



# Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

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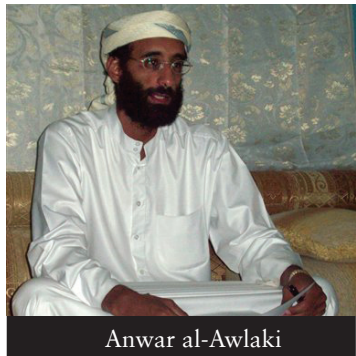
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## TALIBAN MILITARY COMMANDER IN ZABUL PROVINCE DISCUSSES TACTICS AND STRATEGY

The sparsely inhabited Afghan province of Zabul is nevertheless a strategic concern for U.S. and Coalition forces in Afghanistan, due to its location and majority Pashtun population. Zabul shares a border with Pakistan to the south and another with the unsettled Taliban hotbed of Kandahar to the west. Taliban activity is on the rise in Zabul and the Taliban publication *Al-Sumud* recently took the opportunity to interview a prominent military commander in Zabul province, Mullah Abd al-Qahhar (*Al-Sumud*, January 2010). The interview is dated December 23, 2009.

Mullah Abd al-Qahhar is described as a prominent leader of the 1980s jihad against the Soviets and the Afghan communist regime. His religious studies were interrupted by the conflict. After being wounded four times he joined the Taliban in 1994 and has been fighting Coalition occupation forces in Zabul for several years.

During the interview, the Taliban commander discussed the tactics used in Zabul province and the overall strategy of the Taliban forces. Abd al-Qahhar claims Taliban forces control most of the districts of Zabul, save for the “district capitals where enemy forces have their posts.” The mujahideen also control “all roads of enemy transport, including the Kabul-Kandahar highway. Whenever they try to move from one point to another, they face ambushes and landmines planted by



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the roadside.” Assembling and planting mines effectively required the establishment of specialized training courses to teach the skills needed for the remote control of explosives. All mujahideen units in the province now have expertise in these areas.

American forces are engaged against the Zabul Taliban, aided by a battalion of Romanian troops in the Shinkay and Shah Joy districts. Romania pulled out its 520 troops in Iraq last year while pledging to reinforce its battalion in Zabul by 108 soldiers in 2010 to better enable it to carry out its mission (Xinhua, June 30, 2009). Much of the Romanians’ Soviet-era equipment would be familiar to mujahideen veterans like Mullah Abd al-Qahhar.

Abd al-Qahhar says an expansion of Taliban influence and operations in the province prevents the Coalition from establishing new military bases. These operations include “planting mines, preparing obstacles, martyrdom-seeking campaigns on enemy convoys, rocket attacks on enemy posts, and offensive attacks on enemy garrisons.”

When asked about President Obama’s decision to send additional forces to Afghanistan, the Taliban commander suggested that the president have a close look at former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s remarks last November, when the ex-Soviet leader pointed to the Soviet failure in Afghanistan as a lesson for President Obama. In his remarks Gorbachev suggested that the current conflict was unwinnable and the United States should begin withdrawing troops rather than raising their numbers, stating, “I believe that there is no prospect of a military solution” (Bloomberg, November 10, 2009). Abd al-Qahhar sees the Afghanistan “surge” as only part of an American plan to establish a semblance of security in the country before beginning an evacuation. “I believe that sending more troops is only intended to expedite the mission of withdrawal and rehabilitation of the collaborating government to bear responsibility. However, at the same time, they do not conceal their fear that the collaborating government will fall less than one week after the exit of the Crusader forces.”

In classic guerrilla warfare fashion, Abd al-Qahhar states that “the citizens are the mujahideen themselves.” The Taliban have managed to ingratiate themselves into the local population by providing parallel administrations in each district that offer an alternative to the corrupt system managed by Kabul. The Taliban settle local disputes and offer a speedy and honest judicial system;

in return the people provide the mujahideen with all of their needs.

Nevertheless, Abd al-Qahhar sees the greatest strength of the Taliban’s “Islamic Emirate” in its steadfastness against the global “Crusader union”; “The Emirate has never felt weak, never surrendered, never bargained, and never had any internal disputes or dissensions, despite all the ordeals and hardships it has gone through in its jihad against the Crusaders.”

Abd al-Qahhar also stressed the usefulness of suicide attacks, citing the suicide bombing of a military convoy in Shah Joy that he claims killed eight Romanians (possibly referring to the August 27, 2006 attack on an Afghan military prisoner convoy in which the Romanians took casualties when they came to assist) and a suicide car-bomb attack on an American base that he claims killed 23 Americans (the Mullah apparently refers here to the November 19, 2009 attack on an American base in Shah Joy that killed an American NCO of the 82nd Airborne Division) (Afghan Islamic Press, August 27, 2006; AFP, August 27, 2006; Xinhua, November 19, 2009). According to U.S. military sources, U.S. troops are “often met with outright hostility” in Shah Joy district (*Stars and Stripes*, November 12, 2009).

#### SOMALI ISLAMISTS TARGET ARMY CHIEF IN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

Somalia’s al-Shabaab movement attempted to kill General Muhammad Gele Kahiye, the new leader of the government’s military forces, on January 7 in a preemptive strike. The assassination attempt comes before a much-anticipated government offensive to retake Mogadishu from the Islamist militants who now control most of the city. Kahiye escaped the blast in Mogadishu’s Hodon district, but two bodyguards were killed and six others wounded (Horseed Media, January 7). Somali police spokesman Abdullahi Hassan Barise later denied Kahiye was in the car when it was hit by the mine (Radio Simba, January 7).

Colonel Kahiye replaced General Yusuf Hussein Dhumal as commander of the Somali Armed Forces on December 6 after several weeks of debate at the highest levels of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of President Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad (Raxanreeb, December 6, 2006; Reuters, December 6, 2009). The move finally came three days after a suicide bomber killed three government ministers and many others at

a Mogadishu graduation ceremony. National security minister Abdullahi Muhammad Ali remarked at the time, “This is a part of a national plan to activate the army and the security institutions ahead of intended government military operations to restore law and order” (AP, December 6, 2009).

Al-Shabaab spokesman Shaykh Ali Dheere claimed responsibility for the attack, saying the group’s intention was to kill the military’s commander. “We wanted to kill the military chief to counter government planned offensives on our positions in Mogadishu and its environs” (Radio Gaalkacyo, January 7; Garowe Online, January 7). On the same day, a spokesman for al-Shabaab’s Islamist rivals, Hizb al-Islam, denounced the government at a Mogadishu press conference for what he described as an impending government military offensive designed to retake Mogadishu, which several TFG ministers have promised to do by the end of the month (Shabelle Media Network, January 7). The spokesman, Shaykh Muhammad Moallim Ali, suggested that the government forces planned to begin with assaults on Mogadishu’s Bakara arms market and the Elasha Biyaha settlement south of Mogadishu (Mareeg, January 7).

Several hours after the failed assassination, al-Shabaab militants launched a mortar attack on the presidential palace in Mogadishu. Government forces retaliated with artillery fire directed at Mogadishu’s Yaqshid neighborhood, a reputed al-Shabaab stronghold (AFP, January 7). Some 20 civilians were killed in the shelling, which was reported to have hit a number of houses and some children playing soccer (Mareeg, January 7; AFP, January 7).

## The Radical Source for Non-Arabic Speaking Muslims: Anwar al-Awlaki

By Murad Batal al-Shishani

In November 2001, an American Muslim cleric told the *Washington Post* that he had no sympathy for the perpetrators of 9/11, that Muslims and non-Muslims needed “more mutual understanding,” and that the Taliban had no right to impose the burqa on women (*Washington Post*, November 19, 2001). The

cleric, Shaykh Anwar al-Awlaki, is the same man who is now believed to have played a major role in radicalizing Major Nidal Malik Hasan, the U.S. army psychiatrist who killed 13 American soldiers at Fort Hood last November, and 23-year-old Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried to detonate explosives aboard an airliner over Detroit on Christmas Day.

In an exclusive interview, al-Awlaki told Yemeni journalist Abdulilah al-Sha’i (the only journalist to interview the leader of al-Qaeda in Yemen, Abu Basir al-Wuhayshi), that Major Hasan contacted him on December 17, 2008, to inquire about the legitimacy of killing American soldiers and officers. Further correspondence discussed Shari’a-based justifications for killing Israeli civilians. Al-Awlaki considered the Fort Hood attack a legitimate act of jihad as it was a military target and described Hasan’s attack as a “heroic act.” At the same time, al-Awlaki said that he has not recruited Hasan. “America did with its crimes and injustices” (al-Jazeera, December 23, 2009). A Yemeni official stated that Nigerian terror suspect Abdulmutallab met al-Awlaki in Shabawa, east of Sana’a. (AFP, January 7).

There is a huge difference between the moderate statements al-Awlaki made in the period between 2001-2002 and the radical views he has expressed since 2007. In the intervening period, al-Awlaki moved to Yemen, where he was banned from re-entering the United States and detained without charge in a Yemeni prison for over a year. Al-Awlaki believes he was imprisoned at the request of the United States, but describes his detention as “a chance to review the Quran and to study and read in a way that was impossible out of jail. My time in detention was a vacation from this world” (Interview with Infocusnews.net [Anaheim], September 17, 2008). The shaykh says he was interrogated in prison by the FBI about his connections to the 9/11 terrorists (Interview with cageprisoners.com, December 31, 2007).

After his release, al-Awlaki translated and summarized the works of Yusuf al-Ayiri, an al-Qaeda ideologist who was killed in a security operation in northern Saudi Arabia in 2003 (muslim.net, Jan 15, 2009; *Asharq al-Awsat*, April 30, 2007). He then went on to write the guide *44 Ways to Support Jihad*, in which he says, “Jihad today is obligatory on every capable Muslim. So as a Muslim who wants to please Allah it is your duty to find ways to practice it and support it.” The 44 ways of supporting jihad include giving the mujahideen money, praying for them, preserving their secrets, sponsoring

their families, providing moral encouragement and urging others to join the jihad.

In the same book, al-Awlaki encourages followers to be “Internet mujahideen” by, among other things, “setting up websites to cover specific areas of jihad, such as: mujahideen news, Muslim POWs and jihad literature.” Al-Awlaki also offers some advice to potential mujahideen: “Shaykh Abdullah Azzam used to say: ‘Luxury is the enemy of jihad.’ Jihad is difficult and demands sacrifice. Therefore avoiding the life of luxury removes some of the obstacles that may stand between a person and Jihad. You need to be able to sleep on the floor, eat food different than what your mother or wife cooks for you, use cold water for [ablutions] and not mind being unable to take a shower everyday.” The would-be jihadist is also advised to learn Arabic, he argues, saying, “Arabic is the international language of jihad. Most of the jihad literature is available only in Arabic and publishers are not willing to take the risk of translating it. The only ones who are spending the money and time translating jihad literature are the Western intelligence services...and too bad, they would not be willing to share it with you.” [1] The book was published on the shaykh’s blog, [www.anwar-alawlaki.com](http://www.anwar-alawlaki.com), currently offline.

Furthermore, in a lecture entitled “Allah is Preparing us for Victory” (recommended reading by many jihadi forum contributors), al-Awlaki says, “Some Muslims say the way forward for this Ummah [community] is to distance itself from terrorism and spend their time in becoming good in business, good in technology, agriculture, and the rest; and this is how we can compete with the rest of the world. The Prophet of God (p.b.u.h) said that this is wrong and Allah will dishonor us if we do that” ([salaatime.com](http://salaatime.com), n.d.; see also [muslim.net](http://muslim.net) November 9, 2009).

Al-Awlaki was born in New Mexico in 1971, when his father, Nasser al-Awlaki, a former government minister before the 1994 unification of North and South Yemen, was studying there. Anwar spent his childhood in Yemen, returning to the United States in 1991 to obtain a BA in engineering from Colorado University and a Master’s degree in education from San Diego University. Al-Awlaki then served as Imam of a San Diego mosque, where he met Khaled al-Mihdar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, two of the 9/11 hijackers. In 2001 he became Imam of Dar al-Hijrah mosque in Falls Church, Virginia, near Washington, before leaving the United States in 2002. His next stop was London before leaving for Yemen,

where he spent 18 months in prison, for reasons that remain unclear ([hanein.info](http://hanein.info), November 13, 2009; [albidaweb.com](http://albidaweb.com), December 26, 2009). Currently he is based in Shabawa, east of Sana’a, and is associated with Shaykh Abdulmajeed Zandani’s al-Iman University. He is apparently living among his tribal relatives as he belongs to one of the largest tribes in southern Yemen. His relatives have warned against targeting him, saying it would escalate the tension the country is already experiencing instead of calming it down ([albidaweb.com](http://albidaweb.com), December 26, 2009).

It is worth noting that al-Qaeda in the south of Yemen is uniquely combined with the tribal structure (explaining the protection al-Awlaki is being offered), but it is worth noting that al-Awlaki’s influence is greater among non-Arabic speakers. In Arabic language jihadi forums, Anwar al-Awlaki’s writings are very rare as most of them are in English and more Western-oriented. They are made available in different e-libraries and Islamic e-bookshops in the United States and the UK, where his radical views form a major resource for non-Arabic speaking Muslims, especially in the West.

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Notes:

1. Translation from <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nafaawlaki44waysupportjihad.pdf>

## East African Terrorism Comes to Scandinavia

*By Raffaello Pantucci*

**I**n a scene right out of the cinema, a young Somali man armed with an axe and a knife came crashing through the door of Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard’s Aarhus house late on January 1. Hitting a panic button specially installed in the house, Mr Westergaard was barely able to scramble with his five-year old granddaughter to his safe room while security services raced to the scene. Hearing police arrive, the

young man turned to confront them, bellowing “I’ll be back” in broken Danish before being shot in the arm and leg by police.

This is the first time that Islamists seeking revenge for the infamous “Muhammad cartoons” have been able to take revenge in the West. Previous bombing plots were broken up in Denmark in September 2006 and September 2007, with convictions resulting in both cases, and prosecutors claiming that the cartoons were definitely the motivation for the plotters in the second of the two cases (AP, August 11, 2008). In July 2008, two Tunisian men were picked up by Danish police in Aarhus as part of an alleged plot targeting Westergaard, though charges did not stick. In the end, one man was deported and the other released (AP, January 2). Late last year, the FBI arrested David Coleman Headley and Tahawwur Hussain Rana on charges (amongst others) that they were planning a terror attack on the “facilities and employees of *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*.” [1] *Jyllands-Posten* was the newspaper that first published the cartoons while Kurt Westergaard is the most prominent of a group of 12 cartoonists who accepted the editor’s challenge to depict images they associated with the Prophet Muhammad. In hiding until last year, Mr Westergaard announced that he was emerging from seclusion as he was “too old to be afraid” and he wanted to play his part in defending “democratic values” (BBC, April 5, 2009).

In parallel to this growing threat, Danes have watched recently as a network has been uncovered linking their nation to war-torn Somalia and the al-Qaeda-inspired al Shabaab. On December 3, 2009, a suicide bomber killed 22 people at a Mogadishu medical school graduation ceremony, including three ministers of the transitional government. It was revealed soon afterwards that the bomber, who allegedly wore a burqa while carrying out the attack, was a Danish-Somali man known to the *Politiets Efterretningstjeneste* (Danish Security Intelligence Service - PET) (Somaliland Press, December 9, 2009; Reuters, December 11, 2009).

This was not the first time that alleged Shabaab-linked Somalis with Danish residency permits have been discovered plotting. In August 2009, ahead of a visit to East Africa by U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, Kenyan security forces broke up a cell that included Somalis with Danish ties (*The Australian*, September 8, 2009). What has set alarm bells ringing, however, is the revelation that Westergaard’s attacker was one of the members of this Kenyan cell, but had been released after

authorities could not find evidence of his involvement in the plot (*Copenhagen Post*, January 5).

While it quickly emerged that the man, now identified in the Kenyan press as Muhammad Muhideen Gelle, was already known to the PET as an individual with links to al-Shabaab, what has increasingly surprised people is the depth of his connections to previous Danish plotters (AP, January 4). According to a report from neighboring Sweden, Gelle was allegedly seen in the company of the Danish Mogadishu bomber on a fundraising trip in that country last year (*Spiegel*, January 6). It is unclear whether this was in connection to the Shabaab network that was apparently established by senior Shabaab leader Fu’ad Muhammad Qalaf, who served as an imam at the Rinkeby mosque in Stockholm for many years (*Jane’s Intelligence Weekly*, August 12, 2009).

Gelle is nicknamed Abdi or MMG by the Danish press, which cannot report his name due to court injunctions. Gelle is believed to have arrived in Denmark in 1997 as part of a group of 38 refugees from war-torn Somalia. He distinguished himself from the rest of the group by learning Danish rapidly and getting good grades in school before graduating to become a caregiver for the elderly, a tutor to younger kids and marrying “the sweetest girl in Aarlborg.” The two had three children together (*Ekstra Bladet*, January 5). One report said that he continued his work in the community right up to the day before the attack, serving as a temp at a Danish Red Cross center for young immigrants (*Jyllands-Posten*, January 7).

According to his family, by 2006 things had started to change, in particular after a series of recruitment attempts by the PET (Danmarks Radio, January 5). Gelle started to become more radical and introverted, talking about going back to fight in his homeland of Somalia. He is alleged to have gone to join the fighting at least twice, once returning injured to Aarlborg, where he was apparently spotted attempting to recruit fellow countrymen to the war. His marriage did not survive his newfound religiosity or bellicose desires and the two divorced last year when he moved to Copenhagen, reportedly to support himself as an IT programmer (*Ekstra Bladet*, January 5). Then in September he was picked up in Kenya and repatriated to Denmark, where he apparently continued to operate as part of a network under PET surveillance.

While al-Shabaab did not officially claim the attack on Westergaard, spokesman Shaykh Ali Mahmud Raage

(a.k.a. Shaykh Ali Dheere) was reported as saying, “We appreciate the incident in which a Muslim Somali boy attacked the devil who abused our prophet.” He then seemed to make a tacit admission: “There could be some people who might say that boy was related to Shabaab” (AFP, January 3). It is unclear at this stage whether this was a planned attack or a frenzied effort by a single individual linked to Shabaab’s international network – though if it was an organized attack it would mark an escalation in Shabaab’s activities, which have, for the most part, confined themselves to Somalia and its immediate vicinity.

What is clear, however, is that operational networks do exist which link al-Shabaab to Somali diaspora communities in the Nordic countries. Sweden’s security services have repeatedly warned of this threat, while Danish security services have found themselves very busy in the wake of the cartoons. Both have increased their focus on their respective domestic Somali communities. It has been estimated that there are about 20,000 Somalis in each nation, though figures are unreliable. What has alarmed Swedish forces, however, is the growing evidence that non-Somalis are being attracted to the fight from Sweden, something that is supported by a Danish report which claims Somalia is now being seen as the exciting jihad hotspot among young radicals. While the actual numbers are quite small (Sweden claims some 10 nationals are currently in Somalia, and the number from Denmark is unlikely to be much higher), the connection does raise the worrying prospect that al-Shabaab or a similar group might attempt to manipulate the network to carry out an attack in Europe. For Kurt Westergaard, this attack will likely not be the last attempt on his life, given the Islamists’ long memories and the fact that, unlike the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, the death threat here does not have a main source (i.e. the Iranian Ayatollahs) capable of rescinding it.

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Notes:

1. Department of Justice, “Two Chicago men charged in connection with alleged roles in foreign terror plot that focused on targets in Denmark,” October 27, 2009: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2009/October/09-nsd-1157.html>. Translations of the Danish news stories can be found: <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com>.

## Indonesian Counter-Terrorism: The Great Leap Forward

By Zachary Abuza

Too often the news surrounding terrorism is dominated by the headline-catching acts of terrorism, such as last summer’s twin suicide bombings in Jakarta, or the take-down of terrorist operatives such as Dr. Azahari bin Hussin or Noordin Mohammad Top. Less is written about success in counterterrorism operations. No country deserves more credit for improving its counterterrorism operations and capabilities than Indonesia. While terrorism will never be eliminated, Indonesia has developed a strong and effective counterterrorist force, while at the same time consolidating its democratic transition. There is no other country in the world that can make this claim.

From 2002 to 2005, Indonesia was wracked by annual terrorist attacks perpetrated by a radical Salafist organization, Jemaah Islamiya (JI). JI’s 2002 Bali bombing remains the single most lethal terrorist incident after 9/11. That was followed by the August 2003 bombing of the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta, the October 2004 bombing of the Australian Embassy and the October 2005 triple bombing in Bali. In November 2006, JI’s master bomb-maker, Dr. Azahari bin Hussin, was killed and his cache of 23 bag bombs was seized. That set the organization back a year. Counterterrorism operations in July 2007 led to the arrests of top JI leaders, including Zarkasih, the group’s spiritual leader, as well as seizures of large caches of explosives. In July 2008, a ten-person cell in Pekenbaru, Sumatra was taken down with the cooperation of Singaporean security forces. (AP, April 28, 2009; AFP, April 7, 2009). On July 17, 2009 JI was finally able to perpetrate mass-casualty attacks by detonating bombs in two luxury hotels in Jakarta.

There are several aspects to note. First, constraints in personnel and resources enabled JI to carry out only one mass-casualty attack per year. It is clear that JI’s leaders were unhappy with this tempo, and hence switched from car bombs to smaller bag bombs, used in the 2005 attacks and the 2009 bombings. Second, JI clearly demonstrated its ability to learn and adapt. In addition to shifting its tactics, JI’s leaders changed their operations in response to government security operations. In 2005, Noordin Top wrote a manual for cell maintenance and operations, which paralleled the philosophy of Musab al-Suri, a Syrian jihad ideologue

who articulated a decentralized model of self-sustaining and autonomous cells driven by a common ideology. JI has remained a hard group to penetrate.

Indonesian security forces deserve credit for developing an elite counterterrorism police force firmly in civilian hands, Densus-88 (Detachment-88). The force, created in 2003, is well-trained, well-paid, well-led and free of the endemic corruption that permeates much of Indonesia's police and bureaucracy.

But more than this, counterterrorism is perceived as politically legitimate because it has not come at the expense of the rule of law or democracy. In fact, only in Indonesia did counterintelligence actually strengthen democracy and rule of law. Unlike neighboring Malaysia or Singapore, which have relied on colonial-era internal security acts that allow for indefinite detention without trial, roughly 450 terrorism suspects in Indonesia have been charged and tried in courts of law or released. Though some sentences were light and annual amnesties that freed some 250 convicted terrorists caused diplomatic hassles, it was an important means for delegitimizing JI. As the head of Densus-88, Brigadier General Tito Karnavian said Indonesia's success was based on "law enforcement, prosecution and the judicial process. We do not use the military approach" (*Financial Times*, December 28, 2009).

This successful approach may be compromised by proposed legislation. In September 2009, the Indonesian government submitted revisions to its anti-terrorism law to Parliament. The proposed changes included lengthening the period of detention without trial from seven days to two years, should the suspect's activities be deemed to endanger Indonesia's security. The second proposed amendment would give the government the right to detain people and groups that glorify terrorism and openly incite violence against religious minorities (*Straits Times* [Singapore], September 2, 2009). The bill is still being debated. Though the police have had an anti-incitement law at their disposal, until lately they have not had the political cover to use it. Recently the police have suggested that this has changed. As a top police official said:

If any preacher is found to have uttered provocative words or broken the law (by preaching hatred), we will definitely take action against him. We won't hinder dakwah [Arabic "dawa"], the spread of [the] Islamic message,

but we will try to be embedded there, be more transparent and do direct monitoring. We are just stepping up surveillance all over the country because the threat of terrorism remains real and frightening (*Straits Times*, August 22, 2009).

But counterterrorism operations were successful for another reason as well. In a mid-2007 raid on a JI safe-house, a document that outlined JI's new structure was recovered. That document identified Poso, Sulawesi, as a central front in the group's regeneration. Poso, along with Ambon province, was the scene of intense sectarian bloodletting from 1998-2001, which continued to simmer through 2004-05. Though the conflict bore out of local reasons, JI quickly became involved and escalated the degree of violence. Thousands of people were killed in the bloodshed that JI used to set up a network of paramilitary forces and Islamist charities. Indeed, many in JI had long supported such a strategy, deeming the Qaeda-style campaign of bombing Western interests to be counter-productive to the group's interests. That document, along with the arrest of several JI operatives, convinced the government to take sectarian violence seriously and not to let these conflicts fester. But after documents were recovered that explicitly identified the conflict zones as the centers of JI's regrouping, the government has been very proactive.

The death of bomb-maker and financier Noordin Top in a September, 2009 Densus-88 raid was a blow to JI (*Jakarta Globe*, September 17, 2009). He was a very charismatic individual and it takes a special skill set to be a recruiter for suicide bombers. He had strong organizational skills and ran a network resilient enough to sustain him all these years while perpetrating attacks under a dragnet. He was a financier with links to Middle-East financiers and was clearly a proponent of an al-Qaeda ideology when many JI members were beginning to see such a strategy as counter-productive. Noordin Top's operational savvy will be hard, but not impossible, to replicate.

Despite these gains, Indonesian security forces are realistic about the challenges ahead. Noordin's network was stronger than first thought and they have seen JI continue to recruit (*Reuters*, December 29, 2009). While top operatives have been killed or arrested in the past few years, technical proficiency has been transmitted and a new generation of leaders is emerging. There has been no evidence of out-right factionalism, nor have there been any mass defections.

There are four other issues that are cause for alarm:

- Since 2004, JI has been moving into the provision of social services. [1] The number of JI-related charities has proliferated, all with the government's approval. Despite their designations by the United Nations Security Council's Al-Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee, Mohamad Iqbal Abdurrahman (a.k.a. Abu Jibril) and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir have been active in fundraising, social-welfare activities, humanitarian relief and dakwah. The government believes they can be weaned off of terrorism, though skeptics tend to see this as an opportunity to openly recruit and regroup until the security and political environment are more favorable. Indeed, many of these charities have expanded their international operations. The Medical Emergency Rescue Committee Indonesia (MER-C), for example, has been active in Gaza, despite the Egyptian government's attempts to expel them, as well as in southern Thailand (Jakarta Post, February 10, 2009).

- A second concern is the emergence of home grown militants, radicalized on the internet, seeking training overseas. This has already been the case in Singapore, where there have been five arrests of home-grown militants. This is a new phenomenon that will require new tools and tactics. Moreover, there is concern about new splinters. In early 2009 a new group calling itself al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia announced its formation through a number of media interviews and web postings (Straits Times, March 14, 2009).

- The third factor is beyond Indonesia's control, but of paramount concern to them: the ongoing conflicts in the southern Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan. Sadly, neither the Philippine nor the Thai governments have demonstrated the capacity or will to resolve these festering conflicts. It is not that there are large numbers of Indonesians traveling to these hotspots, but all play a role in the radicalization of Indonesians and fuel the jihadist narrative, as well as provide safe havens and opportunities to train in small numbers. In Pakistan, there is an additional concern that the government continues to lack the political will to crackdown on the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), an organization with a global

network that has worked closely with JI in the past.

- Finally, Indonesia's much-discussed disengagement program has not been as successful as the government claims. For one thing, it is absolutely starved of resources and has none of the ancillary or follow-up aspects that are features of Singapore or Malaysia's programs, such as the provision of social workers, psychologists, parole officers and family counseling programs. Indonesia's program isn't really a program at all; it is an ad hoc response conducted by a handful of JI members who have renounced violence. The disengagement program lacks any post-release monitoring. There have been several known cases of recidivism, including one of the suicide bombers in the 2009 Jakarta bombings.

In sum, once Indonesian leaders developed the political will to crackdown on JI, an institutionalized counterterrorism program which upheld the rule of law and respected the country's democratic gains was put in place. While terrorism will remain a fact of political life in the world's largest Muslim country, its potential to jeopardize the state has decreased considerably.

*Zachary Abuza is one of the leading scholars on Terrorism in Southeast Asia. He is currently Associate Professor for Political Science and International Relations at Simmons College.*

Notes:

1. Zachary Abuza, "Jemaah Islamiyah: Indonesia's Hezbollah," *Middle East Quarterly* (Winter 2009).

## The Growth of the Deobandi Jihad in Afghanistan

*By Arif Jamal*

Three students from Karachi's Jamia Uloom al-Islamia left their Islamic studies half way to completion and took a train to Peshawar on February 18, 1980 to take part in the nascent anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. Anti-Russian passion was



their only weapon, but they wanted to practice what they had learned in the classrooms of their madrassa. [1] The three students - Irshad Ahmed, Abdus Samad Sial and Mohammad Akhtar - later assumed grand religious titles; the first two became Maulana-s (“Our Master,” a title used for religious leaders with formal qualifications) while the third came to be known as Qari (“Reader,” i.e. one who recites the Quran). His colleagues later gave Qari Akhtar another grand title, “Saifullah” (Sword of Allah). They decided to call their three-member group the Jamiat Ansar-ul-Afghaneen (Party of the Friends of the Afghan people) and chose Irshad Ahmed as their first amir. The three students who formed Jamiat Ansar-ul-Afghaneen while still in their teens would later have a tremendous influence on the rise of Deobandi jihadism in South and Central Asia and beyond.

On their way to Afghanistan the trio joined a small Afghan Deobandi group in Peshawar, the Harakat-e-Inqilab-e-Islami Afghanistan (Islamic Revolutionary Movement of Afghanistan - HIIA) of Maulana Nasrullah Mansoor. Armed by the HIIA, the group crossed the Durand Line into Afghanistan where it became the principal jihadi group for students from the Pakistani Deobandi madrassas. It had already trained some 4,000 Pakistani madrassa students by 1988 when the Soviets started leaving Afghanistan. The Pakistani boys that the HIIA had trained were later organized under the name of Harakat ul-Jihad al-Islami (Islamic Jihad Movement - HuJI) to wage jihad in Kashmir. [2] These 4,000 Deobandi jihadists provided the foundation on which the entire Pakistani Deobandi jihadist movement was founded in later years. Most of the Pakistani jihadist groups, including parts of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), directly trace their roots to the HuJI.

HIIA and HuJI played another more important role, mostly ignored until now, by helping the Deobandi movement grow in largely Barelvi Afghanistan (the Barelvi are a less politicized branch of Muslims who place more stress on rituals). They not only recruited boys from the Pakistani Deobandi madrassas to fight jihad in Afghanistan, but also helped place Afghans in the Pakistani madrassas. These students later founded the Taliban movement. Thanks to HIIA, the Pakistani and Afghan Deobandis built a relationship that has survived against all odds. Interestingly, all the Pakistani Deobandi groups have split several times, but maintain unbreakable bonds with the Afghan Taliban, the main Deobandi group in Afghanistan.

HuJI in Kashmir and the First Split

At the end of the Afghan jihad in 1989, the HuJI looked for another theater of jihad and found one in nearby Kashmir. HuJI temporarily abandoned the Afghan theater of jihad completely and focused on Indian-administered Kashmir, which offered a gateway to India. The beginning was slow as Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was not ready to unleash Pakistani jihadi groups in Kashmir for fear of reprisals from India. Moreover, the ISI was unable even to train and arm the boys crossing into Pakistan from Kashmir until 1991. [3] This period of relative inactivity gave birth to internal frictions in the group, which split in 1991. Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil and Maulana Masood Kashmiri led the revolt against the founding members and founded Harakatul Mujahideen. It is not clear what really caused the split. The founding members later alleged that Maulana Khalil was too subservient to the ISI and always sought publicity. [4] However, the split was a serious jolt to the HuJI, as the bulk of the mujahideen followed Maulana Khalil, their commander and teacher.

#### Foundation of Harakatul Ansaar, al-Faran and the Second Split

The split in the HuJI, an important recipient of Saudi money, made the Saudis very unhappy. They deputed a Mecca-based Deobandi alim (scholar), Maulana Abdul Hafeez Makki, to reunite the two groups. Maulana Makki immediately established contacts with an emerging jihadi alim, Maulana Masood Azhar, to fulfill this task (Masood later founded Jaish-i-Mohammad in 2000). Maulana Makki became a regular visitor to Pakistan in this period. [5] Their efforts bore fruit when the two groups reunited in 1993 under the name of Harakatul Ansar. Maulana Sadatullah became the amir of the united group. This is the time when the Kashmiri groups, particularly the Hizbul Mujahideen (the armed wing of Pakistan’s Jamaat-i-Islami and distinct from Harakatul Mujahideen), started showing weakness in the face of atrocities by the Indian security forces. This was also the time when the inflow of Kashmiri boys began decreasing. To keep the pot boiling in Kashmir, the ISI started encouraging Pakistani jihadi groups such as the HuJI to play a bigger role in the jihad in Kashmir. Harakatul Ansar attracted a lot of attention the following year when, helped by a small group of Hizbul Mujahideen, it occupied the Islamic shrine at Charar Sharif in Indian-administered Kashmir. The event encouraged jihadis fighting in Kashmir and jolted the Indian security forces. After its success in Charar Sharif, Harakatul Ansar organized the kidnapping of some

European and American tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir. A previously unknown group, al-Faran, believed to be a front group for the Harakatul Ansar, claimed responsibility. After several months the United States designated Harakatul Ansar as a terrorist group. As U.S. pressure increased on Pakistan to take action against Harakatul Ansar, the ISI apparently asked them to split once more. The group again split into HuJI and Harakatul Mujahideen. [6]

A Failed Coup d'état by Jihadist Major-General Abbasi  
The al-Faran episode was a wake-up call for the Benazir Bhutto government, which started putting pressure on the ISI to come clean on the jihadi scene. It also came down a little harder on the jihadis. HuJI decided not to take all of this lying down. In the early second half of 1995, the Pakistani civilian intelligence discovered a plot by a small group of Islamist army officers led by Major General Zahirul Islam Abbasi. The officers were accumulating arms to take over command of the army and the government. The intelligence services discovered that the plotters had planned to eliminate the entire military command during the corps commanders' conference on September 30, 1995. Major General Abbasi's group was closely affiliated with HuJI and wanted to overthrow the Bhutto government to pave the way for a Taliban takeover similar to Afghanistan. HuJI was to help the rebel army officers. In his first interview with the author, Major General Abbasi denied any plan to overthrow the government but did admit that his group was transporting arms and ammunition from the Afghan mujahideen to the Kashmiri mujahideen. [7] However, in a subsequent interview, he admitted that they were taking action against the Bhutto government and the army command as part of their faith. [8] During both interviews, he admitted his links with the HuJI. However, before the trial of the military began, the ISI asked Qari Akhtar to go to Afghanistan. Qari Akhtar returned to Pakistan only when General Musharraf dismissed Prime Minister Sharif's government.

#### 9/11 – New Directions

In spite of severe differences amongst them, all of the Pakistani Deobandi groups and political parties maintained close links with the Afghan Taliban. Jihadi groups went further and established links with al-Qaeda after the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Many of them, such as HuJI, trained their cadres in al-Qaeda's training camps. The U.S. bombing and occupation of Afghanistan enraged the entire Deobandi movement in Pakistan. They turned their guns against General

Musharraf when he decided to join the U.S.-led coalition against terror in order to save the Kashmir jihad. Half of the Deobandi jihadi movement decided to fight General Musharraf while the other half would remain in sleeper cells as part of the grand strategy. Qari Akhtar took up arms against his former benefactor, General Musharraf but fled Pakistan after failed assassination attempts on the Pakistani president. Qari Akhtar was arrested in Dubai in August 2005 and extradited to Pakistan. However, under the growing influence of the Islamists, he was never prosecuted. After the suicide attack on the arrival ceremony of Benazir Bhutto in October 2007 (which she survived), she blamed Qari Akhtar and others for planning it. He was arrested but was again let off the hook.

HuJI carried out several high-profile terrorist attacks in the years following 9/11 but claimed responsibility through previously unknown front groups. The attack on the then-finance minister and later prime minister, Shaukat Aziz, was claimed by the Islambouli Brigade; the attack on Lieutenant General Ahsan Saleem Hayat was claimed by the Jundullah of Karachi, and so on. Some of the other terrorist acts were claimed by or blamed on HuJI-al-Almi. It is important to note that most of the terrorists arrested in the post-9/11 period in Pakistan belonged to HuJI or to groups split from HuJI.

#### Commander Ilyas Kashmiri and al-Qaeda

HuJI ran at least six training camps, three in Pakistan and three in Afghanistan, before the 9/11 attacks forced the terrorists to go underground. These training camps included Ma'askar ("camp") Mehmood Ghaznavi in Kotli (Pakistan-administered Kashmir), Ma'askar Abu Ubaida bin Jarrah in Gilgit (Northern Areas of Pakistan) and Ma'askar Abu Haneefa in Mansehra (North-West Frontier Province). In Afghanistan, they ran Ma'askar Irshad in Jalaabad, Ma'askar Khalid Zubair Shaheed in Rashkor near Kabul and another camp in Kirgha near Kabul. Ma'askar Mehmood Ghaznavi in Kotli was used by Brigade 313 [9], the wing dedicated to jihad in the Jammu region of Indian administered Kashmir while the remaining five trained jihadis from all over the world, including al-Qaeda cadres. [10] 313 Brigade leader Ilyas Kashmiri was arrested in the wake of the failed assassination attempt on Musharraf in December 2003, while Qari Akhtar succeeded in escaping for a time but was later arrested. Like Qari Akhtar and others, Commander Kashmiri escaped punishment thanks to the growing influence of the Islamists. In 2005, Commander Kashmiri moved to the Waziristan region

where he coordinates his group's activities with the TTP and al-Qaeda. Commander Kashmiri is a prime suspect in coordinating the suicide attack on Forward Operating Base Chapman in the Khost province of Afghanistan in December 2009 that killed seven CIA officers and injured six others. The United States is currently seeking his extradition from Pakistan (*The News*, January 6).

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Notes:

1. Author's interview with Abdus Samad Sial, July 30, 2001.
2. Ibid.
3. See Arif Jamal, *Shadow War: The Untold Story of Jihad in Kashmir*, Melville House, New York, 2009.
4. Author's interview with Qari "Saifullah" Akhtar, Afghanistan, July 1999.
5. Author's interview with Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil, Rawalpindi, October 2000.
6. Author's interview with Maulana Ameen Rabbani, Rawalpindi, December 1999.
7. Author's interview with Major General Zahirul Islam Abbasi, Rawalpindi, March 2002.
8. Author's interview with Major General Zahirul Islam Abbasi, July 2005.
9. 313 Muslims won the first jihad under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad against an army 10,000 infidels.
10. Author's interview with Commander Ilyas Kashmiri, Kotli, June 2000.