



# Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

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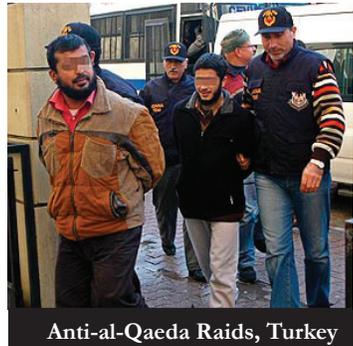
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## MAURITANIA'S IMPRISONED ISLAMISTS DEBATE JIHAD WITH RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS ON PUBLIC TELEVISION

Buoyed by the successful transition of power after recent elections and the reconciliation of the government and opposition, Mauritania is now taking the unprecedented step of broadcasting a televised debate on the meaning and merits of jihad from inside a Nouakchott prison. On one side was a panel of officials and scholars, on the other was a divided group of some of Mauritania's most dangerous convicts, including the leader of al-Qaeda in Mauritania, Khadim Ould Saman (al-Jazeera, January 19).

In the last few years, Mauritania has battled a low-level but often shockingly violent insurgency led by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (see *Terrorism Monitor*, August 20, 2009; July 30, 2009; February 23, 2005; *Terrorism Focus*, October 1, 2008; January 9, 2008).

The two-day event (January 18-19) was attended by 67 Salafist prisoners, most of whom still await trial. The panel of scholars was led by Shaykh Muhammad Hassan Ould Daou and the Minister of Islamic Affairs, Ahmed Ould Nini, who announced, "We are here today to discuss ways and means to get out of a crisis that threatens civil peace in a nation known for its spirit of tolerance, magnanimity and openness" (AFP, January 2). One member of the panel explained, "The objective is to encourage [the prisoners] to repent and to support a fatwa that condemns fundamentalism and religious violence – a fatwa which imams will



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later disseminate in mosques” (*Jeune Afrique*, January 29). One of the central questions examined in the dialogue was the legitimacy of attacks against Muslims and non-Muslims.

Ould Saman, who wore an “Al-Qaeda” T-shirt to one of the sessions, maintains that attacks on the Islamic Republic of Mauritania are a religious duty due to the government’s failure to uphold Shari’a. During the debate, Ould Saman insisted the scholars and clerics had no choice but to follow his example:

Indeed, we are right to face infidels everywhere in Muslim lands until they leave every part of Muslim countries and until we liberate them. We have the right to fight a handful of people who rule Muslim countries until we remove them by fighting them by the sword and until we enforce the rule of Shari’a. It is the right of Muslims to be ruled by the Shari’a... You [the clerics] have no knowledge and are wrong to describe us as ignorant and religious extremists (al-Jazeera, January 19; January 23).

Ould Saman, however, appears to represent a minority view among the prisoners, 47 of whom signed a document calling for dialogue with Mauritanian religious scholars. The document praised the outreach work of the scholars, saying they have explained certain concepts “which they previously did not understand” (Agence Nouakchott d’Information, January 11). Still, about 20 irreconcilables continue to support Ould Saman’s hardline views, even with the possibility of an amnesty dangling before them. This group, which includes some of Mauritania’s best-known terrorists, is aware that AQIM has demanded their release in exchange for three Spanish hostages. Many of the Salafist detainees have complained of torture and mistreatment while in prison, though human rights groups report an improvement in this area under the new regime.

Ould Saman escaped from the same prison in 2006 and is alleged to have used his freedom to murder four French tourists in December 2007 and to organize an attack on the Israeli embassy (now closed) in February 2008. He was re-arrested in April, 2008 (Agence Nouakchott d’Information, April 30, 2008). After his arrest, Ould Saman was charged with using Mauritania as a base for “terrorist acts against a foreign country [Israel] and belonging to a terrorist organization” (AFP, August 26, 2009). The talks, which are being followed

closely by the public, are supported by Mauritania’s newly legitimate Islamist party, Tawassoul.

#### SOMALIA’S RAS KAMBONI GROUP JOINS AL-SHABAAB’S GLOBAL JIHAD

Somalia’s Hizb al-Islam movement appears to have lost a significant portion of its fighting strength to its Islamist rival, al-Shabaab. A senior Shabaab leader, Shaykh Fu’ad Muhammad Khalaf, used a February 1 news conference in Baidoa to announce that the Ras Kamboni Brigade had left Hizb al-Islam to join the mujahideen of al-Shabaab (al-Qimmah, February 1). A declaration signed by the leaders of both movements outlined the groups’ shared objectives, which include the establishment of an Islamic government, support for Muslims in the Horn of Africa who are living under the rule of “enemy Christians”, and a determination to “combine the jihad of the Horn of Africa with the international jihad.” Ras Kamboni will now operate under the name al-Shabaab (Shabelle Media Network, February 1).

Mu’askar (Camp) Ras Kamboni was one of four Islamist militias that gathered together under the Hizb al-Islam umbrella in January, 2009 to oppose the government of Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad. Ras Kamboni has previously cooperated with al-Shabaab, most notably in the expulsion of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) from the southern port of Kismayo in 2006. The movement is based in south Somalia and is currently led by Shaykh Hassan Abdullah Hirsi al-Turki, a controversial Islamist warlord and political figure who is well known for his shifting loyalties. Al-Turki provided reinforcements to al-Shabaab when the movement took heavy losses in the summer of 2008. The warlord was defeated in fighting by al-Shabaab in southern Somalia last fall, but unlike other Hizb al-Islam leaders he was unable to flee into ethnic-Somali north Kenya as he is wanted there for his alleged involvement in the 1998 Nairobi embassy bombing (Shabelle Media Network, February 2).

The Ras Kamboni militia has joined al-Shabaab just as the movement made a declaration of allegiance to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Shaykh Fu’ad Muhammad Khalaf announced that the unification agreement was just the first step in dismantling the Hizb al-Islam Islamist coalition, saying, “We intend to invite other groups in Hizb al-Islam and make our war a global jihad” (Garowe Online, February 2).

Hizb al-Islam commander Shaykh Ahmad Madobe said al-Turki was already “long suspended from Ras Kamboni” and was an ailing man who was “not capable of carrying out any duties” (Shabelle Media Network, February 2). Backed by a number of Ras Kamboni commanders, the leader of Hizb al-Islam, Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys, questioned the reality and significance of the Baidoa agreement; “Shaykh Turki has joined al-Shabaab, but that does not mean Ras Kamboni has indeed joined our brothers in al-Shabaab” (Garowe Online, February 2).

## Taking al-Qaeda’s Jihad to Facebook

By *Murad Batal al-Shishani*

Web forums associated with jihad and al-Qaeda sympathizers have become a major source of information about militant Islamist groups, as well as a platform for the dissemination of the audio, visual and textual literature of the Salafi-Jihadis. According to the U.S. State Department, only 15 sites were run by groups described by the United States as “terrorist” groups in 1998, but the number of these sites increased to more than 4,000 by 2005. [1]

Despite the proliferation of jihadi websites, such sites and forums are prone to monitoring and closure by the United States and its allies, as well as by self-appointed censors with hacking skills. These obstacles lead the Salafi-Jihadis to search for various methods to overcome the blockages, closures and security restrictions imposed on their platforms.

In this context, active pro-jihad contributors to “al-Faloja Islamic Forums” (which today hosts more than 250,000 contributions) urged al-Qaeda’s supporters to “invade” Facebook in December 2008 by creating sympathetic groups—a feature available on the networking site—to spread the Salafi-Jihadi message. Facebook is a social networking website devoted to connecting individuals and groups. According to Facebook’s statistics page, the site has more than 200 million active members, and more than 100 million of these enter Facebook at least once each day.

This outreach campaign seems to have had almost immediate results; according to Pakistani authorities,

the five young American Muslims arrested in Pakistan last December were recruited online via YouTube and Facebook after the suspects used these sites to reach out to groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Lashkar-e-Jhangyi (*Dawn* [Karachi], December 16). A high-ranking Department of Homeland Security official claimed that “Online recruiting has exponentially increased, with Facebook, YouTube and the increasing sophistication of people online” (*Washington Post*, December 13).

The author has searched Facebook using keywords such as “jihad,” “al-Qaeda,” “al-Zarqawi,” “Bin Laden,” etc. and found a number of pro-al-Qaeda groups (“groups” on Facebook are applications created by users with common interests, fan-bases, advocates of a cause, etc). The author found that the number of members in these groups, which use names such as “Zarqawi,” “al-Jihad al-Rayyan,” “al-Qaeda,” “Yusuf al-Batar battalion,” etc. range from 50 to 150; however, groups using the name “Osama bin Laden,” (there is more than one) tend to have more members, sometimes in excess of 400.

Compared to the number of participants in jihadi web forums, these numbers are comparatively low; but the author noticed that the creators of most Salafist groups on Facebook adopt symbolic usernames such as Ziad Jarrah (one of the 9/11 hijackers who was on United Airlines flight 93), Marwan Hadid (a Syrian jihadi who founded the armed faction of the Syrian brotherhood in the early 1980s) and Yusuf Al-Ayiri (a Saudi al-Qaeda ideologue who was killed in a security sweep in Saudi Arabia’s Ha’il province in 2003 (see *Asharq al-Awsat*, April 30, 2007).

The growing number of jihadi Facebook pages created and used by members who typically keep their names secret raises a question about the purpose behind creating such groups. Are al-Qaeda and affiliated sympathizers using these groups for more than mere propaganda, such as a means to communicate between members?

Al-Qaeda and affiliated Salafi-Jihadis seem more interested in attracting new users and conveying their messages to them than in using these sites for communication. Dr. Thomas Hegghammer, a visiting professor at Harvard University who specializes in the study of militant Islamic movements, says that Facebook lends itself to jihadist propaganda poorly for several reasons: administrators can easily close or remove controversial groups, intelligence agencies can

see easily who accesses these groups and Facebook seems to attract a relatively liberal crowd. [2]

Although Salafi-Jihadis successfully use web forums as media outlets and have also managed to broadcast their materials on YouTube, it appears that they cannot easily infiltrate Facebook. Abdul Hameed Bakier, a Jamestown Foundation analyst who specializes in analyzing jihadi web forums, told the author that it seems that few Salafi jihadists use Facebook to disseminate their ideology. “They are not using Facebook for serious communication. So far, ‘The Secrets of the Mujahideen’ remains the only tool that jihadists appear to use [for communicating] over the Internet... ‘Secrets of the Mujahideen’ is software programmed by Salafi-Jihadis to cipher and decipher communications. The software was recently upgraded to its newer version, Secrets of Mujahideen 2.0” (see *Terrorism Monitor*, September 27, 2007; March 30, 2007). Khaled al-Kadi, a computer systems specialist based in Amman, Jordan, told the author that the ease of monitoring and controlling such groups make the Salafist efforts to “invade” Facebook a difficult process.

It seems, therefore, that the Salafi-Jihadis have successfully developed their own method of disseminating information, a method which distinguishes between communications and propaganda purposes. At the operational level, it appears that Facebook, despite being exploited by various political organizations for its large community of users, still presents certain difficulties for al-Qaeda’s media activities. At the same time, however, it should be noted that the increasing use of web-based social networks such as Facebook present an opportunity for Salafi-Jihadis to find new ways of attracting young Muslims to their ideology.

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Notes:

1. See Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges*, Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace, 2006.

2. Author’s email interview with Thomas Hegghammer, June 19, 2009.

## Turkish Jihadis Respond to Ankara’s Anti-Al-Qaeda Operations

*By Brian Glyn Williams and Bilun Erim*

Turkish police units launched their largest anti al-Qaeda operation to date on the morning of January 22. The operation took place in a series of pre-dawn raids in towns throughout Turkey. It led to the arrest of as many as 140 people allegedly involved in an al-Qaeda ring that was plotting to carry out suicide bombings against Turkish troops in Afghanistan as well as attacks on the Turkish police (*Hurriyet*, January 22). The terrorists’ target appears to have been the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters in Kabul, which has a sizeable Turkish contingent, and Turkish police facilities in several cities that have been involved in previous al-Qaeda arrests.

Led by the Emniyet Genel Mudurlugü (EGM – General Directorate of Security), the raids took place in the cities of Van, Ankara, Sanliurfa, Mersin, Malatya, Adana, Gaziantep, Diyarbakir, Mus and 14 other towns (*Milliyet*, January 23). Many of these towns are in eastern Turkey, where there has been a rise in Salafism and militant Islam in recent years. While Turkey is currently run by the Islamist Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (AKP – Justice and Development Party), it has shown itself to be as intolerant of al-Qaeda activities as previous secular governments.

According to the Turkish press, the arrests unfolded after the Turkish police uncovered an al-Qaeda-associated group in Ankara and Adana earlier in the week (*Zaman*, January 21). Information found at this time alerted them to the existence of three separate al-Qaeda rings that were said to have been run by an Afghan-based leader named Mehmet Dogan. Turkish sources claim that this figure was responsible for sending as many as 100 Turks to Afghanistan for military training and indoctrination. While it might seem incongruous that Turkey, a country known for its Ataturk-style secular tradition, would send so many people to Afghanistan or Pakistan for jihad training, in actuality there has been a small trickle of Turks going to fight jihad in Iraq and Afghanistan in recent years (see *Terrorism Monitor*, December 7, 2006). Seven Turkish nationals who were suspected of having ties to militant groups in Pakistan were deported from that country to Turkey on January 26. The suspects were turned over to Turkish authorities in Istanbul (*Dawn* [Karachi], January 28).

It should be recalled that homegrown Turkish al-Qaeda cells carried out a major suicide bombing that killed 58 in Istanbul in 2003 and attacked the U.S. consulate in Istanbul in 2008 (see *Terrorism Monitor*, November 18, 2004). Turkish jihadi websites have posted several martyrdom epitaphs for Turks who died fighting Coalition forces in Afghanistan in recent months. [1]

The purported leader of the targeted Turkish al-Qaeda group, Mehmet Dogan, had three amirs (commanders) under him, namely Serdar Erbashi (a.k.a. “Ebuzer,” the head of the Ankara cell), Dincay (head of the Kaceli cell) and Vedat Altin (head of the Gaziantep cell). Another leader of some significance was a professor at Yuzuncuyil University in Van known only as “M.E.Y.” who recruited several of his students.

Evidence found in the raids points to the existence of an elaborate plot and included anti-government propaganda, camouflage clothing, fake documents, plans of police stations, rifles, ammunition, photos of Turks in Afghanistan, explosives and grenades.

While mainstream Turks—who are by and large not interested in Salafist Islam—considered the arrested militants to be “brainwashed terrorists,” the active online jihadist community in Turkey reacted with dismay and fury to the arrests. The consensus on the Turkish jihadist sites is that Turkey is the “poodle” of the Americans and was acting under pressure from the CIA. One well-known jihadi site, *cihaderi.net*, which purports to convey “news from the jihad world,” had a lively debate over the arrest of “our Muslim brothers” by Turkish forces. One forum member who goes by the name “May Allah Be Their Helper” asked how good Muslims in Turkey could wage jihad in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Palestine when they are being killed “with our own arms” [i.e. by fellow Turks] and “our hands tied [by the Turkish authorities]” (*cihaderi.net*, January 22).

Under the sub-heading “I Can’t Stand It,” a second forum member admonished Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan for not being able to stand up to the United States the way he did with Israel after the 2009 Gaza campaign (*cihaderi.net*, January 22). Another forum member wrote: “Those who have declared democracy and secularism to be curse words do not lick what [the Americans] spit, nor are they their slaves and servants” (*cihaderi.net*, January 22). A third forum member warned darkly that “everyone should know that even if the infidels and their stupid servants

don’t want it, the day of reckoning shall come with Allah’s permission (*cihaderi.net*, January 22).

Another jihadist website, *hakozhaber.net*, had a discussion of the arrests wherein one forum member wrote, “We have said and written this numerous times and we will continue to do so. The security units under the AKP-Gulen coalition operate arbitrarily and unlawfully under the guise of a so-called al-Qaeda operation and they organize midnight raids with brutality against many innocent people just because of their Islamic identities, their Islamic education, their struggles, or for having some Islamic publications in order to please some global imperial centers” (*haksozhaber.net*, January 22). In a more controversial posting, a forum member described the Turkish government as the “servant of the Americans” and claimed that “if a person truly lives by the rules of Islam they should turn out to be like the Taliban and al-Qaeda.” The writer went on to declare, “I love them [those who were arrested], for in the name of Allah they are devoted” (*haksozhaber.net*, January 22).

While these forums provide an important window into the little-explored world of Turkish jihadism, one must not make the mistake of seeing their comments emblematic of broader Turkish society. While jihadist tendencies have risen in Turkey in recent years, a recent poll of Turks shows that roughly 50% of them still define themselves as “Ataturk secularists” and only 30% admit to being religious (*Milliyet*, January 27). But, as the scale of the arrests would seem to indicate, an increasing number of Turks are being drawn to the romanticized notion of jihad and have come to see the Turkish state, even one run by Islamists, as the enemy.

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Notes:

1. “Afganistan’da 2 Turk ve 1 Arab Kardesimiz Sehid Oldu.” *cihaderi.net* January 15, 2010. For a further listing of “Our Martyrs” who have died in Pakistan, Afghanistan and other zones of jihad, see: <http://www.kudusyolu.net/category/sehitlerimiz/page/2>. For photos of Turkish shehids (martyrs) in Afghanistan, see <http://gonulerleri.org/forum/index.php?topic=5886.0>.

## Pakistan's Military Examines its Options in North Waziristan

By Lieutenant General Talat Masood

The United States has been pressuring Pakistan for several months to extend its counterinsurgency operations to North Waziristan. The U.S. perspective is that strong militant entities, especially the Haqqani group, the Hizb-i-Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmaytar and Taliban forces under Hafiz Gul Bahadur are using the safe haven of North Waziristan to conduct raids on American, NATO and Afghan troops. Pakistan is resisting the immediate expansion of the conflict due to several factors, one of which is that Islamabad feels its military is already overcommitted in South Waziristan, Swat and Malakand and needs time to consolidate the gains it has achieved in these places before undertaking any further operations. More than 150,000 military and paramilitary forces are currently deployed in the tribal agencies and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in order to clear pockets of resistance, prevent the recurrence of militant attacks, and hold the territory that has been cleared until it stabilizes. The military has claimed the capture and killing of hundreds of militants during the operations, but the Taliban's top leadership and many hard-core militants managed to escape in thickly forested areas or flee to adjoining tribal agencies. Conditions in Bajaur and Momand remain fairly volatile and clashes between security forces and militants are frequently reported. Remote areas of South Waziristan close to the border with North Waziristan continue to provide sanctuary to the Taliban and other militant entities that are now the target of U.S. drones.

### Prioritizing North Waziristan

In the current operational environment, North Waziristan is not an immediate priority for Pakistan's army. The militant entities in this area are not hostile toward Pakistan. It is generally believed that there is a tacit understanding that the Pakistan Army will not launch an operation if the tribes and militant groups stay neutral while operations against the Mahsud tribes and stabilization efforts continue in South Waziristan. The militant groups have not kept entirely to their undertaking and have given refuge to both al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders of South Waziristan. Another factor inhibiting a future offensive is the possibility of all the tribes uniting against the Pakistan Army in the event it

launched an operation in North Waziristan. This would bring the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban closer, posing a formidable threat to regional security. The Taliban in North Waziristan number anywhere from 10,000 to 12,000 fighters and they have the advantage of local terrain that is very inhospitable to forces from other parts of the country. The local Taliban in North Waziristan have support from a cross-section of people. Those who oppose them fear retaliation as the government's writ is practically non-existent in the region.

North Waziristan has been a victim of gross neglect by successive governments. Pakistan's participation in the Afghan anti-communist jihad, the subsequent abandonment of the region by the United States and the international community and finally the impact of the events of 9/11 have totally destroyed the social, tribal and administrative structure of the area, encouraging the Taliban to fill the vacuum. They are in fact running a parallel administration, providing justice in accordance with their harsh interpretation of Islam and maintaining security by imposing ruthless measures. The Haqqani Network and other groups have militias of 3,000 to 4,000 fighters and could draw more from the adjoining provinces of Afghanistan if Islamabad launches a military operation. Militants fleeing from South Waziristan and other parts of the tribal agencies have also sought refuge in the area.

Islamabad does not want to antagonize the Afghan Taliban and other militant groups residing in North Waziristan, knowing that it will have to deal with them once American and NATO forces leave. The new U.S. strategy on Afghanistan already envisages a withdrawal of forces commencing in 18 months and there is talk of bringing the reconcilable Taliban to the negotiating table. The other Coalition contributors have no intention to remain in Afghanistan any longer than necessary. In such unpredictable conditions, Pakistan would like to keep its options open and watch closely how U.S. policy and the military situation evolve.

### The Indian Equation

The Indian factor is crucial to the strategic calculus Pakistan uses in formulating policy on Afghanistan and the Taliban. With tensions high since the Mumbai terrorist attack and several provocative statements by Indian military and political leaders, Pakistan finds it difficult to relocate its forces from its eastern Indian border west to the Afghanistan border. U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' statement in New Delhi

that India's patience would be exhausted in the event of another terrorist attack on India by jihadi groups has given additional reason to be more circumspect in shifting forces (*The Hindu*, January 20).

A further inhibiting factor in the extension of military operation in North Waziristan is the danger that it could trigger a fresh wave of suicide attacks in many parts of Pakistan, as was experienced during military operations in Swat and more recently in South Waziristan. The high human and financial cost is another important consideration. Pakistan has lost more than 2,000 men from its security forces and thousands of civilians in its fight against militants. The financial cost of insurgency is already taking its toll, with the defense budget exceeding the allocated amount by over 35 % while demands for more money, weapons and equipment are rising. It is estimated that Pakistan has suffered a loss of nearly \$28 billion for being a front line state in the fight against militants. [1] When U.S. assistance is withheld due to bureaucratic hurdles it compounds Pakistan's ongoing financial crisis.

A recent statement by Army spokesperson General Athar Abbas made it clear that the army has no intention of launching a major military operation for the next six to twelve months as it is already over-committed and busy consolidating its position in the areas of Swat, Malakand and South Waziristan (*Dawn* [Karachi], January 22). This must have come as a rude shock to the U.S. military commanders who have been pressing Pakistan's military to expand its area of operations to North Waziristan. The United States wants Pakistan's army to take on the Haqqani Network, which has close ties to Arab militants and is alleged to be involved in a number of deadly suicide attacks, including the recent suicide bombing of the CIA station in Khost province by a Jordanian triple agent (see *Terrorism Monitor*, January 28).

#### The Need for Stabilization and Consolidation

The absence of a military operation in the near future means that the frequency of drone attacks on North Waziristan will continue or even intensify. It gives rise to considerable local resentment and sharpens anti-American sentiment while presenting a moral and political dilemma for the government, notwithstanding its tactical advantage.

There is no doubt that operations in Swat, Malakand and South Waziristan have been largely successful, but

there are pockets of these areas still in the hands of the militants, though the leadership has fled into other tribal agencies, principally North Waziristan, Orakzai and Momand.

It is estimated that there are roughly 100 hard-core al-Qaeda operatives and about 2,000 auxiliary members and supporters. In the frontier region, Uzbeks constitute the largest group among al-Qaeda's foreign mujahideen, with Arabs, Uighurs, Tajiks and a few individuals from African countries constituting the rest. Nearly a dozen of the mainly Arab hard-core al-Qaeda have been killed or captured in the last few months.

#### Rebuilding Local Administrations

The civilian administration has yet to be made fully functional in Malakand division and in South Waziristan. Tribes opposed to the Taliban are being mobilized to take care of local security and support the government's efforts in establishing an administrative structure commensurate with tribal traditions. This may take time but is a very critical part of the operation. Several pro-government leaders opposed to the Taliban have been killed, which has been demoralizing for pro-government tribes and groups. Furthermore, there has been a large internal displacement of people during the military operations. From South Waziristan alone, nearly 300,000 persons were displaced and remain either in camps or as guests in adjoining settled areas. Hospitable conditions need to be created so these people will not fall prey to the machinations of the Taliban when they return. There is already considerable resentment among them that they were caught in the crossfire of the military and Taliban.

It is encouraging, however, that the fight against militancy is being pursued more enthusiastically now than it was during President Musharraf's rule. With the support of the civilian government, Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani has shown the determination and will to seriously engage in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations according to the government's priorities.

#### Conclusion

The government is currently unprepared to negotiate with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leadership. At this stage it aims at ruthlessly pursuing the leaders and their groups. However, it is important to understand that the TTP is a loose network of motley and disparate

groups that have coalesced to leverage their impact but have little in common. In South Waziristan, the heartland of the resistance, the Taliban could be characterized as ideologically motivated. In North Waziristan the situation is similar. In Khyber Agency, however, criminals, smugglers and the drug mafia have worn the mantle of the Taliban to challenge the authority of the state.

In Khurram Agency sectarian groups are fighting for turf and in Orakzai and Bajaur a mix of ideology and criminality acts as an incentive for insurgency. These groups will continue to cause trouble for quite a while. However, if the government and the military remain steadfast and pursue the militant leaders and their groups vigorously according to a well-conceived plan involving both military and other elements of national power, there are good prospects for pacifying the area in two to three years. Much, of course, will depend on how the situation unfolds in Afghanistan and the extent of international support to Pakistan.

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Notes:

1. According to economist Shahid Hasan Siddiqui, Pakistan has spent \$40 billion on the war on terrorism while being compensated only \$12 billion by the United States. See Pakistan German Business Forum, Seminar on Post Budget Implications on Business by PGBF, February 1, <http://www.pgbf.com.pk/press-7-28-09.asp>.

## A Guide to Militant Groups in Kashmir

*By Arif Jamal*

After a few years of relative calm, militancy is slowly but surely resurfacing in the Indian administered state of Jammu and Kashmir. In a smaller-scale repeat of

Mumbai, two terrorists occupied the Punjab Hotel in downtown Srinagar on January 6. They remained held up there for nearly 24 hours before police commandos killed them. However, the terrorists succeeded in setting the hotel on fire before the holdup came to an end. As in Mumbai, the terrorists took orders from handlers in Pakistan who used five different cell-phone numbers. Their handlers had already used two of these numbers to guide the attackers in Mumbai (*The Hindu*, January 10). Police later said that one terrorist was from Kashmir and the other from Pakistan and pointed an accusing finger at the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the same group responsible for Mumbai. However, a little-known group, Jamiat ul-Mujahideen, later claimed responsibility for the holdup (AFP, January 8).

Over 150 Islamist groups

In the early days of jihad in Kashmir, between 1988 and 1990, more than 150 groups surfaced on the jihadist scene. Some of these groups united to form bigger groups such as Hizb ul-Mujahideen, but most of them simply disappeared. Some of those which still exist are mere shadows of their past and have very few followers. None except the Hizb ul-Mujahideen have the capability of carrying out militant operations inside Indian-administered Kashmir on their own. Some of these groups collaborate occasionally with Pakistani groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba to justify their existence.

Hizbul Mujahideen

From its start in October 1989, Hizb ul-Mujahideen started gaining strength as it became the armed wing of not only the Jamaat-i-Islami of Jammu and Kashmir but also of the Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir ("Free Kashmir," i.e. Pakistani controlled Kashmir). The Jamaat-i-Islami of Jammu and Kashmir elevated minor politician Mohammed Yusuf Shah, (a.k.a. Salahuddin, after the mediaeval Muslim general Salah al-Din) to the rank of supreme commander of the Hizb ul-Mujahideen. [1] Yusuf Shah cleansed the movement of everybody who did not agree with the ideology of the Jamaat-i-Islami or posed a threat to his personal leadership. In its early years, Hizb ul-Mujahideen boasted as many as 10,000 jihadist fighters, but currently the number of its members is barely in the hundreds. In the last 20 years, the Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir had tens of thousands of young men trained in jihad in Kashmir. They are mostly waiting in the wings as sleeper cells. [2]

### Ansar ul-Islam and Jamiat ul-Mujahideen

Jamiat ul-Mujahideen traces its roots back to the now forgotten Ansar ul-Islam (Helpers of Islam), a small group of Islamists active in Kashmir since the mid-1980s. Ansar ul-Islam was the first important Islamist group to emerge in Kashmir and helped turn the secular liberation struggle by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front into an Islamist jihad. Ansarul Islam was founded by Hilal Ahmed Mir (a.k.a. Nasir ul-Islam). Hilal Ahmed Mir dreamed of unifying the Islamists in Kashmir under one umbrella as Islam ka fouji bazu (the armed wing of Islam). [3] He was opposed to the intention of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to turn the group into the armed wing of the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Islamist political party founded by Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi. In 1989, a dozen jihadist groups united to form Hizb ul-Mujahideen, but the struggle continued between the group led by Hilal Ahmed Mir and the faction led by Master Ahsan Dar, a veteran jihadi from North Kashmir who wanted to turn the new group into the armed wing of the Jamaat-i-Islami. The ISI supported the latter and Hilal Ahmed Mir left Hizb ul-Mujahideen to form Jamiat ul-Mujahideen in June 1991. After the death of Hilal Ahmed Mir, Ghulam Rasool Shah (a.k.a. General Abdullah) became the amir of the Jamiat ul-Mujahideen. Today, the group does not have more than a few dozen followers.

### Sectarian Jihadist Groups

The foremost goal of most of the Kashmiri youth who took up arms was to oppose what they called "Indian occupation." However, there were two important sectarian groups: the Shi'a Hizbul Momineen and the Salafist Tehrik ul-Mujahideen. Apart from the Hizb ul-Mujahideen, the ISI allowed only the Tehrik ul-Mujahideen from Indian-administered Kashmir (led by Maulana Jamilur Rehman) to set up its own training camps. The most important of these, Ma'askar (camp) Abdullah bin Mubarak, was set up outside of Mansehra district. Although the Tehrik ul-Mujahideen attracted very few Kashmiris, it trained thousands of young Pakistani recruits from the Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith (an Islamist political party) at its training camp. The Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith (Assembly of the Way of the Followers) adopted Tehrik ul-Mujahideen as its armed wing in the late 1990s.

In the early days of the Kashmir jihad, Maulana Abbas Ansari, who heads the Shi'a political party Ittehad ul-Muslimeen, set up a Shi'a militant group under the command of Mir Tahir. [4] Under the influence of Saudi

Arabia, the ISI discouraged Shi'a Muslims from joining the jihad in both Afghanistan and Kashmir. Maulana Abbas Ansari has a vast following among the Shi'a of Kashmir and was deemed particularly unacceptable by the ISI. Consequently, the Shi'a militants had to wind up their jihadi infrastructure and join the political field in the early 1990s. At the same time, the ISI encouraged a rival Shi'a group, Hizb ul-Momineen. Hizbul Momineen accepted only Shi'a recruits. The first commander of the Hizb ul-Momineen, Shuja Abbas, developed differences with the ISI in the late 1990s and had to quit. Now led by Syed Ijaz, Hizb ul-Momineen has engaged in little militant activity in recent years. The most important role of the Hizb ul-Momineen has been to save the Kashmir jihad from drifting into Shi'a-Sunni sectarian conflict when the ISI asked the movement to claim responsibility for the assassination of pro-Indian Shiites who were actually being killed by Sunni jihadis. This was done to prevent India from stirring sectarian tensions by claiming that Sunnis were killing Shi'a in Kashmir.

Harakat ul-Jihad al-Islami and its Deobandi Offshoots  
The Harakat ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI), a Deobandi group of Afghan jihad veterans led by Qari "Saifullah" Akhtar, was the first external group to join the jihad in Kashmir, though its role was initially limited. By 1993, the Kashmiri groups, including Hizb ul-Mujahideen, started showing weakness. The Indian army's strategy of crushing the militancy by punishing militants' families worked to a great extent and neutralized a large number of the Kashmiri militants. This is when the ISI started pushing Pakistani militants into the Kashmir theatre of jihad. A group calling itself Harakat ul-Mujahideen under the leadership of Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil split from HuJI in 1991. As Kashmir opened up for the Pakistani and international mujahideen, the HuJI groups reunited under the name of Harkat ul-Ansar, under the leadership of Maulana Saadatullah. Harakat ul-Ansar pushed as many mujahideen as possible from Pakistan and other Muslim countries to Kashmir and became the principal player on the jihadi scene. It raised its profile by launching several high-profile operations such as Operation Charar Sharif, Operation al-Hadid and Operation al-Faran. The latter two targeted Western nationals and brought Harakat ul-Ansar onto the center stage of international jihad in 1994. It split once more into its former groups under Western pressure.

### Jaish-i-Mohammad

Harakat ul-Mujahideen, itself a splinter group of HuJI, split again in 2000 when Maulana Masood Azhar

formed the Jaish-i-Mohammad (Army of Mohammad). Some of the Harakat ul-Mujahideen militants hijacked an Indian aircraft on the eve of Christmas and took it to Qandahar in Afghanistan. They released the passengers only when India released three top militants from Indian jails. One of them was Maulana Masood Azhar, an ideologue of Harakat ul-Mujahideen. Instead of rejoining his parent group, Maulana Masood Azhar formed his own group, Jaish-i-Mohammad, in February 2000. Jaish-i-Mohammad drew cadres from all the Deobandi groups, particularly from the Harakat ul-Mujahideen and Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan. It was a great victory for Maulana Masood Azhar to win over Maulana Abdul Jabbar, who was sent to Afghanistan to run the Jaish-i-Mohammad training camp near Kabul. He was also the bridge between the Jaish-i-Mohammad and al-Qaeda.

### 9/11 and the Deobandi Jihadist Groups

The U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban in 2001 jolted the Deobandi groups. Consequently, the Deobandi jihadist groups scaled down their operations in Kashmir and focused on Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although the level of Deobandi terrorism is likely to rise in the coming months and years in Pakistan, they are not likely to take power. The fate of Afghanistan is more likely to determine the fate of the Deobandis in Pakistan. If the U.S.-led coalition withdraws from Afghanistan without completely weakening the Taliban, the Deobandi groups are likely to come back to power in Kabul. The fall of Kabul would immensely strengthen the Deobandi groups in Pakistan.

### Markaz Dawat wal Irshad and Lashkar-e-Taiba

The role that Pakistani Salafists played in the Afghan jihad was very marginal. They worked under Markaz Dawat wa'l-Irshad, an educational and jihadi religious movement headed by Hafiz Mohammad Saeed. Their other important leader was Zafar Iqbal (*Indian Express*, April 27, 2000). [5] Both men taught Islamic studies at the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore. When the Afghan anti-Soviet jihad came to an end in 1989, the group boasted less than a hundred members. However, the group received a lot of money from Saudi Arabia (including official sources) and grew rapidly. The Markaz set up Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) as its armed wing in 1990 to fight in Kashmir. LeT set up six training camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan-controlled Kashmir where it has trained more than 200,000 jihadists making it the largest jihadist group in the world. [6]

The LeT introduced suicide attacks in Kashmir in 1999 for the first time as a result of encouragement from General Pervez Musharraf, who became Chief of the Army Staff in 1998. Other groups copied the tactic, not only in Kashmir but also in Pakistan. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has perfected the practice in recent years.

When the LeT and Jaish-i-Mohammad carried out a joint attack against India's parliament in December 2001, India brought its forces up to the international border. To avoid another war with India and to pacify international public opinion, General Musharraf banned several Islamist and jihadist groups, including the Markaz Dawat wa'l-Irshad and Lashkar-e-Taiba in January 2002. However, Markaz Dawat wa'l-Irshad was allowed to change its name in December 2001 before the ban was imposed and continued to function with impunity. Hafiz Saeed announced that Markaz Dawat wa'l-Irshad had been dissolved, with its members divided between Jamaat ul-Dawah and the LeT. Jamaat ul-Dawah was to henceforth focus on dawaat (preaching) while the LeT focused on jihad in Kashmir. Hafiz Saeed claimed that the two groups were independent of each other, with Jamaat ul-Dawah to be headed by Hafiz Saeed and the LeT by one of his top lieutenants, Maulana Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi. [7] However, the links between the two were never broken and they kept working together. Both groups provided relief in the aftermath of the earthquake in Kashmir in 2005 in full public view (as witnessed by the author).

### The Mumbai Attacks and Future Prospects

LeT attracted a lot of international attention in November 2008 when it carried out terrorist attacks in Mumbai which targeted Jews and American and European nationals. However, the LeT sent hundreds of its trained recruits into Indian-administered Kashmir during 2009. Heavy infiltration of Indian-administered Kashmir by the LeT has created a lot of tension between the two nuclear neighbors, who occasionally exchange fire along the border.

The Kashmiri jihad has remained a war of liberation for all practical purposes, even for the most extreme groups operating in Indian-administered Kashmir, such as Hizb ul-Mujahideen. There have been few, if any, militants from Indian-administered Kashmir who took part in the global jihad. However, most Pakistani jihadi groups, including those from Pakistani-administered Kashmir, have a global agenda and Kashmir is only their

first stop. With the militants from Indian-administered Kashmir retreating and the Pakistani jihadists taking over the center stage, the Kashmir jihad has drifted into global jihad. Kashmir's two jihads are converging fast. Arif Jamal is a visiting fellow at the New York University and author of "Shadow War – The Untold Story of Jihad in Kashmir."

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Notes:

1. Author's interview with Master Ahsan Dar, Muzaffarabad, September 10, 2001.

2. Author's interviews with recruits at the training camps, 1998-2006.

3. Author's interview with Ghulam Rasool Shah, Islamabad, March 9, 2002.

4. Author's interview with Mir Tahir Masood, Islamabad, August 25, 2001

5. Author's interview with Zafar Iqbal, November 27, 1997.

6. Author's interviews with recruits at the training camps, 1998-2006.

7. Press Conference by Markaz Dawat wa'l-Irshad leaders in Lahore on December 24, 2001 – Attended by the author.

5. An audiotape allegedly recorded by Osama bin Laden appeared to claim responsibility for the attack, though not explicitly. The authenticity of the message has not been confirmed (al-Jazeera, January 25).

6. In January 2010 the chairman of the board of directors of the Yemen News Agency repeated the accusation that Iran is supporting the Houthis and stated that al-Qaeda cannot pose the same level of threat as the northern rebellion. <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news203619.htm> .

7. A translation of this work in full may be found at <http://www.tawhed.net/c.php?i=21> .

8. See Jim Lacey (ed.), *The Canons of Jihad*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 2008, pp.147-161.