

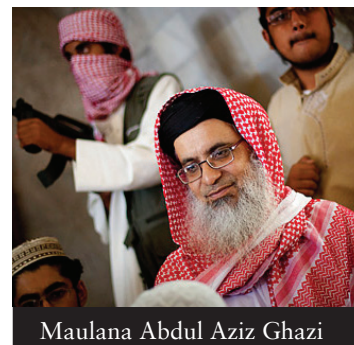
MILITANT LEADERSHIP MONITOR

Personalities Behind the Insurgency

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Maulana Abdul Aziz Ghazi

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PROMINENT AL-SHABAAB LEADER WOUNDED IN MOGADISHU

Sheikh Fuad Mohammed Khalaf (a.k.a. Fuad Shongole) was wounded in a large bombing in Mogadishu's Abdallah Shidiye mosque which took the lives of between 39 and 70 people (depending on sources) in the Somali capital's infamous Bakara market, wounding scores of others (Reuters, May1). Khalaf, a leading al-Shabaab figure, is described at times as a military commander, spiritual leader and, according to the U.N., fundraiser for the insurgents [1] in the fluid, decentralized jihad being waged in Somalia. Khalaf, a dual Swedish-Somali citizen, was reportedly preaching in the mosque when it was rocked by double-bombings that detonated just minutes apart. Mines were laid on two floors whereby the second explosion targeted the fleeing survivors of the first blast (Mareeg, May 2). While conceivable that the attack may have been an assassination attempt on Khalaf by rival Hizb ul-Islam fighters who operate in the same space, al-Shabaab spokesmen vaguely placed blame on what the group termed "foreign companies" at work in Mogadishu (Radio Horseed, May 1).

Sheikh Ali Muhammad Husayn, a leading al-Shabaab figure in the greater Banaadir Region, held a telephoned press conference for local reporters in Mogadishu commenting on the mosque blast that hit his colleague, describing the attack as "an unforgettable lesson" (Shabelle Media Network, May 2). Husayn went further to say the militias in the region under his tutelage should continue to wage war against the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) under the guise of "resisting aggression" (Shabelle Media Network, May 2).

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Khalaf appeared at the partly ruined house of worship the following day in a demonstration of his resilience, telling those gathered, “I am alive, and did not sustain much injuries”, and accusing the United States of “using Somali infidels” to devastate the mosque and kill dozens of his al-Shabaab acolytes (Dayniile online, May 3). TFG Defense Minister Yusuf Siyad Indha Adde told Somali radio listeners that it was neither an attack from a rival militia, nor from a Western-backed proxy, but a deadly rift within the al-Shabaab movement that caused the destruction at the Abdallah Shidiye mosque (Voice of Mudug, May 3). Many Somalis expressed shock at an attack on a mosque, a tactic that had previously been out of bounds until very recently and appeared to locals to be an import from the sectarian warfare in Iraq.

Notes:

1. According to a list of most the problematic Somali groups and leaders for Somalia and the international efforts there, the UN Security Council has written that, “Khalaf has facilitated financial support to al-Shabaab; in May 2008, he held two fundraising events for al-Shabaab at mosques in Kismaayo, Somalia. In April 2008, Khalaf and several other individuals directed vehicle borne explosive device attacks on Ethiopian bases and Somali Transitional Federal Government elements in Mogadishu.” See <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9904.doc.htm>

ABDOLHAMID RIGI HANGED BY IRANIAN GOVERNMENT

Abdolhamid Rigi, the brother of captured Jundullah leader Abdolmalek Rigi, was hanged in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-Baluchistan Province on Monday, May 24 (Reuters, May 24). According to a spokesman from the judiciary’s public relations department, director-general of the Sistan-Baluchistan Justice Department Hojjat ol-Eslam val Moslemin Ebrahim Hamidi stated Rigi, described as Jundullah’s second-in-command, was executed for “waging a war against God” and providing support to his brother’s terrorist group (Fars News Agency, May 24). On January 21, the Zahedan Revolutionary Court sentenced Rigi to death stating that he was “living proof of ‘the presence of bandits’ in Pakistan” (Fars News Agency, January 21). Zahedan’s Prosecutor General Mohammad Marzieh told local press that some families of the 20 victims (some sources report there were up to 25 victims) of the May 28, 2009 attack—an attack that was described by some witnesses

as a suicide bombing on the well-known Shia Amir al-Mohini mosque in Zahedan, and the responsibility of which is ascribed to Rigi—were present during his execution (Iranian Students News Agency, May 24). Iran’s quixotic, millenarian Shia leadership continues to claim that the Rigi brothers were being simultaneously supported by Pakistan, the U.S., and the U.K. (and sometimes throwing in Israel for good measure) while being allied with al-Qaeda (Iranian Labor News Agency, May 24) in a grand conspiracy to destabilize the Iranian regime from within its borders by fomenting unrest in ethnic-Baloch Sunni regions of the country’s southeast. The regime described Abdolhamid Rigi as a “*mohareb*,” a Farsi-language term meaning “an enemy of God.” To be declared a *mohareb* is a crime punishable by death in the Islamic Republic of Iran according to its implementation of sharia law since 1979 (Mehr News Agency, May 24). [1] Iranian state television reported that Abdolhamid Rigi purportedly confessed to Jundullah receiving some form of covert American support (though no evidence has been thus far presented) as well as being involved in armed robbery, weapons smuggling, and drugs trafficking alongside terrorism charges (Press TV, May 24).

Jundullah’s leader, Abdolmalek Rigi, who was captured under somewhat mysterious circumstances on February 23 en route from Dubai to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (see *Militant Leadership Monitor*, February 2010; *Terrorism Monitor*, April 2, 2010), may very well meet the same fate as his now late brother. Just days before his sibling’s execution, Abdolmalek was quoted as saying “A high-ranking CIA official said it would be difficult for them to launch a military strike on Iran, but they had a plan to help any anti-government group or organization with the potential to pick up arms, and fight the Islamic Republic and not just any country. He told me that my group had the ability to pose a serious challenge to the Iranian government” (*Tehran Times*, May 23). Abdolmalek’s capture and Abdolhamid’s hanging are undoubtedly a robust message to the rest of Jundullah’s members that Tehran is out to destroy their movement. Hojjat ol-Eslam val Moslemin Ebrahim Hamidi said that an offer of amnesty remains on the table for group members willing to come in from the cold and “repent” for their terrorist endeavors (*Tehran Times*, May 25).

Notes:

1. The Iranian regime uses the term *mohareb* to eliminate genuine terrorists as well as to tar the in genuine political opposition as enemies of the republic

such as the supporters of Mir Hussein Mousavi after the disputed June 12, 2009 presidential election. Hardline Ayatollah Ahmed Khatami told a Tehran University audience that Green Movement protest leaders “were ‘rioting’ in defiance of God’s will” (Daily Telegraph, June 26, 2009).

The Religious Godfather of the Punjabi Taliban: Maulana Abdul Aziz Ghazi

By Zafar Imran

Maulana Abdul Aziz Ghazi, the elder brother of Abdul Rasheed Ghazi of Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) infamy (*The Nation* [Lahore], July 3, 2007) is probably the most notable Islamic ideologue in Pakistan’s rapidly radicalizing society. [1] With a following of thousands of diehard Islamists who believe in the cause of al-Qaeda and Taliban, Abdul Aziz and his late brother Abdul Rasheed Ghazi were the first ones who actually tried to establish a micro-Taliban state within Pakistan through militant means. This attempt was thwarted by a devastating military crackdown (*Dawn*, July 26, 2007), yet it set a precedent and emboldened other fellow travelers who tried to mimic the Ghazis’ methods on a larger scale in Swat and Buner districts later on. Situated in Islamabad’s G-6 sector known as Aapara, Aziz’s Lal Masjid has become a hub for the syndicate of militants collectively known as Punjabi Taliban. His graduates, working closely with al-Qaeda in Pakistan, are responsible for masterminding and implementing some of the deadliest attacks on Pakistan’s security apparatus.

Abdul Aziz Ghazi’s primary achievement has been declaring “jihad against [the] Pakistani government” on behalf of Pakistan’s jihadist community. The syndicate of Punjabi Taliban is actually a loose group of independent militant outfits that Aziz has been able to draw together to achieve a common goal of bringing down the secularized government in Pakistan that radicals and hard line conservatives alike deem un-Islamic. Successfully shifting the center of gravity of insurgency from Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) to settled cities and districts, Abdul Aziz has used a unique approach of socioeconomic reform to win the

hearts of impoverished Pakistanis –which distinguishes him from jihadi stereotypes in Pakistan.

Released triumphantly last year on bail from Adia Jail after more than two years detention (*The News International* [Karachi], April 16, 2009), Abdul Aziz Ghazi continues to threaten the state of Pakistan with suicide attacks and his brand of violent Islamism (*Dawn*, April 17, 2009). With the aid of a sophisticated web forum, which connects him with his followers and the wider global jihadi community, he communicates with his supporters through recorded messages and provocative jihadi anthems. With strong links to Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Mullah Muhammed Omar, Aziz’s Lal Masjid complex functions as al-Qaeda’s regional public relations center in Pakistan. Important publications and messages from al-Qaeda Central are immediately translated into Urdu and made available to likeminded individuals. The transition of Taliban supporters into a mainstream radical force of change in Pakistan’s settled areas was initiated when Abdul Aziz, after the Lal Masjid 4, called for “*sharia ya shahada*” (Islamic law or martyrdom). Many small militant outfits, previously operating independently, rallied around him and answered his call. Today, he has become the godfather of the so-called Punjabi Taliban and is treated with enormous reverence within jihadi circles.

Background

Abdul Aziz is an ethnic Baloch hailing from the Sadwani clan of the Mazari tribe in the town of Rojhan in southern Punjab Province, near its junction with the Balochistan and Sindh provinces in central Pakistan (*BBC Urdu*, July 11, 2007). Pakistan’s then-military ruler, General Zia-ul-Haq, was very close to Ghazi’s father, Maulana Qari Abdullah, because of the latter’s support for jihad in Afghanistan. Abdullah, described as the Lal Masjid’s founder, was appointed *khateeb* (“he who delivers sermon in Friday prayers”) in the government-supported Lal Masjid in Islamabad during the reign of Muhammed Ayub Khan. After graduating from the Deobandi-style Jamia Uloom ul Islamia seminary in Karachi’s Binori Town area, Aziz returned to the Lal Masjid in the 1980s where he and his father worked closely with Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and oversaw recruitment and training of Afghan mujahideen. After the assassination of his father on the mosque’s grounds in 1998, Aziz was officially appointed *khateeb* until 2005 when Musharraf ousted him. Aziz loudly deplored Musharraf’s decision to become America’s

ally in the War on Terror and became even more vocal when Pakistan began fighting its own citizens in a bid to reverse the expanding Talibanization of the FATA. Musharraf dismissed Aziz for issuing a specific fatwa saying that, “none of the army officers who were killed during the fight in the tribal areas was [sic] a martyr and do not deserve a Muslim funeral and burial in Muslim cemeteries.” His dismissal led to violence and triggered a chain of events that ended with the battle of the Lal Masjid and catalyzed the insurgency the world is witnessing in Pakistan today.

Methods

Frustrated by the ambivalence of Pakistanis over Musharraf’s acquiescence to American pressure, Aziz tried a more domestic approach to mobilize people and called for massive social reforms as well as the replacing of Pakistan’s parliamentary system with a strict sharia code. In his “Proposed Blueprint of Islamic System” that he distributed throughout the country, Aziz took a reformist stance and called for a collective effort to overhaul the existing system by providing people easy access to justice, something that is hard to come by in Pakistan, bringing an end to corruption and lawlessness. [2]

In a display of his vision for Pakistan’s future, he set up a rogue sharia court inside the Lal Masjid and began hearing cases. Advocating vigilantism to repair a “rotten” society, Abdul Aziz and his brother Abdul Rasheed Ghazi sent teams of armed students to issue warnings to neighbors, local shop owners, and law enforcement personnel to either abide by their version of sharia law or brace for adverse consequences (*Daily Times* [Lahore], July 1, 2007). Kidnappings of defiant neighbors brought attention the Lal Masjid within a few days and the Ghazi brothers gained respect among Islamic hardliners. When a group of militant female students from the adjoining Jamia Hafsa seminary kidnapped seven Chinese expatriate workers from a nearby massage parlor on charges of “promoting obscenity” in the city, the situation greatly escalated. Musharraf, under pressure from Beijing (Xinhua, June 26, 2007), Pakistan’s old Cold War ally, cracked down on the mosque in July of 2007.

Abdul Aziz, under instructions from his “friends” attempted to escape the mosque by disguising himself as a burka-clad woman, but was embarrassingly captured and paraded on Pakistani television. In contrast, his outspoken brother Abdul Rasheed Ghazi, the public face

of the mosque to the international media, was ordered by these same “friends” to keep fighting. Ghazi was finally shot and killed in the complex’s basement. After the battle was over, officials discovered messages sent by al-Zawahiri when sifting through the rubble. Whether or not Abdul Aziz and his brother were operating under direct instructions from al-Zawahiri remains an open question. In any case, al-Qaeda’s concern over the siege provides more than enough insight into its interest in Lal Masjid (*The Sunday Times*, July 15, 2007). [3]

Aftermath

Although the siege’s end brought temporary relief to the streets of Islamabad, it undoubtedly emboldened Islamists across the region. The military’s perceived brutality angered radicals and jihadists and earned Aziz enormous public sympathy and enshrined his legitimacy. Al-Qaeda seized the opportunity to mobilize like-minded religious centers of power to wage jihad against an “un-Islamic” military government in Pakistan. In a rare address directed to the Pakistani people and their clerics, al-Zawahiri called for “*qital fi sabilillah*” (a fight or struggle on the path of God) against Pakistan’s security forces for perceived aggression in the Lal Masjid debacle and maltreatment of Abdul Aziz Ghazi. [4]

Several new militant outfits sprung up in Punjab, the country’s most populous and wealthiest province, to avenge the killings of the Lal Masjid martyrs. The Ghazi Force was formed by Abdul Aziz’s students and is responsible for some of the deadliest suicide attacks in Pakistan. With its training camp in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province’s [5] Hangu district, the Ghazi Force, in coordination with anti-Shia terror groups Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, has been instrumental in forging an alliance of militants in Pakistan’s settled areas. Proof of Aziz’s patronage of Ghazi Force surfaced last year when the outfit’s top leader Fidaullah was captured outside his house in Islamabad (*The News International* [Karachi], June 1, 2009).

Conclusion

Aziz—proud of having sacrificed for his cause—is one of the most celebrated figures in the Pakistani jihadi community and continues to command respect of top al-Qaeda leadership. The Lal Masjid incident has undoubtedly transformed the nature of insurgency in Pakistan from being externally focused on Kashmir, India, and Afghanistan to waging an internal jihad

against the state. Surrounded by his loyal followers, he seems very confident about the prospect of bringing sharia law to Pakistan very soon. Abdul Aziz, reflecting on the magnitude and reach of the Lal Masjid siege, stated that his disciples would not have achieved this massive success even “if we struggled for 1000 years” (Toronto Star, February 16).

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Notes:

[1] According to Pew Global Attitudes survey “Pakistani Public Opinion” released in August 2009, a growing percentage of Pakistanis favor strict implementation of sharia and corporal punishments. Survey, which claimed to cover 90% of Pakistan’s adult population, revealed that 83% support stoning people who commit adultery; 80% favor punishments like whippings and cutting off of hands for crimes like theft and robbery; and 78% support death penalty for people who leave the Muslim religion.

[2] Maulana Abdul Aziz Ghazi, “Islami nizam ka mujawwiza khaka (Urdu)” (Proposed blueprint of Islamic system), Lal Masjid website (<http://www.jamiah-hafsa.com/>)

[3] Video message from Ayman Al Zawahiri released by al-Qaeda’s as-Sahab media wing in English titled “The Aggression against Lal Masjid,” (AP, July 11, 2007)

[4] Ibid.

[5] On April 15, the Northwest Frontier Province was officially renamed Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province in a long awaited move affirmed by the Pakistani senate (Dawn, April 15).

A Portrait of Abderrazzak el-Para: GSPC’s Mystery Man in the Maghreb

By Camille Tawil

Amari Saifi, better known as Abderrezak el-Para (The Parachutist), was a rising star in the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and

Combat, GSPC (Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat). However, his path as an Islamist militant leader was cut short when he was apprehended by anti-government rebels in Chad and handed over to the Algerian authorities via Libya in November 2004. To this day, he is yet to appear publicly before a court of law, fueling allegations that he might have been a double agent involved in false flag operations planted by the government inside the GSPC (now al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb-AQIM), a view which is plausible but with which this author does not agree.

Who is el-Para?

Amari Saifi is said to have been born to an Algerian father and a French mother in the city of Guelma, in eastern Algeria, in 1968 (though some sources indicate his birth year may be 1966) (Ennahar Online, May 8, 2009; Al-Arabiya, May 9, 2009). He was raised in a middle class conservative family and in the 1980s it was not unusual for a young man like him to join the army; the nihilistic strife between Islamist and government forces that would later shred Algeria’s civic fabric had not yet begun. He trained as a paratrooper in Biskra province in the mid-1980s, but went through various posts, including being on the team assigned to the former defense minister, Khalid Nezzar. (Ennahar Online, May 8, 2009). During his army career, he was reprimanded several times for his inappropriate actions and was finally expelled in the early 1990s (Ennahar Online, May 8, 2009; *El-Khabar*, May 19, 2004). Soon after leaving the army, el-Para joined the Islamist groups that took up arms against the government following the cancellation of the elections in which the Islamic Salvation Front was on the verge of winning, in January 1992.

El-Para joined the militants in 1992-1993, and was soon to become a mid-level leader of the Armed Islamic Group (Groupe Islamique Armé-GIA), aided no doubt by the knowledge and experience he gained in his formal military training. He worked closely with the top leaders of the GIA, and witnessed the power struggle that engulfed the group between 1995 and 1996. Upon the death of the GIA’s emir, Djemal Zitouni, in the summer of 1996, el-Para moved from the GIA’s strongholds in central Algeria to the eastern provinces of the country known by the jihadists as the 5th region. In 1998, when the new GIA emir, Antar Zouabri, claimed responsibility for a series of massacres against civilians, el-Para joined forces with Hassan Hattab, the GIA’s emir of the 2nd region, and Nabil Sahraoui, the emir of the 5th region, to create the GSPC.

Under Hattab, el-Para replaced Sahraoui as emir of the 5th region, making him the highest commander in the whole of eastern Algeria, with direct control of the provinces of El-Oued, Tébessa, Khenchela, Batna, Biskra and Annaba (Ennahar Online, April 24, 2009). Taking on a massively heightened level of authority, el-Para's rise to prominence accelerated. An Algerian press account stated that el-Para intermarried into a prominent Mauritanian family thereby solidifying a familial cross-border linkage possibly allowing him to expand his ambitions beyond those localized in Algeria (Liberté [Algiers], May 19, 2004).

In January 2003, el-Para inflicted the heaviest casualties against the Algerian military of which he was once a member. In a meticulously planned ambush, the army lost 45 soldiers from an elite unit in the Sahara between the provinces of Biskra and Batna (Ennahar Online, April 24, 2009). The ambush was el-Para's brainchild. Having observed troop movements for weeks preceding the attack, he arranged for the theft of four vehicles at a bogus roadblock on the road between Biskra and Batna—the headquarters of the 5th region of the GSPC. He anticipated correctly that the army would seriously pursue the group behind the theft. The soldiers advanced unaware that they were being led into a trap. With dozens dead, el-Para absconded with their weapons and uniforms.

The large-scale ambush made el-Para Algiers's "enemy number one," but he did not stay in the eastern region of the country, and decided to move further south towards the heart of the Algerian Sahara, near the known smuggling corridors running along the borders of Mali and Niger (Ennahar Online, April 24, 2009).

In February 2003, el-Para managed to kidnap a group of Western tourists in the Sahara, an incident that gained him notoriety outside of his native Algeria. El-Para harmed none of the 32 European tourists he held hostage [1]; the first group of 17 was freed in a commando raid in the Algeria Sahara in May 2003, and the remaining 14 were freed in Mali in August of that same year (The Daily Telegraph, August 19, 2003). [2] A sum of 5 million Euros supposedly paid by German federal authorities dispensed via the Malian Tuareg rebel leader Ibrahim ag-Bahanga to el-Para has been widely reported as paid in ransom in return for freeing the hostages (Ech Chorouk El Youmi, October 23, 2009). After releasing the second group of hostages in Mali, el-Para moved on to Niger, then to Chad where

he was captured in March 2004 by a Tibesti Mountains-based rebel group called the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad-MDJT). After lengthy negotiations, the Chadian rebels handed him over to the Libyan government intermediaries, which in turn handed el-Para over to Algeria, in November 2004. The botched handling of the el-Para affair caused a rift within the MDJT and pushed many rebels out of the movement in protest (Liberté [Algiers], November 21, 2004) to form a splinter faction. The MDJT's leaders wanted el-Para to be sent to Germany for trial rather than Algiers but the Algerian Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité (Department of Intelligence and Security) convinced a lower level MDJT commander to hand el-Para over (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 25).

It is believed that during his months in Chad, el-Para was in contact via satellite phone with senior al-Qaeda leadership, such as Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri (*Al-Sharq Al-Aswat*, September 11, 2004). Though not verifiable, el-Para's contact with the al-Qaeda leadership was very likely not a new phenomenon. He is reported to have been one of the first GSPC leaders to have met a roaming Yemeni named Emad Abdelwahid Ahmed Alwan, [3] whom the Algerian press described as the "envoy" of Osama bin Laden in North Africa. Al-Qaeda's emissary, Alwan, supposedly met el-Para in the al-Djabal al-Abyad (White Mountain) in the Algerian Sahara in 2001; the Yemeni was on his way to meet other leaders of the GSPC in order to unite the various jihadists in the region (Ech Chorouk El Youmi, October 23, 2009). Alwan was killed by Algerian troops on September 12, 2002 near Batna (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 25). It took the GSPC until September 2006 (see *Terrorism Monitor*, November 29, 2007) to merge with al-Qaeda and become a franchise in North Africa, renaming itself al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). El-Para missed the chance to see the merger, which came into being after the GSPC contacted al-Qaeda in Iraq to seek assistance in freeing him from his Chadian captors.

It should be noted that el-Para has never appeared before a court of law since his transfer to Algerian custody, despite many trials in which he was a defendant. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in June 2005 (BBC News, June 25, 2005). Some of his former militant colleagues have repeatedly asked the courts to bring him in as a witness in their trials, but to no avail (Ech Chorouk El-Youmi, October 23, 2009).

Conclusion

El-Para's absence has fueled speculation that the Algerian secret services may be trying to protect an "asset" they planted inside the Islamist movement, especially in light of his past role as an army paratrooper. This author is not supportive of this theory. The real reasons may be totally different—such as the fear that he could make embarrassing allegations that he was mistreated or tortured, or that he may ask to be extradited to Germany, which issued an international arrest warrant for him in relation to the death of the German tourist who died during the 2003 hostage crisis in the Algerian Sahara.

In May 2009, el-Para issued a statement from his prison cell denouncing his past actions, repenting, and pledging to join Algeria's national reconciliation process. He also asked his former colleagues, today's leaders of AQIM, not to mimic his folly of kidnapping Western tourists (Ennahar Online, May 9, 2009). The leaders of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger have just formally agreed to open a joint anti-terror and anti-narcotics command center in Tamanrasset, deep in southern Algeria (AP, April 22) which, with a history of very minimal inter-regional cooperation until now, may have been united by el-Para's operations that had roiled the Saharan states, irrespective of the illogically imposed French colonial-era demarcations in the sand.

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Notes:

[1] One of the 32 hostages, a 46-year-old German woman named Michaela Spitzer in the Mali group, allegedly died of heatstroke and was buried in the Sahara (Der Spiegel, August 29, 2003).

[2] The nationalities of the 32 hostages included 16 Germans, 10 Austrians, four Swiss, and one Swede and Dutch respectively (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 2005).

[3] Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2004) p. 88.

Admiral of the Desert—Muhammad Omar Osman and the Ogadeni Rebellion

By Andrew McGregor

The ceaseless destruction of Somalia by internecine clan warfare, sectarian conflict and foreign intervention continues to garner headlines in the international media; yet across Somalia's border with Ethiopia there is an ongoing conflict involving ethnic Somalis in a remote and inhospitable region that has had a negligible amount of press coverage. The decades old struggle between the Ethiopian government and the ethnic Somalis of Ethiopia's Somali Region (known as Haraghe Province until the administrative reforms of 1995) is one of brutal attacks and retaliations conducted out of sight of foreign reporters, who are officially banned from the region. [1] Though it is best known as the Ogaden conflict, after the ethnic-Somali Ogadeni clan that leads the rebellion, ethnic-Somalis actually fight on both sides of the dispute.

The Somali Region is the second largest of Ethiopia's nine regions and is home to over four million people. Since its conquest by imperial Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, the region has experienced very little in the way of development or improvement. In addition, it has remained the focus of Somali nationalists who seek the creation of a "Greater Somalia"—incorporating Somalia, Somaliland, Djibouti, the Somali Region of Ethiopia and the ethnic-Somali northeastern districts of Kenya. Pursuit of this goal led to the Ogaden War of 1977-78, when Somali dictator Siad Barre committed four mechanized brigades to support armed Somali separatists in the region. The conflict quickly expanded, with airlifts of Soviet military equipment and 10,000 Cuban regulars tipping the scales in favor of the Marxist Derg junta (1975-1987) in Addis Ababa. Though Ethiopia eventually inflicted a devastating defeat on the Somali military, the dominant theme in the country's policy towards the Somali Region and Somalia proper has been the avoidance of any repetition of such a costly and threatening episode. Since the 1991 overthrow of the Derg, Ethiopia has been ruled by the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), an umbrella group dominated by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) under Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

Even the name of Ethiopia's Somali region is in dispute. Ethiopia's official name of the vast area is "the Somali Region," though it is also called the "Fifth Region"; Ogadeni clan Somalis call it "the Ogaden region" (a name rejected by the non-Ogadeni Somali clans of the region); and the pre-revolution Somali government referred to it as "Western Somalia." [2] The leader of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), Admiral Muhammad Omar Osman, rejects the idea that the name "Ogaden" implies the superiority of that clan. "This is the internationally recognized name, which is shown on world maps. The Front sees no use in creating a new name for the region and then introducing it to the world anew. The former Somali government called the region Western Somalia, but few people in the region know this name." Nonetheless, Osman says it is possible the name might still be changed "after liberation" (*Asharq al-Awsat*, October 12, 2009).

From Desert Tribesman to Somali Admiral

Now 70-years-old, Muhammad Omar Osman has led the ONLF since being appointed at a party congress held in 1998. As a member of the Ogadeni clan, he was born within the borders of Ethiopia, but by the time he was a teenager he was attending school in Mogadishu. Osman turned to a military career and pursued military studies in Egypt and the Soviet Union. As an officer of Somalia's armed forces, Osman assumed a position within Siad Barre's Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party, the Soviet-inspired Marxist-Leninist political wing of Barre's military regime. Founded in 1976, the party's leadership was dominated by military officers and Osman eventually rose to a prominent position in the party's five-member Politburo (Bartamaha, October 12, 2009). Loyalty to the Siad Barre regime resulted in Osman's appointment to Admiral of Somalia's tiny navy of Soviet-built fast-attack craft. After the overthrow of the Siad Barre regime, Osman returned to the Somali Region of his native Ethiopia, where he joined the ONLF.

Clan Militia or National Liberation Movement?

The ONLF was formed in 1984 after the collapse of the separatist Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF). The movement entered into politics in 1991 with some initial success, though the rise of the rival and more broadly-based Ethiopian-Somali Democratic League (later the Somali People's Democratic Party) and the ONLF's open policy of secession created strong opposition from Addis Ababa and drew support away

from the ONLF, which then began a program of armed resistance to the Ethiopian state in 1994. Besides attacks on Ethiopian troops, the movement has been blamed for a series of bombings in Addis Ababa and the Somali region capital of Jijiga, leading the central government to designate the ONLF as a terrorist organization with alleged (but so far unsubstantiated) ties to al-Qaeda. Despite Ethiopia's role as an American military ally, the Ethiopian regime's characterization of the ONLF and its activities as "terrorism" has failed to bring about a U.S. or E.U. designation of the ONLF as a terrorist organization.

Unlike the region's Islamic Nasrullah resistance movement of the 1960s, the ONLF is notably secular and nationalist in orientation, though there remains a subtext of tension between the Christian rulers of Ethiopia and the Muslim clans of the Ogaden region. Some reports maintain that the ONLF portrays itself as a secular movement for external consumption, but it increasingly relies on Muslim identity and calls for jihad in its recruiting. [3] In discussions with the Arab press, Osman has not hesitated to describe the Ogaden issue as "an Arab-Islamic cause because the Ogadeni people are an Arab Muslim people" (*Asharq al-Awsat*, October 12, 2009), part of an attempt to elicit a degree of sympathy from the broader Islamist-leaning world.

Osman calls for a "free referendum" on independence, consolidation with Somalia or a continued presence within Ethiopia for the Somali Region, though he says negotiations with the Ethiopian government are possible, so long as they take place in the presence of an unbiased third party in a neutral location (*Asharq al-Awsat*, October 12, 2009).

Despite being personally based in Eritrea amidst widespread allegations of Eritrean military training and support for the ONLF, Osman denies any suggestion that his movement acts as a proxy in the ongoing rivalry between the leaders of Eritrea and Ethiopia. "The Ogaden Region and Eritrea were under Ethiopian occupation, and we began the war before Eritrea was liberated and also before the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict. There is no connection between this conflict and the ONLF struggle" (*Asharq al-Awsat*, October 12, 2009). Many local Somalis not belonging to the Ogaden clan (a sub-clan of the Darod) reject the ONLF as an attempt to enforce Ogadeni rule in the region. Pro-government clan militias have been formed by Addis Ababa (sometimes through coercion) from members of the Isaaq, Dir and non-Ogadeni Darod clans to combat the ONLF. There

were reports of heavy fighting between the ONLF and clan militias backed by government troops in late April (Jimma Times, April 30; Ogaden Online, April 24). The poorly trained and equipped clan militias typically take heavy casualties in clashes with the ONLF.

Without outside observers it is extremely difficult to assess the accuracy of battle reports from either side. For example, ONLF forces claimed a major success last year in capturing the town of Mustahil, killing 100 government soldiers while capturing another 50. A government spokesman termed the claim “absolutely false” and maintained ONLF forces were on the run (Shabelle Media Networks, March 8, 2009; Garowe Online, March 9, 2009; Somaliweyn, March 10, 2009). Only rarely do accounts bear any similarity to each other; more often one side will claim victory and the infliction of great losses on the enemy while the other side will respond with a statement saying they know nothing of any such encounter.

The ONLF frequently refers to military actions undertaken by its “Special Forces” units, such as the Dufaan commando or the Gorgor (Eagle) unit (Mareeg Online, March 7, 2009). The latter was reported to have captured the Malqaqa garrison along the road between Jijiga and Harar in mid-May, killing 94 soldiers, freeing 50 civilian detainees and seizing 192 light and heavy machine guns (Ogaden Online, May 17). As usual, these figures are impossible to verify.

Resource Exploration Intensifies the Conflict

Though the arid expanses of Ethiopia’s vast Somali Region offer little more economic activity than herding and other agrarian pursuits, there has been a great deal of recent speculation regarding potentially exploitable mineral deposits and oil and gas reserves. Chinese, Malaysian, Indian, Canadian and Swedish exploration companies have all become active in the region under government protection after concluding deals in Addis Ababa without local Somali consultation. The ONLF has warned foreign exploration companies that the central government does not control the region and its security guarantees to expatriate firms are worthless (Afrol News, November 14, 2006). The guerrillas demonstrated the veracity of their threats with a major attack on a Chinese-managed oil exploration site at Obala in the northern Ogaden region in April 2007 that killed 65 Ethiopian soldiers and nine Chinese oil workers. It also resulted in the short-term abduction of seven Chinese oil workers (BBC, April 14, 2007; ONLF

Communiqué, April 24, 2007). The scale of the attack led to speculation that Eritrean advisors and weapons had been part of the operation. According to Osman, “If the occupation authorities exploit these resources, they will not use them to develop the region. Rather, they will use them to destroy the region and repress the people” (*Asharq al-Awsat*, October 12, 2009). Further warnings to foreign companies were issued last month (Shabelle Media Network, April 25).

Though the Obala operation finally gained the movement international attention, it served to justify an extremely severe crackdown on the region by Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) troops operating under the concept of collective punishment. Though outside observers were banned during the operation, refugees and local informants of human rights organizations reported summary executions of civilians, destruction of villages, torture and blockades of food and humanitarian aid. In what is clearly a “dirty war,” ONLF forces have been accused of similar human rights abuses in dealing with the civilian population.

Leadership Disputes Within the ONLF

Internal disputes within the party came to a head with the January 2009 killing of the head of the ONLF’s Planning and Research Department, Dr. Muhammad Sirad Dolal. A committee of ONLF members produced a report on Muhammad Sirad Dolal’s murder in March. The report suggested that cronyism and tribal favoritism began to permeate the movement’s leadership after Muhammad Omar Osman became ONLF Chairman in 1998. Differences arose between the party leader and Muhammad Sirad Dolal after the latter opposed the Chairman’s attempt to remove Muhammad Abdi Yasin from his post as Liaison for the Diaspora Community, allegedly for reasons based on tribal animosity. In 2005, Osman claimed Dr. Dolal was preparing to defect to the Ethiopian government and issued orders that he was to be killed, orders that were subsequently ignored by fighters who did not believe the Chairman’s allegations. As the party began to split over the growing animosity between the two, Osman dismissed Dr. Dolal from the movement’s leadership. An unsuccessful assassination attempt on Dr. Dolal followed at an ONLF-dominated refugee camp in Kenya in 2008. Between November 2008 and January 2009 there were a number of clashes between the Chairman’s supporters and supporters of Dr. Dolal. Eventually Osman sent three commando teams to kill Dr. Dolal after informing them that Dolal was an Ethiopian agent. After the successful conclusion

of their mission on January 17, 2009 it was decided to let local government security forces take credit for the killing (Raxanreeb.com, March 23; *Sudan Tribune*, March 16, 2009). Dr. Dolal's daughter has openly accused Muhammad Omar Osman and party leaders Abdirahman Mahdi Madayi, Muhammad Ismail and Adani Hiromooqe of organizing his death (Raxanreeb.com, January 11). While it appears Osman's supporters had little input to this report, it nevertheless provides background for the subsequent split in the movement. Regardless of who was responsible, the death of Muhammad Sirad Dolal divided the ONLF. A senior movement member, Abdiwali Hussein Gas, announced the appointment of a new ONLF chairman, Salahudin Ma'ow, with the promise that the new leader would bring Osman to account for breaking up the ONLF (*Jimma Times*, March 3, 2009). For his part, Osman denies that any split has taken place in the movement, suggesting those who mention it are those who would like to see such a split occur (*Asharq al-Awsat*, October 12, 2009).

A smaller Somali movement, the United Western Somali Liberation Front (UWSLF, a local successor group to al-Itihad al-Islami) has finally capitulated to the Ethiopian government after 18 years of sporadic armed struggle (Reuters, April 9; Raxanreeb.com, May 7). Under its leader, Shaykh Ibrahim Muhammad Dheere, the UWSLF will now operate as a peaceful political movement within the boundaries of the Ethiopian constitution (Walta Information Center, May 6). The ONLF has lambasted Ethiopian attempts to represent this event as the end of hostilities in the region (*Jimma Times*, May 7).

Conclusion

Amidst rumors of new challenges to his leadership from within the ONLF, Muhammad Omar Osman, the Admiral turned rebel leader, faces major difficulties in sustaining his movement's struggle in the face of a deeply divided membership, local opposition, an unsympathetic public image, unrestrained retribution from the Ethiopian military, a lack of foreign support from any quarter other than Eritrea and general international opposition to violent movements even rumored to be linked to radical Islamists.

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Notes:

1. In May 2007, three journalists from the New York Times were arrested in the town of Degeh Bur and held for five days while attempting to report on the situation in the Somali Region (New York Times, May 23, 2007; Committee to Protect Journalists, "Attacks on the Press 2007," February 5, 2008).
2. Ethiopia is divided into nine ethnically-based administrative regions and two chartered cities. For map, see the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-Ethiopia pdf, <http://www.ocha-eth.org/Maps/downloadables/ETH.GENERAL.pdf>
3. See Mohammed Mealin Seid, "The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict," SSRIC, January 26, 2009, <http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/mealin/printable.html>

From Jihad to Human Rights: The Life and Death of Taliban Middleman Khalid Khawaja

By Derek Henry Flood

Khalid Khawaja (sometimes spelled Khwaja) was found dead adjacent to a stream in the town of Karam Kot, North Waziristan on April 30 (*Dawn*, April 30) with a note pinned to his bullet-pierced body that read, "He was a U.S. agent and whoever spies for America will meet the same fate" (*Daily Times*, May 1). Khawaja had embarked on a supposed peace mission on March 25 with a former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) colleague known as "Colonel Imam" (given name Sultan Amir Tarar) and an Anglo-Pakistani journalist named Asad Qureshi who was seeking to interview top-tier Taliban leadership in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) for an upcoming documentary for British television.

Strange Bedfellows

After 18 years in the Pakistan Air Force and another two serving his country as an ISI officer, Khalid Khawaja was dismissed from government service in 1987 (though

some sources state the year was 1988) when he became too overtly critical of General Zia ul-Haq's Islamist credibility within Pakistan. But he would remain a murky interlocutor of his country's violent politics until the hour of his death. He often defined his role in Pakistan's public sphere as indispensable while reporters and diplomats over the decades in various encounters with him considered his activities less defined. His brutal captors in the FATA insisted he "confess" to his CIA affiliations over the years. Khawaja had told the *Guardian* in 2002 that he had been negotiating with the Kanadahr-core Taliban as part of a semi-clandestine delegation after 9/11 on behalf of former CIA Director Robert James Woolsey and Pakistan-American businessman Mansoor Ijaz, with whom he had previously been in contact in regard to backchannel Kashmir negotiations (*Guardian*, September 11, 2002). Khawaja's Taliban talks faltered when it became clear the American goal was to simply overthrow Mullah Mohammed Omar's regime with the help of Afghanistan's northern ethnic war-fighting groups and that Omar had no intention of giving up bin Laden. Nor did the ultra-reclusive Omar likely have any interest in meeting Woolsey as Omar generally refused to meet anyone not from the Pashtun belt he calls home. Realizing that any kind of negotiated settlement was fruitless, Khawaja scuttled back to Pakistan. Khawaja, with his excellent command of English, and his ability to swing between intellectual rationales and Islamist dogma, was a rare figure in Pakistan's radical circles who was able to move between disparate worlds. Khawaja told Jamestown on March 17, 2008, in the same breath, that he considered Osama bin Laden and the late 60 minutes correspondent and author of the seminal *Charlie Wilson's War*, George Crile, to be equally good friends of his. He spoke of Crile with great fondness and said that he had hoped to collaborate on a storytelling project when Crile was struck down by pancreatic cancer in 2006, which greatly saddened him. Khawaja was also in contact with Daniel Pearl before his murder by terrorists on the outskirts of Karachi in January 2002. Pearl had contacted Khawaja about getting in touch with a shadowy militant figure named Sheikh Mubarak Ali Shah Gilani while looking into the Richard Reid shoe-bomber case which ultimately led to Pearl's abduction and subsequent beheading. Khawaja had also boasted of setting up a rendezvous in 1989 at a hotel in Medina, Saudi Arabia between ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Osama bin Laden in order to protect the interests of "Afghan Arabs" [1] who had begun to settle in Pakistan as the Soviet occupation of

Afghanistan was coming to a close (Pakistan Spectator, May 2).

Lal Masjid

The Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) was constructed in the mid-1960's after Mohammed Ayub Khan, the first of Pakistan's military rulers, relocated Pakistan's capital from the colonial-era port of Karachi, perceived as vulnerable to the Indian or Iranian navies, to the newly constructed Islamabad. The Lal Masjid had been a hotbed of radicalism throughout the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s and was closely connected to Pakistan's security establishment because of both the state-approved ideology of its leader Maulana Abdullah, who was in regular communication with the late dictator General Zia ul-Haq (BBC News, July 27, 2007), and because of its locale to the headquarters of the ISI in the capital. During the eight-day siege of the mosque complex, Khawaja was busy shuttling back and forth as an ad hoc advocate for those that had recently disappeared. The kidnappers holding Khawaja suggested that he had sold out Lal Masjid's radical Ghazi brothers by instructing Abdul Rasheed Ghazi to stay behind and fight while telling Maulana Abdul Aziz to compromise himself and exit the mosque in a burka (*Dawn*, April 30), at which point he was mortifyingly caught in a body search by a policewoman at a checkpoint. Many young Punjabi and Kashmiri militants who came out of the siege unharmed but saw many of their classmates, including girls, perish at the hands of Pakistani policeman and soldiers, moved to North Waziristan forming new militant configurations with escalating consequences for old guard jihadis who they viewed as insufficiently militant. Somewhat ironically, Khalid Khawaja's funeral service was carried out at the reconstituted Lal Masjid (*Daily Times* [Lahore], May 2) and prayers were led by Maulana Aziz, the very man whom the Asian Tigers believe Khawaja had stabbed in the back.

Defence of Human Rights

Khawaja's passion in the last period of his life was that of a self-declared human rights activist who confronted the Pakistani state on the abductions and disappearances of hundreds of citizens since Pervez Musharraf fell on the "...with us" side of the American global anti-terror drive, in the wake of 9/11. On March 17, 2008, this author sat down with Khawaja at his lawyer's office at the Rawalpindi Bar Association outside Islamabad.

Khawaja had been arrested (“abducted” as he termed it) on the charge of “the distribution of hate material” on January 26, 2007 en route to the Lal Masjid while he was working as an interlocutor on behalf of the institution’s militant clerics and their jihadi epigones (*Daily Times*, February 4, 2007). Khawaja was deeply involved in an NGO calling itself Defence of Human Rights [2] that sought information on thousands of missing and “disappeared” detainees after then-President Musharraf had consented to deeper intelligence cooperation after the commencement of the US-led War on Terror. Khawaja told Jamestown sarcastically, “I am known as terrorist” alluding to his pro-Taliban outlook and professed past friendship with bin Laden in the 1980s. Khawaja described Pakistan as a “slave nation” that was exhausted from decades of subservience to American congressional foreign policy whims and suggested that Pakistanis had far fewer rights than African slaves in the pre-Civil War era United States. “We just want the rights of slaves,” Khawaja lameted, stroking his long, graying beard. “Your [American] slaves had more rights than normal people in Pakistan today.” When he was grabbed near the Lal Masjid by ISI agents in late January of 2007, Khawaja told Jamestown that Musharraf’s men uttered, “pray for us” and told Khawaja they had the utmost respect for his past jihadi credentials on behalf of the state but that the political tide had turned against him and they were forced to do Musharraf’s bidding by arresting him. In 2008, Khawaja said that in Pakistan’s 61 years of independence, 33 years had been under a military dictatorship that prevented Pakistan from maturing into a healthy society. Years of zero checks and balances under the Musharraf regime “polluted the political climate” in Pakistan and the country’s establishment had run amok in the name of America’s War on Terror, during which the rights of detainees and terror suspects inside Pakistan had lessened considerably. Up until his capture, Khawaja was a relentless agitator in Pakistan’s internal political dynamics. He had filed a petition to revoke the law granting immunity, based on grounds within Pakistan’s constitution of Pakistan’s top political leaders including its oft loathed and wildly corrupt president, Asif Ali Zardari.

Defence of Human Rights, and Khawaja in particular, were advocating for the release of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, often referred to as “Lady al-Qaeda” by the tabloid press, from U.S. custody in New York. The Defence of Human Rights website lists a past protest in 2009 for Siddiqui, describing her detention as a “daughter of our nation” whose “tragic confinement” is a result of the “Zionist

and American War of [sic] Terror.” Khawaja considered the plight of Dr. Siddiqui a cause célèbre for Pakistanis whose case could be used to rally the public behind his organization. An MIT and Brandeis graduate, Siddiqui was charged in a New York federal courtroom in January with attacking American troops in Afghanistan in 2008 with a firearm (UPI, January 19) and she was convicted on two counts (*Guardian*, February 4). Despite much of the mystery that surrounds Siddiqui’s case and her alleged disappearance from Karachi in 2003, her surfacing in Afghanistan five years later, and whether or not she was a genuine jihadist, Khawaja calculated that the mere notion of a Pakistani woman being detained in the United States, circumstances be damned, would rally all hues of Pakistani nationalists to his cause.

Before his March abduction, Khawaja had filed a petition in the Lahore High Court pressing for the release of Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar (Adnkronos International, April 23). He had also appointed himself legal spokesman (though he is not known to have had any formal legal training) for the five Alexandria, Virginia residents who were arrested in the town of Sargodha in December 2009 after their parents reported them missing from the Washington, D.C. suburbs they called home. Sargodha is the headquarters of Pakistan Air Force’s Central Air Command in northern Punjab Province and the Virginia youths allegedly had maps detailing the Sargodha Pakistan Air Force complex as well as the Chinese-supported Chashma nuclear power plant (*Dawn*, May 9, 2008) near central Punjab’s border with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province (*Washington Post*, March 18

Murder

It is generally believed in Pakistan that Khalid Khawaja was killed by an unknown group of pro-Kashmiri “Punjabi Taliban” calling themselves the Asian Tigers. The hitherto unannounced group is thought to be a splinter group of either Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) or Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM). Many of the Kashmir-focused jihadis who lived and trained in and around Muzzafarabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) relocated to North Waziristan in 2004, when the Musharraf government had its arm twisted to reign in its former proxies’ activities in AJK. Harakatul Jihadul Islami (HuJI) and Lashkar-e-Zil (LeZ) commander Ilyas Kashmiri (see *Militant Leadership Monitor*, January 2010) reportedly holds sway in the Mir Ali area. The Asian Tigers are thought to be former members of

anti-India Kashmiri radical groups formerly supported in a formal capacity by the Pakistani state who were then radicalized against it in the aftermath of the Lal Masjid siege and which made the waging of jihad against Pakistan's institutions their new *raison d'être* (*Dawn*, May 3). Khawaja's son, Usama Khalid, told reporters gathered outside his Islamabad home that it was LeJ that "martyred" his father and that his family would continue Khawaja's mission to advocate for the post-9/11 disappearances and support the Virginia five (*The Nation* [Lahore], May 1). Further speculation was heightened when a transcript of a leaked phone conversation—between prominent Pakistani journalist and television host Hamid Mir and a man believed to be Usman Punjabi representing the Punjabi Taliban (*Daily Times* [Lahore], May 19)—was published on a Facebook page and later in the Pakistani press and blogosphere. Some in Pakistan believe Mir gave up Khawaja in retribution for Khawaja getting Mir fired from his job at the major Urdu language newspaper *The Daily Ausaf* and told jihadis that Khawaja was assuredly a CIA asset (*Times of India*, May 18).

The Coming War in North Waziristan

Pakistan is under immense pressure from the upper most echelons of the U.S. government to launch an all-out assault in North Waziristan, the last remaining area of the FATA unscathed by a major Pakistani army incursion in recent years. North Waziristan, which lays adjacent to Afghanistan's turbulent Khost Province, has continued to remain a beacon of jihadist terrorism while the other agencies from South Waziristan up to Mohmand in the north have been crippled by all out assaults that have flattened town centers, coupled with UAV drone strikes that are becoming ever more relentless by the week under a quietly aggressive Bush-era policy prescription that the Obama White House has greatly amplified in intensity. A who's who of Pakistani, Afghan, Kashmiri, and other assorted international Taliban-aligned militant leaders are thought to be operating in unchecked North Waziristan. Father and son terror duo Jalaluddin and Sirajuddin Haqqani of the Haqqani Network, Ilyas Kashmiri of LeZ, Hakimullah Mehsud, the still living emir of the TTP, as well as top LeJ, JeM, and Lashkar-e-Tayyba (LeT) militants all call North Waziristan home (*The News International* [Karachi], May 14). American pressure has increased since the killing of seven CIA officers on December 30, 2009 at Camp Chapman in Khost Province by a sometime Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate asset named

Humam Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi, and the clumsily constructed vehicle-borne improvised explosive device left in New York's Times Square on May 1, just one day after Khawaja's murder by Pakistani Faisal Shahzad, a naturalized U.S. citizen who has subsequently told investigators he had trained somewhere in either North or South Waziristan.

Khawaja had been attempting to be an interlocutor between the Pakistan military establishment and militants that he and Colonel Imam deemed reconcilable. He was possibly creating his own backchannel when he was killed. According to Pakistani journalist Syed Saleem Shahzad, Khawaja had made a trip to the region with an Iraqi Islamist named Mahmood al-Samarai which he thought achieved enough progress to return with Imam and Qureshi to continue trying to foster dialog and prevent more bloodshed (*Asia Times*, May 21). The harboring of militants from Kashmir, Punjab, and those dispersed from Pakistani army operations in the adjoining tribal agencies may be precisely why Khalid Khawaja was killed—outside observers believe—by those to whom he provided ideological succor. by those to whom he provided ideological succor. If Khawaja was on a mission to negotiate specifically with the North Waziristan Taliban to avoid war, this notion may have threatened the sanctuary of the South Waziristan Taliban and Punjabi Taliban taking shelter under the aegis of the North Waziristan faction within FATA's ultimately fissiparous and sectarian Pashtun tribal structure. Khawaja, in attempting to cut a deal for the North Waziristanis that would undercut the other groups inside that agency, may have been reason enough for them to eliminate a lifelong jihadi sympathizer, particularly if he was discussing the taboo of the other jihadi groups receiving covert Indian support in order to keep Pakistan's generals occupied and troops away from the Indian border as many in Pakistan speculate (*Daily Jang*, May 25).

General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, Pakistan's level-headed Chief of Army Staff, said that Pakistani army units have been conducting small operations in the area already with some of his 40,000 troops stationed there but he had no plans to launch what he termed a "steamroller operation" despite American political and economic pressure to do so (*The Nation* [Lahore], March 31). Asad Munir, a retired high-ranking ISI official, stated that an offensive in North Waziristan was all but inevitable but that the army is presently occupied in South Waziristan and Orakzai agencies and may

have to launch a new operation in the Khyber agency before a full-scale assault on North Waziristan could begin (REF/RL, May 5). Khawaja had connections to the Afghan Taliban as part of Pakistan's strategy in 1990s Afghanistan to counter Indian power in the region but the hydra-headed Pakistani Taliban, with its Kalashnikovs pointed at Islamabad's throat, does not seem to be something Khawaja could have had a handle on. Hafiz Gul Bahadur, the local leader of the North Waziristan Taliban (see *Terrorism Monitor*, April 10, 2009) may have been amenable to Khawaja and Colonel Imam's pleas for a peace initiative but with so many other groups operating in the agency, Khawaja was likely murdered by those not of the specific territory under Bahadur's writ.

Conclusion

The very undignified way in which Khalid Khawaja's corpse appeared in a non-descript area in the badlands of North Waziristan speaks to the nihilistic schism that has emerged in the three years since the Lal Masjid siege between Cold War-era jihadis focusing their efforts externally by exporting jihad outside of Pakistan's borders and the younger generation that seeks to overthrow Pakistan's fitful democratic institutions. Khawaja's passing is a sure sign of the end of Pakistan's old guard generation of strategic jihadis and the rise of a much more chaotic Pakistan where non-state groups, impossible to reign in by the ISI precisely because they view the ISI as their dogged opponent rather than sponsor, will constantly push the envelope of civil war in Pakistan for years to come. A mix of genuine counterinsurgency tactics and containment of multiple militant fires in the FATA may be Islamabad's best hope as the execution of a once-vaunted jihadi demonstrates that negotiation with the Taliban's new generation is a very unlikely possibility.

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Notes:

1. The term Afghan Arab denotes the foreign fighters from the Maghreb, Mashreq, and Levant regions who

had been radicalized fighting the Red Army inside Afghanistan during the 1980s and whose native regimes viewed their return to their countries of origin as a possibly destabilizing factor and preferred these battle hardened mujahideen remain in the Afghanistan-Pakistan theater with no desire to reintegrate them back into Arab society.

2. The website for Defence of Human Rights can be seen here: http://www.dhrpk.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=1&Itemid=8.