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Islamic Jihad Union

CONTROVERSIAL GATHERING OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARS REFUTES AL-QAEDA'S IDEOLOGICAL CORNERSTONE

Al-Qaeda and related Islamist militant groups have long relied on the works of a 14th century Syrian-born Islamic scholar for the ideological underpinnings of their radical approach to religion and politics. Shaykh Taqi al-Din ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) was the author of the seminal “Mardin Fatwa,” frequently cited by militants as justification for political violence. A conference of Islamic scholars was held on March 27-28 at Turkey’s Mardin Artuklu University to re-examine Ibn Taymiyya’s controversial ruling. The conference was guided by a panel of 15 scholars from across the Islamic world and aired live (in part) by al-Jazeera TV. Mardin is an historical crossroads of trade and empires; though part of Turkey, most of its citizens are Arabs, Kurds, Syriac Christians and Yezidis.

Ibn Taymiyya was born into turbulent times, with his native Mamluk state of Syria and Egypt under constant threat of attack or invasion by nominally Muslim Mongol armies. The shaykh solved the tricky problem of Muslims fighting Muslims (forbidden by the Koran) by ruling that the Mongols occupying Mardin were not fully-practicing Muslims, thus legitimizing the mobilization of the state’s full resources in a jihad against the invaders. Though intended for very specific circumstances, the Mardin fatwa has survived as a means of legitimizing jihad against rulers who are judged to be insufficiently Islamic in governance and beliefs.

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The Mardin fatwa and related works of Ibn Taymiyya and his disciples became pillars in the works of 20th century radical Islamists such as Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam and Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj, who relied on Ibn Taymiyya for justification of their opposition to secular “apostate” regimes and leaders in the Muslim world. The authority of the 14th century shaykh has been cited repeatedly in the statements and manifestos of numerous Salafist militants, most notably Osama bin Laden.

Some of the participating scholars argued that the traditional Islamic division of the world into Dar al-Islam (*the Abode of Islam*) and Dar al-Harb (*the Abode of War*) was outdated and did not anticipate the development of international law and human rights. The new Mardin declaration stated clearly, “Anyone who seeks support from [the Mardin] fatwa for killing Muslims or non-Muslims has erred in his interpretation and has misapplied the revealed texts” (*Today’s Zaman*, April 2; mardin-fatwa.com).

Dr. Ahmet Ozel of the Islamic Studies Center of Istanbul noted, “In the medieval age, all states were constantly at war with each other, and there was no system of international law. That is why medieval Islamic jurists saw non-Muslim countries as the Abode of War... Today, Muslims are not only secure and free in European countries; they can even be elected to parliaments” (*Hurriyet*, March 28; March 30).

The scholars also examined the problem of “textualism” (a rigid adherence to texts regardless of changing contexts). Bosnian Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić observed, “Most ulema [Islamic scholars] have a problem. They know the classical texts very well, but they don’t know the contemporary world that much” (*Hurriyet*, March 28).

Among the conference’s important decisions:

- Muslim individuals or groups do not have the right to decide on their own to declare or conduct jihad.
- The emergence of civil states that guard religious, ethnic and national rights means the rigid divisions between “Abode of Islam” and “Abode of War” are no longer valid.

- The Mardin fatwa and similar texts had been misused not only as a result of changing contexts, but they had been interpreted incorrectly.

Organizers of the conference emphasized that the closing declaration was not itself a fatwa, though much of the Islamic press continued to refer to it as such.

The conference was sponsored by two Muslim NGOs: the Global Center for Renewal and Guidance (GCRG) and Canopus Consulting. The GCRG describes itself as an “independent educational charity.” Its president is Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, a well known Mauritanian scholar of Islam who teaches at King Abdul Aziz University in Saudi Arabia. The GCRG vice-president is Shaykh Hamza Yusuf (a.k.a. Mark Hanson), an American convert to Islam who runs the Zaytuna Institute for Islamic studies in California. An internet search did not reveal any prior activities of an NGO using the name Canopus Consulting, though the name is used by an apparently unrelated software firm. The conference received financial support from the Turkish and British governments, though Turkey’s own Religious Affairs Directorate refused to participate (*Hurriyet*, March 28).

Opposition to the conference came from several directions. The top religious authority in Turkey, Directorate of Religious Affairs President Ali Bardakoglu, rejected the entire exercise, saying, “It’s incredibly meaningless for a group of people to gather after centuries have passed to try and invalidate a religious view given centuries ago” (*Today’s Zaman*, April 2). Reaction also came from an Iraqi militant group, Jaysh al-Fatihin (Conquering Army), which denied that circumstances had changed since the Mardin fatwa. “All of us know that the incidents most similar to our [present] situation were those that happened in the time of Imam Ibn Taymiyya...” (Media Commission of Jaysh al-Fatihin, April 1).

Elements of Turkey’s Islamic press derided the conference as an example of U.S. efforts to undermine the Islamic world and create a new form of Islam compatible with U.S. interests (*Vakit*, March 30; April 1). A well-known Turkish scholar, Hayrettin Karaman, insisted that opposition to an existing fatwa could only be expressed by a new fatwa on the same subject, allowing Muslims to decide which scholar’s opinion they trust more (*Yeni Safak*, April 1). Many Turkish scholars declined to attend out of fear that the conference was organized

by the British government. “They’re worried that the conclusion of the conference will be that jihad is no longer valid in our day and age and that this will rule out resistance even under situations of oppression such as that in Palestine today” (*Sunday Zaman*, April 4). In India, however, the results of the conference were welcomed by a number of prominent Muslim leaders (*Times of India*, April 2).

AFGHANISTAN’S HIZB-I-ISLAMI DISTANCES ITSELF FROM TALIBAN

Since the arrest in Pakistan of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and other leading members of the Afghan Taliban, negotiations between the movement and the Karzai government have ground to a halt. The opportunistic Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of Afghanistan’s Hizb-i Islami (HI) appears ready to step into the peace talks as the representative of the armed Islamist opposition, leaving his Taliban allies outside of the process.

Hekmatyar was the single largest recipient of CIA military aid and funding in Afghanistan during the anti-Soviet jihad, as distributed by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which regarded Hekmatyar as a favorite. Despite this, Hekmatyar’s forces did little fighting against the Soviets, preferring to stockpile their weapons for use against their former mujahideen allies in the post-war struggle for political dominance.

During the Afghan Civil War of 1992-1996, HI was notorious for targeting civilians, particularly in Kabul, where their barrages of rockets and artillery killed thousands. The strategy proved to be political suicide; while the Taliban assumed leadership of the Pashtun Islamist movement, Hekmatyar fled to exile in Iran. By 2008 he appeared to have rebuilt an insurgent force inside Afghanistan that was soon fighting alongside the Taliban. Nevertheless, as one Kabul daily noted, Hekmatyar has always betrayed his coalition partners in the past (*Arman-e Melli* [Kabul], March 31).

The HI delegation presented a 15-point MESAQ-e Melli Nejat (National Rescue Plan) to a government delegation consisting of the most powerful men in the Karzai regime (Pajhwok Afghan News, April 2). The delegates also had meetings with EU and UN envoys in Kabul. They rejected the idea of talks with U.S. representatives, but expressed interest in meeting the ambassadors of China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (Tolo TV, March 30).

Qotboddin Helal, the leader of the delegation, told the Afghan press that HI and the Taliban share a common belief in the application of Shari’a, but have important differences in terms of governance. HI favors elections leading to an “elected Islamic government in Afghanistan,” while the Taliban favors the creation of an Islamic Emirate without elections (*Hasht-e Sobh* [Kabul], March 30). Unlike the Taliban, HI already has representatives in Afghanistan’s parliament, including Minister of Economy Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal.

Hekmatyar’s son-in-law, Dr. Ghairat Bahir, was also part of the HI delegation (Weesa [Kabul], March 30). Bahir spent four years in the American prison at Bagram air base on terrorism charges before being released in 2008 (Quqnoos.com, June 1, 2008). He has since acted as a go-between for Karzai and Hekmatyar, who was specially designated as a “Global Terrorist” by the United States in 2003.

Another member of the HI delegation, Mohammad Amin Karim, said his movement had officially recognized the Afghan government, the armed forces, the constitution and parliament as “realities.” According to the delegate, HI’s key demand was a six-month long withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan to begin in July along with the closure of foreign prisons, both of which demonstrated that Afghanistan was an occupied country (Tolo TV, March 30).

When details became public, Chairman of U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen quickly dismissed the HI “rescue plan” as “unacceptable” (Pajhwok Afghan News, March 31). HI forces continue to claim attacks on U.S. forces, most recently on Sehra Bagh airbase in Khost province (*Shahadat* [Peshawar], April 4).

The possible return of Hekmatyar was not welcomed by much of the press in Kabul, where he is not remembered fondly. *Payam-e Mojahed* reminded its readers of the fact that Hekmatyar was affiliated with Pakistan’s secret services, while *Cheragh* less diplomatically described the HI delegation as “Pakistani stooges” (*Payam-e Mojahed*, April 3; *Cheragh*, April 5).

Washington is facing a growing disinterest on the part of its allies for continuing military operations in Afghanistan. Karzai’s government has already engaged in secret negotiations with the Taliban in the Maldives while launching a series of aggressive criticisms of U.S. activities and policies in Afghanistan (see *Terrorism*

Monitor, February 12). If these are correctly interpreted as signs that the war is drawing to a gradual close, Pakistan's security services are well served by having the ISI-connected Hizb-i-Islami dialogue with the government while Mullah Omar's Taliban continue to apply military pressure on the Karzai regime.

Taliban Spokesman Discusses U.S. Media and Military Strategies in Afghanistan

By *Abdul Hameed Bakier*

Many jihadi internet forums have circulated a recent special interview with the official spokesman of the so-called Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Qari Muhammad Yusuf al-Ahmadi. The interview was conducted for the March-April issue of *al-Somod Islamic e-magazine*, an official Taliban publication. In the interview, the Taliban official talks about U.S. President Barack Obama's new strategy in Afghanistan and the military situation in the southwest in particular. (*as-ansar.com*, March 20).

Al-Ahmadi describes the Coalition's military campaign in Helmand province as a failure because of the tough Taliban resistance. The Taliban spokesman claims that Helmand residents have inflicted heavy human losses on the Coalition. The 15,000 troops mobilized by the Coalition succeeded only in occupying Marjah, a small district in Helmand. "We could confidently say the end result of the military campaign and the fuss stirred by the media was aimed only at raising the flag of the treacherous government" says al-Ahmadi, who claims most parts of Marjah are under mujahideen control. According to al-Ahmadi, The United States realized, in the past eight years of war in Afghanistan, that it couldn't crush the resistance; therefore, the Americans want to revise their tactics this year and include non-military tactics along with military operations. These tactics are:

- Start peace negotiations with the mujahideen through Karzai's government.
- Spread rumors against the mujahideen to influence their morale.

- Include the "treacherous Afghan military" in joint operations with the "Crusaders" against the mujahideen.

Though these tactics were synchronized with media propaganda, they were a total failure, says al-Ahmadi, who asserts that the mujahideen not only pushed the enemy back in Helmand, but marched to the heart of Kabul to avenge the enemy at their fortresses, and killed tens of their soldiers. Al-Ahmadi had announced earlier the Taliban's opposition to any peace negotiations with that Afghan government, but the statement received conflicting reactions from Salafi-Jihadi forum participants (*7anein.info*, March 16). Although Karzai's government is corrupt, participating in peace negotiations might offer the Taliban a chance to change the current Afghani regime, said one forum member. Other members believe if Mullah Omar is in full control of the Taliban and promises to restrain the movement from committing violent acts against neighboring countries, the Coalition might agree to withdraw from Afghanistan.

The Mujahideen also succeeded in countering the enemy's psychological warfare. Al-Ahmadi invited journalists to Helmand to verify facts on the battlefield and refute Coalition claims of victory. Responding to a Red Cross complaint, Ahmadi doesn't deny that the Taliban has mined public squares in Marjah, but argues that the Red Cross should also investigate U.S. military war crimes in Afghanistan. "As the official spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, I demand that the Red Cross officials refrain from repeating claims dictated by the Americans."

Al-Ahmadi said the strong resistance and jihad of the Afghan people has convinced all invaders, including President Barack Obama and U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, that control of Afghanistan is far-fetched. The spokesman corroborates his claim by citing U.S. General David Petraeus, who said the United States faces a tough enemy and will see difficult days this year (*msnbc*, February 21). Although al-Ahmadi denied reports about the arrest and killing of many Taliban leaders, he emphasized the jihadi leaders' courage in leading the way to battle:

The Afghan people see by their own eyes that the top leaders of the Islamic Emirate race ahead of the ordinary mujahideen to the battlefields. The leaders are killed, injured, and fall captive. By the patience that they exhibited in Guantanamo

and Bagram and by the pride they showed by bearing their ordeals, they proved that they prefer the life of prisons and torture over a life of leisure under the enemy. They see in submission to the enemy a treachery to the sacrifices of their martyred brothers.

Concerning the ongoing NATO and US “Moshtarak” military operation against the Taliban, al-Ahmadi said the Taliban had made all necessary arrangements and plans to counter the offensive. The mujahideen took into consideration the seasonal weather conditions in the country when preparing to repel the offensive. The Taliban has decided on a target list against the Coalition which spans all over the country, says al-Ahmadi.

Responding to a statement by U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke that at least one member of every Pashtun family is involved with the Taliban, al-Ahmadi said Holbrooke aimed to undermine the comprehensive resistance of the Afghan people by minimizing its importance. Al-Ahmadi also claimed that by limiting his statements to one ethnicity, Holbrooke was trying to instigate ethnic and sectarian feuds among the Afghan people (For Holbrooke, see *Dawn*, February 7).

The Afghan people rose up against the Americans in all states to defend Muslim honor apart from national or ethnical reasons, alleges al-Ahmadi, adding, “The believing youth of Afghanistan are eager to kill the Americans and Crusaders. Our sons’ hearts boil with hatred for the Americans.”

On government reports of internal fighting between the Taliban and units of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hizb-i-Islami on March 6 in Baghlan Province, al-Ahmadi claimed the fighting was with government militias that were defeated by Taliban forces: “When these militias were defeated, the agent government did not wish to admit to the defeat, thus it claimed that these militias belonged to the Hizb-i-Islami.” The Islamic Emirate was first established to stop the internal fighting, according to al-Ahmadi, and therefore denounces all acts leading to dissension in Islamic mujahideen ranks.

Al-Ahmadi is well known in jihadi forums as the Taliban’s spokesman for southwest and northwest Afghanistan. Many jihadi forums post his reports on the jihadi situation in Afghanistan on a regular basis regardless of accuracy. Al-Ahmadi’s contact details are also circulated in the forums. The Taliban spokesman

also uses Facebook to disseminate mujahideen propaganda.

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Mass Arrests of al-Qaeda Suspects in Saudi Arabia Illustrate Security Threat from Yemen

By Murad Batal al-Shishani

The Interior Ministry of Saudi Arabia released a statement announcing the arrest of 113 persons “constituting a network and two cells” tied to al-Qaeda on March 24. The network was comprised of 101 individuals, including 47 Saudi nationals, 51 Yemenis, a Somali, a Bangladeshi and an Eritrean (*Arab News*, March 25). The suspects are alleged to have planned attacks on oil installations and security centers in al-Sharqiyah (Eastern) province of Saudi Arabia (*al-Watan*, March 25).

At a news conference on the same day, the Saudi Interior Ministry’s security spokesperson, Major General Mansur al-Turki, said that each of the two cells was composed of six individuals (two suicide bombers and four assistants), all of whom were Saudi nationals and one Yemeni national. He said that both cells worked independently but were affiliated with al-Qaeda in Yemen, and were tied to Abu Hahjir (a.k.a. Sa’id al-Shihri). Al-Turki said that the arrested individuals (including a woman) were aged between 18 and 25 years-old (*al-Watan*, March 25).

Al-Turki pointed out that the deaths of Yusuf al-Shihri and Ra’id al-Harbi (both disguised in women’s clothes) in clashes at the al-Hamra checkpoint in Jazan on October 13, 2009 “opened a window for the security agencies to determine that the al-Hamra checkpoint fire fight was a prelude to a broader plan, not a separate incident.” From there the Saudi security agencies started to investigate more cells, which led to the latest arrests. (*Asharq al-Awsat*, March 25; *al-Watan*, March 25).

Al-Turki gave details on the methods that al-Qaeda in Yemen use to smuggle individuals and weapons into Saudi Arabia. He said that there was evidence of cooperation between al-Qaeda and the Houthist rebellion in north Yemen, adding that al-Qaeda exploited the war to smuggle operatives, weapons, and ammunition into Saudi Arabia. He suggested that al-Qaeda was exploiting the general confusion that prevailed along the southern border of Saudi Arabia, particularly the large number of simple civilians who enter Saudi Arabia illegally in search of jobs. Trained al-Qaeda operatives were smuggled under the guise of Yemeni civilians seeking livelihoods across the border (*al-Watan*, March 25). The next day, al-Turki commented on the presence of non-Saudis among the arrested individuals, telling the Saudi press that al-Qaeda is facing difficulties in recruiting large numbers of Saudis.

The details of the arrest as publicized by Saudi Arabia indicate three important developments in the behavior of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia since it moved to Yemen and merged with Salafi-Jihadis there, creating al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP):

- Easy targeting of Saudi Arabia is considered to be one of the benefits of al-Qaeda's creation of a safe haven in Yemen. This is not the first time that al-Qaeda has attempted to infiltrate Saudi borders; one of these attempts reached the Saudi Deputy Interior Minister, Prince Muhammad bin Nayef, in an assassination attempt by a suicide bomber last August. AQAP's ability to recruit all of these members and distribute them in different cells indicates that AQAP represents a legitimate threat to Saudi national security; especially as al-Qaeda continues to target Saudi oil installations to guarantee a greater international impact.

- In addition to AQAP's aim of recruiting non-Saudis inside Saudi Arabia, the Salafi-Jihadis' main target for recruitment remains Saudis, as 47 of the arrested individuals are Saudi natives. Moreover, the age range of 18-25 indicates that they represent a new generation of Saudi al-Qaeda members as the majority appear to be younger than those al-Qaeda suspects named by the Saudi government since 2003. This suggests that al-Qaeda has succeeded in developing new methods to attract youngsters despite Saudi efforts to counter al-Qaeda on the ideological level.

- Finally, the arrests show the increasing role of AQAP deputy leader Sa'id al-Shihri, who seems to be in charge of operations inside Saudi Arabia. This suggests that al-Shihri's profile will increase as the operative in charge of Saudi Arabia, one of the most important areas for al-Qaeda. In his latest tape, for instance, al-Shihri said that the foiled Christmas day suicide attack by 23 year-old Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab on Detroit-bound Northwest Airlines flight 253 was coordinated directly with Osama bin Laden. (alfalofj/vb/showthread.php, February 8).

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The Rise and Fall of the Islamic Jihad Union: What Next for Uzbek Terror Networks?

By Cerwyn Moore

On March 4, a Dusseldorf judge convicted four men for their involvement in a plot to unleash a series of bomb attacks against U.S. army facilities in Germany. Fritz Gelowicz and Daniel Schneider, both German converts to Islam, and Adem Yilmaz and Attila Selek, both Turkish citizens, were popularly referred to as the "Sauerland cell," part of a larger group known as the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU). Some of the men in the Sauerland Cell were reported to have trained in camps in Waziristan, along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. U.S. and German security agencies uncovered the plot, arresting three of the men in Medebach-Oberschledorn, Germany, in September 2007 (*Der Spiegel*, December 8, 2009). The fourth man, Attila Selek, was apprehended by Turkish authorities in Konya in November 2007 (*Der Spiegel*, November 15, 2007). Selek was then extradited to Germany to stand trial for his role in the bomb plot.

The Uzbek Militants in Waziristan

Roughly nine months before the German court ruling, Pakistani forces launched a counter-insurgency operation

to suppress the activities of pro-Taliban militants, including Uzbek affiliates, in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of North and South Waziristan and in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The tribal areas bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan have become known as a haven for radical groups, playing host to pro-Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters. The patronage of local tribal groups in these two provinces allowed remnants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), under the control of Tahir Yuldashev, and the IJU splinter group to gain a foothold in the region. Uzbek militants, sheltered by Sirajuddin Haqqani, attended a rudimentary training camp at Mir Ali in Waziristan and continued to play a key role in the intricate relationships between the remnants of al-Qaeda and the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. As part of an alliance between the powerful Haqqani network and associates of Baitullah Mahsud's Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), these groups extended their influence in tribal areas made up of a mosaic of different ethnic and sub-ethnic tribal communities. The growing influence of the alliance masked infighting between different tribal factions in 2004 and afterwards. According to local reports, some Waziri groups led by Mauvli Nazir were unhappy with the presence of "foreign" Uzbek groups in parts of FATA in 2007 (*Dawn*, April 11, 2007). An agreement could not be reached and this forced Yuldashev to relocate to another part of Waziristan. However, the infighting continued, prompted partly by Pakistani efforts to exploit the friction between the two Uzbek factions (the IMU and IJU) and local tribal groups, which eventually spilled out into attacks against Pakistani forces in 2008. In response, the Pakistani authorities launched a major counter-insurgency operation—targeting Mahsud's network—in order to dislodge Islamist groups that had encroached into the SWAT valley.

The Toar Tander-I counter-insurgency operation in the tribal areas was launched in April 2009. This operation, together with Operation Rah-i-Rast (launched in May), gained renewed momentum throughout the summer months. Initially the army sought to build on the success of U.S. drone attacks and counter a deadly wave of terrorism that had inflicted large casualties in Pakistani cities. Throughout the latter part of 2008 and 2009, the U.S. authorities had turned increasingly to the use of drone strikes to eliminate the leadership of al-Qaeda and members of pro-Taliban groups in the tribal belt between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This policy led to the death of a number of key al-Qaeda members and their supporters, such as Baitullah Mahsud, who was killed in August 2009. Little more than three weeks

after the death of Mahsud, a missile strike was launched on August 27 against a group of Islamists in the village of Kanigoram in Waziristan. Reports slowly emerged that one of the dead men may have been IMU leader Tahir Yuldashev, known in local circles as Qari Farooq (*Dawn*, October 2, 2009). TTP spokesman Qari Hussain indicated that Yuldashev had not been killed, a point reiterated by an IMU spokesman (*Ferghana.ru*, October 4, 2009). Nevertheless, it is now believed that Yuldashev died in the missile strike.

A statement issued shortly after the drone strike by a spokesperson for the IMU reported that Uzbek fighters had been engaged in four months of "severe fighting" in four northern provinces of Afghanistan. The spokesman stated that operations were taking place in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, but the ranks of the IMU were being filled on a "daily basis by new volunteers" (*Ferghana.ru*, October 4, 2009).

The Formation of the Islamic Jihad Union

About ten years earlier the IMU – an Uzbek guerrilla group which numbered around two to three hundred fighters and their families – moved from Tajikistan, where it had played a role in support of the late Mirzo Zivoev and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) in the 1992-1997 Tajik Civil War. The IMU – led militarily by Juma Namangan and ideologically by Tahir Yuldashev – was comprised of Uzbek fighters who opposed the regime of President Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan. The IMU was hosted by the Taliban and by early 2001, Namangan, a former Soviet paratrooper, led a unit of non-Afghan volunteers that fought alongside al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Namangan died, along with a considerable number of IMU fighters in the fighting soon after the U.S. invasion. Others fleeing the U.S. onslaught were killed in the Shah-i-Kot valley, bordering Pakistan, as Yuldashev and the remaining members of the IMU sought refuge in the tribal regions on the Afghan-Pakistan border. Yuldashev took over the sole leadership of the IMU in 2002. Differences emerged between the remaining Uzbek volunteers, leading to the creation of the IJU splinter group.

The IJU formed around a small core of people led by two Uzbeks, Najmiddin Jalolov (a.k.a. Abu Yahya Muhammad Fatih) and Suhayl Buranov (a.k.a. Abu Huzaifa). The network sought to unite a host of sub-ethnic groups through their shared common Turkic heritage. It had support in the hierarchy of al-Qaeda, but also drew on the different non-Uzbek ethnic groups from

the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Greater Middle East all of whom spoke a cluster of closely related languages (Turkish, Azeri, Uzbek, Turkmen, Tatar and Uyghur). While it remained a fringe network and off-shoot of the IMU, it had a desired aim of continuing attacks against the Karimov regime, which Najmiddin Jalolov reiterated in a statement released through the IJU's Islamist web portal (Sehadet Zanami, May 31, 2007). The IJU were implicated in a series of attacks, including a number of suicide operations in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent in 2004 (AP, July 27, 2004). Thereafter the group remained largely underground, consolidating links to other groups and establishing small but committed support networks in the tribal belt, in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, and, where possible, in the Turkic speaking diaspora communities in Europe. Although it focused on radicalizing converts in Germany, which has a large Turkish population, it also sought support from radical Islamists across Central Asia.

Following the foiled plot in Germany in 2007, the IJU launched a small number of attacks in Afghanistan, including the use of a Turkish-born German convert and Turkish fighters who were involved in suicide operations directed at ISAF forces in and around the Afghan town of Khost (Sehadet Zanami, September 15, 2008). At the same time the group launched a much larger media campaign in support of its activities, publishing statements, video footage and evidence of its actions through a number of dedicated Turkish websites, parts of which were also publicized through the media wing of al-Qaeda, al-Sahab. However, after the 2007 Germany plot, European governments actively targeted clandestine cells that were said to support the IJU, leading to a series of arrests in Germany and Scandinavia. Then in April 2009, Turkish authorities launched a crackdown on groups with ties to the network. Approximately thirty five people were arrested in six different cities in Turkey. Among those arrested was the alleged Turkish representative of the IJU, as well as others who were said to be close associates (Evrensel, April 22, 2009). According to the Turkish press, members of the group had been involved in a plot to bomb NATO offices in Germany and Turkey (*Star*, October 16, 2009; *Zaman*, October 20, 2009).

In the Wake of Operation Falcon

It appears that the joint 2009 operation by Pakistani and Afghan forces, named Operation Falcon, effectively forced the Uzbek militants - the IMU and their associates - to move across the tribal belt. These actions pushed

Yuldashev and his supporters into the northern FATA regions by August 2009, with coordinated operations by German-led ISAF and Afghan troops in the Kunduz region, effectively cutting off escape routes for the IMU and IJU, who had a foothold in Kanigoram and Mir Ali. The targeting of the IJU led to sporadic attacks across Central Asia, with the movement claiming responsibility for the May 2009 attacks in the Andijan region of Uzbekistan and Uzbek fighters being implicated in attacks in Tajikistan in late 2009 (RFE/RL, July 23, 2009; May 27, 2009). Other reports late last year indicate that the IMU had to move its remaining fighters to the strategically important border area near Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, following orders from the Taliban leadership, and in response to the coordinated offensive in the tribal belt (Ferghana.ru, September 18, 2009).

After the death of Yuldashev, various reports indicated that an Uzbek militant, Usman Jan, or an ethnic Tatar named Zubair ibn Abdurakhman had taken over the leadership of the IMU (*Dawn*, October 3, 2009; Ferghana.ru, September 29, 2009). Though much smaller in numbers, the IJU has also suffered as a result of U.S. drone attacks and the coordinated and concerted pressure of Afghan, Pakistani and ISAF forces. Reports emerged that Najmiddin Jalolov was killed in a U.S. drone strike in October 2009 while suspected members of the IJU have been arrested in Europe in recent months (Ferghana.ru, October 9, 2009; *Dawn*, February 22). Remaining members of the IJU and IMU appear to have attempted to slip through the Coalition cordon in the Kunduz region and may regroup in the coming months. Nonetheless, the arrests in Turkey and Germany and the sustained military campaign appear to have had the short term effect of severely damaging the capability of both the IMU and the IJU.

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