



Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

VOLUME IX, ISSUE 37 ♦ OCTOBER 14, 2011

IN THIS ISSUE:

BRIEFS.....1

IRAQI MILITANTS ENCOURAGE PEOPLE OF KHUZESTAN TO LAUNCH JIHAD AGAINST IRAN
By Rafid Fadhil Ali.....4

THE TEHRIK-E-TALIBAN PAKISTAN'S EXPANDING WESTERN CONNECTIONS
By Raffaello Pantucci6

BRINGING SHARI'A RULE TO YEMEN AND SAUDI ARABIA: AL-QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA'S POST-REVOLUTION STRATEGIES
By Murad Batal al-Shishani8



Faizul Shahzad

Terrorism Monitor is a publication of The Jamestown Foundation. The Terrorism Monitor is designed to be read by policy-makers and other specialists yet be accessible to the general public. The opinions expressed within are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of The Jamestown Foundation.

Unauthorized reproduction or redistribution of this or any Jamestown publication is strictly prohibited by law.

TALIBAN REJECT AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE HAQQANI-ISI RELATIONSHIP

Following a series of high-level meetings between American and Pakistani security and military figures related to the operations of the notorious Haqqani Network in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, the leadership of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has released a statement denouncing what it perceives as an American attempt to detach the Haqqani Network from the Taliban command in the interests of creating divisions within the movement. The statement is also critical of American suggestions that the Haqqani Network has close ties to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the latter agency long suspected of having close ties to the Taliban and various other Islamist militant groups active in Kashmir and in the tribal agencies of Pakistan's northwest frontier. The Taliban consider this an attempt to "attribute the decisive and staggering attacks by Mujahideen of Islamic Emirate to the neighboring country of Pakistan" (ansar1.info, September 27).

The Taliban assert that the success of their summer "Badr" offensive was so successful that it forced many Coalition partners to reassess their participation in the Afghanistan conflict. Afghanistan's government claimed from the beginning that "Badr" was coordinated with the ISI (Tolo News [Kabul], May 28). According to the Taliban statement, the success of this campaign revealed the true nature of the "lies and false information" spread by CIA chief General David Petraeus and others in the American command. Unwilling to attribute these victories to the Afghan Taliban, these same U.S. officials have concocted an intervention from Pakistan to explain their defeats at the hands of an enemy they claim to have weakened long ago. These unfounded allegations are meant



For comments or questions about our publications, please send an email to pubs@jamestown.org, or contact us at:

1111 16th St. NW, Suite #320
Washington, DC • 20036
Tel: (202) 483-8888
Fax: (202) 483-8337
Copyright ©2011

to “deceive the members in its coalition for a bit longer.”

The Taliban are especially disturbed by American suggestions that veteran Pashtun jihadi commander Jalaluddin Haqqani is not part of the Afghan Taliban command but is rather somehow a separate force “tied to others.” The statement asserts that such efforts are designed to “give a bad name to our prominent figures by tying them to foreign intelligence... the Islamic Emirate is at its strongest and [is] unified more than it has been at any other stage... Neither are our bases in Pakistan, nor do we need residence outside of our country... The respected Jalaluddin Haqqani is [one of] the Islamic Emirate’s honorable and dignified personalities and receives all guidance for operations from the leader of the Islamic Emirate.”

The U.S. military has long been frustrated by deadly operations carried out against its troops in Afghanistan by Haqqani Network forces, which typically retire into Pakistan after finishing their operations, placing them beyond most forms of retribution by American forces. A series of meetings in the last few weeks has been designed to goad Pakistan’s military into carrying out a major offensive against the Haqqani Network and compel the ISI to stop its support for the group (*Pakistan Observer*, October 10).

According to U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, “We cannot have the Haqqanis coming across the border attacking our forces and [Afghans] and disappearing back into a safe haven... We keep telling [the Pakistanis] you can’t choose among terrorists. If you are against terrorism, you have to be against all forms of terrorism” (*Dawn* [Karachi], September 22).

FREE SYRIAN ARMY LEADER THREATENS STRIKES ON SYRIAN MILITARY

Since the formation of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) on July 29, the force led by Colonel Riyad Musa al-Asa’d (formerly an engineer in the Syrian Air Force) has become the core of a small but still largely ineffective armed opposition to the Syrian regime. [1]

The only visible part of the FSA is a camp inside Turkey’s Hatay Province containing roughly 65 former Syrian soldiers and officers. The camp is surrounded by troops of the Turkish military, which has been conducting an October 5-13 mobilization exercise in Hatay Province (*Hurriyet*, October 5; AFP, October 5). It is from here that Colonel al-Asa’d attempts to recruit and direct defectors from the Syrian Army, which he says number some 10,000, spread all over Syria. The FSA also operates a press office from the camp which tries to rally international support for the FSA and its campaign of armed opposition to the regime of Bashar Assad. As part of this effort Colonel al-Asa’d has recently granted a series of interviews to regional and international news outlets describing the formation of the FSA and its intent to overthrow the Syrian regime.

Colonel al-Asa’d makes some bold claims about the FSA and its ability to control defectors from the Syrian military by creating a type of mirror force: “We have formed a complete army and distributed the regiments and companies according to the system operating in the regular Syrian army’s command... There is a need to create an army nucleus capable of controlling matters and which turns into an official army after the regime’s downfall” (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 9).

While some defectors have joined the FSA, it seems clear that many other military defectors have simply gone home or into hiding. One group was recently involved in fighting with regime forces in Rastan in a battle in which 40 people are said to have been killed before the FSA was driven from the town (*The National* [Abu Dhabi], September 30).

Despite the claims of Colonel al-Asa’d and the FSA, the new armed opposition force is still a long way from mounting an effective campaign against the regime. The FSA remains poorly organized and lacks safe bases from which to mount attacks on the Syrian Army. The FSA has few weapons and admits it lacks external support. While Turkey appears willing at the moment to offer refuge to Colonel Asa’d and his small group of followers,

this is still a long way from allowing a large resistance force to carry out cross-border military operations. According to the Colonel, “The Turks are the only ones standing with us now. The Arabs have let us down and therefore we have no one except them.” The FSA rejects foreign intervention, but is asking for an “air and naval embargo” against Syria and a “no-fly zone” in certain parts of Syria (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 18; *Hurriyet*, October 10).

Colonel Asa’d maintains that until now, the FSA has refrained from carrying out operations against fellow soldiers in the Syrian Army, preferring instead to combat selected groups such as the non-military security forces, air intelligence and the Shabihah, an informal pro-regime militia. Now, however, shelling of civilians by the regular army and bombings by the air force has compelled the FSA to direct their attention towards the regular forces: “We excluded [the regular army] at first, but we are now forced to target it. We are going to strike with all our force” (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 9). In an interview with a UK daily, al-Asa’d said he is coordinating a campaign of guerrilla attacks and assassinations through intermediaries that cross between Turkey and Syria (*Independent*, October 10).

Nevertheless, Colonel al-Asa’d told a Turkish daily that assistance of the type received by Libyan rebels from NATO would be essential to the FSA’s success: “If the international community helps us, then we can do it, but we are sure the struggle will be more difficult without arms... The international community has helped opposition forces in Libya but we have been waiting and suffering for seven months. The situation is less complicated in Syria than the situation in Libya but we haven’t received any help so far” (*Hurriyet*, October 8).

Note:

1. For the founding statement of the FSA, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZcCbIPM37w>

Iraqi Militants Encourage People of Khuzestan to Launch Jihad against Iran

Rafid Fadhil Ali

Influenced by the upheaval that has stricken many Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa, the people of southwest Iran’s Khuzestan Province have tried to start their own protest movement. Khuzestan is inhabited by a majority of Arabs and is home to more than 80% of Iran’s oil reserves. In the Arabic literature of the political and cultural organizations of the province, the area is called al-Ahwaz. [1]

The calls for an uprising in the province earlier this year tried to emulate the April 2005 protests in Khuzestan, which were quelled by the use of violence by Iranian authorities. The Iranian state media reported no news from the province during the current protests but opposition sources claimed that the Iranian Revolutionary Guards opened fire on the protesters and killed three people. It was also reported that dozens were arrested (Alarab.net, April 18).

Although the movement did not develop into anything like the uprising of 2005, it attracted the attention of Iraqi Islamist insurgent groups. The Salafi-Jihadi Ansar al-Islam (AI) group released a communiqué named “Message of solidarity with our brothers in Ahwaz,” calling on them to unify their efforts and launch a jihad against Iran (alboraq.info, May 11). Cooperation between the Iraqi insurgents and Ahwazi groups reportedly started soon after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. During the 2005 uprising in Khuzestan, the first agreement between activists from the province and Iraqi insurgents became known and a series of bombs struck Iranian government buildings and targets the following years (Islammemo.cc, June 12, 2005).

Arabs in the province accuse successive Iranian governments of pursuing a policy aimed at changing the demographic nature of the region by encouraging non-Arab Iranians to migrate to the province in large numbers. They are also critical of changes in the province’s borders that have seen southern areas with a majority Arab population detached and areas with Arab minority populations added in the north.

In an interview with the Jamestown Foundation, the leader of the disbanded Hizb al-Nahda al-Arabi al-Ahwazi (Ahwazi Arab Renaissance Party), Sabah al-Mossawi, revealed that there were Ahwazi fighters who had joined the Iraqi insurgency: “They went to fight the occupation [i.e. Coalition forces] but also to fight the Iranian-backed parties. They mainly joined the Islamic Army in Iraq and the Ba’ath party.”

Throughout centuries of conflict between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, the Khuzestan region managed to maintain a degree of relative independence, being ruled by a series of local tribal leaders. The last of these was toppled by the Iranian authorities in 1925 and the area came under the direct control of Tehran. After the Islamic revolution of 1979, the community’s demands for more rights and recognition of their distinct identity were not accepted by the new government. Subsequently a large-scale uprising broke out in the province. The Iranian authorities in turn repressed the protest movement ruthlessly and the area came under military rule. Iraqi-backed organizations launched a series of attacks on military and civilian targets during the uprising. The Ahwazi issue attracted international attention when a group of Ahwazi gunmen belonging to the Democratic Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Arabistan (DRFLA) occupied the Iranian embassy in London in 1980 and took hostages. After a six-day siege of the embassy by police, the gunmen killed one hostage, leading to a successful raid to release the hostages in the embassy by the British Special Air Service (SAS), a Special Forces Regiment.

There are various opposition groups which claim to represent the Arab population of Khuzestan. All of them are banned in Iran but operate in exile while claiming to have an active presence in the province. However the most prominent group that claims to be militarily active is the Ba’athist Arab Struggle Movement to Liberate Ahwaz (ASMLA) and its armed wing, the Martyr Mohye al-Din al-Nasir Brigade (MMDNB). The latter’s strategy is to target oil production facilities in the province as a means of weakening the Iranian economy, which depends heavily on the oil of Khuzestan Province. In 2007 the MMDNB recognized Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri as the new leader of the Iraqi Ba’ath party (Albasrah.net, June 24, 2007)

The majority of the people of Khuzestan are Shi’a Muslims but there has been a growing movement among them to convert to Sunni Islam. This trend has escalated significantly over the last few years, driven mainly by

a local identity problem. Resentment of Iran by some Shi’a Ahwazis is reflected in a number of ways, including a rejection of the Shi’a faith. None of the prominent Shi’a clerics in Iran or Iraq have clearly supported the Ahwazi cause. The most senior Ahwazi cleric and the most influential community leader, Shaykh Muhammad Tahir al-Khaqani, was forced to leave Khuzestan after the uprising of 1979 and put under house arrest in Qom until his death in 1986. No other local cleric emerged to preserve the Shi’a-Arab nationalist identity of the population.

Salafi-Jihadi groups from Iraq regard the conversions to Sunni Islam in Khuzestan-Ahwaz as genuine and are encouraging the integration of Ahwazi converts in the international jihadi movement. According to the AI communiqué: “The origin of the people of Ahwaz is that they are a Sunni nation. The Iranian occupation has imposed Persian and Shi’a culture on them. The policy of Persianization is based on the Rafidah faith (i.e. Shi’a Islam). Therefore there should be a clear distinction of the right faith (i.e. Sunni Islam). This distinction should be the foundation to be relied on for achieving political and geographical independence for the state of Ahwaz.” The AI message went on to set a strategy for the confrontation in Khuzestan, calling for its people to build a Sunni religious and political leadership: “There should be a unified Sunni-Jihadi movement in Ahwaz and it should join the global jihad” (Alboraq.info, May11).

The AI communiqué is very important. It is picking up on a growing trend and trying to direct it towards a jihadi goal. So far the revolutionary movements in Khuzestan have been based on the community’s Arab identity within a Persian and Shi’a Iran. With the increase of conversions to Sunni Islam among the population, it is not possible to rule out that a base for a Salafi-Jihadi organization could be established in the province. Such a development might well change the relationship between Salafi-Jihadi groups and Iran. The former have avoided a direct confrontation with Tehran so far, despite the often severe confrontations between the Shi’a and Sunni communities in the Middle East. Iraqi Sunni Islamists will be heavily involved in such a struggle, putting the Salafi-Jihadists at the centre of one of the most significant geo-political conflicts in the region.

Rafid Fadhil Ali is journalist, writer and reporter. From 2003 to 2007 he covered the Iraq war and followed events from the field. Rafid worked for different pan-Arab and foreign media organizations. He is an expert in Iraqi politics and militant groups in the Middle East.

Notes:

1. Khuzestan was historically named Arabistan (the land of the Arabs). In 1935 the Iranian government of Shah Reza Pahlavi renamed it Khuzestan i.e. “the Land of the Khuzis,” referring to the ancient name used for sugar cane farmers in the ancient kingdom of Susa. Local Arab people call the province al-Ahwaz and emphasize its history of independence under Arab rulers since the Arab invasion of 639 C.E. Ahwaz is also the name of the Khuzestan capital.

The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan’s Expanding Western Connections

Raffaello Pantucci

As the United States breathed a sigh of relief that the 10th anniversary of 9/11 had passed without any major incident, the U.S. Justice Department announced that three men had pled guilty to charges of trying to smuggle a member of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) into the United States. As one of the suspects, Irfan ul-Haq, put it, it was “not their concern” what the smuggled individual might “want to do in the United States – hard labor, sweep floor, wash dishes in a hotel, or blow up. That will be up to them.” [1] The men were apparently part of a network of people smugglers that was willing to help Pakistani TTP members enter the United States, highlighting once again the menace posed by the group to the United States, as perceived by the American security community.

The histories of the three men at the heart of this case are unclear. They were arrested on March 10 in Quito, Ecuador, as part of an operation by American forces (NTN24 [Bogata], September 20, 2011). In court documents released later, prosecutors laid out a case showing that from January 2011, undercover agents dispatched by a law enforcement agency approached two of the men in Quito, Irfan ul-Haq and Qasim Ali, to inquire about smuggling a fictitious person from Pakistan into the United States. The initial approach was to ul-Haq, who directed them to talk to Ali in order to obtain fraudulent documentation. The two men then met and spoke with the undercover agents a number of times to work out the details and a month later ul-Haq seems to have brought a third man, Zahid Yousaf, into the conspiracy. [2] It was at about this time that one of the undercover agents told the suspects he was a member of the TTP and that the individual who was intended to be smuggled was also a member – information that elicited the callous response highlighted before. [3] While it is unclear whether the suspects were actually supportive of TTP aims, their capacity to smuggle individuals out of Pakistan and into the United States using fraudulent documentation would have provided the TTP with a useful network were they able to connect with it. At one point the suspects provided the undercover agents with a sample fake British passport and ul-Haq boasted of having contacts in Pakistani immigration that could provide exit stamps for people who were wanted by security services.

This in turn highlights the general growing concern about the increasing internationalization of the TTP. On July 29 the UN Security Council agreed to add the TTP to the list of proscribed groups. [4] In an electronic interview with *Terrorism Monitor*, Richard Barrett, coordinator of the UN’s al-Qaeda-Taliban Monitoring Group, said the move was “an important symbolic consequence” that showed “the international community as a whole condemns [the TTP] without reservation. This universal condemnation acts as an encouragement to all those who are opposed to TTP and have suffered from its violence.” [5] The move follows earlier decisions to proscribe the TTP by Pakistan, the UK, the United States and most recently, Canada. [6] The threat to the West was brought into focus when Waliur Rehman, the head of TTP in South Waziristan, announced: “Soon you will see attacks against America and NATO countries, and our first priorities in Europe will be France and Britain” (al-Arabiya, June 28).

This is not the first time the group has threatened the West and it has attempted in the past to carry through on these threats. Back in January 2008, the group was connected to a plot to attack Barcelona, Spain and other possible EU targets by deploying a network of twelve men, ten Pakistanis and two Indians. According to prosecutors and an informant within the cell, some of the men had undergone training with TTP in Waziristan. The informant reported that the then-TTP leader Baitullah Mahsud had specifically identified him as a potential suicide bomber. The link to the TTP was confirmed in August 2008 when TTP spokesman Maulvi Omar released a video in which he stated, “the [foiled attack] in Barcelona was conducted by twelve of our men. They were under pledge to Baitullah Mahsud and the TTP has already claimed responsibility because [of] Spain’s military presence in Afghanistan.” [7]

While this plot was disrupted, responsibility for Faizul Shahzad’s failed car bombing in Times Square in May 2010 was claimed by TTP soon afterwards in a video that featured footage of Shahzad at a TTP camp. According to the indictment that was handed down against him, Shahzad admitted to having trained alongside the group in Waziristan in December 2009. Having returned to the United States, Shahzad received some \$5,000 in February 2010 to help him carry out an attack there. He then went about purchasing a gun and locating the necessary equipment to build a car bomb. [8]

While it is unclear whether Shahzad had any contact with TTP networks in the United States, the existence of these networks now seems to have been confirmed. Aside from the group arrested in Quito, FBI agents in Miami moved in May to disrupt a network based around a pair of imams in Florida who were allegedly running a fundraising network to send money to the TTP. According to prosecutors, the group sent at least \$50,000 to Pakistan and discussed the terrorist attacks it was going to support with their contacts there (*Miami Herald*, May 14). This came after an August 2010 operation codenamed “Samosa” in Ottawa, Canada that was mounted by Royal Canadian Mounted Police forces to disrupt a network that was sending funds to the TTP and accumulating bomb making material locally (National Post, July 5).

Successful attacks have yet to emerge from these TTP support networks, but it seems likely that more plots will follow in the future. Given the ongoing trickle of foreigners drawn to Pakistan and the TTP’s ongoing campaign at home against the Pakistani state and its

American backers, it is likely that this connection will continue to be a focus of concern for Western intelligence agencies.

Raffaello Pantucci is a Consulting Research Associate with the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and an EU Science and Technology Fellowship Programme (China) Research Fellow. He is a regular contributor on terrorism issues for newspapers, magazines and journals on both sides of the Atlantic, and is currently working on a book looking at the roots of the British Jihad.

Notes:

1. USA vs. Irfan ul Haq, Factual Proffer in Support of Guilty Plea, filed September 12, 2011. http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1683.pdf.
2. USA vs. Irfan ul Haq, Qasim Ali, Zahid Yousaf, Indictment filed March 3, 2011. http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1678.pdf.
3. USA vs. Irfan ul Haq, Factual Proffer in Support of Guilty Plea, filed September 12, 2011. http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1683.pdf.
4. <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE13211E.shtml>.
5. Author’s email interview with Richard Barrett.
6. Public Safety Canada – Currently Listed Entities, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/ns/le/cle-eng.aspx#TTP>.
7. <http://www.nefafoundation.org/multimedia-intvu.html>
8. USA vs. Faisal Shahzad, indictment, http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/Shahzad_Faisal_Indictment.pdf.

Bringing Shari'a Rule to Yemen and Saudi Arabia: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's Post-Revolution Strategies

Murad Batal al-Shishani

Since it began last February, the youth-led peaceful revolutionary movement in Yemen demanding an end to President Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime has provided a political alternative to the Yemeni people which has marginalized the rhetoric of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). At the same time the violent response of the Yemeni regime to all oppositional social and political forces has increased the chaos and tension in the country. As a result many ungoverned areas have emerged and the absence of the state has fuelled AQAP's re-emergence on the political scene of Yemen.

Before the revolution, AQAP had a strong presence in three governorates: Abyan, Ma'rib and Shabwah. Since the movement re-emerged AQAP has expanded in new areas such as Hadramawt and Aden. Other areas have witnessed limited but active cells of AQAP, such as in the capital Sana'a and the Zaidi Shiite dominated al-Jawf and Sa'da regions. [1] In certain areas AQAP has established Shari'a rule and even installed checkpoints.

Alongside the geographical expansion, AQAP has benefited from the instability in Yemen by adopting various strategies to present their ideology as an alternative to the Saleh regime. AQAP has also kept the pressure on the Saudi royal family in neighbouring Saudi Arabia. In an audio message discussing President Saleh's policies, AQAP ideologue Adel al-Abbab (a.k.a. Abu al-Zubair al-Abbab) said: "Ali Abdullah Saleh, [it] is not [a] secret to you that AQAP is founded only for the recovery of Shari'a [which is] replaced by secularism. And you should know that the cause of wielding a weapon in your face is not for [the] sake [of] influence, money or a position, but to implement Shari'a, which does not exist under your rule." [2]

Local Strategies

AQAP has started to present itself as part of the "Arab Spring" in Yemen. Yemeni Journalist Abdulrazaq al-Jammal spent several days as a guest of AQAP in the areas they control and has interviewed one of the prominent leaders of the movement, Fahd al-Quso. [3]

Al-Jammal asked the AQAP commander what led the movement to attempt to control the Abyan Governorate after avoiding public appearances previously. Al-Quso replied that the move came about because "All the Yemeni people refused this regime and expressed their absolute desire to end the rule of Ali [Abdullah] Saleh and combined their efforts with us to this. And we are an integral part of this people's journey towards dignity and freedom under the banner of Islam" (*Al-Quds al-Arabi*, September 19).

In order to establish their influence in the areas they control AQAP started to rule these areas by Shari'a, establishing Harakat Ansar al-Shari'a (Movement of Shari'a Supporters) to further this effort. This movement, as AQAP ideologue al-Abbab explains, aimed to win the locals' support and "attract them to Shari'a rule." By this movement AQAP hopes to turn Shari'a rule "into popular action instead of keeping it as an elite one...by providing public services and solving people's problems" said al-Abbab. [4] Al-Quso confirms this by saying that "all Muslims are supporters of Shari'a, and Ansar al-Shari'a includes all the mujahideen who [work for] Shari'a to rule in the country" (*Al-Quds al-Arabi*, September 19).

AQAP has formed Ansar al-Shari'a from tribesmen in the areas where they are imposing Shari'a rule. Al-Jammal noticed that in Abyan "many of those who are members of Ansar al-Shari'a are from the inhabitants of [Ja'ar] province, so any internal fighting will certainly have effects that extend to the coming years in a country where taking revenge is on the top of the list of troubles" (*al-Wasat*, September 14).

By relying on local elements, AQAP was able to gain support on the ground, but the absence of the state also played a major role in achieving this support. According to al-Jammal, in the areas where AQAP imposed Shari'a rule, they "succeeded in creating a status of amiability between them and the inhabitants of those regions, especially that many of the fighters belong to those regions. The model of al-Qaeda is very perfect in comparison with the model of the Saleh regime. In addition to the unprecedented security stability, the organization presents some services to the citizens, especially in the aspect of livelihood...[and] many crimes like murders, stealing [and banditry] have disappeared dramatically since the Ansar al-Shari'a entered their areas" (*al-Wasat*, September 18).

During their presence in the Jaar directorate and many of the regions of the Abyan province, the fighters of the Al-Qaeda organization were able to create a status of amiability between themselves and the inhabitants of those regions in particular because many of the fighters are from those regions. The model of Al-Qaeda is perfect in comparison with the model of the Saleh regime. In addition to the unprecedented security stability, the organization presents services to the citizens, including livelihoods. I have seen lists given to me by the media officials of the organization, which consist of the types of supplies that are presented to large numbers of citizens. There are even two pickups that have been assigned to distribute water to the houses, which is considered a great thing for a people who never depended on their government. The citizens of the Jaar directorate say that many crimes like murders and stealing have disappeared dramatically since the Ansar Al-Sharia entered their areas.

Regional Strategies

Since Saudi and Yemeni jihadists merged in 2009 to found AQAP, most jihadist literature considers the proximity to Saudi Arabia a causal effect for the presence of jihadists in Yemen. Jihadists desire to use Yemen as a launching pad against Gulf States, but as AQAP is unable presently to launch an open campaign as it did between 2003 and 2007 on Saudi soil, the movement has resorted to sending small cells from Yemen or recruiting Saudis to assassinate the Kingdom's officials and royal family members. According to Saudi border guards in the Jizan region, they have managed to stop more than 25,000 illegal entries into Saudi Arabia from Yemen and thwarted the smuggling of close to 10,000 weapons in September alone (al-Jazeera, October 4).

Last August, Saudi Khadir al-Zahrani and two others attacked Interior Minister Prince Muhammad bin Nayf's palace in Jeddah. Al-Zahrani was killed and the other two were arrested by Saudi forces (Arabnews.com, August 6; al-Jazeera, August 6). This attack came on the second anniversary of an assassination attempt on Prince Nayf's son, Assistant Interior Minister for Security Affairs Prince Muhammad bin Nayf, by a suicide bomber. The assassination tactic is preferred by AQAP with their inability to launch an open confrontation with Saudi authorities (see *Terrorism Monitor*, November 25, 2009).

The Saudi position towards Saleh was perceived among Yemenis as support for the regime. AQAP in

turn started to use more "political" rhetoric directed towards the Saudi royal family. Well-known AQAP ideologue Ibrahim al-Rubaish released an audio message addressing Prince Nayf after the attack on his palace and threatened him of the consequences of the Arab Spring: "Today we are in an era of revolution. These revolutions succeeded in overthrowing the most repressive and tyrannical of Arab regimes, those which used to teach Nayf and his criminal gangs how to use methods of repression are collapsing by the gatherings of the youth." [5]

Al-Rubaish who previously set seven conditions to end the fight against the Saudi royal family, has listed significant new politically-oriented demands in addition to the historic demands of the Saudi Arabian jihadists. These demands include "the expulsion of infidels from the Kingdom and the nullification of all man-made laws which fill your various ministries, those which you call with various names, such as rules and regulations". Further demands by al-Rubaish include:

- "Restore to the Islamic judiciary its usurped independence and respect, and grant its judges the right to investigate all cases, allowing its rulings to be carried out on all people, noble or ignoble, the rulers or their subjects."
- "Grant the Presidency for the Promotion of Good and Prevention of Vice total jurisdiction to carry out their tasks, with both their hands and their tongues as suitable, against individuals, princes, establishments, and government institutes."
- "The Islamic propagators and students [are] to be granted the freedom to speak the truth, fearing no repercussions from anyone, and that the Interior Ministry have no authority to plant or dismiss Friday preachers."
- "Release all people in your prisons who are not serving criminal sentences."
- "Do not stand as an obstacle to those who seek to defend and aid the Muslims in Palestine, Iraq, or any other Muslim land with their lives, wealth, or tongues." [6]

Conclusion

AQAP, like most Salafi-Jihadist groups, has been demonstrating a strong ability to adapt to the pressures they are experiencing; most notably the pressure the Arab Spring has put on such movements to present a political alternative to the Arab masses.

This being said, AQAP has adopted new strategies locally and regionally that aim to gain local support as well as to assist in representing the group as an integral part of the youth movement. AQAP aims to present Shari'a rule (according to their understanding of it) as the most suitable alternative to Arab political systems. This means that the defiant and violent response of Arab regimes, including Yemen, to peaceful protests demanding political change, will ultimately be the major factor in restoring al-Qaeda and affiliated groups' status as defenders against these regimes.

Murad Batal al-Shishani is an Islamic groups and terrorism issues analyst based in London. He is a specialist on Islamic Movements in Chechnya and in the Middle East.

Notes:

1. Adel al-Abbab, in a Pal Talk conversation released on April 22, gave details on AQAP activities in these areas (<http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?t=32700>). See also Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Is al-Qaeda establishing a small Shari'a emirates in Yemen?" Open Democracy, May 19, 2011.
2. <http://aljahad.com/vb/showthread.php?t=381>, September 10, 2011.
3. For further information about al-Quso see Militant Leadership Monitor, August 27, 2010.
4. <http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?t=32700>
5. Ibrahim Sulaiman al-Rubaish: Yokhrboon Beoutahm Be Aydeehm (Destroying Their Homes with Their Own Hands), <http://as-ansar.com/vb/index.php>, August 29.
6. Ibid.