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IS PAKISTAN REVERSING STRATEGY OF ISOLATING BAITULLAH MAHSUD IN WAZIRISTAN?

As Pakistani F-16 fighters attack Taliban targets in South Waziristan, the government and military leadership appear to be reconsidering their earlier attempts to persuade other Taliban commanders in the region to remain on the sidelines during a much-delayed ground campaign against Baitullah Mahsud, leader of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

The government's appeals were directed principally at Siraj Haqqani, leader of the deadly Haqqani Network and son of renowned Afghan mujahideen leader Jallaludin Haqqani, Deobandi warlord Hafiz Gul Bahadur of the Uthmanzai Wazir (see *Terrorism Monitor*, April 10), and Ahmadzai tribal leader Maulvi Nazir, whose complex loyalties are somewhat difficult to grasp, being simultaneously pro-Bin Laden, anti-Baitullah Mahsud and pro-Pakistan when suitable (see *Terrorism Monitor*, May 14, 2007). Pakistan's press has reported a series of meetings between government officials and TTP leaders designed to isolate Baitullah, as well as warnings issued to Taliban factions not to interfere with military convoys on their way to Waziristan once the planned offensive begins.

Bahadur and Nazir overcame their differences with Baitullah in February, when they joined Baitullah in the Shura Ittihad-ul-Mujahideen (Council for United Holy Warriors) at the urging of Afghanistan's Mullah Omar (*The News* [Islamabad],



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1111 16th St. NW, Suite #320
Washington, DC • 20036
Tel: (202) 483-8888
Fax: (202) 483-8337

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February 23). Little has been heard of this alliance since, suggesting this was only a temporary display of unity. Maulvi Nazir is a bitter rival of Baitullah. His participation in the new alliance was likely only a sign of his loyalty to Mullah Omar and there are conflicting reports on whether he will support or oppose Baitullah once the campaign begins.

A July 28 suicide attack by Bahadur's faction against government security forces killed two members of the Frontier Corps and wounded five others, suggesting Bahadur has rejected the government's advances (*The News*, July 29; Geo News, July 28). With Siraj Haqqani likely to side with Baitullah to protect his cross-border network, Islamabad appears to have realized the isolation of Baitullah within the Pakistani Taliban is unlikely. After having served as their sponsor for several years, Baitullah is likely to be joined in any conflict against government forces by the remnants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which has been based in Waziristan since being expelled from Afghanistan in late 2001. Known a decade ago for their skills in mountain warfare, the present capability and strength of the Uzbeks is uncertain after years of attrition and isolation from Uzbekistan, but Baitullah's fall will surely result in their destruction, giving the remaining Uzbeks a strong incentive to repel any government incursion.

While there have been numerous unconfirmed reports of negotiations between the government and Baitullah, a senior Pakistani military official told an Islamabad daily that it was now too late for talks: "Both the civil and military authorities have concluded that Baitullah is an enemy of Pakistan and must be dealt with accordingly" (*The News*, August 3).

While the major Taliban leaders appear to be lining up behind Baitullah, a number of lesser commanders appear prepared to seek retribution from Baitullah for various past offenses. A former ally of Baitullah, Turkistan Bhattani, has already started operations against Baitullah's men in the Tank region after having declared his readiness to take on Baitullah's men as soon as Islamabad gave the green light (ANI, July 13; AFP, July 11). Bhattani has joined with two other factions in the reformed Abdullah Mahsud group (named for the late Mahsudi Taliban leader). Local press reported the new Amir of the alliance, Waziristan Baba (a.k.a. Ikhlas Khan) had sworn revenge on Baitullah for killing people in South Waziristan and destroying schools and hospitals (*The Nation* [Islamabad], July 23). A later statement from existing Abdullah Mahsud commander

Qari Misbahuddin Mahsud denied the appointment of Waziristan Baba, claiming he had been sent by Baitullah to create rifts amongst the Abdullah Mahsud Taliban. According to Qari Misbahuddin, Waziristan Baba had already been expelled after less than two months in the Abdullah Mahsud group. A decision had been made to kill him, but he escaped before it could be implemented (*The News*, July 24).

The Pakistani military is still in the process of consolidating its control of Swat, Buner and Dir. Militants driven out of these areas are reported to be regrouping in Shangla District. For the moment, Baitullah's ability to operate beyond South Waziristan appears to be restricted, giving the government time to pursue its aerial campaign (using American supplied targeting intelligence) against him while avoiding a wide-scale conflict against a combination of Taliban factions in Waziristan. Aerial operations, however, are incapable of establishing the government's writ across the Tribal Agencies of northwest Pakistan. Pakistan's F-16s cannot carry out night operations, leaving the battlefield to the Taliban at night. As American and international pressure builds for a ground assault on South Waziristan, Islamabad will use the bombing campaign to buy enough time to find alternatives, whether through the submission of Baitullah Mahsud, or the creation of a tribal alliance capable of ensuring victory in a land campaign.

A senior Pakistani security official explained the government's decision to act against all of South Waziristan's Taliban warlords rather than attempt to isolate Baitullah. "We have delayed the operation only to broaden its horizon. The militants in the border regions have developed joint networks, therefore it is imperative to confront them on both sides of the border so that they do not slip from one area [to] another during the course of operations... It would be difficult to confront Baitullah Mehsud and leave the other ones alone. The operation would have to be an all out war against all of them" (Adnkronos International, July 31).

IRAQI RESISTANCE LEADERS SPEAK OUT ON CONTROVERSIAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

After documents were leaked in mid-July that suggested an alliance of Iraqi resistance leaders had been meeting with a delegation of U.S. diplomats and military officials in an unnamed "neighboring country," it has since been confirmed that such talks between the Political Council

of the Iraqi Resistance (PCIR) and the United States took place twice this year in Istanbul, with Turkey acting as a mediator (*Hurriyet*, July 24; *Today's Zaman*, July 27; see also *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, July 27).

News of the meetings was quickly denounced by the Iraqi Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, who expressed astonishment that the United States was prepared to meet with “terrorists” without the knowledge of the Baghdad government (al-Jazeera, July 25). Both the United States and Turkey were accused of mounting an assault on Iraqi sovereignty and interfering with Iraq’s internal affairs (*Hurriyet*, July 24).

PCIR spokesman Abd al-Rahman al-Baghdadi insists the PCIR did not actually negotiate with the United States, but only discussed “conditions for negotiations.” He claims the U.S. delegation confirmed that “the mistake of invading Iraq by the previous administration should be corrected.” He denied rumors circulating in Iraq that the discussions included the possibility of PCIR inclusion in the political process. “We do not recognize any political process under the occupation.”

Al-Baghdadi described the main points of the PCIR’s “protocol of negotiations” in an interview with *al-Arab*:

- The U.S. administration must issue an official apology to the Iraqi people for crimes committed in Iraq.
- Iraqis who suffered from the U.S. occupation must be compensated.
- All detainees and prisoners must be released.
- The United States must recognize Iraqis’ resistance to occupation as a legitimate right (*Al-Arab* [Doha], July 31).

The meetings were held in March and May of this year. Al-Baghdadi declined to name the US diplomats and military personnel at the meetings “according to their request.” The spokesman says the PCIR’s stipulations were taken to Washington with the promise of a response by the end of June, but nothing has been heard from the Americans since then. While al-Baghdadi says the PCIR is “not concerned by their lack of response,” he believes “the issue is on hold but not over.” He also confirmed that the PCIR had insisted that no one from the Iraqi government attend the meetings.

The March 6 document signed by the PCIR and the U.S. Government reportedly called for the PCIR to name 15 representatives as a negotiating team. Turkey would act as mediator and guarantor for the duration of the negotiations. Should any of the Iraqi representatives be arrested inside or outside of Iraq during the discussions, both Turkey and the United States pledged to do everything possible to obtain their release (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 26).

Ali al-Jubouri, the secretary-general of the PCIR, has insisted that one of the two documents signed with the Americans include U.S. recognition of the Iraqi resistance, describing this as “a major achievement” for the resistance (al-Jazeera, July 15; July 25; IslamOnline July 24).

Reaction to the talks from Baghdad’s Shiite politicians has been overwhelmingly negative. MP Hamid al-Malah, a leading member of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC), demanded to know “whether this is an attempt by the Americans to bring back terrorism to Iraq” (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 26). Others fear that the PCIR acts as a front for unrepentant Ba’athists like former Vice President Ezzat Ibrahim al-Douri.

Muhammad Bashar al-Faydi, spokesman for the Sunni Hayat al-Ulama al-Muslimin (Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq - AMS), notes that the PCIR represents only four of over 100 resistance factions in Iraq. Thirteen of these groups have authorized the secretary-general of the AMS, Shaykh Harith al-Dari, to speak on their behalf on political issues and in potential negotiations (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 26, see also *Terrorism Monitor*, December 27, 2006). The al-Azhar educated shaykh is a vocal opponent of both al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Awakening councils. The PCIR spokesman says the alliance has “no objection” to authorizing Shaykh al-Dari to negotiate on their behalf (*al-Arab*, July 31).

Jihadis Ask How the Mujahideen Will Control an Islamic State of Iraq

By Abdul Hameed Bakier

Jihadi internet forum members are engaged in a continuing debate on the obstacles hindering the application of Islamic law in Iraq after the U.S. withdrawal and suggest certain approaches to modify

the current social and unreligious practices of the people. The debate was triggered by a posting entitled “How would the Mujahideen control the regime?” (hanein.info, July 24).

In a posting intended to start a discussion and solicit ideas to improve the deteriorating application of Islam in Iraq, forum member “al-Falahi” complains that the people of Iraq are abandoning Islam, consequently making it difficult for the mujahideen to take control of the regime in Iraq and set up an Islamic Shari’a state after the 2011 U.S. withdrawal.

Al-Falahi claims that from the time of the 2003 U.S. occupation until a few years ago, pious Sunni Islamic practices dominated in Baghdad. Currently, most Sunni dominated neighborhoods are ignorant of the Sunni creed and the majority of Sunnis support the infidel Awakening councils. Worse, people curse God and religion, bars are abundant, and young men and women are busy engaging in forbidden relationships. Iraqis are growing ever-distant from committing to an Islamic state once the mujahideen take over. The 95% of people who once supported the mujahideen now support the Awakening councils. Al-Falahi says that regardless of the reasons that led to the current detachment of people from Islam, the different Iraqi mujahideen factions must now consider how to tackle the following issues before attempting to implement Shari’a in Iraq:

- The weak ideological commitment of Iraqi Sunnis.
- The absence of a suitable entity to rule the state. To establish an Islamic Shari’a state, there must at least be people who are capable of resisting local pressure against Shari’a from the Kurdish Peshmerga militias in the north and the well-trained Shiite militias in the south. The Islamic state must also be prepared for regional interference from Iran, Turkey and the “pro-Western” states of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Syria, all of whom would not hesitate to impose an embargo on the Islamic State of Iraq if ordered to by the West.
- Even if the mujahideen came to power, they would need to apply certain measures to control Baghdad’s Shi’a, who are 75% of the population.
- The mujahideen also need to deal with the existing Iraqi military and police trained by the

occupation and willing to engage the mujahideen. Al-Falahi put the total strength of Iraq’s security forces at 500,000, along with 100,000 members of the Awakening councils.

- The mujahideen need to tackle the many Islamic factions with international connections.

Al-Falahi ends his posting with a question: If the Americans withdraw from Iraq leaving behind only a few bases, how could the mujahideen take over and rule the country by establishing an Islamic state?

Over the following week, many forum members responded to al-Falahi’s inquiry. Some members felt that al-Falahi exaggerated the number of Iraqis who had abandoned the Islamic state project. To address the problem, members believe the real reasons behind Iraq’s shift away from Shari’a should be explored. The mujahideen must have a clear political and Islamic agenda comprehensible by common Iraqi Sunnis. Other members responded by saying the different mujahideen factions have secret military and political plans ready to implement after the U.S. withdrawal, but to make these plans a reality these same factions will have to unite under one command and keep attacking the enemy and his supply routes until the occupation is no longer sustainable.

Concerning the Awakening councils, forum members agree they will collapse just like the current government of Iraq after the U.S. pullout. Eliminating the heads of tribes that support the U.S. occupation would guarantee the demise of the Awakening councils. The Sunni factions created by the occupation will face a similar fate, but the Shi’a factor remains a big problem for the Islamic state project and should be dealt with by the same oppressive measures used by the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Forum member Abu Obaida al-Jabouri does not think the Iraqi people are shifting their support from the mujahideen to the occupation. The proof may be seen in the daily jihad operations that kill many Crusaders, Shiite rejectionists and apostates. When the mujahideen shura council announced the Iraqi Islamic state project, the mujahideen were in control of al-Anbar, Diyala, Salah al-Din and Mosul provinces. People were very content with the rule of the mujahideen. Unfortunately, mujahideen rule did not last long because many jihadi factions were tardy in pledging allegiance to the new state.

According to al-Jabouri, the jihadis' Islamic State project began with a first phase of guerrilla warfare conducted by the mujahideen. The second phase was the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). The final phase of jihadi operations, control of the whole country, has been obstructed by the Awakening councils and Iraqi traitors who conspired against the ISI.

Now the mujahideen are back to phase one and will continue jihad operations. The Awakening councils came at a time when Shiites were killing common Sunni Iraqis. The people were optimistic that these councils would protect them from Iranian aspirations in Iraq. Therefore, the mujahideen who succeeded in defeating the Americans and forcing them to announce pullout plans must educate the people and convince them to accept the Salafi-Jihadi factions before attempting the application of Islamic Shari'a similar to what is being done in Somalia and Afghanistan.

Finally, al-Jabouri said, "My dear brothers, you should not underestimate the strength of the mujahideen who defeated superpowers in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are fighting [the occupation] with our convictions and faith in God." Many expect Iraq's jihadi factions to fight each other over conflicting goals and methods after the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, much like Afghanistan's mujahideen factions attacked each other after the Soviet withdrawal.

Abdul Hameed Bakier is an intelligence expert on counter-terrorism, crisis management and terrorist-hostage negotiations. He is based in Jordan.

Local Militants Struggle with Taliban Government for Control of Pakistan's Khyber Agency

By Mukhtar A. Khan

Pakistani security forces have not yet established their writ in parts of the volatile Khyber tribal agency. Despite a drawn out military operation dubbed Sirat-e-Mustaqeem (Straight Path), the wary Islamist militants are still at large. Some call it a friendly game of hide-and-seek, others call it a staged drama, yet over 600 people have been killed in the fighting. Several thousand

more have been displaced due to the exchange of fire between the Taliban and Pakistani security forces.

Last year, the government claimed to have killed or seriously injured Mangal Bagh – the leader of Lashkar-e-Islam (LeI)—described as a Robin Hood-like character who has gathered several thousand disaffected people around him. Mangal Bagh is still alive and dwelling in the Tirah Valley, where he controls most parts of the agency. Mangal Bagh does not allow his organization to be aligned with the Baitullah Mahsud-led Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), but has imposed the same strict Shari'a rules in those parts of the Khyber agency under his control. Anybody who is not wearing a head covering has to pay a fine of 100 rupees. He has also imposed a jazia (also called a jizya, or protection tax) for the non-Muslim communities living in Khyber. Each non-Muslim individual has to pay him 1000 rupees annually, with exceptions for women, children and the handicapped (*Daily Mashriq* [Peshawar], June 2).

In the government's fresh offensive against Mangal Bagh's LeI, Pakistani gunship helicopters pounded their positions in the Tirah Valley (35 km southwest of Landi Kotal, the main town in the Khyber region) and claimed to have killed over 20 Taliban as well as destroyed four LeI "hideouts." These included a mosque near Bara and a camp allegedly used to train suicide bombers (*Daily Times* [Lahore], July 28; *Dawn* [Karachi], July 27). However, very few people believe the latter claim to be true, as Lashkar-e-Islam does not support suicide bombings. The LeI is considered to be a pro-government militant organization that asks its fighters not to attack military convoys and government installations.

Control of the Khyber Agency is important for both the Taliban and the government. The main land route to Afghanistan and the Central Asian states is via the Khyber Pass, now a vital supply route to U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan. The TTP have sought control of this route to gain political and economic leverage. Several times, TTP leaders have tried to align their movement with Mangal Bagh's LeI, but each time Mangal Bagh has refused to approve a merger with the TTP. Despite their internal rivalries and fierce clashes, the three main militant groups in the Khyber Agency, Lashkar-e-Islam, Ansar-ul-Islam and Amr bil Ma'ruf wa Nahi Anil Munkar (Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice), have all kept their distance from the mainstream TTP. Local people say the Pakistani establishment has been guiding, supporting and fueling differences among the Khyber's militants to use them as a buffer against TTP operations targeting the Khyber Pass supply route.

Since late 2005, Lashkar-e-Islam and Ansar-ul-Islam have used pirate FM channels to wage a fierce war of words, but the government has remained a silent spectator unless the broadcasts have resulted in a full-fledged battle on the ground. The LeI preached a Sunni Wahhabi version of Islam, while Ansar-ul-Islam propagated Sufi Islam. The Amr bil Maruf wa Nahi Anil Munkar group has maintained its own identity, though it has the same ideology as Bagh's LeI and the TTP. Its founder and leader, Haji Namdar, was assassinated last year in Bara by a young man allegedly sent by Baitullah Mahsud's group to eliminate him (*The Nation* [Islamabad], August 14, 2008). Baitullah's deputy, Hakimullah Mahsud, based in the neighboring Kurram tribal agency, took responsibility for Namdar's assassination. The main reason for their rivalry was Haji Namdar's refusal to allow the TTP access to the strategically important Khyber region.

Despite the efforts of the so-called pro-government and anti-Baitullah militant groups, the TTP has made inroads and extended influence in the Khyber agency through an Afghan national, Commander Rahmanullah, who took the position in late 2008 after his predecessor Mohammad Yahya Hijrat (a.k.a. Kamran Mustafa Hijrat) was arrested in Peshawar by Pakistani security forces (*The News*, December 10, 2008). Yahya Hijrat, also an Afghan national, was a deputy to Hakimullah Mahsud and was assigned responsibility for attacking trucks loaded with supplies for U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Last December, his men attacked and burnt to ashes more than 300 vehicles destined for NATO troops in Afghanistan while they were parked in a terminal in Peshawar (see *Terrorism Focus*, January 21). The attacks continue; on July 17 an oil tanker was destroyed in the Jamrud district of the Khyber Pass, with the resulting fire destroying 20 shops and killing a fruit vendor (*Daily Times*, July 18). A second tanker was damaged by a bomb the same day near Landi Kotal (BBC, July 17).

Mukhtar A. Khan is a Pashtun journalist based in Washington, D.C., covering the issues of Taliban and al-Qaeda in Pakistan-Afghanistan border regions.

What Next for the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group after Rebuff from the Libyan Regime?

By Camille Tawil

After having given Colonel Qaddafi's regime what they thought it wanted to hear, namely a rejection of the merger of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, the exiled leaders of the LIFG must have been expecting a positive sign from the regime. Instead, what they got was a short statement from the Libyan External Security Organization (ESO - Jihaz al-Amn al-Khariji), calling on those who have become "mature" after having been "misguided" by groups "calling themselves Islamic," to come back to Libya and reintegrate with Libyan society. So, what has been going on?

A few weeks ago, positive signs were emerging from Libya. After two years of talks between the imprisoned leaders of the LIFG and the Libyan authorities, always in the presence of representatives from the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation (GICDF), headed by Colonel Qaddafi's son, Saif al-Islam, the imprisoned leaders of the LIFG were reported to have been ready to announce their long-awaited "muraja'at" – their religious/ideological rethinking. Dr. Ali al-Sallabi, a Qatar-based Libyan Islamist, is the most prominent mediator from outside Libya and has been allowed to visit the imprisoned LIFG leaders in the Abu Salim prison in Tripoli. According to al-Sallabi, the LIFG leaders were expected to soon release a religious study countering the ideology of the extremists (IslamOnline, June 17). Al-Sallabi explained that there has been "real progress" in the talks and that the leaders of the LIFG were "nearing the completion of a book that will tackle major ideological issues." Among these, he named the following:

- The issue of permitting theft of public funds to finance jihad.
- The takfiri practice of accusing countries, regimes and rulers of being kafirs (unbelievers).
- The identification of the proper bodies that should be allowed to declare whether a state, regime or ruler is kafir.

- The issue of “armed activities that take place in Muslim and Western countries.”
- The issue of taking up arms under the pretext of wanting to achieve “change and reform.”
- The issue of initiating a jihad and the conditions necessary to take such a step.

The Exiled Leaders Speak Out

In March, Saif al-Islam’s GICDF announced that the talks with the leaders of the LIFG were progressing and they were tackling the issue of using violence in a Muslim society such as Libya’s. The GICDF went on to announce that preparations were being made to free 170 imprisoned members of the LIFG after another 136 members had been freed over the two years since the talks began. [1] A day after that statement was released, a one-page hand-written statement was issued by the Amir of the LIFG, Abu Abdullah al-Sadeq, in which he affirmed for the first time that talks were being conducted with the authorities, praising Saif al-Islam’s efforts to bring “reform” to Libya (oalibya.com, March 12).

Soon after the talks began, the leaders in exile of the LIFG suddenly started to come forward after years of silence to support the imprisoned leaders in the discussions with the Libyan government. First, there was a letter issued by Abdullah Mansour a former leader of the LIFG in the U.K. and a member of its religious committee (*al-Hayat*, June 11). Then there was an unsigned statement by a group of “former and present” members of the LIFG in the U.K. (*al-Hayat*, July 4, 2008). Both the letter and the statement had one aim in common: supporting the talks between the imprisoned LIFG leaders and the Libyan authorities. Both rejected the merger of the LIFG with al-Qaeda that was announced by Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Laith al-Libi in October 2007 (Abu Laith was killed four months later by a missile fired by an American Predator unmanned aerial vehicle in North Waziristan). The statement from former and present LIFG members was clear in saying that Abu Laith lacked the proper authority to merge the LIFG with al-Qaeda. It went on to say that the LIFG as an organization was never part of Bin Laden’s global war on the West and always had a “local aim”: Libya.

Despite its significance, this statement posed a major problem – it was unsigned. No one, therefore, could identify these “former and present” members of the LIFG. Many of them, in fact, had a legitimate reason for

not coming forward - acknowledging their link to the LIFG might cause problems with authorities in the U.K., where the LIFG is a designated terrorist organization. This author, however, was able to meet with one of the main figures behind the statement and was assured that it has the backing of LIFG leaders residing in the U.K.

Response of the Libyan Regime

The problem of not being able to reveal their identity was nothing compared with another problem the exiled LIFG leaders were facing; instead of a positive reaction from the government to what they thought was a balanced statement, the Libyan authorities’ reply was a very short statement issued by the ESO. Colonel Qaddafi, the statement said, has issued instructions to the authorities to assist those who have been “deceived” by groups pretending to have an Islamic agenda, but who have now become “mature” enough to know that they were wrong in following such groups, to return to Libya without any fear of being harmed. [2] The statement went on to say that those “misguided” Islamists in exile should be helped in their reintegration with Libyan society and in finding employment. It urged those wishing to come back to Libya to contact authorities so arrangements can be made to repatriate them. The message was clear to the LIFG leaders in exile: if you want to be part of the peace in Libya, return to your country, admit that you were misguided and do not try to make the LIFG equal in any way to the government.

The ESO’s new leader, Abu Zaid Omar Dourda, has headed the service since his appointment in April, six weeks after Moussa Koussa was removed from his post and appointed foreign minister. This change of leadership probably does not have anything to do with the reply the exiled LIFG leaders were given – it was a reply from the whole intelligence service, as an institution. But the changes at the top of the ESO came at a time when Saif al-Islam (the main backer of the talks with the LIFG’s imprisoned leaders) had been suffering from setbacks in his struggle for “reform” with other elements within the Libyan regime. Saif now spends a lot of his time in London, where he is reportedly planning to re-launch a television station that was taken over by the Libyan government in April (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 21). This does not mean that he will be exiled; he will surely be able to go back, if he so wishes (he is scheduled to give a speech in Tripoli on August 20). But it does indicate that Saif al-Islam feels more comfortable pursuing his reform policies in London than in Tripoli.

While Saif has been losing the struggle against his opponents inside Libya, the star of his younger brother, Dr. Mutassim Qaddafi, has been on the rise. Mutassim, who is the Libyan National Security Adviser, made an official visit to Washington in April and met with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, as well as his counterparts from the American National Security Council.

Conclusion

It is unclear how events will develop going forward. For instance, it is uncertain whether the imprisoned leaders of the LIFG will continue with their planned muraja'at, expected in August (before the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan – around August 20), and even whether these muraja'at will please the government in their final version.

Moreover, it is also unclear if the Libyan authorities will agree to free the imprisoned leaders (or even some of them) if they do not announce that their group has disbanded. The Libyan government does not tolerate the presence of political parties and it will surely not allow a jihadi organization to regroup, especially after having defeated it.

What is clear, however, is the reaction of the Libyan leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Senior al-Qaeda leader Abu Yahya al-Libi has stated plainly that there is no other way but to use force to topple the regime of Colonel Qaddafi. Abu Yahya made his views known in an audiotape entitled “Ibn-al-Shaykh - The Grave rather Than Retreat” (al-Fajr Media Center, July 25). Abu Yahya spoke at length about Ibn al-Shaykh (a.k.a. Ali Abd-al-Aziz al-Fakhiri), a radical Islamist that the Libyan government announced committed suicide in his cell at Abu Salim prison in May. Ibn al-Shaykh was killed, according to Abu Yahya, because he refused to accept the legitimacy of the rule of Colonel Qaddafi; he refused to retreat from his past conviction that the regime is “apostate.”

The al-Qaeda leader addressed President Qaddafi and his new pro-Western alignment: “You killed, imprisoned, and tortured the youth and elders of Islam in obedience to the United States and in support for its Christian banner, as well as its Crusade. The flags of the United States are flying in the sky of Tripoli, where you buried in the darkness of its unjust prisons the people of faith, monotheism, and righteousness.”

Abu Yahya went on to promise that the mujahideen will take revenge on Qaddafi. How? He explained that “the soldiers of jihad are getting near you, after having their words unified, their forces assembled, their hearts combined, and their banner raised in the Islamic Maghreb, in order to take revenge on you and those who are like you.” This was definitely a clear response from Abu Yahya to those LIFG leaders who rejected the merger with al-Qaeda. He never mentioned them by name, but his words were clear: you will fail if you continue to insist that you are a “Libyan group” and reject being part of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). At least Abu Yahya himself knows where he stands - he is no longer a leader with the LIFG, but part of al-Qaeda. Now the ball is thrown back into the court of the LIFG leaders to decide whether they are, or are not, part of al-Qaeda. This will surely become clear when (and if) the LIFG releases its long-awaited muraja'at.

Notes:

1. “Human Rights Association of the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation Issues a Statement Regarding Dialogue with the Islamic Fighting Group,” Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation, March 11.
2. Libyan External Security Organization, <http://www.leso.org.ly/ar/index.html>

Camille Tawil is a journalist for al-Hayat newspaper in London where he has worked for the past seventeen years.

Imprisoned PKK Leader Abdullah Ocalan Preparing a Roadmap to Peace in Turkey's Ethnic-Kurdish Insurgency

By Emrullah Uslu

Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan – PKK), plans to release a “roadmap” of PKK conditions for laying down arms in the ongoing, decades-old ethnic-Kurdish insurgency in southeast Turkey. Details are now emerging of the project the PKK leader first announced on May 13, when Ocalan stated he would release a

“roadmap” to peace at the end of August based on the Turkish Constitution of 1921 (gundem-online.com, May 13). Ocalan’s four-step roadmap is expected to include:

- An introduction describing why Turkey should solve the Kurdish issue.
- A suggestion that Turkey should establish a strategic alliance with the Kurds in Iraq and Syria.
- An outline of the steps necessary to implement short and long-term solutions.
- A disclosure of the conditions that must be met before disarmament of the PKK fighters still in the mountains (*Hurriyet*, July 18).

A Basis in Turkey’s First Constitution

Ratified by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in the latter stages of the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922), the Turkish Constitution of 1921 was the nation’s first, and remained in force until superseded by the Constitution of 1924.

The reason Ocalan bases his roadmap on the 1921 Constitution may be found in the belief of some experts on Turkish constitutional affairs that the 1921 Constitution stipulated Turkish provinces were to have full autonomy in local affairs. [1] Article 11 of the 1921 Constitution defines “province” as an autonomous institution. It states that those powers exclusive to the state include domestic and foreign policy, judicial issues, military affairs, international economic relations, and inter-provincial issues. Provincial parliaments were to have autonomous powers in the fields of education, health, economy, agriculture, development, and social issues.

The Kurdish nationalist Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi – DTP) has a view similar to Ocalan’s. The DTP prepared a draft proposal outlining its own plan to address the Kurdish question using the 1921 Constitution as precedent. The DTP argues that the 1921 document is the most democratic of all of the country’s constitutions and reflects the party’s advocacy of a single state and a single flag but also its objection to a single language and a single ethnicity (*Hurriyet*, June 2).

Ten Fundamentals

According to the Turkish daily *Sabah*, Ocalan’s roadmap will also contain ten “fundamentals” crucial to a settlement:

- 1) The definition of a citizen should be amended in the Constitution and grant Kurds the status of a founding group of Turkey.
- 2) Kurdish-language instruction and education should be accepted and codified in the constitution.
- 3) The ceasefire should continue and an unconditional amnesty should be announced.
- 4) Intellectuals should take the initiative during the transformation period.
- 5) All obstacles to the freedom of conducting politics should be lifted. Everyone should be allowed to participate in the political sphere.
- 6) The isolation inflicted on Abdullah Ocalan should be lifted.
- 7) Local authorities should be empowered. Democratically-based local autonomy should be accepted.
- 8) A Truth Commission should be created to research all events in the Turkish-Kurdish struggle, especially any murders committed in its pursuit.
- 9) The “Village Guard” system (an ethnic-Kurdish paramilitary loyal to the Turkish state) should be abolished.
- 10) The land distribution system should be reformed (*Sabah*, July 24).

An End to the Armed Struggle?

The reason Ocalan and the DTP propose “roadmaps” to address the Kurdish issue is because violence no longer serves the PKK’s interests. Since September 11, 2001, a number of geopolitical developments have forced the PKK to change its approach:

- International pressure on the PKK to renounce violence.

- Turkey's developing economic and security relationship with the Kurds of northern Iraq.
- The democratizing effect of Turkey's application for membership in the European Union.
- Kurdish and Turkish exhaustion and frustration with the continuing civil war.

Since the PKK resumed its armed struggle in 2004, the movement has been unable to achieve the level of success it expected. The trilateral talks between Turkey, Iraq and the United States have pushed the PKK into a corner where there is no room for advocating violence (see *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, July 29). In fact Cemil Bayik, one of the top leaders of the PKK, admits, "The PKK has gained what it could from the armed struggle and the state cannot gain anything with its military operations. The international community is also supporting the peace process. Thus it is now time to find a peaceful solution" (Firat News Agency, June 2).

Political observers suggest the government is waiting for Ocalan's road map with "uncomfortable curiosity." The government is intrigued because it knows Ocalan can offer something "workable" and has the influence to make the PKK and the support base of the movement accept the proposals. This has made the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP) government uncomfortable because it is afraid that Ocalan will take the initiative during this "bottleneck" and, worse, be seen as taking Ocalan's recommendations into consideration (*Vatan*, July 17).

While the public was busy discussing Ocalan's roadmap, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan revealed that the government has launched a comprehensive plan to address the Kurdish question. "We have launched an initiative, whether you call it the Kurdish problem or the southeast problem, or as some recently named it, the Kurdish initiative" (*Hurriyet*, July 23; see also *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, July 24). In the following days, Interior Minister Besir Atalay gave a press conference to outline the government's Kurdish initiative. "The way to a solution is through democratization. We want to take this step together with all segments of society. For this reason, we would like to see every segment being constructive regarding this and contributing to a solution" (*Today's Zaman*, July 30). Atalay emphasized that the government was making efforts to put to work a model that is unique to Turkey and stated that his

government expects that no segment of society would attempt to sabotage the process (*Today's Zaman*, July 30). Apparently linked with this plan, the Turkish National Police Academy is hosting a panel to discuss the Kurdish question. It is the first time that a Turkish governmental institution has openly discussed the Kurdish question in this format (*Radikal*, July 29; see also *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, July 29).

Reaction to the Roadmap

Some political observers regard Erdogan's statement as a way to preempt Ocalan's roadmap with Kurdish reforms (Reuters, July 21; *Radikal*, July 22). In fact, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has declared, "The Kurdish issue will be solved in Ankara, not in Imrali," referring to the site of Ocalan's imprisonment since 1999 (*Anadolu Ajansı*, July 21).

Regardless of their political affiliations, many Kurdish intellectuals and politicians welcomed both the government's efforts as well as Ocalan's roadmap. AKP deputies appeared for the first time in six years on Roj TV (a Kurdish satellite TV station based in Denmark and Belgium and accused of having ties with the PKK) and stated that "all political actors [including Ocalan] should be considered if they positively contribute to the peace process" (*Hurriyet*, July 31). More importantly, Yılmaz Ates, the deputy chairman of Republican Peoples Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP) who is closely associated with state ideology joined a show on Roj TV via telephone and stated that "we need to have self-criticism about what happened that we [Turks and Kurds] have become foes" (aktifhaber.com, August 1). The president of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq, Massoud Barzani, also stated his support for initiatives to solve the problem. "If the problem is in the process of being solved, the PKK has to lay down its arms because the Kurdish public will not support them" (*Sabah*, August 1).

Turkish nationalists, on the other hand, are very upset with the AKP's plan. The leader of the National Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi - MHP), Devlet Bahçeli, furiously rejects attempts to solve the Kurdish problem because he thinks such efforts are a form of negotiating with terrorists. "If you negotiate with those who spent 25 years in the mountains to divide the country, be prepared to negotiate with Turkish nationalists who are ready to spend 50 years preventing the division of the country" (CNNTurk, August 1).

Duran Kalkan, a prominent figure in the PKK leadership, has outlined how the PKK sees recent developments. Kalkan thinks it is not important whether the government is preempting Ocalan's peace plan or not. What is important is what the government's plan includes. Kalkan suggests the plan should begin with the initiation of a dialog. While the dialog continues, PKK militants may redeploy to avoid clashes with the Turkish military. If negotiations proceed satisfactorily with pro-PKK organizations, including the DTP or Ocalan himself, and some rights are granted, the status of the PKK militants could then be discussed (Gundem-online.com, August 1).

Conclusion

It is a fact that the debate on resolving the Kurdish question is a healthy step toward preparing Kurdish and Turkish public opinion for a possible peace deal with the PKK. Public distrust is one of the main reasons why both sides cannot come together. Ironically, the distrust is largely based on the accusations of both Turks and Kurds that the other side is serving the interests of "outside forces." There is no dispute that the majority of the Turkish public believes the PKK is a project of "outside forces," i.e. a U.S. plan to divide the country. On the other hand, Abdullah Ocalan and other PKK leaders think it is the United States that prepared the government's plan to eliminate Ocalan and the PKK (Gundem-online.com, August 1). When it comes to the question of whether a possible peace is on the horizon we should not be too optimistic.

Notes:

1. Ergun Ozbudun, 1921 *Anayasası* [1921 Constitution], Ataturk Kultur Merkezi, Ankara, 1992, pp. 43-44.

Emrullah Uslu is a Turkish terrorism expert with a PhD from the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Utah. He worked as a policy analyst for the Turkish National Police's counter-terrorism headquarters for more than six years. Mr. Uslu has taught courses on terrorism and political violence.