

# TERRORISM FOCUS

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### SOMALI ISLAMISTS THREATEN KENYA’S PEACEKEEPING DEPLOYMENT

In an effort to prop up Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government (TFG), Kenya has decided to send a battalion of troops to join the undermanned African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which has only 3,000 of its authorized strength of 8,000 troops (Afrique en Ligne, November 18). Kenya has so far tried to avoid becoming embroiled militarily in the Somali conflict, though it has provided military training for TFG troops.

With a mandate calling for support of the unpopular Transitional Federal Government (TFG), Somalia’s insurgents regard the AU peacekeepers as being little better than the Ethiopian occupation force. There have been frequent and sometimes fatal attacks on Ugandan and Burundian troops, the only countries so far to actually send soldiers to Somalia as part of their commitment to the AMISOM peacekeeping force. TFG forces appear unlikely to be able to pick up the slack once Ethiopian troops have fully withdrawn – they are sporadically paid, have little commitment to the TFG and devote much of their effort to looting merchant warehouses in Mogadishu. Under pressure, most of these forces can be counted on to go home or defect to Islamist formations.

Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys, leader of the Eritrean-based faction of the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS), warned last week that efforts to replace Ethiopian occupation troops with Kenyan peacekeepers would “meet with nothing but failure... We will fight them like we fought

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the Ethiopians” (Radio Shabelle, November 20). Aweys has spoken in the past of forming a “greater Somalia,” incorporating the Somali minorities living in eastern Ethiopia and northeastern Kenya. As Islamic Courts Union (ICU) chairman, Aweys once declared, “We will leave no stone unturned to integrate our Somali brothers in Kenya and Ethiopia and restore their freedom to live with their ancestors in Somalia” (AP, November 19, 2006).

Responding to reports that Kenyan troops would attempt to occupy south Somalia as far north as the port of Kismayo (currently occupied by Somali Islamist forces), the Shaykh said, “I’m specifically warning Kenya. I was told that Kenya said that it will send troops [to Somalia]... I warn Kenya that it should not pay any interest to this matter, because Ethiopia has already failed. I understand that Kenya is planning to deploy up to Kismayo town. Kenya should not burn the thatched house that it is living in” (Radio Shabelle, November 20).

Rejecting the position taken by rival Djibouti-based ARS leader Shaykh Sharif Ahmad, who has entered into an agreement with the TFG, Shaykh Aweys asserted that his faction would continue the campaign against foreign occupation: “We still stick to our position, we stick to fighting, we stick to holy war, we stick to liberation” (Radio Shabelle, November 20).

A spokesman from the Shabaab administration of Kismayo, Abdigani Shaykh Muhammad, announced, “If Kenya sends soldiers into Somalia, then we will recognize Kenya as an invader like Ethiopia, Uganda and Burundi” (Radio Garowe, November 20). Al-Shabaab is the most radical of the Islamist factions fighting the TFG and the Ethiopian troops supporting it. Its leader, Shaykh Mukhtar Robow “Abu Mansur,” has pledged his allegiance to al-Qaeda, but there is little evidence of operational ties as of yet. Abu Mansur threatened to bring a “jihadi war” to Kenya in October, over Kenya’s provision of military training to 10,000 TFG recruits (see *Terrorism Focus*, November 5). Al-Shabaab is also angered by Kenya’s practice of extraditing Somali nationals to Ethiopia, where they are detained and questioned by U.S. intelligence. The al-Shabaab spokesman warned that the Islamists will “wage attacks inside Kenya” if the deployment to Somalia goes ahead.

With the TFG now exerting control over only parts of Mogadishu and Baidoa (and in daylight hours only), the gradual withdrawal of Ethiopian forces threatens to spell the end for the TFG, many of whose members already prefer the safety of Nairobi to a precarious existence in the Somali capital. The urgency of the situation was reflected in a three-day visit last week to Addis Ababa by the U.S. AFRICOM Commander, General William “Kip” Ward. The General held meetings with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and numerous Ethiopian military commanders (AllPuntland.com, November 20; Ethiopolitics.com, November 21).

TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf admits that his government is “on the verge of a total collapse.” The government has failed to name a new cabinet, and the President is unable to work with the Prime Minister. Referring to the rapid fall of town after town to advancing Islamist forces, Yusuf warned, “It is every man for himself if the government collapses... The Islamists kill city cleaners, they will not spare legislators” (al-Jazeera, November 16).

#### MYSTERY SURROUNDS PROFESSIONAL ASSASSINATION OF SPECIAL FORCES GENERAL IN ISLAMABAD

Though no claim of responsibility has been made, it appears Taliban/al-Qaeda elements may be behind the assassination of a recently retired Pakistani Special Forces general and his driver in Islamabad (*The News [Islamabad]*, November 20). The target of what appeared to be the work of professional killers was Major General (Ret.) Amir Faisal Alvi, former General Officer Commanding of the Special Services Group (SSG), Pakistan’s elite Special Forces unit.

General Alvi led several SSG operations in the Wana district of South Waziristan, during which numerous Taliban members were killed or captured. Seemingly at the top of his career, General Alvi was suddenly dismissed by the Army on disciplinary grounds for “conduct unbecoming” in August, 2005. The details of the dismissal have never been made public, leaving outsiders to speculate whether the dismissal may be linked to his assassination.

After a forcible retirement from the Army, General Alvi took up an executive position with the Islamabad office of Malaysia’s Red Tone Communications, a

telecommunications company. An associate of the general revealed afterwards that the general had been receiving phone-threats from the Taliban for three months and had a death threat painted on his house only days before the murder (*The News*, November 20). Despite the warnings, General Alvi appears to have taken few, if any security precautions, taking the same route to his office most days. The ambush was carefully planned, taking place at a speed-break where his vehicle would be forced to slow down.

According to witnesses, General Alvi's vehicle was intercepted at the speed-break by two youths on a motorcycle and a Mitsubishi Pajero SUV. Acting in a deliberate fashion, the assailants, one youth from the motorcycle and two men from the SUV, opened fire from both sides of the general's vehicle, making sure that Alvi was dead before leaving. The whole operation took roughly 30 seconds. According to police, 9-mm pistols were used in the attack, with the general struck by bullets eight times, his driver six times (*The News*, November 20).

A former instructor of the General at the military academy, Brigadier Shaukat Qadir speculated on the reason Alvi may have been targeted: "he was the kind of fellow who probably made some boasts about what he has done in his life in the SSG and elsewhere in the operations in Wana so perhaps that would be one reason I could think of" (*Dawn* [Karachi], November 19). Though the SSG played a major role in the Lal Masjid assault of 2007, General Alvi was no longer with the force by that time. 20 SSG members were killed in a retaliatory suicide bombing on the SSG officers' mess in September 2007.

Besides al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the Sunni extremist Lashkar-i-Jhangvi is also considered a suspect in the killings. Interior Affairs Advisor Rehman Malik announced recently that Lashkar-i-Jhangvi was one of three groups being used to carry out al-Qaeda operations in Pakistan (*The News*, November 23; *Dawn*, November 21). Considering the sensitive nature of General Alvi's work with the SSG and the mystery surrounding his dismissal from the army, it is also possible that the reason for his death may be known only to those deep inside Pakistan's intelligence community.

The SSG consists of at least three battalions of highly trained commandos. Since its formation in 1956, SSG personnel have received advanced training from the Special Forces of Britain, the United States and China. The SSG in turn offers Special Forces training to a number of Middle East nations. The unit saw extensive service during the 1965 and 1971 wars with India and the 1978-1979 Soviet-Afghan war. Unconventional warfare, reconnaissance, counterterrorism and intelligence-gathering are a few of its many responsibilities. In recent years the SSG has been used in covert operations targeting al-Qaeda and Taliban members in Pakistan's northwest frontier region. SSG personnel often work closely with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence.

### **Iraq's Islamic Mujahideen Profiled by Jihadi Websites: Part One**

The profiles of a number of Iraqi jihadi groups were prepared and released by al-Haq news agency (haqnews.net August 7). According to al-Haq, the material was collected through interviews with field commanders, jihadi forums and pertinent websites. The files accumulated by al-Haq, entitled, "The Media Jihad: a Reading of the Jihadi Media in Iraq," were also distributed in some jihadi forums, prompting forum participants to add their corrections, additions and revisions (alboraq.info, November 8). Al-Haq decided to release these profiles in the jihadi forums after Arab media refused to publish them. Terrorism Focus will cover these profiles in two issues. Part One will discuss the Islamic Resistance Movement / 1920 Revolutionary Brigades, the Ansar al-Sunna Army, and al-Jaysh al-Islami in Iraq.

#### **Islamic Resistance Movement / 1920 Revolutionary Brigades**

The core members of this group are a mixture of Salafis, Muslim Brothers and independent Islamists, backed by a few Iraqi tribesmen and the Association of Muslim Scholars. The group claims no alliance with any political party and has an independent decision-making process. The political wing, the Islamic Resistance Movement (IRM), includes a political office, an Islamic decrees office, a jihad security office and a media section. The military wing is called the 1920 Revolutionary Brigades

(1920-RB) and is comprised of over thirty battalions (according to al-Haq). The name of each brigade and its field of operations are given. The profile does not give the name of the group’s general leader, called only “the Amir,” but names the head of the political office, Mujahid Abdul Rahman, and the official spokesman, Abdullah al-Omari.

- Ideology

The group emphasizes its Islamic identity and religious justification for fighting the occupiers by relying on the teachings of the holy Quran and Sunna as a source of guidance in their religiously mandatory “defensive jihad” to evict the enemy from Iraq before moving on to “occupied” neighboring Muslim countries. The main objectives of the group are to expel the enemy and establish an Islamic Caliphate in Iraq.

The IRM reiterates that its jihad is complimentary to other groups’ jihads against occupiers. The group says, “We don’t claim to be the only jihadi group, but ask all our members to obey the leadership.” Abu Qodama, one of the field commanders of 1920-RB, says, “We cooperate with all jihadi groups, except the Baathist groups whom we deem non-Islamic polytheists.” Although an al-Qaeda onslaught on the IRM/1920-RB resulted in the death of some of the group’s leaders, the movement opted not to retaliate (ktb-20.com July 3, 2007).

The movement rejects the political process in Iraq and does not recognize the Iraqi government that resulted from this process. The group’s Amir believes peace is not possible in Iraq under U.S. occupation; therefore, any elections or referendums are irrelevant. Along with four other jihadi organizations, the IRM/1920-RB released a statement declaring any Iraqi government illegal during American occupation.

The movement affirms that their jihad is conditioned on not harming any civilians and rejects the principle of “the end justifies the means.” The group aborts any attack on U.S. forces that might result in killing innocent bystanders. The group

also renounces all forms of sectarianism and judges people individually on the degree of their collaboration with the occupiers.

- Military activities

1920-RB fighters are deployed in the Sunni governorates of Iraq, using rocket and mortar attacks, light weapons ambushes, sniper attacks and roadside bomb attacks. The group also claims the downing of a British C130 Hercules in February, 2005, and the kidnapping of the American director of the Baghdad airport in April 2005 (*Telegraph*, February 2, 2005).

- Media activities

The group’s statements and video messages are broadcast by Arabic-language satellite channels such as al-Jazeera, al-Zawra and al-Rafidayn. The group also releases communiqués, video clips and *al-Katayb*, an internet magazine covering its military and political activities. Besides using jihadi websites such as al-hesbah.info, alboraq.info, hanein.info and muslim.net, 1920-RB has websites of its own - kataeb20.com and ktb-20.com.

### Ansar al-Sunna Army

Founded in 2003 as a Salafi-Jihadi movement, this group is considered an outgrowth of the Kurdish-Sunni Arab Ansar al-Islam. The group includes former members of Ansar al-Islam and volunteers from Arab countries, although the original core was formed from members of al-Taifa al-Mansoura Mujahideen Brigades (TMMB). The TMMB later withdrew from Ansar al-Sunna and joined al-Jaysh al-Islami (see below). Abu Abdullah al-Hassan Bin Mahmoud is the Amir of the group and Shaykh Abdul Wahab al-Sultan is the religious mentor.

- Ideology

As the name implies, Ansar al-Sunna is a Sunni group following the Salafist path. The legitimacy of its insurgency operations is based on the

religious duty of “defensive jihad.” In the founding declaration of the group, Amir Abu Abdullah Mahmoud said, “after the occupation of Iraq, jihad became a divine obligation on every Muslim. The objective of jihad is to expel the enemy and implement an Islamic Sharia government.”

Ansar al-Sunna’s operations and objectives are in conformity with all other Sunni jihadi groups, and, like many other groups, Ansar al-Sunna refrained from retaliating against al-Qaeda’s attacks on the group members.

In a statement released in June 25, 2006, Ansar al-Sunna rejected the democratic process in Iraq as illegitimate and blasphemous, condemning Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki’s national reconciliation initiative and identifying members of Iraq’s parliament as apostates.

- Military activities

The group is militarily active in northern Iraq, the Sunni governorates and in some southern cities, where it targets national guards, police and the militias of the two Kurdish parties led by Jalal al-Talibani and Masoud Barazani. The group claims the bombing of offices belonging to Kurdish political parties in February 2004; the bombing of an American military base in Mosul on December 21, 2004; and the bombing of the Turkish Embassy in Baghdad in October 2003.

- Media activities

Like many other Iraqi jihadi groups, Ansar al-Sunna does not have continuous coverage of its activities in major news channels other than al-Jazeera, al-Zawra and al-Rafidayn satellite television channels. The group publishes *Ansar al-Sunna* magazine, *the Mujahideen Harvest* news bulletin and has its own website ([ansar11.org](http://ansar11.org)). Ansar al-Sunna posts almost daily reports of allegedly successful attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq, along with other political and religious statements. Ansar al-Sunna rejected the U.S.-Iraqi security agreement in a religious decree released by the group on November 20.

### Al-Jaysh al-Islami in Iraq

The existence of this Salafi-Jihadi group backed by Sunni tribes and ex-military officers was first announced in late 2003, but the group claims it was actually formed before the occupation of Iraq. The group’s “defensive jihad” aims to rid Iraq of the U.S. occupation before setting up an Islamic Sharia government. Regardless of discord with some jihadi groups and internal fighting with al-Qaeda, al-Jaysh al-Islami declares it has no animosity with any jihadi group, but rather endeavors to unite with them under a single leadership. Dr. Ibrahim Yusuf al-Shamari is the group’s official spokesman, Dr. Ali al-Naimi the media spokesman, and Imad al-Din Abdullah the director of central media information.

- Ideology

Like many other Sunni groups, al-Jaysh al-Islami rejects the current political process in Iraq but accepts any process within the framework of Islamic constraints. It also believes the occupier should compensate Iraqis for moral and physical damage inflicted by the occupation.

- Military activities

Al-Jaysh al-Islami is considered the biggest jihadi group in Iraq and deploys in the Sunni governorates in Baghdad, al-Anbar, Salah al-Din, Mosul, Kirkuk, Diyala, Babel, central Basra, and al-Amara. The group’s military targets include U.S. forces, the Iraqi military, Iraqi police and the Badr (Shiite) militias. The group is well-known for its use of roadside bombs, snipers and rocket attacks. The intelligence unit of the group is responsible for a number of notorious hostage-takings and the kidnapping and killing of American civilians working with Iraq’s housing ministry. Abu Moshtaq al-Zebaidi is the group’s military commander.

- Media activities

The group has a number of regular publications of its military operations under names such as *Aydo* (Prepare); *Sout al-Jihad* (Voice of Jihad); *Fi thikra al-ihlital* (On the Anniversary of Occupation)

and *Alyoum wa ghadan ya Amerika* (Today and Tomorrow, O America). Special publications of the group cover unique subjects, such as weapons of mass destruction and the activities of the “Baghdad Sniper.” The different formations of al-Jaysh al-Islami also release their own accounts of attacks on the occupiers with videos bearing titles such as Sawaeq al-Fallujah (al-Fallujah Detonators) and Istamiro Ya Asood al-Anbar (Continue al-Anbar Lions). The group’s best-known regular publication is *al-Fursan* magazine, with 16 issues so far. Al-Jaysh al-Islam probably leads all Iraqi jihad groups in the number of websites and internet forums it maintains. Its official website, [iaisite.org](http://iaisite.org), is run by the group’s media corps, along with [alboraq.info](http://alboraq.info), [alboraqmedia.org](http://alboraqmedia.org), [baghdad sniper.net](http://baghdad sniper.net) and [leeflash.com](http://leeflash.com).

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### **Iraq’s Shias Split over the Impending U.S.-Iraq Status-of-Forces Agreement**

Major divisions have begun to emerge in the Shia political bloc following the Iraqi cabinet’s approval of a proposed security agreement between Baghdad and Washington that would authorize American forces to remain in the country until the end of 2011 (Voices of Iraq, November 18; Arab Times, November 20). Despite forming a united front against the bilateral agreement last summer, the approval of the latest version of the pact has stirred discord within the Shia leadership, which is squabbling over various legal terms in the status-of-forces agreement (SOFA) and the timetable calling for a full withdrawal of U.S. troops by December 31, 2011 (For an earlier Shia reaction to the talks, see *Terrorism Focus*, June 18).

In many ways, the divisions emerging between Shias are largely motivated by Iraqi electoral politics. Ahead of provincial elections scheduled for the end of January 2009 and the general elections later in the same year, each Shia party is calculating the political losses and gains of the agreement, estimating the risks of political concessions that would allow U.S. troops to stay in Iraq after 2011, conditional on the level of security. For

those factions that make up the ruling party and directly participated in the negotiations (i.e. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki’s Dawa party and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim’s Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council - SIIC), the strategic objective of the pact has been to engage Washington to maintain the current stability through next year’s elections, the outcome of which will likely be in favor of the ruling factions in Baghdad. Al-Maliki, who has bolstered his leadership image since the Basra offensive in March, sees this as an opportune moment to consolidate his power, even seeking ways to accommodate the interests of Sunni factions to strengthen his position in parliament (*Al-Sabaah* [Baghdad], November 19).

However, those Shia factions who were not involved in the negotiating process (i.e. the Sadrists and the Fadhila Party) have shown outright hostility to the entire deal on the basis that the security agreement would legalize the presence of U.S. forces beyond 2011, and ultimately undermine Iraq’s national sovereignty (Voices of Iraq, October 4). Such nationalist rhetoric has resonated among the urban poor in cities like Baghdad and Basra, where Sadrists are beginning to form a new militia movement (“The Promised Day Brigade”) to thwart the security agreement (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, November 18).

For Sadr and other Arab Shia nationalists like Ibrahim Jafari (who appears to have split from the Dawa party in recent weeks), the approved security agreement is a testimony to the decline of Baghdad as home to an autonomous and elected government (Fars, October 3; Middle East Online, October 20). While organizing demonstrations in cities like Kut and Baghdad, the Sadrists have compared the security pact with the 1978 Camp David Accords, viewed by Arab nationalists as a one-sided agreement that merely advanced the interests of Western powers and led to the disintegration of a united Arab front (Voices of Iraq, October 12; Fars News, October 18). Prior to its approval, the agreement was also rejected by some moderate Shia clerics, who believed the bilateral pact would undermine Iraqi sovereignty and provide U.S. troops a permanent foothold in the region. As Karbala-based cleric Murteza Qazwini described it, the deal is fundamentally an illegal document that violates Iraq’s national sovereignty (Voices of Iraq, October 3).

Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, a leading Shia cleric based in Najaf, has also opposed the security pact, challenging the non-transparency of the deal and a lack of provisions

that would guarantee Iraq's sovereignty (IRNA, July 5; Fars, October 4; *Al-Sabaah*, October 11; IRNA October 23; Voices of Iraq, October 31). But Sistani has also thrown his weight behind Maliki and Hakim in confronting Washington over specific phrases in the agreement (IRNA, October 10; Press TV, November 19). As al-Maliki regularly visited Sistani in Najaf and sought his approval on various terms of the agreement, the grand ayatollah continued to support al-Maliki by maintaining that the responsibility to sign the security agreement lies in the hands of Baghdad. Sistani's cautious stance on the security deal underlines how he sought to bridge the gap between those Shia factions who participated in the negotiations (the Dawa and SIIC) and other parties who saw themselves as outsiders to the negotiation process (the Sadrist and Fadhlis). The reality, though, is that Sistani is unable to singlehandedly overcome such divisions, since his authority is largely limited to those Shia factions inside the ruling government; in other words, those who already support and have directly negotiated the agreement.

In the background lies the shadow of Iran. Since the beginning of the talks, Tehran has opposed the security agreement for fear that Baghdad would succumb to U.S. pressure in establishing permanent bases in the country that would pose a military threat to Iran (Al-Manar TV, September 6). An Iranian analyst described the proposed security pact as reeking of ambiguity and conditional phrases that provide plenty of room for Washington to legally legitimize its military presence in Iraq beyond 2008 (Tabnak, October 22). Despite Tehran's attempt to influence the negotiations, even allegedly bribing Iraqi lawmakers to oppose the pact weeks before its approval, the Maliki government, along with pro-Iranian politicians like Hakim, has resisted Tehran's calls to simply reject the pact, while assuring Tehran that their country will not be used as a launching pad for any attack on Iran (Al-Manar TV, September 6; *Today's Zaman*, October 18).

The approval of the security agreement marks a major development in Iraqi politics, which is slowly maturing in response to negotiations with the occupying forces and the need to develop a post-Baathist national politics. The factionalism behind the talks displays signs of a new post-Baathist type of democratic nationalism that is evolving more around competition between parties based on political interests rather than religious or sectarian affiliation. As Sunni and Shia factions make alliances opposing or supporting the pact, Iraqi politics is entering

a new stage of democratic consolidation (Voices of Iraq, November 20). If the agreement passes in this week's parliamentary vote, al-Maliki will be able to claim a major victory, further legitimizing his status as a non-sectarian, national leader.

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### **What Lies Ahead for U.S. - Turkish Counterterrorism Cooperation in the Obama Era?**

The strategic relationship between Turkey and the United States entered into a new phase on November 5, 2007, when President Bush pledged real-time intelligence sharing with the Turkish military while condemning the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan - PKK): "The PKK is a terrorist organization. They're an enemy of Turkey, they're an enemy of Iraq and they're an enemy of the United States" (Turkey.usembassy.gov, November 5, 2007). Since then, Turkish-U.S. intelligence sharing has been very productive in targeting the PKK camps in northern Iraq over the last year.

This week, Iraq's parliament is voting on approval of the Status-of-Forces Agreement (SOFA), an accord that spells out the conditions of the U.S. occupation and provides a timetable calling for a full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq by December 31, 2011. Approval of the accord will open yet another chapter to shape Ankara's counterterrorism policies against the PKK. Turkish journalist Fikret Bila, who is well known for his close relations with the Turkish military and whose work usually reflects the views of influential institutions in Ankara, is not expecting a total American withdrawal from Iraq:

[U.S. President-Elect Barack] Obama would not seek to withdraw all American troops from Iraq. The U.S. would not give up its interests in Iraq. It would not change its traditional policy to control energy corridors and oil fields in the Middle East and the Caucasus. One of the options before Obama is to redeploy American troops into northern Iraq (*Milliyet*, November 2).

It is a common belief among the Turkish security bureaucracy that the United States will not want to withdraw its troops from Iraq.

To digest the new reality in Iraq, one of the questions Ankara seeks to answer is whether the Obama administration will allow Turkey to continue its military operations in Iraqi territory. In a speech given in the United States on November 13, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated:

Turkey is resolved to maintain multilateral and close cooperation with the new U.S. administration led by Mr. Obama. Naturally, we particularly expect the new U.S. administration to take into consideration Turkey's sensitivities on matters which have vital importance. This is also important not only for bilateral relations but also for peace and security (*Hurriyet*, November 15).

Erdogan also described his expectations of Iraq:

Turkey has assisted [the] Iraqi people in all areas to finalize their efforts to get back to normal again. On the other hand, Turkey has a rightful expectation from Iraq. Iraq should terminate the ongoing presence of terrorist organization on its northern territories. We expect both the central government of Iraq and the local administration in the north to take more influential and tangible steps (Worldbulletin.net, November 14).

Details of a November 17 phone conversation between President-Elect Obama and Turkish President Abdullah Gul were released in a press statement from the Turkish president's office. According to the statement, Obama declared Turkey "has the right to fight against terrorism as part of its right to self-defense, [while] emphasizing the importance of a special alliance relationship between Turkey and the United States" (*Today's Zaman*, November 19). In this statement what needs to be understood is how Obama defines the "right to self-defense." On the basis of self-defense, would the Obama administration allow Turkey to expand its fight into Iraqi territory, or is "self-defense" limited to Turkish territory?

In his draft agenda for a security partnership with Europe, Obama emphasized that America's relationship with Turkey has been strained by the Bush administration's "misguided and mismanaged intervention in Iraq, which has helped revive the terrorist threat posed to Turkey by the separatist Kurdish Workers Party." The solution offered in the draft is to "lead a diplomatic effort to bring together Turkish and Iraqi Kurdish leaders and negotiate a comprehensive agreement that deals with the PKK threat, guarantees Turkey's territorial integrity, and facilitates badly needed Turkish investment in and trade with the Kurds of northern Iraq." [1]

Turkey has already resumed three-way talks on the PKK issue with Baghdad and Washington (*Today's Zaman*, November 15; *Hurriyet Daily News*, November 20). In addition, Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin has revealed that Turkey may take further steps to ameliorate Abdullah Ocalan's prison conditions if Ocalan calls on the PKK to lay down its arms (*Hurriyet*, November 25). Ocalan has not yet responded. However, what seems obvious is that the PKK has been revising its strategies against the changing nature of the Turkish and American approach to the terrorism problem. The PKK leadership has written a letter to President-Elect Obama while also intensifying its harsh criticism of the United States for aiding Turkey. According to Ahmet Deniz, the PKK's head of external relations:

America is an enemy of the Kurds and it helps the Kurds' enemies in their attacks on the Kurds in terms of explosives and intelligence. It provides information to Turkey. Their spy planes and Israeli spy planes fly over our area on a daily basis, yet they talk about the Kurds' rights and get close to the Kurds when their interests dictate. When they have no use for the Kurds and their interests lie with other sides which are hostile to the Kurds, they will abandon the Kurds and not support them (*Chawder [Sulaimaniyah]*, November 3; see also *Terrorism Focus*, November 19).

To send a message to the international powers, and particularly to the United States, that the PKK continues to be an important actor in the region, the group sabotaged the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline near Midyat in Turkey's southeastern Mardin province on November 21 (hpg-online.net, November 22; *Anadolu Ajansi*, November 24).

In these uncertain times for the Kurds of Iraq, it remains to be seen whether the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) will seek to eliminate the PKK from its territory. What is interesting to note here, however, is that the Turkish military has not been involved in public discussions about the recent developments. At least two technical points are directly related to the U.S. withdrawal plan and Obama's approach of bringing Turkish and Kurdish leaders together to find a solution for PKK terrorism. First, will the Obama administration allow the Turkish military to continue its air raids on PKK camps in Iraqi territory? Second, will the Obama administration continue to share the actionable intelligence provided by American unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) with the Turkish military?

In what seems to be an effort to reduce the Turkish military's reliance on U.S. intelligence, Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul visited Israel in October to try and expedite the long-delayed completion of 10 Heron UAVs being produced by Israel Aircraft Industries. Two of the Herons are scheduled to be delivered by the end of November, with the other eight scheduled for delivery in early 2009 (*Yeni Safak*, October 31).

Ankara appears to be adjusting its counterterrorism strategies according to the new reality in Iraq. This includes reducing dependency on American intelligence provided by UAVs and the establishment of better diplomatic mechanisms with the Kurds of Iraq to isolate the PKK. Turkey still considers American support as a vital element for its fight, but due to the expected U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq, the nature of this support may shift from military cooperation to diplomatic coordination.

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#### Notes:

1. "Barack Obama and Joe Biden: A Stronger Partnership with Europe for a Safer America," n.d., [www.barackobama.com/pdf/Fact\\_Sheet\\_Europe\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Fact_Sheet_Europe_FINAL.pdf).

## The Role of Tribal Lashkars in Winning Pakistan's War on Terror

After successive failed attempts to tackle the rising militancy in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the adjoining North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Pakistan's new civilian government is now encouraging local tribal people to stand up against the Taliban and al-Qaeda and flush them from their regions. The government is hopeful that the tradition of tribal lashkars will evict militants from the region, or at least isolate al-Qaeda and weaken the roots of the Taliban. The lashkar is a traditional tribal militia, often formed on an ad hoc basis for the accomplishment of a specific purpose. The forming of tribal militias is not something new in the history of FATA, but this time it has shown some positive results, partly because it is backed by the "will" of the tribal folk who have become fed up with Taliban atrocities.

The most noteworthy and unprecedented anti-Taliban uprising to date took place in the Buner district of the NWFP, where villagers raised an armed squad of volunteers and killed a group of six militants who had attacked a police station in the Kingargalli area of the district and brutally killed eight policemen (*The News* [Islamabad], August 31). Since then, other armed lashkars in the Frontier province and tribal region bordering Afghanistan have been encouraged to hunt for Taliban militants.

Every tribesman in the lashkar is armed with his own weapon, food and supplies. Normally, the government does not assist such lashkars either financially or logistically. Typically, lashkars are formed to hunt down an outlaw, address a family feud that has grown out of control, or sometimes even challenge a particular government policy. They are assembled for the resolution of a particular issue and then disbanded. In general, the tribal lashkars have a good track record of bringing peace and order to their wild land, but they twice failed to expel al-Qaeda fighters from the tribal region in 2003 and 2007, when big lashkars with thousands of volunteers were formed in South Waziristan. The organizers of these lashkars were further discouraged when the Taliban began targeting all those tribal elders who had been part of the militias. Since then, more than 300 tribal elders have been killed in targeted killings in the tribal belt alongside the Afghanistan border, stretching from South Waziristan to the Bajaur area (Aaj TV, October 28).

This time, however, the increasing brutality of the Taliban (which now includes murder, kidnappings of local people, the torching of girls' schools, and the bombing of CD shops) has frustrated local tribals to such an extent that they have started a genuine and indigenous resistance movement to get rid of all militants in the area. In the past, the fear of Taliban reprisals and uncertainty about the sincerity of the government and military's commitment to fighting militancy prevented the communities from challenging the militants.

This resistance movement has some parallels with the Sunni "Awakening" movement in al-Anbar province of Iraq, where tribesmen rose up against al-Qaeda militants and successfully evicted them from the area. But there are also some major differences between these two movements. In Iraq, the Sunni tribes were assisted with millions of dollars from the U.S. government as well as active military support. In contrast, the tribal lashkars in Pakistan are so far relying on their own old-fashioned guns against the sophisticated weapons of Taliban and al-Qaeda (*Daily Mashriq* [Peshawar], October 25).

Lakki Marwat was the first district in the NWFP to raise a volunteer lashkar to evict Taliban militants from the area. The Taliban were warned by the elders of the lashkar to surrender or face the consequences. The local Taliban did not dare to face up to the large lashkar, and as a result they either gave up their militant activities or left the area. (Newline [Karachi], October 2008). The same encouraging results were achieved in another district of the province, Hangu, where the Taliban did not put up much resistance and evacuated the area. However, it was in Buner district where the lashkars achieved unprecedented results, inviting attention from the rest of the tribal area.

Soon several such lashkars were formed in the nearby Bajaur tribal area, adjacent to Swat, where tribesmen have suffered at both the hands of the Taliban and through successive military operations. A lashkar of 4,000 armed men raised by the Salarzai tribe launched a campaign against the militants, attacked their strongholds and destroyed their houses and so-called "command centers" in the Bajaur tribal region. Lashkar leaders warned local and foreign militants of dire consequences if they did not leave the area. Malik Munasib Khan, who is leading the uprising against the militants, said that the houses destroyed by the volunteers included one belonging to

militant leader Naimatullah, who had occupied several government schools and converted them into madrassas (*Dawn* [Karachi], September 1). Volunteers of the Salarzai tribe set fire to eight Taliban houses in the Aundai area and killed three militants. Under pressure, the Taliban leadership began directing their supporters to trim their beards and long hair (Taliban hallmarks in the tribal areas) to avoid recognition (*Daily Times* [Lahore], October 5). The lashkars had some gains in Kurram agency as well, where they captured the Bagzai area, a stronghold of the Taliban, with six militants killed and 26 others injured. The local lashkar then retook control of the Char Dewal and Jalmai villages from the Taliban. After further defeats of the Taliban in various parts of the Kurram agency, the tribal volunteers plugged all access points to prevent further entry of unwanted elements into the agency (Geo TV, September 2).

In some areas, the Taliban reacted swiftly and brutally to the challenge posed by the tribal lashkars. In Bajaur, the Taliban beheaded four elders from the Charmang as they returned home after attending a jirga convened to plan action against the Taliban (*Daily Times*, October 11). In another incident in the same tribal area, 22 tribesmen were killed and 45 injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up at a Salarzai jirga where members of the lashkar were finalizing their strategy after demolishing houses belonging to Taliban fighters. Over 100 people were killed in a suicide attack on an Orakzai Agency jirga which had been convened to form a lashkar to clampdown on local Taliban activities (*Daily Times*, November 7). This particular bombing reflected the new intensity of the struggle between Taliban militants and tribal forces – previously, the Orakzai Agency had been considered the most peaceful of the seven agencies making up FATA.

There is no doubt that the tribal lashkars have delivered by flushing Taliban fighters from some parts of the tribal areas, as well as evicting them from certain settled districts of the NWFP. It is also a fact that this time, it is not just a mere display but a real and genuine indigenous movement against the militants who have created major problems for the local tribes. The tribesmen became fed up with Taliban brutality and could not endure their activities any longer. Unfortunately, the mobilization of the lashkars is not likely to be enough to halt the Pakistani Taliban. Despite some significant gains by the lashkars, there seems to be no stopping the Taliban in Swat, Khyber Agency, Waziristan, Kohat district and other parts of the NWFP and FATA. It is also widely feared that

the anti-Taliban lashkars could cause further violence and sow the seeds of unending tribal feuds which could turn into a civil war-like disaster. Another fear is that the accumulation of too much power and weapons in their hands will allow the lashkars to grow out of control and turn to warlordism, creating a new range of problems to replace those posed by the Taliban.

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