph. According to the statement, "It is incumbent upon all Muslims to pledge allegiance to [al-Baghdadi] and support him...The legality of all emirates, groups, states, and organizations, becomes null by the expansion of the khalifa's authority and arrival of its troops to their areas." - *Reuters*, June 29

June 30, 2014 (UNITED STATES): Sinh Vinh Ngo Nguyen, of Garden Grove, California, was sentenced to 13 years in federal prison for attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization. Nguyen had told an undercover FBI agent that he wanted to engage in jihad and planned to travel to Pakistan to train al-Qa`ida fighters. - *AP*, June 30

June 30, 2014 (UNITED STATES): The White House will send an additional 200 troops to Iraq to increase security at the U.S. Embassy and Baghdad's international airport. The new deployment will also include helicopters and unmanned aerial drones. According to *Voice of America*, the troops "will join the 275 troops sent to protect the embassy

earlier this month. These forces are separate from the up to 300 military advisers the president authorized to assist Iraq as it battles an invading army of jihadists that has taken over major cities and threatens the capital in Baghdad. The latest announcement will bring to nearly 800 the number of U.S. forces in Iraq." - *Voice of America*, June 30

June 30, 2014 (IRAQ): The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant struck the perimeter of the al-Askari mosque, one of Shi'a Islam's holiest shrines, in Samarra. A mortar round landed at the perimeter, killing a number of people. - *Time*, July 1

June 30, 2014 (SOMALIA): A car bomb ripped through a busy market in Mogadishu, killing two people. - *Guardian*, June 30