



Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

VOLUME VIII, ISSUE 10 ♦ MARCH 11, 2010

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SOMALIA’S HIZB AL-ISLAM PLEDGES TO RETAKE TERRITORY LOST TO AL-SHABAAB RIVALS

Senior Hizb al-Islam commander Shaykh Ahmad Madobe has declared that Hizb al-Islam is preparing plans to expel rival Islamist militia al-Shabaab from territories in the Juba region of south Somalia (AllPuntland.com, March 1; Shabelle Media Network, March 1). The lands were seized by al-Shabaab during an offensive against former ally Hizb al-Islam in the last few months. Led by Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys, Hizb al-Islam leaders have been regrouping across the Kenyan border and are no doubt planning to take advantage of the long-delayed government offensive against al-Shabaab.

Shaykh Ahmad Madobe warned that stern measures would be taken against anyone found working with al-Shabaab. Besides the projected counter-attack in the Juba region, the Hizb al-Islam commander also said that his movement would begin hunting down al-Shabaab leaders in Mogadishu (Shabelle Media Network, March 1).

Shaykh Ahmad Madobe is a former senior member of the Islamist Ras Kamboni Brigade, one of four Islamist militias that gathered together under the Hizb al-Islam umbrella in January, 2009. When Ras Kamboni leader Shaykh Hassan Abdullah Hirsi al-Turki crossed over to al-Shabaab in early February, Shaykh Ahmad Madobe remained with Hizb al-Islam (al-Qimmah, February 1; see *Terrorism Monitor*, February 4).



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Fax: (202) 483-8337
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Though Shaykh Ahmad Madobe had pledged to hunt down Shabaab leaders in Mogadishu, al-Shabaab assassins may have struck first when pistol-wielding gunmen killed a senior Hizb al-Islam military commander in a Mogadishu market on March 9. Barre Ali Barre, also a prominent Ras Kamboni member, was a strong opponent of Hassan al-Turki's decision to join al-Shabaab (Mareeg, March 9; AFP, March 9).

After nearly being driven out of Mogadishu last year by a combined Hizb al-Islam/al-Shabaab offensive, Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is enjoying the rift growing between its Islamist opponents as it plans its long-delayed counter-offensive (AllPuntland.com, February 23). According to TFG Minister of State for Defense Yusuf Muhammad Si'ad "Indha Adde", "We are aware of the conflict that has emerged between Hizb al-Islam and al-Shabaab and we are very happy to hear about it. They subject the civilian population to a lot of suffering and the government will take advantage of this important opportunity" (All Puntland.com, February 23). Indha Adde was a leading member of Hizb al-Islam before he defected to the TFG in May 2009.

Rumors persist in Mogadishu that the TFG will enter into an alliance with Hizb al-Islam to destroy their mutual enemy, al-Shabaab. The scenario is far from impossible in Somalia's highly fluid political atmosphere and would reunite the two former Islamic Courts Union (ICU) co-chairmen, President Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad and Hizb al-Islam leader Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys, in a common military effort against the ICU's former militia, al-Shabaab.

Shaykh Hasan Dahir Aweys has lately been trying to distance his group's Islamist ideology from al-Shabaab's, while at the same time urging al-Shabaab to stop escalating disputes between Islamist movements in Somalia (Garowe Online, February 28).

KENYA TURNS TO ISRAEL FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE AGAINST GLOBAL JIHAD

As it gradually becomes drawn into the war in neighboring Somalia, Kenya has begun looking for new sources of security assistance beyond traditional partners like Great Britain and the United States. On February 11, Kenya's Minister of Internal Security, George Saitoti, met with his Israeli counterpart Yitzhaq Aharonovich in Jerusalem to request Israeli military assistance in countering radical Islamists who are threatening Kenya (Shabelle Media Network, February

14). Saitoti told the Israeli Minister, "The jihad is taking over Somalia and threatening to take over Kenya and all of Africa. No one is more experienced than you in fighting internal terror." Israeli officials brought up the problem of African migrants and refugees attempting to enter Israel through the Sinai, bringing this response from the Kenyan Interior Minister: "Help us fight al-Qaeda and we'll help you with the infiltrators. We have vast knowledge in the subject" (Y-Net News, February 11; Arutz Sheva, February 11; Somaliland Press, February 12; Israel Today, February 14). The Israeli government was also reported to have said that it is ready to hold consultations on forming a joint force with Kenya to guard the northern Kenyan border with Somalia and prevent the entry of extremists (Shabelle Media Network, February 14).

Somalia's al-Shabaab movement has threatened repeatedly to attack northern Kenya, most recently on February 10, when Shaykh Husayn Abdi Gedi announced plans to strike at troops belonging to Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) who are completing military training from Kenyan instructors in northeast Kenya (Radio Gaalkacyo, February 10, *Puntland Post*, February 6).

The talks with Kenya appear to be part of a growing Israeli interest in the Horn of Africa. In early February, the spokesman of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yigal Palmor, told Somali media that Israel was ready to recognize the breakaway territory of Somaliland as an independent nation (Golis News, February 11). If Israel proceeds, it would be the first nation in the world to recognize Somaliland since its split from the rest of Somalia in 1991. International recognition is almost an obsession in Somaliland, a territory that is unable to receive foreign aid, military equipment or development assistance without it. The elected government in Hargeisa would be sure to show its appreciation to any nation that broke the two-decade old diplomatic freeze-out. The Israeli declaration came on the heels of a statement by the deputy leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula that the movement intends to cooperate with Somali militants to place both sides of the narrow Bab al-Mandab strait at the southern end of the Red Sea "under the protection of Islam" (al-Malahim Establishment for Media Production, February 8; see also *Terrorism Monitor*, February 19). German-made Israeli Dolphin class submarines believed to be equipped with nuclear-armed cruise missiles carried out naval exercises in the Red Sea in June 2009 after passing through Egypt's Suez Canal (*Haaretz*, July 5).

A few weeks later, two Israeli warships passed through the Suez Canal into the Red Sea (AFP, July 14). These excursions were widely interpreted as a warning to Iran.

The Somali press has cited unconfirmed reports that Israeli troops may establish a military outpost in the Somaliland port of Berbera to guard the approaches to the Red Sea (Shabelle Media Network, February 14). Berbera's small naval port is a Cold War legacy, built by the Soviets in 1969. Shifting alliances led to U.S. use of the port by 1980 and a U.S. upgrade of facilities in 1985. Since then, the port has become dilapidated but still continues to provide a major source of foreign currency for the Somaliland government. Berbera also has a long Soviet-built runway capable of handling all types of military and cargo aircraft.

Drone Attacks: Pakistan's Policy and the Tribesmen's Perspective

By Farhat Taj

This paper provides an analysis of Pakistan's policy on unmanned aerial vehicle ("drone") attacks in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and how these attacks are perceived by students from Waziristan, the region most heavily targeted by CIA drones. The interviews with students were conducted in November/December 2009 by the author, a researcher from FATA. Pakistan's public position is to demand the United States stop the drone attacks in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan for two reasons: it amounts to a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty (1); and it is counter-productive given the significant degree of collateral damage, which in turn creates public sympathy for Taliban/al-Qaeda forces and hatred for the United States (2). The researcher placed the above-mentioned policy position before the students featured and asked them how they perceive said policy as well as how they would respond to it.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 students from different colleges and universities all over Pakistan. The duration of each interview was between one and two hours. Each one of the students attends a different college or university. Moreover, each one of them belongs to a different village in Waziristan.

Because of the sensitive nature of the inquiry, the researcher had to meet each student separately. None of the students agreed to a tape-recorded interview, but all allowed the researcher to make written notes during the interview. The students' freedom of expression is drastically limited by the ongoing targeted killings in FATA, in which hundreds of tribal leaders, teachers, students, doctors and other people who publicly spoke against the Taliban and al-Qaeda have been assassinated, often along with their family members. [1]

All respondents were unanimous on the fact that the Taliban have completely taken over FATA, especially North and South Waziristan, with the help of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Punjabi militants (Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizbul Mujahideen, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi etc) and foreign fighters, including al-Qaeda Arabs.

They agree that the government of Pakistan has no writ whatsoever over the tribal agencies. They hold the militant occupation responsible for:

- Damaging their culture and traditions.
- Eliminating their entire traditional and indigenous leadership.
- Weakening the tribal society.
- Occupying their houses by force.
- Destroying their traditional and democratic institution of *jirga* (an assembly of elders that makes decisions based on consensus) and tribal code of Pashtunwali ("The Way of the Pashtuns"), instead replacing it with the militants' own strict brand of Shari'a.
- Bringing destruction to homes and businesses by inciting Pakistani military operations.

The majority of the respondents (13 of 15) did not fully see the drone attacks as a violation of the sovereignty of Pakistan. Their argument is very simple: the state of Pakistan has already surrendered FATA to the militants, therefore, Pakistan has no reason to object to the drone attacks. Pakistan will have this right only if can retake the areas from the militants. Some respondents said that their homeland is used by the militants and the ISI as a launching pad for attacks on ISAF and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Each of the respondents could recall

having seen the bodies of those martyred in Afghanistan in their villages. Every respondent was unhappy with what they called the malicious nexus between ISI and the militants. They are sure that the Taliban militants are still strategic assets of Pakistan's military establishment. Some suggested that, under the garb of military operations in Waziristan, the ISI had in fact strengthened the militants and double-crossed the United States. It was during these operations that much of the tribal leadership was eliminated by both the militants and military in order to create a power vacuum that was eventually filled by the militants. The same military operations killed hundreds of civilians and destroyed thousands of their houses without killing or injuring any important militant leaders. Wherever military operations in FATA took place, the area was since completely handed over to the militants and the state's writ surrendered through agreements with the militants. The students, who consider the militants and ISI/military responsible for the insecurity in FATA, increasingly find themselves hostages in the hands of both and as a result, the majority of the respondents welcomed the drone attacks for three reasons:

- The drone attacks are killing the leadership of those al-Qaeda and other militant groups who have made ordinary tribesmen and women hostages. Ordinary people are powerless against the militants and drones are seen as helpful by eliminating the militants and frustrating the designs of ISI.
- The drone attacks have resulted in substantial damage to the militants, especially the elimination of the Arab and Punjabi leadership of al-Qaeda.
- The drone attacks cause a minimum loss of innocent civilians and their property. The respondents appreciated the precision of such attacks.

However, the respondents also pointed out that because of the drone attacks, innocent civilians were being killed by militants on a daily basis on suspicion of spying for the United States. It has become a daily routine that dead and mutilated bodies of civilians are found with a warning note that such treatment would be meted out to any person involved in spying. The resulting fear leaves most tribesmen as tightlipped spectators. For any person to remain free of militants' suspicion, he has to condemn the drone attacks in public. A very interesting remark came from one of the respondents, who was

asked why he was reticent in discussing the issue. He remarked, "If you have drones flying above you and Taliban holding a knife beneath [you], how can you speak out the truth?"

The respondents expressed a strong desire for drones as a means to attack the leadership of local Pashtun Taliban. Half of those who supported drone attacks said that people's daily lives are affected most by the local Taliban and not the Arabs or other al-Qaeda militants who generally mind their own business, or have perhaps assigned the duty of harassment to the local Taliban. One of the respondents suggested that if only ten people amongst the leadership of the local Taliban were killed, the hierarchy of the organization would collapse like a house of cards.

Farhat Taj is a Ph.D. Research Fellow at the University of Oslo and a Pakistan-based journalist specializing in the FATA region.

Notes:

1. Due to security reasons the names of the students, their villages in Waziristan and the educational institutions in which they study will not be disclosed.

Kurdish Counterterrorism Group Works to Prevent Terrorism in Kurdistan and Iraq

By Wladimir Van Wilgenburg

With an intelligence and military wing of over 1,000 people, the Sulaymaniyah-based Counter Terrorism Group (CTG) collects intelligence and carries out operations to prevent terrorists in Iraq from destabilizing the Kurdistan region in cooperation with U.S. forces. Lahur Talabani, the nephew of the Iraqi president, heads the CTG. "What we do in Kirkuk, Mosul, Diyala is like a buffer zone. We try to prevent the terrorists from entering these areas." [1]

The CTG was set up by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in 2002 with U.S. assistance against the threat

of Ansar al-Islam in the Halabja region. Lahur says the CTG falls under the authority of the regional Kurdish Ministry of Peshmerga (Defense). One of the biggest catches made by the group was al-Qaeda member Hassan Gul, who was a messenger for Osama bin Laden in 2003-2004, but Lahur claims they catch “big people” all the time.

The strategy of the CTG is aimed at preventing terrorists from focusing on the Kurdistan region by stopping attacks in disputed regions like Mosul, Kirkuk or Diyala. According to Lahur, “We chase them all the time, so they don’t have time to think about the Kurdistan region. This is a strategy that we used for the past three years and we’ve been successful.” The CTG sees the disputed regions as buffer zones for the security of the autonomous Kurdistan region in Iraq. “If you see the security situation in KRG and compare it to the rest of the country, there is a big difference.” According to the security chief, the financial support of terrorists is limited now, because the shaykhs in Hawija are asking [the terrorists] why they are not able to carry out a successful operation in the Kurdistan region.

The CTG operates with the permission of the local authorities in the whole of Iraq, not only in disputed regions. “They come ask us for help, because our unit is specially trained to fight terrorism and the police and army are not well-equipped or trained for those kinds of operations.” Still, the unit considers itself an Iraqi force, not a Kurdish one. “My money comes from Baghdad, directly from the Ministry of Defense. I am an Iraqi, it’s my duty to go and protect other Iraqis in those regions.”

The counterterrorism-head says his units carried out many operations in Kirkuk and Mosul in the last few weeks. “We have this joint force now, which is made out of the Peshmerga, Iraqis and Americans in each of those disputed areas. They have set up these special operation rooms, where they collect intelligence and jointly go after these targets. They set up these joint check points, which are [composed of] Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs, and everybody is involved. I think that’s going to have an effect.”

Although al-Qaeda’s infrastructure was almost wiped out in Kirkuk in three months, the group is finding new ways to carry out attacks by sending special assassination teams from Mosul to Kirkuk, believing they won’t be recognized by the authorities. “Lots of those [arrested] cell leaders are Sunni Turkmen coming from Tel Afar or people wanted by the authorities in Mosul. They escape

and regroup in Kirkuk to attack the police or civilians.” While Turkmen of Tel Afar are involved in terrorism, he says that the same is not true of the Turkmen in Kirkuk. “I don’t know the reason behind that.”

Al-Qaeda is still trying to create an ethnic war in the province of Kirkuk.

Nine months ago they sent a special group of seven people from Tel Afar to assassinate Kurds, Christians and Arabs. Nobody knew it, but they were trying to set up everybody against each other. So the Kurds suspect that Arabs are assassinating Kurds, while the Arabs assume the Kurds are doing it. In once case they [conducted a large-scale] attack in the Abdullah Restaurant, killed over 70 Kurds, set up a fake website, and claimed [responsibility] as a Turkmen group. But it was [in fact] a different group from Mosul [attempting] to start a war between Turkmen and Kurds. (see al-Jazeera, December 12, 2008; Reuters, December 11, 2008).

Lahur also says political Sunni parties use former Ba’athists in attacks to pressure the Iraqi government and make them look weak. Authorities operating southwest of Kirkuk recently seized a quantity of arms and detained three members of the Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia, an armed Sufi-based group that supports the Ba’athist former vice-president of Iraq, Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri (*Aswat al-Iraq, March 2*).

As an example of the ties between Sunni political parties and terrorism, Lahur mentioned the Sunni al-Hadba list, which won the elections in the province of Mosul last year (Iraq Tomorrow, February 15, 2009; Kurdish Globe, April 17, 2009):

Interrogation reports show that the al-Hadba leadership approached [the terrorists] to try to frighten Shi’as and Kurds from the Mosul province and to carry out IED attacks and financially support them to carry out attacks in Shi’a and Kurdish-dominated regions. And this is coming from interviews from high officials that were captured from Ansar al-Sunna [a Kurdish Salafi-Jihadi group], like Mullah Halgurd Hawleri. He is one of the main leaders of Ansar al-Sunna who was captured six months ago. He said he was approached by the leadership of al-Hadba and the governor’s people.

The security chief claims some of the banned Sunni candidates in Iraq are also supporting terrorist attacks. “They didn’t ban those people for no reason; the government probably has some proof for this.” Despite this, he thinks the banning of candidates will only have a limited effect on security. “I think they will try to increase their attacks, but we the security forces will increase surges against the terrorists, so they don’t have time to increase attacks.”

Wladimir van Wilgenburg writes freelance articles on the Middle East and is an editor at the Kurdish newspaper Rudaw, based in Erbil, northern Iraq.

Notes:

1. Author’s interview with Lahur Talabani, Sulaymaniyah, February 26, 2010.

Kashmir’s Militants May Derail India-Pakistan Negotiations

By Arif Jamal

Islamist terrorism in South Asia, the epicenter of global terrorism, thrives on lasting India-Pakistan enmity. Pakistan would have no interest in using jihad as an instrument of its defense policy in a conflict-free South Asia. One of the important objectives of the Pakistani and, arguably, Indian Muslim jihadis has been to sustain and even amplify tension between the two nuclear archrivals, possibly leading them to war so the jihadis can thrive in the resulting chaos.

In early February, India unexpectedly announced its intention to resume talks with Pakistan that were suspended in the wake of the November, 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks. It was a foregone conclusion that the jihadis would try to subvert the talks. While the two countries were discussing the format of the discussions, terrorists struck the German Bakery in the city of Pune

in India’s Maharashtra State on February 13, killing 11 people and injuring 60. The dead included an Iranian and an Italian. Apart from targeting Westerners attending the nearby Osho Ashram, the German Bakery was probably chosen for its proximity to the Chabad House, a Jewish religious centre. The Chabad House in Mumbai was a primary target of the Mumbai attackers in 2008. In this most recent attack, terrorists used a combination of RDX, ammonium nitrate and petroleum hydrocarbon oil in the explosive. The Indian Mujahideen (IM), who have close ties with the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), are suspected of having used the same combination in explosions in Ahmedabad and Surat in July 2008 (*Frontline* [New Delhi], Feb 27 - March 12).

On February 23, just two days before the top diplomats of the two countries met in New Delhi, terrorists struck once again in the District of Sopore in Indian-controlled Kashmir. Four militants held a pitched battle with the Indian troops which lasted for over two days and killed at least three Indian security forces personnel, including an army captain (*Indian Express*, February 25). The battle seemed to have been aimed at embarrassing Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir, who was to fly to New Delhi the next day. If nothing else, the terrorists succeeded in making Pakistan stiffen its position on Kashmir.

Three days after the two foreign secretaries held their talks, the United Jihad Council (UJC), a conglomerate of over a dozen Kashmiri jihadi groups, referred to them as “an Indian ploy to defuse international pressure,” pressure which UJC chairman Yusuf Shah said had brought India to the negotiating table. Shah also opposed the idea of talks and declared, “No progress whatsoever could be made in the talks between the foreign secretaries of Pakistan and India...so it could be stated that talks have been unsuccessful... The core issues, including the Kashmir imbroglio, were not discussed by the foreign secretaries of the two countries (*The News* [Islamabad], March 1, 2010).”

However, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, amir of Jamatud Dawah and the alleged planner of the Mumbai attacks, minced no words and asked Islamabad to go to war with India because “India wants war... If India is not prepared to hold talks [on Kashmir], Pakistan will have to fight a war at all costs...” (*Economic Times* [New Delhi], March 1). Just one day after India had agreed to resume talks, Saeed said that India would never free Kashmir without a war. Addressing a huge public rally of his Kalashnikov-toting followers in Lahore on February

5, Saeed said that India would suffer the same fate in Kashmir as the Soviets and Americans had experienced in Afghanistan (*Economic Times*, March 1).

Pakistani jihadis have tried to scuttle the peace process between India and Pakistan by carrying out high-profile terrorist acts both in Kashmir and in the Indian heartland every time the two countries tried to take a new peace initiative.

This trend has been underway since 1999, when the infiltration of Pakistani troops into the Indian side of the Kashmir Line of Control (LoC) initiated the Kargil War to thwart the short-lived 1999 Lahore Declaration, perhaps the most important peace initiative ever taken by the two nuclear archrivals (see Rediff.com, February 21, 1999). Although this has been one of the recurrent patterns in India-Pakistan relations since the two countries started what is known as the composite dialogue, the jihadis did not succeed before the November 2008 Mumbai attacks derailed this initiative. This is the first time since 1999 that a civilian government in Pakistan is trying to push for peace. Though the two countries may continue the dialogue in the coming years, terrorist attacks in India and Indian-controlled Kashmir may not let them progress very far before negotiations are once again derailed, as happened in November 2008.

Arif Jamal is a visiting fellow at the New York University and author of "Shadow War -- The Untold Story of Jihad in Kashmir".

Will Xinjiang's Turkistani Islamic Party Survive the Drone Missile Death of its Leader?

By Andrew McGregor

Though it appears to have occurred on February 15, the death of the leader of al-Hizb al-Islami al-Turkistani (Turkistani Islamic Party - TIP) was reported only in recent days (*Geo TV*, March 1; *Dawn* [Karachi], March 1; *The News* [Islamabad], March 2). Abdul Haq al-Turkistani was one of three militants killed by a missile

launched from a CIA-operated unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). The men were reported to have been in a vehicle near the village of Tappi in the North Waziristan district of Miramshah. While the strike took place on February 15, Pakistani security officials did not release the news until March 1. The death of the leader of the radical Uyghur group was confirmed by a Taliban spokesman (*Dawn* [Karachi], March 1). Eastern Turkistan was occupied by troops of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1949 and the subsequent mass migration of non-Muslim Han Chinese to the renamed province of Xinjiang (New Territory) has rendered the native Turkic Muslim Uyghurs a minority in the region.

Despite the amount of international attention the TIP garnered through threats to the 2009 Beijing Olympics, the group's relative inactivity and proclivity for claiming responsibility for incidents they clearly had nothing to do with raises questions about the very existence of the TIP as an active jihadi front.

Is the TIP the same as ETIM?

Many commentators seem happy to repeat Beijing's assertion that the TIP is a new manifestation of the earlier East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), but no evidence has been provided to prove a direct link between the two groups. The ETIM never issued a statement regarding a change of name or organizational restructuring. Indeed, the ETIM seems to have faded out with a whimper rather than a bang after the death of its leader, Hasan Mahsum (a.k.a. Hasan Makhsum; a.k.a. Abu Muhammad al-Turkistani) at the hands of Pakistani security forces in 2003. [1] The uncertain origins of the ETIM's so-called successor group, the TIP, have led to speculation that the TIP may be a splinter group of the ETIM or even a false-flag operation designed to establish ties between Uyghur separatists and al-Qaeda. TIP literature tries to establish a pedigree for the organization by substituting the TIP moniker for the ETIM name in descriptions of Hassan Mahsum's earlier organization in Afghanistan (see the TIP eulogy of Hasan Mahsum, Shumukh al-Islam Network Forum, April 1, 2009). The traditional Muslim name of the Uyghur homeland is "East Turkistan," not simply "Turkistan," which refers to a much larger physical area of Central Asia. Xinjiang (New Territory) is a Chinese name and is never used by Uyghur opposition groups.

Although the TIP was unknown before it began issuing threats of biological, chemical and conventional attacks on the Beijing Olympics in 2008, Abdul Haq claimed

the movement began as part of the military wing of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) under the late Uzbek jihadi commander, Juma Namangani (killed in a U.S. aerial bombardment in November 2001). Uyghurs were present at IMU training camps in Afghanistan prior to 9/11.

Under the name Memtimin Memet (or Memetiming Memeti), Abdul Haq was identified in 2008 by China's Ministry of Public Security as the successor of Hasan Mahsum and next leader of the ETIM (Xinhua, October 21). The statement, which named eight wanted Uyghur militants in connection with plots against the Olympics, made no mention of the TIP. The Ministry maintained that all of the Uyghur plots had been foiled by Chinese security forces. Though a series of bombings and attacks occurred in Xinjiang in August 2009, none were related to the Olympics (except through timing) and no claim of responsibility was issued by the TIP or ETIM. It is possible that the attacks were inspired by TIP videos, but this link has never been confirmed.

Tying Uyghur Militants to al-Qaeda

ETIM leader Hassan Mahsum always denied any connection between the ETIM and al-Qaeda, though there is no question a small group of Uyghur militants fought alongside their Taliban hosts against the Northern Alliance. According to China's Foreign Ministry, the ETIM was a "terrorist organization with links to al-Qaeda," but the scores of terrorists Beijing claimed that Bin Laden was sending to China in 2002 never materialized (China-Embassy.org, December 9, 2002). Likewise, the training and financial assistance that the U.S. State Department maintains al-Qaeda provided to the ETIM seems to have had little impact on ETIM's inability to mount operations of any significance in China. The TIP's "strategy" of making loud and alarming threats (attacks on the Olympics, use of biological and chemical weapons, etc.) without any operational follow-up has been enormously effective in promoting China's efforts to characterize Uyghur separatists as "terrorists" with almost no material loss to China.

A videotaped biography of Hassan Makhsum carried by jihadi websites in 2009 claimed that "the leaders of the Turkistan Islamic Party nominated a new military leader, brother Abdul Haq, by consensus" to replace Hassan Makhsum after his death in 2003 (Shumukh al-Islam Network Forum, April 1, 2009). Despite his alleged role as leader of the al-Qaeda and Taliban-

associated ETIM (or TIP) since 2003, Abdul Haq did not find his way onto the U.N. and U.S. Treasury Departments' lists of terrorists "associated with Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda or the Taliban" until April 2009. [2] Where was Abdul Haq between 2001 and 2008? He is known to have been an instructor at IMU training camps in Afghanistan before 9/11, but disappears from the record until his sudden reemergence as leader of the TIP in 2008.

An ambitious and no doubt expensive media campaign including internet magazines and video productions has little counterpart in actual TIP operations. Through articles in its internet journal, TIP appears to claim the mantle of Hasan Mahsum's ETIM. Many of these articles appear to be an attempt to create an organizational connection between the TIP and the earlier ETIM, going so far as to retroactively rename the ETIM. Despite this, there is a chronological gap between the apparent demise of the ETIM, with the death of its leader in 2003, and the sudden emergence of the TIP in 2008. A few very minor militant actions in this period were attributed to the ETIM, though by this time Chinese authorities were using "ETIM" as an all-purpose descriptor for those responsible for any militant activity. There are scores of different Uyghur nationalist groups, which run the gamut from peaceful secularists to militant Islamist jihadis.

Promoting a Lost Cause in Xinjiang?

A video released in August, 2009 by the TIP's own "Voice of Islam" media center and al-Fajr media center featured Abdul Haq and a number of TIP leaders discussing their jihad against "Chinese colonialism." The video has an Arabic translation of the original Uyghur language remarks by the TIP leaders. A look at some of the leaders' rhetoric shows a movement at odds with its time; its anti-communism decades too late to interest the West; its stated affinity to global jihad winning it no friends while doing nothing to actually further the cause of global jihad; their armed nationalism out of touch with young Uyghurs educated in Chinese and ready to seek economic opportunity at the expense of nationalist pride; and threats of terrorism not even winning them the head-pats given to Tibetan nationalists in an age of global economic integration in which China is a major player. Taking on China's massive military on its own turf is also unlikely to make any priority list for global jihadists engaged in bitter struggles over South Asia and the Middle East. The following video excerpts give some indication of the stated motivation of the TIP:

Shaykh Uthman Umar Haji: “When we ask the Chinese people about the reason that brought them to our country, they say: ‘Turkistan is our land, it is a part of the Republic of China’... The Chinese are cowards and they fear death, but they did not find anyone to confront them and stop their march against Islamic East Turkistan. The Muslims will see how the Chinese Army will flee and leave Turkistan and its people alone... What good comes to a man who lives under the Chinese colonies like an animal? It is really shameful for us to be enslaved by China and accept humiliation and deprivation as an alternative to carrying out Islamic rulings in all aspects of our lives.”

Shaykh Abdul Haq: “The Chinese people are forcing the Muslims to achieve complete apostasy under the slogan of ‘The law is above all.’ They are forcing Muslim children to learn the Communist doctrine and they are afraid that the mujahideen influence the youth. When the Chinese could not apply an idea, they start to distort the image of the mujahideen and jihad through the media. They wanted the Muslims not to wake up from their long slumber and not to be able to recognize their sons, the mujahideen, or to realize the reality of the Communist campaign.”

Shaykh Abdullah Mansur: “We have to conquer our own country and purify it of all infidels. Then, we should conquer the infidels’ countries and spread Islam. The infidels who are usurping our countries have announced war against Islam and Muslims, forcing Muslims to abandon Islam and change their beliefs.” [3]

Among the TIP’s main complaints are government restrictions on the number of children, the demolition of historical Muslim urban areas and the imposition of equality between men and women “in rights and duties” by the communist regime.

Struggling with the Chinese Behemoth

The apparent hopelessness of a military struggle against China was addressed by Commander Abdullah Mansur, who drew on the communists’ own experience:

The Communist Chinese knew the power and effectiveness of weapons more than us, because

they practiced fighting before and reached this level. The Communist Red Army was not formed or assembled overnight, but they were formed one individual after the other until it became a massive army. When they started fighting against Japan and their allies, they fought without tanks or warplanes. However, they managed to deter the Japanese and expel them from their lands in spite of the fact that their enemy was equipped with tanks and warplanes... We can say that confronting the Chinese enemy does not require possessing thousands of warplanes and tanks or thousands of soldiers, but it requires the first condition, which is faith in Almighty God and working according to His commands concerning preparation and jihad. [4]

Following the July 2009 riots in Urumqi that saw the loss of nearly 200 lives, Abdul Haq “appeared” (his face was digitally blurred) in a video urging Uyghurs and other Muslims to broaden the violence. “[The Chinese] must be targeted both at home and abroad. Their embassies, consulates, centers and gathering places should be targeted. Their men should be killed and captured to seek the release of our brothers who are jailed in Eastern Turkistan.” (Voice of Islam; July 31; Reuters, August 1, 2009; *The Standard* [Hong Kong], August 3, 2009). Despite Abdul Haq’s claim that “all the Islamic umma, especially the mujahideen in the world, are entirely ready to fight with their Muslim brothers in East Turkistan against the Chinese,” there were no takers in the jihadi community and the TIP again failed to follow words with operations.

Having sentenced 26 people to death for their role in the Urumqi riots, China has now declared public security funding would be doubled for 2010 (al-Jazeera, January 28). Beijing has also announced plans to recruit 5,000 new special police officers to deal with unrest in Xinjiang. After a month of training, these new officers will serve in mixed units with police from other parts of China (al-Jazeera, February 5). The security initiatives and additional spending suggest Beijing views 2010 as an opportunity to crush Uyghur separatism.

What was behind the decision to target Abdul Haq?

The United States designated the ETIM a terrorist organization in August 2002 after intense diplomatic pressure from China at a time when Washington was trying to prevent a Chinese veto at the U.N. over action against Iraq. The designation also followed a pledge

by China to restrict missile technology transfers to nations like Iran. Though Uyghur militants had never targeted U.S. nationals or interests, the arrest of two Uyghurs in the Kyrgyzstan capital of Bishkek in May 2002 became the justification for Washington's action. The Uyghurs were alleged to have a map of the capital's embassy district in their possession. This was quickly transformed into a plot to bomb the U.S. embassy and the men were deported to China, never to be heard from again. This incident is still used as "proof" of a Uyghur threat to America.

Amir Mir, a Pakistani journalist and security analyst who is usually well-informed on defense matters, said discussions with diplomats in Islamabad suggested China was pressing Pakistan for the right to conduct its own military operations against Uyghur militants in FATA and the NWFP, similar to American operations in the region (The News, March 3). The CIA and the U.S. government do not comment on the process used in targeting attacks by UAVs in Pakistan, but there is wide speculation that Islamabad has negotiated a say in identifying targets on its territory in return for allowing U.S. drone operations to continue. Pakistan has no interest in antagonizing China, a major economic and military partner, and may have called for a strike on the TIP leader to relieve intense pressure from Beijing to do something about Uyghur militants in northwest Pakistan.

Following the strike on Abdul Haq, Pakistan's Foreign Minister travelled to Beijing to convince China of Pakistan's sincerity in ridding the frontier region of TIP members and other Uyghur militants. On March 7, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi expressed satisfaction with Pakistan's efforts; "I believe the government of Pakistan has effective control over the situation" (*The Hindu*, March 8).

Hasan Mahsum's ETIM appears to have collapsed following his death in 2003. With the security forces of Pakistan, China and the United States aligned against it, it remains to be seen if the more "virtual" TIP will survive the death of Abdul Haq al-Turkistani.

Andrew McGregor is Director of Aberfoyle International Security, a Toronto-based agency specializing in security issues related to the Islamic world. He is managing editor of the Jamestown Foundation's Global Terrorism Analysis publications.

Notes

1. See Andrew McGregor, "Chinese Counter-Terrorist Strike in Xinjiang," Johns Hopkins University Central Asia – Caucasus Institute Central Asia Caucasus Analyst (March 7, 2007), http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=4735
2. U.S. Department of the Treasury Press Release TG-92, April 20, 2009, <http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/tg92.htm>
3. Excerpts from "The Duty of Faith and Support," Voice of Islam/al-Fajr Media Center, August 26, 2009.
4. Ibid