



Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

VOLUME VII, ISSUE 27 ♦ SEPTEMBER 11, 2009

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Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, Head of the Supreme Council of Iraq

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ISLAMISTS WARN FRANCE AGAINST MILITARY ROLE IN SOMALIA

With al-Shabaab extremists threatening to try a captured French security advisor in Somalia under their version of Islamic law, the radical Islamist movement appears ready to provoke a French military intervention. The man is one of two Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE) agents abducted in a July 14 raid on a Mogadishu hotel (see *Terrorism Monitor*, July 30). The other agent claims to have escaped his captors on August 26.

Shaykh Muhammad Ibrahim Bilal, chairman of the Islamic Council of Amal (Hope), a former leading member of the ICU and al-Shabaab, condemned France's military and security support for Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) on August 29, adding that any other French officials coming to Somalia will be kidnapped (*Daily Nation* [Kampala], August 31). On August 28, an al-Shabaab official announced that the remaining French hostage would be sentenced for spying under Islamic law. Two days later Shaykh Bilal told Iranian TV that al-Shabaab was ready to execute their prisoner (Press TV, August 30).

The agent who escaped, identified as Marc Aubrière (probably not his real name), provided a dramatic but highly improbable account of navigating his way by the stars to Mogadishu's Presidential Palace after escaping his Hizb al-Islam captors and evading armed gunmen shooting at him for five hours in Shabaab-controlled neighborhoods (Shabelle Media Network, August 26; *Somaliland Times*, August 29). More likely are reports circulating in Mogadishu that Aubrière was released

after the French government agreed to a ransom. The second DGSE agent is being held by al-Shabaab, which has assured reporters that the man is heavily guarded and unlikely to escape (AFP, August 28).

A senior al-Shabaab official described the agent's tale as absurd and accused the movement's Hizb al-Islam allies of accepting money for the agent's release. "Even if he escaped, how was it possible for him to walk all the way to the presidential palace without being noticed by the mujahideen?" (Hillaac, August 26). Al-Shabaab may feel it necessary to deal harshly with the French prisoner to preserve its image in light of their Islamist ally's alleged perfidy in releasing their prisoner in exchange for a ransom (as is widely believed in Mogadishu).

150 of an expected 500 TFG soldiers are now in Djibouti receiving military training from the 5e Régiment Interarmes d'Outre-Mer (5e RIAOM), a mixed-arms Marine regiment permanently stationed in Africa. There are reports that some of the TFG recruits were returned to Somalia for being too young (*Libération*, August 28). The government of Djibouti has also announced its readiness to send an estimated 500 soldiers with French assistance to Somalia to join the badly undermanned African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeeping force (Garowe Online, September 2).

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has indicated France will not be deterred by hostage-takings. "We will mobilize to support Africa faced with the growing threat from al-Qaeda, whether in the Sahel or in Somalia... France will not let al-Qaeda set up a sanctuary on our doorstep in Africa. That message, too, must be clearly heard" (AFP, August 27).

SOUTH SUDANESE MILITARY VOWS TO DESTROY THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

After being accused of inactivity by residents of Western Equatoria and various humanitarian NGOs, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) will commit additional troops including its Special Forces to eliminate the Lord's Resistance Army threat to South Sudan. The northern Ugandan group was formed in 1987 and claims to seek the establishment of a Ugandan government based on the Bible and the Ten Commandments (see *Terrorism Monitor*, April 16, 2008). The movement, led by Joseph Kony, has employed remarkable levels of violence and cruelty in its pursuit of these aims. Since being driven from Uganda it has spread out over South Sudan, the

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR).

The LRA, once intended to represent Acholi interests in northern Uganda, now appears to have lost the last vestiges of ideological purpose, carrying out atrocities without provocation in several African states but no longer operating in Uganda. Despite determined efforts by Uganda and its regional partners to resolve the conflict, LRA leader Joseph Kony has backed away from every effort to negotiate a settlement.

At present, the 8th Brigade of the SPLA's 2nd Division (about 3,000 troops) is hunting the Ugandan rebels in platoon-strength units meant to intercept LRA groups of 5 to 10 people over wide swathes of bush country. According to SPLA spokesman Major General Kuol Deim Kuol, the LRA "come to attack the people and take the food and escape back to hide inside the forest in the DRC, like rats... we are seriously planning to track them down and attack them inside their den in the Garamba forests where they run to" (Sudan Radio Service, September 3).

The SPLA is responsible for security in South Sudan under the terms of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement with Khartoum. The Khartoum regime's former sponsorship of the LRA as a counter to Uganda's sponsorship of the SPLA during the civil war (1983-2005) has created suspicion in some Southerners that the ruling Islamist National Congress Party (NCP) continues to use the LRA to spread insecurity in the South as the region nears a crucial 2011 referendum on independence. SPLA Major General Kuol Deim Kuol is among them. "We [the SPLA] are saying that the NCP is still keeping up their old good relationship with the LRA. As you know, Joseph Kony [the LRA leader] is the NCP's darling; he was residing here in Juba [capital of Equatoria Province] until the SPLA came to Juba in 2005 - all this time Kony was staying here with the NCP." The rebel movement suspended all peace talks in Juba on September 4 (*Daily Nation* [Nairobi], September 4).

Following the revision of AMISOM's mandate in Somalia, which changed from "peacekeeping" to "peace-enforcement" in early September to allow it to engage in combat against insurgent forces, the United Nations is considering a similar revision to the mandate of the Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo (MONUC), which would allow it to join the military campaign against the LRA (Garowe Online [Puntland], September 2; *New*

Vision [Kampala], August 27). Changes to the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) are also being contemplated.

The fighting in Western Equatoria is particularly brutal – reportedly short on ammunition, the LRA continues to practice mutilations and amputations with weapons such as machetes to terrify helpless civilians. Local militias that formed to fend off the LRA marauders have also taken to mutilating LRA prisoners in revenge and to dissuade their comrades from returning (*Sudan Tribune*, March 6). Known as the “Arrow Boys,” the militias use traditional weapons such as bows and arrows, spears, machetes and clubs to defend their homes from the LRA (*Sudan Tribune*, January 14, 2008).

The operation against the LRA has now been extended to the Central African Republic (CAR), according to the Uganda People’s Defense Forces (UPDF) (*The Monitor* [Kampala], September 8). According to a UPDF spokesman, the CAR invited the Ugandans to pursue LRA units in the CAR, where the administration controls little of the country outside the capital of Bangui (*New Vision* [Kampala], September 7). Kony led nearly 200 followers into the southeastern CAR in February 2008, forming a base at Gbassiguri for forays into South Sudan.

A bipartisan bill, the Lord’s Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, introduced in the U.S. Senate in May, would require the Obama administration to act on the elimination of the LRA threat and the apprehension or removal of Joseph Kony and his top commanders. Over 50 UPDF officers arrived in Djibouti on September 8 to receive advanced training from the U.S. military (*Monitor* [Kampala], September 8). Most of the officers are expected to join Ugandan forces in Somalia after the training, but some might be committed to the two decade-old campaign to destroy the LRA.

The Implications of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim’s Death for Iraqi Security

By Babak Rahimi

Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the head of the Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), died on August 26 at a hospital in Tehran, where he had been receiving treatment for lung cancer since May 2007 (Fars News

Agency, August 27, *Kayhan*, August 27; September 2). His death came days after the announcement of an electoral alliance led by his party and other Shi’a factions, known as the Iraqi National Alliance (al-Ittilaf al-Watani al-Iraqi – INA; the new coalition replaces the United Iraqi Alliance - al-Ittilaf al-Iraqi al-Muwahhad - UIA) (*Etemad*, August 24). The Shi’a-dominated alliance is powered by a renewed ISCI led by the young and untried ISCI deputy leader, Ammar al-Hakim. His skill and experience will be tested as the party attempts to resurrect itself after its defeat in the early 2009 provincial elections (Tabnak, August 31). Most importantly, the new political bloc, which also includes the Sadrists, Fadhila and other smaller Sunni, Turkmen and Christian parties, excludes Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki’s Dawa Party, whose popular support remains relatively strong, especially in the Sunni provinces, parts of the Shi’a southern regions and in the capital city (Tabnak, September 1; *Etemad*, August 30).

Amidst these political developments, Iraq continues to face a surge of violence since the June withdrawal of U.S. forces from major cities around the country (*Azzaman*, August 14; al-Jazeera August 28). Although still limited in scale in comparison to 2006, the latest outburst of violence raises new concerns about the possible emergence of sectarian conflict exacerbated by ethnic tensions, especially in Kirkuk and Mosul, where Arab nationalists like Prime Minister al-Maliki seek to thwart Kurdish claims over the oil-rich region. With tensions on the rise, the changing balance of power within the Shi’a political scene points to more uncertainty with the approach of next year’s general elections.

Hakim’s apparent successor, Ammar al-Hakim, was recently asked for his views on the increase in violence during an interview with a Spanish daily: “We hold Saddam’s Ba’ath primarily responsible in such processes and we believe it sent a clear message regarding the invalidity of the alleged resistance to the occupier; this fact makes it imperative for each who bears his weapons to give up, especially with the troops out of the cities now. We know that the main aim [of the insurgents] is to return Iraq to square one, but this cannot be achieved; they want this effort to remove an important card from the political process because it had achieved security in Iraq, but our confidence is in a great God and in the capabilities of our security [services] and the military government” (*El Mundo*, July 1, 2009).

In reality, Hakim's demise has now created a power vacuum that could lead to major changes within Iraqi politics:

- It could provide an opportunity for more radical Shi'a groups like the Sadrists or Hadi al-Amiri's Badr Organization to claim power, while more moderate factions (i.e. those without militias) may feel intimidated and marginalized within the new Shi'a-led alliance.
- Within the ISCI, Ammar might merely serve as a figurehead, while the hard-line old guard within the party, led by figures like Bayan Jabr (a former Badr Corps commander), Shaykh Jalauddin Saghir (senior cleric in Baghdad's huge Buratha mosque) and Hadi al-Amiri (head of the parliamentary defense and security committee) could take charge of the party, contributing to a sectarian type of politics reminiscent of the volatile early post-war period.
- The greatest impact Hakim's death might have is in undermining Maliki's influence in the Shi'a electoral landscape, possibly leading to his downfall at the hands of the ISCI, now at the head of the new Iraqi National Alliance.

The main implication of these changes is the possibility of an increase in hard-line Iranian influence led by the Revolutionary Guard, on which the ISCI and Sadrists have become increasingly reliant for financial and military support. This is already evident in Tehran's bold attempt to reconcile the tension between Baghdad and Damascus over regional security. The Iranian diplomatic mission is led by the Iranian ambassador to Iraq, Hussain Kazemi Qomi, a former Revolutionary Guard officer who maintains close ties with ISCI (Fars News Agency, September 3). A shift towards more Iranian-leaning Shi'a politics could anger Iraq's Sunnis, especially the nationalists, who might see the changing political landscape as a threat to their interests. Although it remains to be seen whether al-Maliki will eventually join the new INA, Iraq will likely witness more violence ahead of the elections as Baghdad gradually seeks to break away from the sectarian politics represented by Abdul Aziz Hakim and his Shi'a federalism.

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Did Somalia's al-Shabaab Plan to Attack the Australian Military?

By Raffaello Pantucci

Operation Neath, one of the largest counterterrorism operations in Australian history, culminated in a series of early morning raids in Melbourne on August 4. The four men arrested were all Australian citizens of Lebanese or Somali descent and apparently part of a larger group of 18 individuals under observation by police (*The Australian*, August 4). In a press conference on the day of the arrests, police laid out their central charge that the men were "planning to carry out a suicide terrorist attack" on an Australian military base using "automatic weapons" in "a sustained attack on military personnel until they themselves were killed." According to police, some individuals in the plot had been to and presumably trained in Somalia, and had sought a "fatwa" (religious ruling) that would authorize them to carry out attacks in Australia. [1]

Four men (Saney Aweys, 26, of North Carlton; Yacqub Khayre, 22, of Meadow Heights; Nayef El Sayed, 25, of Glenroy; and Abdirahman Ahmed, 25, of Preston) were arrested in the raids, while a fifth man (Wissam Mahmoud Fattal, 33) was already in custody on unrelated charges. Police were apparently alerted to the cell late last year after individuals at a local mosque reported the increasingly extremist rhetoric of one of the plotters. Telephone wiretaps were obtained and the security services soon overheard discussions between a key plotter and individuals in Somalia. The Australian plotter appeared to be seeking assistance for individuals to go and train with al-Shabaab in Somalia (*The Australian*, August 4). Reports indicate that two men apparently did go and train, one of whom (believed to be Walid Osman Mohamed) remains in Somalia, presumably training or fighting with the Somali Islamist fighters. The other man, Yacqub Khayre, is alleged to have returned to Australia on July 14, having obtained a "fatwa" or legal ruling from Somalia authorizing a terrorist attack in Australia (Australian Associated Press, August 27).

Telephone intercepts released by police during a bail application hearing revealed Saney Aweys telling an individual believed to be a Somali cleric, "They [the accused] know where they can get them [the guns]. Then

they want to penetrate the military forces stationed in the barracks. Their desire is to fan out as much as possible ... until they would be hit [by defensive fire]. Twenty minutes would be enough for us to take out five, six, ten, eight, whatever Allah knows.” In a later conversation between Nayef el Sayed and Wissam Fattal, Fattal says, “We are doing something very terrific for Allah. We are working together on a great monstrous thing and we will need to persevere.” Fattal and El Sayed are alleged to be the central figures in the plot, with El Sayed apparently acting as a local recruiter for al-Shabaab, while Fattal was seen by police scoping out the Holsworthy Military barracks in New South Wales, the cell’s presumed target (*The Australian*, August 25). Located outside of Sydney, Holsworthy is one of Australia’s largest military bases.

However, police also admitted during the hearings that they had so far uncovered no actual weaponry during their searches of properties related to the case (*The Australian*, August 25). Furthermore, there was some suggestion during the bail hearings that police may have relied on a covert “civilian” agent within the group to obtain information. While defense lawyers did not pursue this avenue of questioning during the bail application, they did state they would pursue it during a later trial (*The Age* [Melbourne], August 26). It was unclear how much the apparent leak of the story to *The Australian* newspaper prior to the arrests would affect the trial. Australia’s Federal Police have vowed to carry out a thorough investigation. [2]

The bail applications by El Sayed, Khayre, and Aweys were all rejected, with the judge assessing the men as a “serious flight risk” and the charges against them serious enough to warrant continued detention. The men’s lawyers used the opportunity to complain about the manner in which their clients were being detained, likening them to “Guantanamo Bay-like conditions” (AAP, August 27).

At least partly in response to the alleged plot, the Australian government officially announced that it was listing al-Shabaab as a terrorist organization on August 21. The proscription of the group means that it will be an offense “to be a member of, associate with, train with, provide training for, receive funds from, make funds available to, direct or recruit for al-Shabaab.” [3]

While it has been involved in military and intelligence operations in the global struggle against Islamist extremist groups, mainland Australia has thus far mostly been spared the threat of home-grown terrorism. Australians have been targeted abroad, however, most

notably in the 2002 Bali bombings in which 88 were killed. More recently three Australians were among those killed in the July 17 attack in Jakarta. At home there have been fewer such plots, with the cell around radical preacher Abdul Nacer Benbrika (who was incarcerated for 15 years along with six followers earlier this year) proving an exception to the rule (*Herald Sun* [Melbourne], February 3). A 2007 investigation codenamed Operation Rochester investigating possible links between Australia’s 16,000 strong Somali community and international terrorism apparently dissipated after nothing was found (*The Australian*, August 4).

Two days after the arrests, al-Shabaab spokesman Shaykh Ali Mahmud Raage (a.k.a. Shaykh Ali Dheere) issued a statement dismissing reports that the detainees were in any way members of al-Shabaab, claiming the men were arrested solely because they were Muslims (Dayniile, August 6). One suspect, Wissam Mahmoud Fattal, took the opportunity of his appearance before a magistrate to shout denials of his involvement. “You call us terrorists – I’ve never killed anyone in my life...Your army kills innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan and Israel takes Palestinian land by force” (BBC, August 31). Though a magistrate has allowed the case to continue, defense lawyers are disputing the quality of the evidence. One proclaimed, “There was no imminent terrorist attack,” while another insisted, “Not only is there an absence of compelling evidence, there is an absence of any evidence” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, August 27; AAP, August 27).

Given the complexity of a case like this – Australian security services indicated that links to the plot extended as far as Kenya, Somalia and the United Kingdom – it is unlikely that the men will face court for at least another year or more, meaning most information on the group will remain outside the public domain. While international press speculation has focused on the apparent link with al-Shabaab, it is unclear exactly why the Somali group would rather abruptly decide to target Australia. While the Royal Australian Navy has deployed an ANZAC class frigate, HMAS *Toowoomba*, off the Horn of Africa as part of Australia’s contribution to coalition efforts against international terrorism and piracy in the Gulf of Aden, Australia is neither the only nor the largest contributor to the operation. [4]

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Notes:

1. “Joint AFP/Victoria Police transcript,” August 4, http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/Victoria%20Police%20Online%20News%20Centre%20-%20Joint%20AFP_Victoria%20Police%20Transcript.pdf
2. “AFP Investigation into Media Leak – Operation Neath,” August 5, http://www.afp.gov.au/media_releases/national/2009/afp_investigation_into_media_leak_-_operation_neath
3. Joint media release by the Australian Foreign Ministry and Attorney General, “Listing of Al-Shabaab as a Terrorist Organization,” August 21, <http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2009/fa-s090821.html>
4. Australian Government Department of Defense, September 1, http://www.defence.gov.au/our_people/wa/20090901/

The Concept of Safe Havens in Salafi-Jihadi Strategy

By *Murad Batal al-Shishani*

The search for a “safe haven” in the strategic planning of the Salafi-Jihadi movement is a central issue in the intended establishment of the “Islamic State.” The safe haven offers a set of strategic advantages, such as security, training camps, a certain degree of centralization and an easier flow of finances. Recently, al-Qaeda and the Salafi-Jihadi movement have sought to create several “safe havens” instead of relying on just one, as it did in the mid-1990s in Sudan or later in Afghanistan under the Taliban. This paper will examine the geopolitical vision of the safe haven as perceived by al-Qaeda and its importance for the organization.

Al-Qaeda’s Changing Strategies

The Salafi-Jihadi movement, with its al-Qaeda expression, has adopted two types of strategies since the mid-nineties. The first strategy was to gather in one safe haven. Sudan, under its military/Islamist regime, was chosen for this purpose in the 1990s, followed by Afghanistan under the Taliban movement. The camps established in these regions trained operatives who carried out the Riyadh bombings in the mid 1990s, the Mombasa and Dar al-Salaam bombings in 1998, and the 2001 bombing of U.S. Navy destroyer *Cole* in Yemen.

Since the day the United States started the “War on Terrorism” by targeting al-Qaeda’s infrastructure in Afghanistan, dispersing its members and cutting off its funding, al-Qaeda has adapted by decentralizing. Cells based on Salafi-Jihadi ideology were formed to operate according to the local conditions of their countries and upon the instructions of local leaders. This strategy produced confrontations with the Saudi authorities in the period 2003-2006, as well as bombings in Djerba, Bali, Casablanca, Madrid and London.

But in that period, Iraq was considered a safe haven and so emerged the al-Qaeda sponsored “Islamic State of Iraq” (ISI). The ideologues of the Salafi-Jihadi movement saw in Iraq not only a place where they could fight the Americans, but also a base from which they could launch attacks on the “near enemy” (the apostate Arab regimes) and liberate Islamic soil. In this regard, Osama bin Laden said, “Know that defending the Muslim countries, especially the Two Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, begins by fighting the enemy in al-Rafidain land [i.e. Mesopotamia].” [1] There are also the famous words of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, words which became a popular slogan in Salafi- Jihadi forums, “We fight in Iraq but our eyes are focused on Jerusalem.” [2] For Yusuf al-Ayiri, the late leader of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia (killed by Saudi authorities in 2003), the safe haven meant “a center to attract fighters.” Al-Ayiri wanted to bring fighters from countries bordering Iraq and he gave detailed instructions to fighters on how to go to Iraq and join the jihad. [3]

The Cell System and al-Qaeda’s Islamic State

Two theoretical points of view emerge among Salafi-Jihadist writings regarding the creation of safe havens, even if small in size. The first view is that of Abu Musab al-Suri (a.k.a. Mustafa Setmariam Nasar), one of the most prominent Salafi-Jihadi strategists and ideologues before his detention in 2005 (see *Terrorism Monitor*, August 15, 2005; September 21, 2006). Al-Suri promoted the idea of a “system,” not an “organization,” meaning that jihadi movements should work according to a system; they should target the close enemy (local regimes) or the far one (United States Israel, India, etc.) in a way that reveals there is agreement over the general aims of the Salafi-Jihadi movements without the need for organizational orders. In other words, these cells should not be part of the organization. [4] This appears to be the approach al-Qaeda adopted after September 11.

The second approach was the one advanced by Abu Bakr Naji, the pseudonym of a regular contributor to jihadi forums. In a book entitled *Idarat al-Tawahush* (Management of Savagery), Naji stressed the importance of establishing safe havens and said the Salafi-Jihadi movement should have a state or semi-state where they have dominance, or places where Salafi-Jihadis are “empowered” (a term often used by them). From these safe havens they can launch attacks against the Americans and their agents that will inevitably drag the Americans to battle. Naji stressed the importance of launching attacks against the U.S. economy to weaken it. [5]

On January 14, 2009, Osama bin Laden described the new Salafi-Jihadi strategy in managing the battle with the United States in an audiotape recording. Bin Laden adapted Naji’s approach to take advantage of the global financial crisis. The al-Qaeda leader wanted to stress that the movement is still able to keep the conflict going for a long time, saying, “To my nation I say – remembering Almighty God’s grace – rest assured, we feel that God has granted us enough patience to continue the path of jihad for another seven and seven years, if God wishes” (al-faloja.info, January 14). Bin Laden believes that Barack Obama’s administration is in a crisis and thus revealed his movement’s intention to “open new fronts” to exhaust the U.S. economically. In this regard bin Laden says: “Having inherited a heavy legacy [that of U.S. President George W. Bush] and only left with two choices, both are bitter, like someone who swallowed a double-edged dagger - no matter how he [President Obama] moves it will cause him pain. It is most difficult for anyone to inherit a long guerrilla war financed by *riba* [usury] with a stubborn and patient opponent. If you withdraw from the war you would suffer a military defeat and if you continue your economic crisis will become worse. Obama has inherited not only one war but two and he is incapable of continuing these wars. We are on our way to open other fronts, if God wishes” (al-faloja.info, January 14).

Bin Laden did not specify where the future fronts would be opened but spoke about the existing fronts in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Waziristan, the Islamic Maghreb and Somalia. It is noted that Somalia and Yemen are among the key fronts where al-Qaeda and the Salafi-Jihadi movement want to establish solid grounds, particularly in light of their diminishing role in Iraq and the growing political role of the Awakening Councils (see *Terrorism Monitor*, November 7, 2006).

In his analysis, Bin Laden attempts to explain the importance of finding a safe haven for the Salafi-Jihadis. However, the movement as a whole tends to adopt a strategic choice of creating many safe havens, one to replace the other, in a way that would provide the movement’s fighters with places to move to and to continue their war. It should be noted that the areas where the Salafi-Jihadis want to create their safe havens are areas that have internal factors needed for the creation of such refuges (poverty, unemployment, the absence of a state, and poor distribution of resources). These areas also have the needed external factors - the military and security presence of the United States. These factors are the main reason for the existence of the Salafi-Jihadi movement in Yemen, Somalia, the Afghan – Pakistan border region, Central Asia, the refugee camps in Lebanon and, of course, Iraq, according to the changes in political conditions in these countries.

In a work entitled “The responsibility of the People of Yemen regarding the Sanctuary of Muslims,” Abu Musab al-Suri highlighted the geopolitical importance of Yemen as a safe haven from the viewpoint of al-Qaeda and the Salafi-Jihadis, a place from which fighters could launch attacks. [6] The book considered the demographic situation in Yemen as well as the Yemeni people’s strong will and poverty. Yemen’s landscape is characterized by fortified mountains that make Yemen the natural citadel for all the people of the Arab peninsula and the Middle East as a whole. With more than 3,000 kilometres of sea coast and a thousand more kilometres of border running through difficult desert and mountain terrain, Yemen is a potential stronghold for the mujahideen. In addition it has the strategic advantage of controlling one of the world’s most important marine straits, the Bab al-Mandab. Weapons are freely available, given that Yemen is governed by tribal traditions. Moreover, there is the religious factor, with Yemen being associated with a number of prophetic Hadiths and “promises.”

Conclusion

Currently, with the armed confrontations along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and the diminishing role of al-Qaeda in Iraq, areas like Somalia, Yemen, Central Asia and some African regions might grow in importance for the Salafi-Jihadis. In addition to seeking the creation of safe havens, the jihadis want to expand the number of fronts involving U.S. forces to exhaust America economically. Lastly, the jihadis desire the creation of a number of alternative safe havens in order not to repeat the experience of Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks.

Notes

1. Bin Laden's letter, *Ila Ahal al-Iraq*, (To the people of Iraq), May 7, 2004. <http://www.tawhed.ws>
2. Musab al-Zarqawi interview with the Media Section of al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia, 1427 A.H. The interview can read on: <http://www.tawhed.ws/r1?i=6680&x=puoevphw>
3. Yusuf al-Ayiri, *Sisilat al hurub al-salibiya* (Series of Crusader Wars), Part One, 2003. Al-Ayiri's writings can be downloaded from <http://www.angelfire.com/ar3/qa3edoon/3eyeery.htm>.
4. See his book, *Da'wat al-Moqawma al-Islamiya*, (A Call for Islamic Resistance), 2005. Can be downloaded from <http://www.tawhed.ws/a?a=hqkfgsb2>.
5. Abu Bakr Naji, *Idarat al-Tawahush* (Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage through which the Umma Will Pass), Center for Islamic Studies and Research, 2005. <http://www.tawhed.ws/a?a=chr3ofzr>. English translation available at: <http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/olin/images/Management%20of%20Savagery%20-%202005-23-2006.pdf>
6. <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=wksqfnyz>

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At the Center of the Storm: An Interview with Afghanistan's Lieutenant General Hadi Khalid – Part One

By Derek Henry Flood

Lieutenant General Abdul Hadi Khalid was the Afghan First Deputy Minister of the Interior for Security from May 2006 to late June 2008. Specializing in counter-narcotics, border policing and internal security, he announced the largest drug seizure in history (*The Scotsman*, June 12, 2008; *Daily Mail*, June 30, 2008). He lost his post after a dispute with the Karzai administration last year but remains one of Afghanistan's leading thinkers on regional ethnopolitical dynamics and transnational criminal networks. Jamestown sat down with Hadi Khalid at his home in

Kabul and discussed a wide range of challenges facing Afghanistan's border security as a landlocked state with six neighbors, as well as the post-Bonn agreement successes and failures in the creation of the Afghan National Police.

JT: Can you order the level of priority beginning with the most challenging border situations for the Ministry of Interior amongst Afghanistan's neighbors?

HK: First is obviously Pakistan. Then Tajikistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and finally China.

When [General Pervez] Musharraf was in power, his government claimed that the main cause of instability in our region was the presence of the international community and NATO troops in Afghanistan.

JT: The Pakistanis claimed that NATO was a bigger threat to the region than their own furthering of the Taliban movement?

HK: They denied this in those days. But we were sure of their support for the Taliban. This was a cause of the sour relationship between Hamid Karzai and General Musharraf. When the civilian government came into power in 2008, they began to make some changes in the ISI and the army. The civilian administration led by Asif Ali Zardari recognized that there was a problem. They told members of the Pakistani Taliban that if you want to be a friend of Pakistan, you must leave some of the areas under your control, such as Swat and Bajaur. But they [the Tehrik-e-Taliban] resisted and they were dangerously close to Islamabad.

For a time, the Taliban in FATA [the Federally Administered Tribal Areas] were useful to the Pakistani state because their relentless assassinations of tribal *maliks* led the Pakistani government to think it could finally reach the Durand Line. But then they realized they could not control these Talibs. The maliks enforced a rigid structure of independence from the central government but they could be dealt with, unlike Mahsud's men.

JT: Is the issue of the recognition of the Durand Line as a formal border a resolvable issue with Islamabad in the near term?

HK: There is a latent fear in the Afghan government that if it formally recognizes the Durand Line as an international border with Pakistan, there could be

a mass Pashtun revolt. Nonetheless, yes, I do think the issue should be solved. President Karzai averts his eyes to the Durand Line problem because he does not want to risk an internal fight that would further destabilize Afghanistan. The thinking has always been that Pashtunistan can never truly be divided as the British attempted to do. We need to have good relations with Pakistan in part because of the large number of Afghan refugees still inside their borders. Like our other neighbors, Afghanistan needs Pakistan.

Intelligence agencies in Pakistan thought they could use a pliant Taliban to destroy the tribal structure of FATA so they could better control the border with Afghanistan. This was a huge mistake. Once the Taliban had finished their war on the tribal elders, they set their sights further afield in places like Swat and Buner, close to Islamabad. Not only could these agencies not control these Talibs, now they are actively at war with them inside Pakistan. Also there are people here who are sympathetic to the idea of the reunification of Pashtunistan because they view this entire region as historically Afghan territory since the Ghaznavid period [975-1187]. Afghans once ruled Kashmir but it makes no sense to reiterate these types of territorial claims today. Pakistan cannot claim any control over Afghanistan today. They hope to gain control of Indian-occupied Kashmir but seeing as they could not even hold onto Bangladesh, I do not think their territorial aspirations are at all realistic.

The tribal maliks stood in the way of Pakistan's desire to control the Durand Line because the ISI knew the maliks would never accept the presence of the Pakistani government in this area. Since the British era, the maliks have exercised a great degree of sovereignty in FATA and they thought that by killing [the elders] via their Talib proxies, the Pakistani Army and intelligence services could finally gain control of the tribes. By decimating the system of elders, Pakistan solved one small problem but created a much bigger one for itself. They were greatly mistaken in thinking they could control men like Baitullah Mahsud. Mahsud and the Pakistani Taliban had their own ideology which contained goals conflicting with the Pakistani establishment.

But the problem of the Durand Line remains a serious one. You may have read that Pakistan forces have physically attacked our border forces in recent years and the situation there can be very tense [see Deutsche Presse-Agentur April 20, 2007]. Pakistan wants to control the Durand Line to assert itself but Karzai believes it is only so they can divide and dominate all of Pashtunistan.

JT: Now let's discuss the situation of your border with Tajikistan and the resurgence of Taliban militancy in Konduz.

HK: The situation in Tajikistan is infecting Pakistan and the rest of Central Asia. Opium, primarily from Badakhshan Province, goes north through Tajikistan while arms come south to us from Soviet-era stockpiles that are being exploited. Some of these weapons [of Tajik provenance] are ending up inside Pakistan. Afghan drug dealers buy weapons from Tajik smugglers and then resell them for a tidy profit. They often double their money on these weapons deals. Not all of these weapons are ending up in the hands of insurgents either. As the security environment declines, villagers in affected areas are buying arms and ammunition to protect themselves. In Tajikistan weapons are cheap and they are plentiful. I believe that some Tajik border forces are also complicit in this trade.

Our border police are some of the most corrupt in the world. This brings me to an important issue. In Afghanistan, all of our police are drawn from the local population where they serve whether they are on our borders, along our highways, or in our cities. I wanted to make the ANP a singular, centrally controlled entity with truly national border police, not just men raised from the villages closest to the borders. This practice leads to corruption.

Another issue I had to deal with was the starkly differing approaches from within the Western military alliance on how the ANP's training should be conducted and how an Afghan policeman's job should be carried out. The EU member states believed the ANP's duties should be restricted to civilian policing like their counterparts in Europe. Some Europeans even said the ANP men should not carry pistols! I told the Europeans that if your police can go to Ghazni with no weapons and come back alive then we would consider disarming our police.

The Americans, for their part, had completely the opposite idea. They saw the ANP as the lesser-armed and prepared "step-brother" of the Afghan National Army (ANA). The Americans view the ANP as a fellow frontline force in our counterinsurgency war while the Europeans strongly proposed that the ANP be removed from the conflict altogether. The Americans are soldiers that do not understand the fundamentals of policing communities and feel the ANP should be proper security forces. We had Germans who were training our police (the German Police Project Office) at the Kabul

Police Academy several years ago but they did not do a good job because they put too many limitations on their mandate. They could train police inside the police academy but not outside of it in real situations.

Then the ANP training was taken over by EUPOL (European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan) which made things far too complicated. The ANP became tangled in a web of inter-EU bureaucracy. Let's say we ask for ten police from EUPOL. EUPOL then has to go around asking EU member states to contribute individual officers for these missions. If one member state says no, they don't want to send their police, what can we Afghans do? Then the Europeans tell us that our police are civilians and must not fight against terrorism because it should not be part of their job. They tell us the fight belongs to the ANA and NATO only. Finally we convinced the Europeans that, while yes, the ANP's first task should be law enforcement and civil order, our police must be able to properly defend themselves when they come under attack from insurgents.

On the murky issue of renewed fighting in Konduz and northern Baghlan Province, it is likely related to the American negotiations with the Russian Federation and several of the Central Asian states for the transit of NATO supplies to Afghanistan. Another factor has been the disenfranchisement of the northern Pashtuns with the renewed ascendancy of ethnic Tajik Jamiat-e-Islami actors in the then-nascent Karzai-led government succeeding the Bonn Agreement. The traditionally dominant northern Tajiks led by Marshal Mohammed Fahim and Ustad Atta Mohammed had no sympathy for the Pashtun power base in Konduz which had allied itself with the Taliban [Konduz was previously an enclave for Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami] and cleaved the Tajiks' northern security belt between Balkh and Takhar Provinces.

The Tajik Jamiat members in Afghanistan's central government sought to divide the northern Pashtuns in a bid to lessen their power. For example, in Baghlan, the new government picked a man named Amir Gul to be a district chief. But Amir Gul has a very bad name in the local society and by putting someone like him in power, the local people turn back to Hekmatyar and Mullah Omar and say "Please help us" because they know Gul to be a corrupt man with a bad reputation among his fellow Pashtuns. Pakistan, al-Qaeda, the Taliban and Hezb-e-Islami were waiting for that moment [to enter northern Afghanistan].

JT: What would be the motivation for Pakistan's ISI and military establishment to foment chaos in Konduz and Baghlan?

HK: Well the first reason would be that they want to prevent NATO from entrenching these northern transit routes. These alternate routes will cause Pakistan to lose a lot of money from the Karachi-Torkham route. Pakistan does not want to lose this money from NATO. Pakistan and the U.S. have historically been allies and Pakistan is scared that if America forms a new relationship with Uzbekistan then Pakistan will be left out of future security equations in the region. The second reason is that Pakistan still wields an enormous amount of influence in Afghanistan and they do not want their role to be diminished in any way. If Uzbekistan becomes stronger in Afghanistan, Pakistan worries that its future is dark. So the reasons for Pakistan's covert support of northern militancy are both economic and political.

JT: What is al-Qaeda's motivation for being in this environment?

HK: For al-Qaeda, the fighting in Konduz is a new window of opportunity for them to regain a foothold in Central Asia.

JT: How did President Karzai's pre-election pacts affect stability in northern Afghanistan?

HK: Karzai has worked to split all of the original jihadi parties dating from the anti-Soviet war. He believes that in causing these splits, he can both weaken all of his opponents and create allies all over Afghanistan. The splitting of [the Tajik-based] Jamiat-e-Islami between Marshal [Muhammad] Fahim on one side and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah on the other has been another factor in further destabilizing the north. With the Tajiks divided against one another, this creates a security vacuum for the ISI and local militants who had been dormant.

Besides the resurgence of a formal terror network, Karzai's division of the old parties has led to a breakdown in social order that the political parties once maintained. This breakdown opens the door for criminal groups to operate. And along with the criminal groups are the drug producers and smugglers. Iran has been beefing up its border police recently in a robust effort to stem the flow of opiates into Mashad and Sistan-Baluchistan. So Afghan narco-traffickers are looking for alternate routes. Tajikistan, with its inept and corrupt government is a viable alternative to relatively strong

Iran. Instability directly south of the Tajik border eases the flow of narcotics northward.

Derek Henry Flood is independent journalist focusing on Middle Eastern, Central and South Asian political affairs.