



Terrorism and Islamic Radicalization in Central Asia

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Militants Threaten to Return to Central Asia after NATO's Withdrawal from Afghanistan

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On December 4, 2012, the deputy chairman of Kazakhstan's National Security Committee, Kabdulkarim Abdikazymov, said to the press that Jund al-Khilafa was a "real threat" to Kazakhstan's national security (Tengrinews, December 4, 2012). Similarly, on November 26, 2012, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defense and Security of Kyrgyzstan, Tokon Mamytov, warned that "there might be danger of an incursion from Afghanistan into Kyrgyzstan in 2013 or 2014" (Kyrtag.kg, November 26, 2012). Abdikazymov and Mamytov's statements reflect concerns in Central Asia about "foreign fighters" currently in Afghanistan returning to their home countries after the planned US and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2013.

The last time a world power withdrew from Afghanistan—the Soviet Union in 1988—many foreign fighters from Southeast Asia returned to their home countries and used the financial and logistical networks and skills acquired in the war-torn country to form terrorist groups, such as Kumpulan Mujahidin in Malaysia, Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines. The question now is whether the several thousand Central Asians in Afghanistan present a "real threat" to their home countries, as Abdikazymov suggests, or whether the threat is only perceived. A review of three Central Asian militant groups based in Afghanistan—Jund al-Khilafah, which targets Kazakhstan, the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), which targets Xinjiang, China, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)—shows that Central Asian fighters do not yet appear to be returning to their homelands. But history, as well as these groups' intent, suggests that the threat of their eventual return to their home countries—whenever it may be—is real.

Jund al-Khilafah is based in the North Caucasus and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, and it carried out three separate attacks in Atyrau, Taraz and Almaty in late 2011 (Tengrinews, September 28, 2012). As evidenced by slain Tunisian-born Jund al-Khilafah amir Moez Garsallaoui's connections to Mohammed Merah, who killed three Jews and four French paratroopers in southwest France in March 2012, Jund al-Khilafah also has international operational capabilities. There are an estimated 200 to 300 Kazakhstani militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan, many of whom have financial relationships with Jund al-Khilafah supporters in Kazakhstan (September 9, 2011). This became apparent with the sentencing of Aidos Kusanov on October 8, 2012, who transferred 380,000 tenge (approximately \$2,500) to Jund al-

Khilafah in Pakistan through the Aqtobe-based militant group Ansar al-Din. Ansar al-Din has not claimed any attacks in Kazakhstan, but has issued numerous video statements condemning the Kazakhstani government on jihadist websites, such as hunafa.com and Kavkaz Center, and seeks to “establish links of material support” to “assist the families of the mujahideen,” according to its own propaganda (<http://hunafa.com/?p=3839>).

Despite Jund al-Khilafa and Ansar al-Din’s operational links to Kazakhstan, the flow of militants and funds still appears to be from Kazakhstan to Afghanistan and Pakistan or elsewhere—not the other way around. This could soon change, however. In a November 2011 Islamic Jihad Union video statement, a Kazakhstani fighter said that after victory in Afghanistan, their “goal” is Central Asia, while another fighter, who claimed to be the “amir,” said their “sphere of interest” is Central Asia, in particular Kazakhstan (Kavkazcenter.com, December 2011). Other experts in the region argue that the IMU and other militants are already in Kazakhstan, using the country effectively as a “terminal” linking Europe, Central Asia and Afghanistan, and therefore the militants do not want to destabilize Kazakhstan, yet (Tengrinews, September 6, 2011).

The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), which is led by Uighurs from China’s Xinjiang Province and is based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, also has Turkish and Russian-speaking members. According to unsubstantiated Chinese reports, the TIP has connections to militants from Xinjiang who are fighting in Syria, while in 2010 TIP members were convicted in Dubai for attempting to blow up a statue of a Chinese dragon outside of a popular mall in a symbolic attack (The National, July 9, 2010). The TIP has approximately 300–500 fighters, but there is only concrete evidence of one TIP fighter who has ever trained in Afghanistan or Pakistan and returned to Xinjiang to carry out an attack. He was Memtieli Tiliwaldi, the alleged leader of the July 30–31 attacks in Kashgar that killed more than ten Han Chinese pedestrians. He was depicted in a TIP video training in a mountainous area resembling the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region and then was confirmed killed by Chinese security forces in Kashgar after the attacks (Times of India, September 8, 2011). China’s Vice Minister of Public Security Meng Honwei said one month before the attacks in Kashgar that there were “signs [that] the ‘East Turkistan’ terrorists are flowing back” and “they are very likely to penetrate into China from Central Asia” (China Daily, May 9, 2010).

Like Jund al-Khilafah and the TIP, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has entrenched itself in northern Afghanistan, but has not carried out any major attacks in Uzbekistan or elsewhere in Central Asia since at least 2004. Reportedly, the IMU is connected to Jamaat Ansarullah, which is an Islamist militant group operating in Tajikistan; and according to accounts, armed groups in Afghanistan’s Badakshan Province, which borders Tajikistan’s Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Oblast, are “becoming stronger” (BBC, December 5, 2012). However, the IMU appears to be more effective in helping the Taliban seize control of northern Afghanistan than attacking targets in Central Asia, even

if it does have a presence in Kazakhstan and other neighboring countries. The Southeast Asian militants who returned to their home countries after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan carried out or trained others to carry out terrorist attacks, which killed hundreds of people, but, they proved much less effective at generating change than the mass social movements in the Arab World in 2011. As long as the populations of Central Asian countries remain vigilant to the threat posed by these militant groups, the fighters returning from Afghanistan will likely be able to only carry out sporadic attacks but gain no traction in society. However, crises like the ethnic riots in Urumqi in 2009, the ethnic clashes in Osh in 2010, the deadly Zhanaozen protests in 2011, and the instability in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakshan in 2012, all have the potential to erode government legitimacy, while increasing support for alternatives to the present leadership. Most alternatives come in the form of opposition parties, but some of those who have been aggrieved may turn toward groups like the TIP, Jund al-Khilafah and the IMU instead.

Hizb ut-Tahrir Takes Advantage of Ethnic Fault Lines in Tatarstan, Kyrgyzstan

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By: Jacob Zenn

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On November 16, Russian prosecutors charged nine citizens of Tajikistan and Russia with membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir and possession of grenades, rifles, TNT, millions of dollars' worth of counterfeit money, and written materials promoting extremism (Interfax [Moscow], November 16). In the months prior, there were also several incidents in which Hizb ut-Tahrir members and other religious extremists were arrested in the Ural region oblast of Chelyabinsk. Chelyabinsk borders Kazakhstan as well as the Republic of Bashkortostan whose population is more than half composed of Muslim Tatars and Bashkirs.

Chelyabinsk is more than 90 percent ethnic Russian, but has recently shown signs of extremist influence. On October 20, counter-intelligence officers searched an office where a female citizen was suspected of storing Hizb-ut-Tahrir materials on her computer. And in August, five Hizb ut-Tahrir members were arrested by the Federal Security Service (FSB) for using material from Islamist websites and Hizb ut-Tahrir propaganda to "brainwash" worshippers at religious classes about "toppling non-Islamic governments" and "establishing a global caliphate" (Interfax [Chelyabinsk], October 22; Interfax [Chelyabinsk], August 2).

According to the Russian Council of Muftis, the influence of Hizb ut-Tahrir among Muslims in Russia, such as Bashkirs, Tatars, North Caucasians and Central Asians, who were the targets of the Hizb ut-Tahrir recruiters in Moscow, undermines security and stability and furthers the ethnic divide between ethnic Russians and Muslims (RT Network, November 16). In the majority Muslim

Republic of Tatarstan, for example, Hizb ut-Tahrir has tried to hijack the agenda of separatist nationalists, even though Hizb ut-Tahrir's call for a global Islamic caliphate contradicts the idea of political self-determination for the Tatar nation.

In July, flags with Hizb ut-Tahrir slogans were seen during protests over allegations of spetsnaz's (Russian Special Purpose Forces) "mass detention of Muslims" in the days following assassination attempts on the two leading muftis in Tatarstan by Islamist militants in which Ildus Faizov was seriously injured and Valiulla Yakupov died (see EDM, July 26). There are concerns that Tatar separatists are now mimicking the attire of Muslim militants from the Caucasus and that the spread of Salafist ideology in Tatarstan has reinforced the increasing militarism of Tatar nationalists (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, July 19). There are reportedly more than 100 fighters in Afghanistan from Tatarstan and an estimated 3,000 Islamic extremists in Tatarstan (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, March 3, 2011).

Similar to Russia, in Central Asia, Hizb ut-Tahrir also exploits pre-existing ethnic fault lines. After the ethnic rioting in Osh and Jalalabad, southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010, which left an estimated 2,000 people dead—mostly ethnic Uzbeks—and forced 400,000 people to flee their homes, Hizb ut-Tahrir resurged in Kyrgyzstan (Sevodnya, January 15, 2010; UNHCR.org, June 17, 2010). The underlying tensions that sparked the riots, such as the country's minority ethnic Uzbeks' demands for greater linguistic and political autonomy, were viewed by the country's majority ethnic Kyrgyz as a threat to Kyrgyzstan's unity—a parallel to Tatar nationalists' demands in Russia.

Before 2010, Hizb ut-Tahrir was based in Osh and Jalalabad, which are the only parts of Kyrgyzstan where ethnic Uzbeks constitute a plurality. Ethnic Uzbeks, who were traditionally farmers and traders, tend to be more religiously conservative than the ethnic Kyrgyz, who were traditionally engaged in animal husbandry and whose religious practices are flavored by local traditions and customs and tend to be moderate, resembling the Kazakhs' and the Tatars' religious practices. This is one reason why Hizb ut-Tahrir first emerged in places like Osh and Jalalabad. Similarly, Hizb ut-Tahrir is active in northern Tajikistan's Sughd Province, where ethnic Uzbeks form approximately 30 to 40 percent of the population, and Andijan, Uzbekistan, which, like Osh, Jalalabad and Sughd, is in the Fergana Valley and is where Hizb ut-Tahrir reportedly formed its first cell in Central Asia in 1986 (RFE/RL, May 14, 2005).

Since 2010, Hizb ut-Tahrir has operated in northern Kyrgyzstan. A number of the internally displaced people from Osh and Jalalabad who held grievances against the government for its failure to prevent the ethnic riots became the most susceptible recruits for Hizb ut-Tahrir. The string of arrests of Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Kyrgyzstan's northern provinces of Chuy, where Bishkek is located, and Issyk Kul between April and July 2012 has continued from August to November 2012 (see EDM, July 16):

- On August 30, three members of Hizb ut-Tahrir reportedly robbed the currency exchange office at a local market in Bishkek, seizing \$80,000 and fleeing in a car stolen by other members (24.kg [Bishkek], September 11).
- On September 25, an imam of a mosque in Ivanovka, Chuy province, was arrested with Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets in his possession.
- On September 26, a 28-year-old Hizb ut-Tahrir member was detained for passing out his organization's leaflets in Naryn, central Kyrgyzstan. He was sentenced to a six-year prison sentence on November 19 (24.kg [Bishkek], September 26; RFE/RL [Kyrgyzstan], November 19).
- On October 29, a 21-year-old Hizb ut-Tahrir member from Tyup was arrested in Issyk Kul for disseminating extremist materials (Interfax [Bishkek], October 29).
- On November 14, in a reflection of Hizb ut-Tahrir's shift from "paper rebellion" to "digital rebellion," USB storage drives containing extremist materials were seized at the house of a Hizb ut-Tahrir member in Karakol, Issyk Kul (Interfax [Bishkek], November 14).

A number of other Hizb ut-Tahrir members have also been detained in southern Kyrgyzstan during the same time period, including the leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Jalalabad (Voice of Russia, August 27). The common denominator between the Muslims from the Russian Federation and the Kyrgyz Republic who have recently turned to Hizb ut-Tahrir is that they see in Hizb ut-Tahrir's promotion of Islamic identity as an alternative political option to governments that, they feel, do not adequately promote and protect their distinct ethno-national identity.

Terror Networks Link Kazakhstani Fighters in Afghanistan and North Caucasus to the Home Front

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By: Jacob Zenn

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On July 3, 2012, the leader of a Salafist group in Kostanay, northern Kazakhstan, was convicted of recruiting Kazakhstani citizens and providing them with fraudulent documents to help them travel to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and join the insurgency (Interfax [Kostanay], July 3). While the Salafist group he led was responsible for helping fighters with the logistics of travel, other Salafist groups in Kazakhstan have been providing financial support to their compatriot fighters in Afghanistan. An investigation of 24 men arrested for plotting terrorist attacks in Atyrau, western Kazakhstan in September 2011, for instance, revealed that the men had been collecting and transferring money to Kazakhstani fighters in Pakistan through Kazakhstan's BTA bank (Tengrinews, September 9, 2011).

These financial and logistics networks facilitate Kazakhstanis fighting in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region with operatives back home. At least three times in 2011, the Az-Zahir Baibars Brigades of Jund al-Khilafah (Soldiers of the Caliphate), which was founded by three Kazakhs from Atyrau, ordered attacks in Kazakhstan from their base in the Afghan-Pakistani border region (Daily Times [Almaty], November 10, 2011). The first attack was on October 31, 2011, when one member of a five-person cell in Atyrau placed a homemade bomb in a dumpster near a local government building, while a second member blew himself up while placing a bomb in a dumpster near the Prosecutor General's office. Some of the 47 residents of Atyrau who were convicted of terrorism in April 2012 for their alleged involvement with this five-person cell reportedly fought in Afghanistan before returning back home (Tengrinews, April 19; Interfax [Atyrau], July 6).

The Az-Zahir Baibars Brigades claimed responsibility for the Atyrau bombings on November 1, 2011, through Jund al-Khilafah's media wing, Minbar Media, saying that the bombings were a "warning to the government," that they "deliberately did not inflict deaths," and that the second bomber was not in a "martyrdom-operation" but that the bomb blew up accidentally (Interfax [Almaty], November 1, 2011). Also through Minbar Media, the Brigades later claimed responsibility for Maksat Kariyev's killing of five police officers in Taraz, southeastern Kazakhstan on November 12, 2011, and police shootings in Almaty carried out by a seven-person cell that was broken up by security forces on December 5, 2011, in Boraldai Village, outside of Almaty (ansar1.info, November 16, 2011).

There are an estimated 200 Kazakhstanis fighting in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Jund al-Khilafah and other militant movements, according to a report by the St. Petersburg-based Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Tengrinews, October 30, 2011). The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) also has Kazakhstani members as evidenced by a video that its media wing, Badr al-Tawhid, released in November 2011. It shows about 15 fighters in what appears to be Waziristan, Pakistan. Most of the fighters are identified in the subtitles as coming from Kazakhstan, while several other fighters are identified as coming from East Turkistan (Xinjiang, China), Turkey and Uzbekistan.

Another video released together with that footage showed six fighters, including a supposed "amir," who speaks in Russian and says the fighters partake in military operations in Afghanistan, but that their "sphere of interest" is Central Asia, in particular Kazakhstan. A second fighter speaking in Russian says that after victory in Afghanistan, their "goal" is Central Asia. The fourth fighter, also speaking in Russian, talks about Muslim family members back in Kazakhstan and says many Kazakhs have died on the "path of jihad" in Waziristan and Afghanistan.

These two videos were called "Appeal of the Kazakh Mujahideen Taking Part in the Jihad to the Muslims of Kazakhstan" ("Obrashchenie Kazakskikh

Mudzhakhidov Uchastvuyushikh v Dzhikhade k Muslumanam Kazakhstana”) and posted on the Caucasus Emirate’s main webpage Kavkazcenter.com (IIPER, No. 49, December 30, 2011). Notably, Kazakhstanis form the largest contingent of Central Asian fighters in the North Caucasus, although their numbers there are not as large as in Afghanistan. At least seven Kazakh fighters were killed and four arrested in Dagestan between 2009 and mid-2011. Two of the four arrested fighters admitted to having learned about the “war against Muslims” through Islamist militant websites and videos (RFE/RL [Caucasus Report], April 20, 2011).

Meanwhile, a review of Kazakh Islamic militants’ online activism shows that as early as November 2010, a Kazakhstani terrorist group called “Ansar Dine” (“Defenders of the Faith”) issued a call to Kazakhs to conduct hijra, or migration, to the Caucasus and Afghanistan, “establish links of material support,” and “assist the families of the mujahideen” (<http://hunafa.com/?p=3839>). This group, Jund al-Khilafah and others all appear to harbor the same goals and are using online media to recruit and propagandize.

Kazakh political analyst Rasul Zhumaly predicts that Kazakh fighters abroad all have the goal “to come back home [and] sooner or later connect with the extremist underground of Kazakhstan” (Tengrinews, September 27, 2011). In 2011, these calls were realized when the Az-Zahir Baibars Brigades in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas and the militants in Kazakhstan coordinated attacks. Zhumaly’s predication may be coming to fruition sooner than expected.

Hizb ut-Tahrir Rises on Kazakhstan's Southern Border

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By: Jacob Zenn

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The Kyrgyz State Security Committee (GKNB) arrested two Kazakhstani men on June 28, who were “spreading and propagating radical and extremist ideas” with the assistance of staff at mosques in Bishkek in order to recruit women into their network. A subsequent search of their residence revealed literature calling for “Jihad and inter-religious hatred” and elements of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). They will be prosecuted under Article 299 of the Kyrgyzstani Penal Code for “inciting ethnic, racial or religious hatred” (Interfax [Bishkek], June 28).

The following week, on July 4, a district court in Tashkent, Uzbekistan held the first hearing in the case of Kazakhstani citizen Yermek Kosmagambetov, who is accused of “smuggling materials of a religious nature” in his laptop as he crossed the border from Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan in March 2012. He will be tried under Article 246 of the Uzbekistani Criminal Code (Interfax [Astana], July 9).

The modus operandi of the two men in Bishkek and Kosmagambetov is

consistent with Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT), whose members are known for clandestinely disseminating pamphlets and digital media that promote HuT's vision of a global Islamic caliphate, criticize the United States and Israel, and call for the overthrow of the secular governments in the Muslim World, among other themes. As in the Bishkek arrests, HuT focuses on recruiting women, who it believes are less likely than men to be suspected of illegal political activity and are "connecting links" within families capable of attracting relatives to join the organization (RFE/RL, July 11, 2007).

Kazakhstan banned HuT in 2005, and according to the Kazakhstani intelligence service, in 2007 HuT was "in disarray" as scores of its cells were broken up and hundreds of its members accepted a government offer to "surrender and be forgiven" (Novoye Pokoleniye, August 17). However, these recent arrests show that HuT influence remains even among ethnic Kazakhs like Kosmagambetov. Dozens of Kazakhstani students at Pakistani universities have also reportedly joined HuT and not returned home (Tengrinews, October 30, 2011).

There are signs of an increase in HuT activity in Almaty, unseen since police liquidated HuT's printing house in Almaty in 2005 and arrested the organization's Almaty branch head in 2006 (gazeta.kz [Almaty], February 8, 2005). In October 2011, the chief of Almaty's Department for Domestic Policy expressed concern about "untraditional religious movements" after authorities found evidence of the HuT in the city (Central Asia Online [Almaty], August 17, 2011). If, as the UN Office for Drugs and Crime reported in March 2012, Kazakhstan intercepts less than 1 percent of the 75 tons of heroin estimated to pass through its southern borders each year, then HuT members with extremist material must also be able to exploit the border for their own purposes – like the men arrested in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

HuT's activity in Almaty may be related to the increase in HuT operations in Kyrgyzstan's northern provinces bordering Kazakhstan. The head of the Kyrgyzstani Ministry of the Interior's Main Directorate for Countering Extremism stated at an OSCE conference on extremist movements in October 2011 that the radical religious organizations operating in Kyrgyzstan have close links with extremist centers operating in Kazakhstan (Interfax [Bishkek], October 4, 2011).

HuT had been concentrated in the country's southern provinces of Osh and Jalalabad where ethnic Uzbeks constitute the plurality (48 percent) and one-fourth of the population, respectively. Uzbeks tend to be more religiously conservative than traditionally nomadic ethnic Kyrgyz and Kazakhs. However, a series of recent arrests in northern Kyrgyzstan shows HuT is thriving in the border region:

- On April 4, four HuT members were arrested in Issyk Kul's capital, Karakol, 30 kilometers from the Kazakh border, with extremist religious literature, leaflets, notebooks, audio cassettes, and DVDs (Interfax [Bishkek], April 4).

- On May 2, two HuT members from a four-person cell who were recruiting youths in Bishkek, Tokmok, Alamudun and Sokuluk districts of Chuy Province, which borders Kazakhstan, were arrested with extremist literature and digital media (24.kg [Bishkek] May 3).
- On June 22, police detained a 32-year old man at a bus stop in Ivanovka, Chuy Province, after finding him with 32 pieces of HuT literature (Central Asia Online [Ivanovka], June 22).
- On July 6, the GKNB arrested a resident of the Tyup district of Issyk Kul, which straddles the border with Kazakhstan, after a search of his residence revealed a large quantity HuT extremist literature and CDs (24.kg [Bishkek], July 6).
- On July 12, the Kyrgyzstani Interior Ministry Tenth Department detained members of HuT's youth wing in Bishkek who were students at the country's elite universities (24.kg [Bishkek], July 12).

HuT spread in northern Kyrgyzstan after clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh in 2010 sent thousands of displaced people up north. The HuT coordinator for Bishkek said in 2010 that the HuT publishing center is in Bishkek and that HuT may have recruited as many as 50,000 new members within half of a year of the ethnic clashes (Central Asia Online [Bishkek], October 5, 2010). While his numbers may be an exaggeration, they are consistent with Kazakhstani expert Saule Mikhametrakhimova of the Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), who estimated in November 2010 that HuT's membership in Kyrgyzstan ranged from 20,000 to 100,000 members.

Thus, the expansion of HuT activity in northern Kyrgyzstan and the networks that have formed across the two countries' borders help explain why two Kazakh extremists were arrested on June 28 for coordinating their operations with staff at mosques in Bishkek. Despite these recent arrests of HuT members in Kyrgyzstan, the country's experts argue that their government has not done enough to prevent Salafist imams who have studied in foreign countries from preaching HuT's ideology when they return home (Interfax [Osh], July 2). The ramifications for Kazakhstan, whose regional economic hub of Almaty is only a five-hour drive from Bishkek, are clear and relate not just to Astana's handling of domestic extremist groups, but also to the tackling of the country's imperfectly secured borders (see EDM, July 6).

Network of Jund al-Khilafah in Kazakhstan Wider Than Predicted

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By: Jacob Zenn

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On December 29, 2011, 41-year old Yerik Ayazbayev, the leader of a Jund al-Khilafah (JaK – Army of the Caliphate) cell based in the Almaty suburb of Boraldai Village, was killed in the Southern Kazakhstan city of Kyzylorda (Interfax [Astana], December 30). Five of his fellow fighters, including the 34-year old sub-leader, Agzhan Khasen, were killed in Boraldai four weeks earlier on December 3. Kazakhstan security forces killed Khasen and the four other fighters inside their safe house, but Ayazbayev escaped.

It is probable that Kazakh intelligence agents became aware of the Boraldai cell's existence from an investigation following a November 8 roadside shooting in Boraldai that killed two police officers. Kazakh authorities suspected the Boraldai cell of carrying out that shooting and possibly another November 11 shooting in Almaty, which killed two police officers. The cell was reportedly planning additional attacks in Almaty (Tengrinews, December 5).

Ayazbayev's location in Kyzylorda was revealed after he accidentally set off an explosion in the five-story residential building where he was hiding. This led police to investigate, and he was killed later in the day on December 29 (Interfax [Astana], December 29). Like the Khasen-led fighters in Boraldai, Ayazbayev refused to surrender when surrounded, and he returned gunfire until he met his death.

On December 6, three days after the Boraldai shootout, JaK issued a statement saying that JaK fighters are “ready to be killed in the thousands in order to support [Islam]” and that “losing our lives is a cheap price that we pay for this cause.” JaK asked that “God give glory” to the fighters who were killed by “the apostate forces of the Nazarbayev regime” at “a base where the five lions of the al-Zahir Baybars Battalion of Jund al Khilafa were gathered” (<http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/jund-al-khilc481fah-22on-the-death-of-five-of-its-members-in-the-state-of-almaty-kazakhstan22.pdf>).

JaK is closely following events within Kazakhstan and has connections to terror cells spanning the country from east to west. In addition to claiming credit for the Boraldai cell, JaK also claimed credit for Maksat Kariyev's terror rampage in Taraz, Southeastern Kazakhstan that killed five security officers and concluded with a suicide bombing on November 12, 2011 and two botched bombings in Atyrau on October 31, 2011.

An investigation of the three surviving members of the Atryau cell (the fourth accidentally blew himself up near the Prosecutor-General's office) revealed that the operation was intended not to kill anyone, but to “intimidate authorities”

(Interfax [Astana], November 9). JaK's corroboration of the cell's intent in a statement after the attacks, but before the results of the investigation shows that JaK does have inside knowledge about Kazakhstan-based cells – it is not merely a media-savvy propaganda team. The JaK statement said: “We refute that the last attack was carried out as a martyrdom-operation. It seems that the bomb exploded accidentally, which led to the martyrdom of its carrier. We ask Allah to accept him among the martyrs” (Interfax [Almaty], November 1).

The investigation also revealed that the JaK leadership provided direct orders for the Atyrau operation from its base in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area (Interfax [Astana], October 9). However, the four cell members were radicalized in Atyrau and contacted JaK in September 2011 on their own (Interfax [Astana], November 9). Likewise, in an investigation of six members of the cell that prepared Maksat Kariyev for his terror rampage in Taraz, the Kazakh authorities determined that the cell had drawn up the attack plans for Kariyev on its own (Tengrinews, November 30).

There is still no evidence that JaK has dispatched fighters from Afghanistan-Pakistan to Kazakhstan to carry out attacks. Rather, there appears to be a strong homegrown element in JaK-linked terror cells in Kazakhstan.

- The Atyrau cell was influenced by Said Buryatsky (a.k.a. Aleksandr Tikhomirov), the late Russian-born Islamic convert who became a jihadi ideologue in the North Caucasus; but, their decision to commit a terror attack was made in Kazakhstan. Atyrau is showing signs of growing extremism with 70 percent of practicing Muslims between the ages of 13 and 30 believed to be influenced by Salafism (Tengrinews, November 17).
- Maksat Kariyev was a former senior rifleman in the Kazakh army. Prior to his attack in Taraz, he consulted local Muslim religious leaders about the consequences of him committing a suicide attack against infidels (Tengrinews, November 14). In fact, Kariyev's “spiritual leader” persuaded him and his cell members to conduct jihad and kill police in order to establish an Islamic Caliphate (Radio Free Europe [Astana], November 30).
- Yerik Ayazbayev followed JaK commands to target the “apostate” Kazakhstani State, but no reports indicate that he or any of his cell members trained in Afghanistan-Pakistan.

The motivations that appear to drive the militants in Kazakhstan to carry out attacks – from perceived religious oppression, to despising the Nazarbayev regime, to employment problems – are derived from circumstances within Kazakhstan. JaK exploits this discontent, offers tactical support, and raises the profile of each attack in the country by managing the post-attack propaganda campaign.

The Tablighi Jamaat: A Soft Islamization from the Ferghana Valley to Russia's Turkic Regions?

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By: Igor Rotar

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=40356

In 2012, Kazakhstan's law enforcement agencies suppressed the activities of 205 missionaries representing the unregistered religious organization Tablighi Jamaat, Kazakhstani Senator Iran Amirov said. According to the Central Asian republic's laws, the activity of any unregistered religious organization is prohibited. Therefore, Tablighi Jamaat missionaries had been fined or expelled (Interfax, October 19, 2012).

The Tablighi Jamaat, which roughly translates to the "Society for Spreading Faith," was founded in the late 1920s in India. It was originally intended as a vehicle for promoting a revival of Islamic piety, and, as such, it placed a heavy emphasis on missionary activity among its membership. The group has traditionally eschewed politics and concentrated its efforts on reinforcing the faith of Muslims. Forming small groups—in Asian countries generally made up of 10–12 individuals and 3–5 people in other parts of the world—Tablighi Jamaat representatives operate globally, both from inside mosques and by propagating their organization's message "door to door." Tablighi Jamaat facilitates strict discipline and subordination to the leader, and its members become professional missionaries. Its activists are required to work for the organization 40 days per year, three full days per month, two afternoons per week and two hours every day. Many followers of terrorist and extremist groups have reportedly attended meetings run by Tablighi Jamaat, but widespread jihadist preaching and ties to terrorist activities have not been identified yet. Nevertheless, Tablighi Jamaat is prohibited in Iran, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. India is also considering banning the organization.

According to Dr. Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, professor of religious studies and chief research fellow at the Oriental Studies Institute under the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, the global mission of the Tablighi Jamaat is the "Islamization" of the world. Regarding alleged extremist components of Tablighi Jamaat, Babadjanov mentioned that "so far I am not aware of political extremist slogans of Tablighi Jamaat. Perhaps, they are not well advertised..." (Ferghananews.com, May 8, 2009). Today, the organization's main office is based in the Pakistani city of Raiwind, near Lahore. Tablighi Jamaat also has a very influential branch in London.

As Babadjanov notes, Tablighi Jamaat shares many common features with Hizb ut-Tahrir (the popular international Islamic organization, which is active in Central Asia and whose members promote the establishment of a global caliphate). For example, in both organizations members are united in small, local groups, facilitating strict discipline and subordination to the leader. The

members of the both organization also have to donate parts of their salaries to their organizations. Moreover, both organizations adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam and expect a similar level of active time commitment from its members. But, unlike Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tablighi Jamaat does not try to establish a caliphate as soon as possible; Tablighi Jamaat members consider Islamization to be a long-term process. The organization, unlike Hizb ut-Tahrir, also tries to avoid open conflicts with authorities (Ferghananews.com, February 13, 2009).

As some Tablighi Jamaat members told the author in July 2007, members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir had tried to establish contact with them. But they politely had explained to them that Tablighi Jamaat does not interfere in politics.

According to Dr. Babadjanov, the first Tablighi Jamaat missionaries visited Central Asia not long after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. First they targeted the Ferghana Valley. The organization is particularly active today in the Kyrgyzstani part of the Ferghana Valley. But now almost all Central Asian members of Tablighi Jamaat are local residents. Central Asian Tablighi Jamaat followers prefer to wear a Pakistani style of dress, and so they look very exotic in the region (Ferghananews.com, February 13, 2009).

Dr. Sergei Abashin, the chief of the Central Asia department of the Russian Ethnology Institute, told Jamestown on January 5 that the Tablighi Jamaat's activities are today particularly concentrated Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Due to harsh repressions by Uzbekistan's and Tajikistan's authorities (members of the organization were sentenced to a long imprisonment), the activity of Tablighi Jamaat is very low in these republics. Little information can be collected about Tablighi Jamaat's activity in Turkmenistan, however, according to Dr. Abashin.

Ethnic Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, descendants of nomads, are less religious than Uzbeks and Tajiks. But even in the Kyrgyzstani part of the Ferghana valley, where the ethnic Uzbek diaspora is very numerous, almost all Tablighi Jamaat members are Kyrgyz, whereas most local Hizb ut-Tahrir members are Uzbeks. In fact, in private conversations with the author in July 2007, Tablighi Jamaat missionaries specifically noted that they preferred to campaign amongst the Kyrgyz exactly because they are less religious than Uzbeks.

Tablighi Jamaat's reach is not limited to Central Asia, however, and its members maintain links with like-minded individuals in the Russian Federation. The main regions of Tablighi Jamaat activity in Russia are Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, which are separated from Kazakhstan by Russia's Orenburg oblast (province). Ethnic Tatars constitute 7.6 percent of the population of the Orenburg oblast; Kazakhs make up six percent, while Bashkirs constitute two percent of the total (Russian Federation Census, 2010). The Orenburg oblast is, thus, the interlink between Turkic ethnic groups living in Russia and Central Asia. At the beginning of Perestroika, some Turkic nationalists told the author that due to this Orenburg link, it would be possible to establish "a Greater Turkistan" from Central Asia to Tatarstan.

The Tablighi Jamaat has, indeed, been quite active in the Orenburg oblast since 2010. In September 2012, more than 500 members of the Tablighi Jamaat movement were arrested in Sol-Iletsk district of Orenburg, which borders on Kazakhstan. Among those arrested were two leaders of the Tablighi Jamaat's Orenburg branch. During the search of their homes more than 500 copies of religious books with extremist content were confiscated. The investigation reportedly revealed that Tablighi Jamaat missionaries from the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia and Kazakhstan regularly worked in the district (Interfax, September 17, 2012). Notably, ethnic Kazakhs constitute 26 percent of the Sol-Iletsk district's population, while ethnic Tatars make up ten percent (Russian Federation Census, 2010). It is, therefore, possible to conclude that in recent years, the Tablighi Jamaat has successfully established a continuous zone of operations from the Ferghana Valley all the way to the Turkic regions of Russia.

Will the Fergana Valley Become a Hotbed of Destabilization in Central Asia?

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October 3, 2012

By: Igor Rotar

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The ethnically and culturally complex region of the Fergana Valley is divided among three countries: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Kyrgyz and the Tajik parts of the Fergana Valley are geographically closer to Uzbekistan than to the capitals of their own countries. Tashkent is only two hours by car from Khujand (the main city in the Tajik part of the valley), while the trip from Khujand to Dushanbe takes about ten hours. From Osh in the Kyrgyz part of Ferghana to Uzbekistan's border takes only 40 minutes, but travel to the capital Bishkek is ten hours.

“The Fergana Valley is a knot of difficult problems: disputed border territories, interethnic tensions, the activities of Islamic radicals. The valley interlinks three Central Asia countries; a conflict in one part on the valley spreads to the other parts, which belong to neighboring countries. Therefore, stability in the Ferghana Valley determines stability in the whole Central Asia,” believes Dr. Sergey Abashin, the head of the Central Asia Department of the Russian Institute of Ethnology (author's interview, September 27).

The influence of Islamic radicalism presents one of the most acute problems in the Fergana Valley. Even in Soviet times, an entire network of semi-underground madrassas and mosques was active, operating beyond the control of the communist authorities. In late 1980s, new religious movements were born in the Ferghana Valley, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir.

The IMU is a militant Islamic group aligned with al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, which tries to unite Islamic radicals from all Central Asia countries. At present, Uzbeks, but also Tajiks, Kyrgyz and Kazakhs are members of this organization. The predecessor of IMU is a movement called Adolat (Justice). In 1991, this organization unexpectedly took shape in the city of Namangan, located in the Uzbek part of the valley. Adolat was set up as an imitation of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards. Young men with green headbands took control of the Namangan overnight and persecute people they judged to be breaking the law (author's witness account of the 1991 events).

The punishment meted out to thieves and prostitutes was unusual: they were paraded through the town sitting backwards on donkeys; they were tied to posts in public places, where people spat in their faces; they were flogged in the mosques. Crime was quickly wiped out. The people of Namangan still remember how they could leave their cars unlocked and tradesmen could leave their goods out for the night. The undisputed leader of this Islamic militia was the 24-year-old Tahir Yuldashev (Igor Rotar, "Under the Green Banner: Islamic Radicals in Russia and the Former Soviet Union," *Religion, State & Society* 30(2), June 2002).

At first, Uzbek President Islam Karimov looked favorably on the activities of Adolat, but soon he realized that he had lost control of Namangan. Adolat activists were arrested and sentenced to long prison terms, but Yuldashev and a few of his followers managed to flee the country. Yuldashev first escaped to Afghanistan, where he established the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and after 9/11 joined forces with the Taliban against the US military forces.

As IMU militants continue fighting in Afghanistan today, its activities in Central Asia are minimal, except for Tajikistan. Throughout 2012, Dushanbe has regularly reported about arrests of IMU members in the Tajikistan part of the Ferghana Valley. However, many analysts doubt that they have real connection with the IMU leadership. "There is no IMU branch in Tajikistan now. Maybe there are some remnants of the IMU in Tajikistan, but I am not sure that most of the so-called IMU members have real links with Afghanistan," said Daniil Kislov, director of the analytical-information agency Ferghana (author's interview, October 1).

But after the Uzbek-Kyrgyz clashes in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010, the IMU is likely to increase its activities in this state. Following the clashes, several hundreds Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan joined militant camps of IMU in Afghanistan (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, September 17, 2010). "Repressions against Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan are continuing. In this situation, Uzbek militants from Afghanistan could return to Kyrgyzstan," according to Dr. Alexander Knyazev, an Almaty-based coordinator of the Central Asia and Caucasus program at the Russian Institute of Oriental Studies (author's interview, October 1).

Hizb ut-Tahrir began penetrating the Ferghana Valley in the beginning of the 2000s. Founded in East Jerusalem in 1953 as a political party, Hizb ut-Tahrir

seeks to establish a worldwide caliphate. The group promotes ideological extremism, though it does not directly engage in violence. Nevertheless, the security forces in most Central Asian republics have targeted Hizb ut-Tahrir members and many of them are imprisoned in Uzbekistan.

At present, Hizb ut-Tahrir's primary activity in the Fergana Valley appears to involve the production and distribution of publications, as it continues to operate illegally throughout the valley.

Although the governments of the Central Asian republics are combating Islamic radicals, their policies toward Hizb ut-Tahrir differ significantly. A more liberal approach is evident in Kyrgyzstan, which incites Islamic radicals from the Uzbek part of the valley to move to the Osh area in Kyrgyzstan, where a compact local Uzbek population resides. Uzbekistan's special services have been reported to occasionally kidnap Uzbek citizens in Kyrgyzstan. "The Uzbek special services act in Kyrgyzstan as if they are at home and do not even bother to consult their actions with Kyrgyz authorities. Usually, Tashkent sends onto our territory Uzbeks who were born in southern Kyrgyzstan, but subsequently obtained Uzbek citizenship and were recruited by the Uzbek special services. From the beginning of the 2000s, about ten Uzbek citizens were kidnaped in Kyrgyzstan," the human rights defender from Osh Arsen Ambaryan claimed (author's interview, September 29).

The situation in the Tajik part of the valley (in north Tajikistan) is different from that in the Uzbek and Kyrgyz parts. During communism, power control was consistently in the hands of Tajiks from the North (from the Ferghana Valley). Moscow relied on them, because they were more assimilated compared to the rest of the population, due to the fact that the Russian Empire conquered the Ferghana Valley earlier than the rest of Tajikistan.

In May 1992, the opposition made up primarily of mountain Tajiks (natives of Karategin and the Pamir) tried to seize power from the "Northerners" by force of arms. The natives of Leninabad and Kulyab leapt to their own defense. However, even the combatants themselves admit that the civil war was not so much a political struggle as a fight for power between different regional groups of Tajiks, who had not developed into a single nation at the time (EDM, September 13).

Since the opposition used Islamic slogans, the Islamist ideology was not popular in northern Tajikistan during the civil war (1992–1997). But after the civil war, the Kulyab clan took power and the "Northerners" lost their command position in the republic. Under these new conditions, many northern Tajiks have become interested in radical Islamist ideology and from the beginning of the 2000s, northern Tajikistan has started to be the region of activity of Islamic radicals. The Tajikistan branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir was born in the Ferghana Valley and now most Tajik members of this organization are from northern Tajikistan. The Islamists from the North established close contacts with like-minded persons from the Karategin Valley (the stronghold of the Tajik opposition) and with the

IMU in Afghanistan, making Islamic radicalism as acute a problem in Tajikistan as it is in neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (EDM, September 25).

The situation with radical Islam in the Ferghana Valley is likely to worsen when NATO and US forces withdraw from Afghanistan after 2014. At that point, the Central Asia militants, who fought in Afghanistan, are likely to return home to pursue a new agenda. The IMU wants to eliminate Christians and Jews and establish a worldwide Islamic caliphate (see the IMU website, furkon.com). The destabilization of the Ferghana Valley is a good start for the export of Islamic revolution. Increased terrorist activities in the valley could cause destabilization in the Central Asian region and present a danger to Russia, where, as the IMU believes, twenty million Muslims live.

Islamic Extremist Group Jamaat Ansarullah Overcomes Tajikistan's Inter-Tribal Conflicts

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By: Igor Rotar

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On September 11, Tajikistan's Supreme Court reached a final verdict in a case against 15 alleged members of the banned Islamic militant group, Jamaat Ansarullah. In the closed trial hearing, 12 of the defendants were sentenced to prison terms between five and 24 years. According to the court ruling, the condemned persons were involved in the following events: fighting in the Karategin Valley in 2010–2011; a terrorist attack in September 2010 in the city of Khujand in northern Tajikistan; and an attempt to commit a series of terrorist attacks in Dushanbe. Most of the defendants were arrested during the operation against field commander Abdullo Rahimov—a.k.a. Mullo Abdulo, who was killed on April 15, 2011—in Tajikistan's eastern Karategin Valley in April 2011 (see EDM, September 13). According to Dushanbe, Jamaat Ansarullah is the Tajikistani branch of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and is sponsored by al-Qaeda (Ferghananews.com, September 11).

Jamaat Ansarullah, also known as the Society of Allah's Soldiers, first came to light in September 2010 when the heretofore unknown organization claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on September 3 in the city of Khujand in Tajikistan's northern province of Sughd. An explosives-packed car rammed into the building of the organized crime department of the regional police, killing two officers and two civilians and wounding 28 people. The suicide bomber was local resident Akmal Karimov, trained in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Reuters, December 26, 2011).

The activity of Jamaat Ansarullah has direct links with events in the volatile Karategin Valley in 2010 in central western Tajikistan. On August 24, 2010, more than two dozen prisoners escaped from a detention center in the capital of Tajikistan after a bloody shootout. All were originally arrested during fighting in

the Karategin Valley in July 2009. These escaped prisoners returned to the Karategin, sparking new military operations in the region by the government. On September 3, the above-mentioned suicide attack occurred in Khujand. Then, on September 19, 2010, a defense ministry convoy seeking to apprehend the escaped prisoners came under a grenade attack in the Kamarob Gorge in the Karategin Valley. At least 28 soldiers were killed. The authorities blamed Mullo Abdullo for the ambush, and additional government forces were sent to the area to hunt down the attackers. Analysts argue that the events on August 24, September 3 and September 19 were directly connected. Moreover, according to Dushanbe, Jamaat Ansarullah's banner was found in the place where Abdullo's armed group was eventually destroyed by government forces seven months later (see EDM, September 13; Asia Plus, May 3).

In September 2011, Jamaat Ansarullah issued several videos calling on Tajikistan's citizens to embrace jihad against "infidels" and urging them to take action to support the implementation of Islamic Sharia law. "Those who pray namaz, who follow fasting rules but support democracy are nonbelievers," a man on the video said. "Allah is killing nonbelievers by our hands and, thus, blesses us." Some politicians and experts, however, doubt whether these videos can really be traced back to Jamaat Ansarullah. According to one former leader of Tajikistan's opposition, the famous Tajik spiritual leader Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda, "the videos are a provocation backed by anti-Islamic forces." Member of Parliament and chief deputy of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP—a legal, moderate Islamic party in Tajikistan) Saidumar Hussaini said, "In our country an organization by the name of 'Jamaat Ansarullah' does not exist. Even among those groups that have been banned, it does not exist, and I doubt that such an organization exists anywhere in the world" (Centralasiaonline.com, September 29, 2011; see EDM, May 8).

The majority of the Jamaat Ansarullah members sentenced by Tajikistan's Supreme Court on September 11 are from the Isfara district in Sughd province. Isfara is a very special region in Tajikistan. The population there is more religious than in other areas of the country. Three natives of Isfara fought on the side of the Taliban during Operation Enduring Freedom, and were held at Guantanamo Bay by the United States. Furthermore, the Islamic Renaissance Party is particularly strong in the Isfara region and, in the 2000 parliamentary elections, won the majority vote of this district's population. Moreover, in Isfara's main fundamentalist Islamic enclave—the village of Chorku—93 percent of the votes cast were for the IRP. The author, who visited Chorku in 2005 and 2010, witnessed that the village strictly prohibited alcohol consumption and required women to veil themselves while in public (see EDM, January 4, 2005).

The Isfara district of Sughd province is dangerous also because of its geographic location. Isfara is located in the Ferghana Valley section of Tajikistan, only a few kilometers from Uzbekistan's and Kyrgyzstan's parts of this ethnically complex area. Ferghana is widely considered to be one of the most potentially volatile regions in Central Asia (see EDM, September 21).

It bears pointing out that the union between Karategin and Isfara Islamic militants under the banner of Jamaat Ansarullah is an important symbolic event because it reflects a case of militant groups overcoming inter-tribal cleavages in favor of a transcendent ideology. Tribalism is a serious problem for Tajikistan; the political struggle here has been practically indivisible from the inter-regional and inter-ethnic one. Indeed, during Tajikistan's Civil War (1992–1997), a coalition of Garm (Karategin) and Pamir Tajiks fought against Kuliab and Sughd Tajiks (see EDM, September 13). During the Civil War, Karategin Tajiks used Islamist slogans and their enemy, Sughd Tajiks followed the secular and even communist ideology. Now, it appears that Islamic militants from different regions of the country have overcome these tribal contradictions.

Will Tajikistan's Karategin Valley Again Become a Militant Stronghold?

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By: Igor Rotar

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39842

The Karategin (literally “black mountains”) Valley—also called Rasht Valley, located in the West-Central part of the country—is a very special region of Tajikistan. During the 1992–1997 Tajikistan Civil War, the Karategin was a stronghold for the Islamic opposition and became the site of numerous battles with militant groups. Notably, four members of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan were murdered here in 1998 (UN Press Release, November 12, 1998). As of 2011, the government has succeeded in pacifying the region, but the end of the West's mission in Afghanistan by 2014 threatens to reignite hostilities in the Karategin in the near future.

The special role of the Karategin Valley as a base of operations for militant groups originally stems from its ethnic cleavages. The region has traditionally been the homeland of the so-called Garm people (Garm is the main town in the Karategin Valley)—a minority ethnic group of Tajiks. Tribalism is a very serious problem for Tajikistan; the Tajiks have failed to unite into a single nation, and the political struggle here has been practically indivisible from the inter-regional and inter-ethnic one. Indeed, during the Civil War, a coalition of Garm and Pamir Tajiks fought against Kuliab and Hudjand Tajiks.

The author visited the Karategin Valley during the battle between government-backed Kuliab troops and the opposition in 1995 and witnessed Kuliab soldiers behaving like foreign occupiers. Banditry was a common occurrence in Garm-populated villages occupied by Kuliab troops. Kuliab soldiers privately told Jamestown that the Garm people were “very bad Tajiks” and it would be better to kill all local residents in the valley.

In 1996, opposition Islamic fighters (mujahideen) managed to seize this part of Tajikistan. The author visited Karategin that year and found the new regime was

not much better than the previous. Even the appearance of the mujahideen was threatening to the local population: the mujahideen wore their hair long and had long beards. The Islamic fighters tried to govern the population in line with Sharia law, with all decisions of the mujahidin taken at meetings in the mosque. Local residents told Jamestown that the mujahideen had sometimes forced them to pray at the mosque five times a day under threat of punishment. When out in public, women were forced to wear scarves covering the whole face except the eyes. The sale of alcohol was strictly forbidden in the Karategin Valley, and cigarettes were banned as well. In addition, the mujahideen banned music at weddings, except for religious music played on traditional instruments.

Yet, several punishments devised by the mujahideen did not conform to traditional Sharia standards. Criminals were beaten in the mosques not with a stick (as Sharia law dictates), but with the shell of a hand-held grenade launcher. Also, large metal tanks were placed in some villages. The accused was put in the tank which was then beaten with a stick. Local people told the author that often the victim's eardrums burst after this form of punishment.

February 1999 terrorist attacks in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, frightened the Uzbekistani authorities into indiscriminately arresting religious dissenters. Consequently, emigration from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan became a mass movement, with whole families fleeing and resettling in the Karategin Valley. Military camps also sprang up alongside civilian Uzbek settlements in the Karategin. Official circles in Dushanbe even discussed seriously allocating parts of the Karategin Valley for Uzbeks to live in, where a "free Islamic Uzbekistan in exile" would be established (Forum 18, November 12, 2003).

Fighters of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) thus lived in the Karategin Valley until 2000. Fighters from Uzbekistan fought side by side with Tajikistan's opposition as early as 1992. Moreover, in 1996, one of the leaders of the IMU, Juma Namangani (given name, Jumma Kasinov), became first deputy to the most influential field commander of Karategin, Mirzo Zieev, who was killed in 2009.

In 1999, the author visited an IMU training camp near Hait in the Karategin Valley. A typical day for IMU militants was broken into two parts—in the morning, they were trained in subversive operations techniques, while the second half of the day was devoted to indoctrination. For instance, the trainees were shown footage featuring the struggles of Islamic militants with the "unfaithful" the world over. Kyrgyzstani military officers interviewed by Jamestown reported that arms, ammunition and food were actually airlifted to these Uzbek fighters by planes of Tajikistan's Ministry for Emergency Situations, headed by Mirzo Zieev.

Minister Zieev, in an interview with Jamestown, denied that arms and ammunition had been airlifted to the Karategin-based IMU by Tajikistan's Emergency Situations Ministry. According to Zieev, the Ministry did not have planes. Zieev also said he had actually convinced Jumma Namangani to leave

Tajikistan, which apparently offended the IMU leader (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, December 14, 2000).

In the summer of 1999, Tajikistan-based IMU militants launched an armed attack from the Karategin in an attempt to break into Uzbekistan through the territory of Kyrgyzstan. After long and heavy fighting with the armed forces of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the militants withdrew back to Tajikistan. Next year, however, the militants regrouped and invaded both Kyrgyzstan and the Surkhandarya administrative region of Uzbekistan. Detachments of some local Tajik field commanders from the Karategin Valley (for example, Abdullo Rahimov—a.k.a. Mullo Abdullo—from Komsomolabad and Eribek Ibraghimov—a.k.a. the “Sheikh”—from Tajikabad) also took part in these armed Uzbek Islamic raids. In the fall of 2000, most IMU fighters moved from Tajikistan to Afghanistan. Some Karategin field commanders, for example Mullo Abdullo, also relocated to Afghanistan together with the IMU (see TM, December 18, 2003).

Yet, hostilities returned to the heart of Tajikistan within a decade. In May 2009, Mullo Abdullo returned with his fighters to the Karategin Valley from Afghanistan, and government troops responded by carrying out military operations against them. According to Dushanbe, in July 2009, Mirzo Zieev supported the rebellion and was killed during the battle (ferghana.ru, July 13, 2009). Furthermore, in 2010, more than two dozen prisoners, including two of Mirzo Zieev’s sons, escaped from a detention center in the capital of Tajikistan after a bloody shootout. All were originally arrested during fighting in the Karategin Valley in July 2009 (Reuters, August 23, 2010; Kommersant, August 24, 2010). These escaped prisoners returned to the Karategin, sparking new military operations in the region by the government. On September 19, 2010, a defense ministry convoy seeking to apprehend the escaped prisoners came under grenade attack in Kamarob Gorge in the Karategin Valley. At least 28 soldiers were killed. The authorities blamed Abdullo for the ambush and additional government forces were sent to the area to hunt down the attackers (BBC, September 20, 2010). After a prolonged period of heavy fighting, the militants were destroyed, but the resistance in the Karategin Valley was only extinguished on April 15, 2011, when Abdullo was killed (Lenta.ru, April 17, 2011).

After Mullo Abdullo’s death, Dushanbe completed clearing the Karategin Valley of its independent warlords, placing the region firmly under the government’s control. The recent military operation in Pamir (the other region where the influence of former opposition field commanders was also strong; see EDM, July 27, August 1) shows that Tajikistan’s government believes that “the Karategin problem” has been resolved. Furthermore, as the author concludes from his travels to the area, local residents of the Karategin Valley are so tired of living through war that they are ready to accept administrative leadership originating from any region of Tajikistan.

But the situation is likely to change after NATO and US forces withdraw from Afghanistan after 2014. At that point, Tajik militants who fought in Afghanistan may return home to continue the struggle. These mujahideen will probably

attempt to settle in the Karategin Valley and the Pamir region, which are both traditionally opposed to the pro-government Kuliab clan. Uzbek militants who fought in Afghanistan could also again use Karategin valley as a staging point for an attack on Uzbekistan, thus spreading the conflict beyond Tajikistan's borders.

The Influence of North Caucasus Islamic Radicals on the Situation in Central Asia

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By: Igor Rotar

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39764

On July 20, five men suspected of terrorism-related activities were arrested in Atyrau (western Kazakhstan). The arrested men had contacts with the Az-Zahir Baibars Brigades of Jund al-Khilafah (Soldiers of the Caliphate), which was founded by three Kazakhs from Atyrau and ordered attacks in Kazakhstan from their base in the Afghan-Pakistani border region (see EDM, July 25). The Soldiers of the Caliphate are inspired by the ideas of international jihadists, including the well-known extremist Said Buryatsky (Aleksandr Tikhomirov), a Russian convert to Islam, who became one of the chief ideologues of the armed resistance in the North Caucasus. Buryatsky was killed by Russian security forces in Ingushetia in March 2010 (see EDM, November 11, 2011).

In 2002-2004, Said Buryatsky frequently visited Kazakhstan and preached in mosques in Almaty, Chimkent (southern Kazakhstan) and Atyrau. Buryatsky's propagandist materials were also translated into Kazakh. From 2008, dozens of young Kazakhs who were inspired by Buryatsky's ideas traveled to and were involved in jihad in the North Caucasus (Radio Azattyk, April 20, 2011). According to Kozy-Korpesh Djanburchin, deputy secretary of the National Security Council of Kazakhstan, "one can find a number of videos glorifying acts of terror, instructions on how to make a bomb, and various terrorist tactics." Djanburchin believes that Kazakhstan's young Islamic radicals are getting information from extremist internet websites based abroad (Kazakhstan Today, July 12). The Internet provides excellent opportunities for collaboration to Islamic extremists from different parts of the world, including like-minded radical groups from the North Caucasus and Kazakhstan. For example, in November 2011, the Caucasus Emirate's main webpage Kavkazcenter.com posted two videos that were called "Appeal of the Kazakh Mujahideen Participating in the Jihad to the Muslims of Kazakhstan" (see EDM, July 25).

However, Aleksey Malashenko from the Moscow-based Carnegie Centre does not think that the influence of North Caucasian Islamic radicals on the situation in Kazakhstan is as significant as media coverage would suggest. "There is much speculation about the impact of North Caucasian jihadists on the situation in Kazakhstan. Yes, some young Kazakhs are familiar with the ideas of Said

Buryatsky, but he is not as popular in Kazakhstan as journalists write,” Alexey Malashenko told Jamestown on August 6.

Islamic extremism from the North Caucasus has also affected the situation in Uzbekistan. In 1996, Chechen warlord Emir Khattab established in Chechnya a military training camp called the “Uzbek Front” for fighters from Uzbekistan. After a series of terrorist attacks in Tashkent in February 1999, Khattab ordered all Uzbek militants to return to Uzbekistan because, as he put it, “big things were underway” in their country (Terrorism Monitor, December 18, 2003).

Some of the Uzbek fighters in Chechnya followed Khatab’s recommendations. For example, in 2003, Uzbekistan’s security services arrested several terrorists who earlier planted and detonated bombs in a marketplace in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and in a bank in Osh. One of the arrested, Azizbek Karimov, a former chief of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan’s (IMU) security service, admitted to investigators that in 1998-1999 he received terrorist training in camps in Chechnya. Karimov stated he was instructed along with some sixty citizens of Uzbekistan who were also receiving “on the job training” during the same period. He testified that he had been ordered to commit the terrorist acts in Bishkek and Osh by the leaders of the IMU, which also funded the operation (Terrorism Monitor, December 18, 2003).

According to the late Sanobar Shermatova, one of most respected Russian experts on Central Asia and the North Caucasus and previously a political commentator with “Moscovskie Novosti,” former Chechen rebel commander Shamil Basaev (killed in an explosion in 2006) maintained good ties to the United Tajik opposition during Tajikistan’s Civil War (1992-1997). In 1992, Shamil Basaev visited military camps of the mountainous republic’s opposition. Basaev personally knew Sayid Abdulloh Nuri, the leader of the United Tajik Opposition and the Islamic Renaissance party of Tajikistan. When Nuri and Tajikistani President Emomalii Rahmon ended the civil war by signing the Tajik National Peace Accord in 1997, Basaev specifically wrote to Nuri that he did not agree with this agreement. As Shermatova has noted, due to these direct connections between Shamil Basaev and Sayid Abdulloh Nuri, Khatab decided to move to Chechnya (Sanobar Shermatova, Chechnya and Russia: Society and State, The Sakharov Foundation, Moscow, 1999).

Some evidence also exists of North Caucasian militants having participated physically in the Civil War in Tajikistan. When the author, as a correspondent with Nezavisimaya Gazeta, visited Karategin Valley (southeast Tajikistan) in 2000, locals told him that the previous year the local influential field commander Shoh Iskandarov had had a Chechen bodyguard. This man reportedly had organized the defense of Karategin Valley against incursions from government troops. During the Civil War, Karategin Valley was the main stronghold of the opposition, and from 1996 to 1999, military camps of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan were also established there.

Furthermore, in 2010, more than two dozen prisoners, including organizers of an alleged coup plot, escaped from a detention center in the capital of Tajikistan after a bloody shootout. The escaped prisoners included four Afghan citizens and six Russian citizens from the Caucasian republics of Dagestan and Chechnya. All were originally arrested in July 2009 in eastern Tajikistan, the scene of fierce civil war battles in the 1990s. The Russian citizens came to Tajikistan from Afghanistan (Reuters, August 23, 2010; Novie Izvestya, August 24, 2010).

“The contacts between Islamic radicals from Central Asia and the North Caucasus are occurring in Afghanistan. Islamic radicals from both regions are coming to this country to help the Taliban,” Aleksey Malashenko told Jamestown on July 30. When the author visited the border between Tajikistan and the Afghan province of Kunduz in 2009, many local people said that they had seen both Uzbek and Chechen militants participating in the fighting. Also, according to Abdul Karim, an officer of the Kunduz office of the National Security of Afghanistan, smugglers have very good contacts along the whole border between Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries. “After the establishment of Central Asian transit routes for the NATO forces to Afghanistan [Northern Distribution Network – NDN], destabilizing Central Asia became profitable for the Taliban. Of course, Uzbek and Tajik fighters of the IMU are optimal for this goal. But the Taliban can also use Chechens, who are known to be very brave soldiers. A few Chechens already came to Kunduz province,” Karim told the author in December 2009.

However, according to Aleksey Malashenko fighters from the North Caucasus and Central Asia are situated in different military camps in Afghanistan. Therefore, the possibility of contacts between them is limited. Malashenko believes that although North Caucasus fighters from Afghanistan sometimes come to Central Asia, their number is not large. “They come to Central Asia not as ordinary fighters, but to carry out special missions or as military instructors. On the whole, Central Asia remains marginal in the minds of the North Caucasus insurgency,” Malashenko argued to Jamestown on July 30.

But the impact of North Caucasus militants on the situation in Central Asia could increase after NATO’s withdrawal from Afghanistan. At that point, Central Asian militants who fought in Afghanistan could move back home to continue the struggle. Whereas, “unemployed” North Caucasian militants from Afghanistan could follow their Central Asian comrades north as instructors.

Influence of Central Asian Islamic Radicals on the Situation in the North Caucasus

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By: Igor Rotar

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A multitude of rumors and speculation exists about the connection between Islamic radicals from Central Asia and the North Caucasus. The following will seek to separate rumor from reality, while analyzing the breadth, scope and policy consequences of these links.

There are, first of all, historical legacies that explain continued contacts between Central Asian and North Caucasian Islamic radicals. In 1944, Josef Stalin deported North Caucasus ethnic groups (Chechens, Ingush, Karachais and Balkars) precisely to Central Asia (mostly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). When Nikita Khrushchev allowed the repressed peoples to return home, some Chechens, Ingush, Karachais and Balkars remained in Central Asia, and these familial and relational ties between the two regions remain to this day (Igor Rotar, "Under the Green Banner: Islamic Radicals in Russia and the Former Soviet Union," *Religion, State & Society* 30(2), June 2002).

Past direct religious links also played a part in shaping the present condition. Notably, only one Islamic university existed within the Soviet Union: the Madrasa Mir-Arab in the city of Bukhara in Uzbekistan, and many North Caucasian imams studied there. In addition, many underground madrasas existed at the beginning of "perestroika" in the Uzbek city of Namangan, where the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was established. A large number of future Chechen field commanders, for example, the former Chechen field commander Salman Raduev, reportedly studied at these madrasas (Igor Rotar, "Under the Green Banner: Islamic Radicals in Russia and the Former Soviet Union," *Religion, State & Society* 30(2), June 2002). "Chechens are devout believers. But their religious education is weak. Islamic scholarship in Central Asia is much stronger than in the North Caucasus. So, many ideologists of the Chechen independence [movement] studied in Central Asia," one of leaders of Tajikistan's opposition, Akbar Turadjonzoda, told Jamestown in 1996.

There were thus clear preconditions for the union of Islamic radicals from the North Caucasus and Central Asia in the 1990s. As the situation in Chechnya continued to spiral toward the first war (1994-1996), a connecting link between the North Caucasus and Central Asian Islamic radicals soon became personified in the famous Chechen War Lord Emir Khattab, originally a citizen of Saudi Arabia. In 1993-1994, Khattab trained fighters from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in Afghanistan. On July 13, 1993, Khattab participated in an attack on border outpost no.12, "Sorigor," on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border (*Caucasian Knot*, July 29, 2010).

By 1996, however, Khattab established a military training camp in Chechnya, the "Uzbek Front," for fighters from Uzbekistan. One of the leaders of the IMU, Bahrom Abdulaev, met with Khattab in Chechnya and discussed the training of Uzbek fighters. As a result of this deal, reportedly about 300 Uzbek militants were trained at Khattab's military camp in Chechnya (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 24, 2000). But these figures may be overstated; Russian and Uzbekistani authorities have officially named fewer than ten citizens of Uzbekistan who had fought in Chechnya. "Of course, during the 1990s there was some collaboration

between Central Asian and North Caucasian Islamic radicals, but the scale of this cooperation was not large. The Russia media often wrote about the 300 Uzbek militants in Chechnya, but I do not believe this figure,” cautioned Dr. Aleksey Malashenko, a leading researcher at the Moscow branch of the Carnegie Center, in an interview with Jamestown on July 24. “I suppose that the real quantity of Uzbek militants in Chechnya is ten times smaller,” he concluded.

The current leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, managed to slow down the activity of rebels in Chechnya. The tensest situation in the North Caucasus is currently in Dagestan. Consequently, most foreign volunteers who want to help the rebellion come to Dagestan. “Definitely, most Islamic radicals from abroad, who want to fight in the North Caucasus, come to our republic. I did not hear about any Uzbek or Tajik rebels in Dagestan. But at least seven Kazakh fighters were killed and four arrested in Dagestan between 2009 and 2011,” Dr. Eduard Urazaev said in an interview with Jamestown on July 23. Dr. Urazaev is a former minister of ethnic affairs of Dagestan, a deputy director of the Dagestan Department of Information, and a well-known political scientist. “I suppose that our Islamic radicals established a recruitment network in this republic,” he added.

Dr. Alexander Knyazev, an Almaty-based coordinator of the Central Asia and Caucasus program at the Russian Institute of Oriental Studies, agrees that Central Asian Islamic militants who come to fight in the North Caucasus are presently more likely to originate from Kazakhstan than from any of the other Central Asian republics. “From an economic point of view, Western Kazakhstan has more connections with the Caucasus than with other parts of Kazakhstan. For example, most goods coming across the Caspian Sea to the region originate from the Russian Caucasus,” he told Jamestown on July 25. “In addition, there is a large Caucasus diaspora in Western Kazakhstan. So, it is not surprising that North Caucasian and Central Asian Islamic radicals have solid connections,” he noted.

However, Dr. Eduard Urazaev admits that the scale of help the North Caucasus rebels receive from Kazakhstan should not be overestimated. “A few dozen fighters from Central Asia are negligible for our scale [of insurgency in Dagestan]. In addition, the discovered fighters from Kazakhstan are not educated believers; they are ordinary marginal persons. So, I do not think that the help is a serious business,” Dr. Urazaev told Jamestown on July 23.

Despite the large potential for a closer union of Central Asian and North Caucasian Islamic radicals, the dissociation between individual ethnic groups has turned out to be a much stronger factor than pan-Islamic solidarity. The Islamic radicals have tried to overcome the inter-ethnic cleavages, and they gained some limited success. “But ethnic identity still remain a more important factor than [a common] religious identity,” Dr. Malashenko argues.

Bomb Blast Connected to Terrorist Activity in Kazakhstan Kills Eight People in Almaty Province

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By: Igor Rotar

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On July 11, an explosion occurred at a house in the village of Tausamal in Almaty province in Kazakhstan. Eight men (including four children) were killed. Prosecutors in Kazakhstan's Almaty region launched a criminal inquiry on July 12 into the explosion. Criminal cases were opened under Article 24 Part One (plotting to commit a terrorist act) of the Penal Code and under Article 233 (terrorism) of the Penal Code. The cases could be handed over to the republic's National Security Committee. The area around the house where the blast occurred was cordoned off. A search through the rubble led to the discovery of firearms, police ammunition and Muslim literature (The Kazakh Telegraph Agency, July 13).

The President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev without delay reacted to the explosion. "The law-enforcement agencies are responsible for the preservation of stability and rule of law in the country. As the President of the country, I am not satisfied with the work done by the law-enforcement agencies and the National Security Committee, in particular. Those efforts that we are making are not effective enough," President Nazarbayev said at a counter-terrorism meeting in Astana on July 12. At the end of the meeting, Nazarbayev ordered that measures be taken to monitor terrorist threats, better coordinate the work of various law enforcement bodies, improve the skills of their personnel and tighten the security of sites vulnerable to terrorist attacks. (Kazakhstan Today, July 12).

The Head of State also listened to Prime Minister Karim Massimov's report on the results of the first stage of an evaluation of the work of senior officials of the central and regional law enforcement forces. According to Massimov's report, 20 percent of law enforcement officers had not passed the state-wide attestation process, and 10 percent resigned before it started (Kazakhstan Today, July 12). The Kazakhstani President initiated the reform of the security and law enforcement system in 2010, with the aim of making the country's law enforcement agencies meet international standards. It is expected that significant structural changes will take place in the Interior Ministry, the judiciary system, the national security committee and police.

Prior to the wave of terrorist attacks in 2011, the problem of Islamic radicalism in Kazakhstan was less ubiquitous than in the other Central Asian republics. But now, the situation is changing dramatically. From 2011-2012, more than one hundred criminal acts connected with terrorism and extremism occurred in Kazakhstan. A few dozen civilians and policemen were killed by terrorists. The authorities are now officially beginning to recognize the existence of illegal armed groups operating within the country.

According to Kozy-Korpesh Djanburchin, a deputy secretary of the security council of Kazakhstan, around 10 percent of the country's population is composed of highly religious people who strictly follow religious practices, while the number of those willing to learn more about religion and engage in religious practices is ever growing. Even though an increasingly religious population is not a source of potential conflict per se, "there is a risk that some of the international terrorist and religious-extremist organizations are taking purposeful steps to secure a lasting presence on the territory of Central Asia, including our country," Djanburchin explained. According to Djanburchin, at least 300 people engaged in terrorism and extremism have been convicted in this country since 2005 (Kazakhstan Today, July 12).

Evgeniy Zhovtis, the leader of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law sees clear parallels between the current situation in Kazakhstan and the situation at the beginning of the 1990s in Uzbekistan. "Social problems and corruption provoke religious extremism. As in Uzbekistan, the Kazakhstani authorities are starting to severely crack down on religious radicals." As Zhovtis noted, about five years ago, the authorities quite rarely arrested Islamic radicals, but now this is the usual practice. The human rights defender believes that only a few convicted Islamic radicals are really terrorists. He argues that the authorities established an isolated detention center in Chimkent province (southern Kazakhstan). "There is a pretrial detention center for Islamic radicals arrested throughout Kazakhstan. The authorities established it because [extremist] Islamic propaganda turned out to be rather successful among convicts [in the country's regular prison system]," Zhovtis told Jamestown on July 14.

"The external factor, that is, help originating from abroad going to Kazakhstan's terrorists – is not the main cause of terrorist activity in Kazakhstan," Dr. Aleksey Malashenko, the leading researcher at the Carnegie Moscow Center, explained to Jamestown on July 17. According to Dr. Malashenko, the external factor is very serious for Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and partly Kyrgyzstan. A lot of men from these republics were trained in Islamic radical military camps in Afghanistan and North Pakistan. But as the researcher believes, only a few Kazakhs were trained in Afghanistan. "Of more importance for the growth of religious extremism in Kazakhstan is social tension and, perhaps, the competition between different Kazakh tribes. Now the most tense situation is in western Kazakhstan – where the Adai tribe lives. The Zhanaozen rebellion happened, exactly, in the Adai area," Malashenko noted.

Analyst and director of the Fergana news agency Daniil Kislov holds a similar view. "The activity of terrorists in Kazakhstan is explained merely by internal factors. This is corruption, and the enormous social inequality and the growth of interference of Kazakh authorities in the life of believers" Daniil Kislov argued in an interview with Jamestown on July 18.

Dr. Dosim Satpaev, the director of the Almaty-based think-tank Risk Assessment Group, disagrees with Dr. Malashenko and Mr. Kislov, however. “During the last twenty years, Kazakh Muslims have extensively been in contact with Muslims from abroad. Many Kazakhstanis studied in Islamic universities in Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Some of them believe that an Islamic state is the optimal model for Kazakhstan. Some Kazakhstanis fought against the international coalition in Afghanistan and some of them returned home” Dr. Satpaev told Jamestown on July 18. According to the researcher, this external factor for Kazakhstan could become more important in the future. “The influence of foreign Islamic radicals is much higher in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan than in Kazakhstan. But if foreign Islamic radicals manage to destabilize the situation in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, then after that they will concentrate their efforts on Kazakhstan,” Satpaev asserted.

However, as Dr. Satpaev admits, for now the importance of the external factor for Kazakhstan’s internal security should not be overestimated. “After the collapse of the Soviet Union, an ideological vacuum developed in Kazakhstan. People were disappointed with the communist system, but they are not happy with the new system either. Many people are starting to identify corruption and social inequality with capitalism, and many of them are beginning to think that only the Islamic model can resolve social problems. These views generate serious preconditions for Islamic terrorism,” Dosim Satpaev noted. Thus, ongoing systemic domestic reforms, carried out in parallel with more effective policing, will clearly be vital in order to tackle the threat of extremism in Kazakhstan before it becomes a more widespread problem in the republic.

Islamic Radicalism in Kazakhstan: Myth or Reality?

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By: Igor Rotar

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Prior to the wave of terrorist attacks in 2011, the problem of Islamic radicalism in Kazakhstan was less ubiquitous than in the other Central Asia republics. Kazakhs (who were nomads in the past) are less religious than Uzbeks and Tajiks, and the proportion of the latter ethnic groups in Kazakhstan is relatively small. For example, a much larger percentage of the Uzbek population in Kyrgyzstan partially explains the more intensive activity of Islamic radicals in this republic (see EDM June 18). Also, the percentage of Christians in Kazakhstan (about 25 percent of the population) is higher than in any other Central Asia republic.

In general, Uzbeks (2.94 percent of the Kazakhstani population) and Uyghurs (1.53 percent) are much more devout believers than the Kazakhs, and consequently, the number of Islamic radicals among them is much greater.

Whereas, the overwhelming majority of the republic’s 330,000 ethnic Uzbeks are

concentrated in the Shymkent region (southern Kazakhstan), making up around 18 percent of its population.

“The underground organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, which advocates for the creation of an Islamic state in Central Asia, is more numerous in the Shymkent region than in the other parts of Kazakhstan. The Shymkent region borders Uzbekistan, and many local Uzbeks have relatives in Uzbekistan. Uzbek believers escaping President Islam Karimov’s repressions flee to the Shymkent region. Some of these believers are Islamic radicals. This fact also destabilizes the situation,” Dr. Igor Savin, the director of Shymkent think-tank “Dialog” recently told EDM.

For example, this year, the Kazakhstani police detained Hurshid Mukhtorov, a citizen of Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan’s authorities are going to deport him to his home country. It is noteworthy that on January 21, 2012, Jamshid Mukhtorov, Hurshid’s brother, was arrested in the United States on charges of sponsoring a terrorist organization, “The Union of Islamic Jihad,” and the intention of participating in a terrorist act (ferghananews.com, January 21).

The problems of the Uzbek and Uyghur diasporas in Kazakhstan are quite similar. Uyghurs live compactly in the Uyghur and Panfilov districts of Almaty province. The Panfilov district borders on the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in China, and many Chinese Uyghur-separatists hide out in Kazakhstan. From time to time, Kazakhstani special police agencies expose alleged terrorist Uyghur organizations. These groups turn out to be made up of both Kazakhstani and Chinese ethnic Uyghurs. In 2000, for example, police operatives in Almaty exposed an underground headquarters of Uyghur separatists from the XUAR. Members of the cell resisted capture and were killed in the shootout that ensued (ferghananews.com, May 4, 2006).

In December 2003, in Almaty, Kazakhstani security services uncovered a cell of the Islamic Party of Turkistan (IPT), established by Chinese citizen Aisu “Khasam” Maksum in the 1980s. The authorities found weapons, ammunition and improvised explosive devices possessed by the arrested people. This particular cell was comprised of Uyghurs from China, Kazakhstan and Turkey. Later, the investigation established that some of the Kazakhstani members of the cell had received training in the IPT camps in Afghanistan. This branch also maintained close contacts with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and, through a Chechen intermediary, also had connections with the Chechen Diaspora in Turkey and with Chechen militants (ferghananews.com, May 4, 2006).

In May 2006, Kazakhstan’s National Security Ministry (NSM) announced that it had exposed a terrorist organization whose members were all Uyghurs. Allegedly, the group’s members were planning to blow up the NSM headquarters and that of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (ferghananews.com, May 4, 2006). However, since then, reports on the activity of Uyghur terrorists have disappeared. “From about the mid-2000s, the Kazakhstani and Chinese security forces have established closer cooperation in the fight against the Uyghur underground on

both sides of the border. The Kazakh authorities also managed to come to an agreement with the leader of the Uyghur community that the government would not interfere into the affairs of the Uyghur diaspora under the condition that the Kazakh Uyghurs will not run any anti-government activities and will not help Uyghur separatists in China,” Igor Savin pointed out in an interview with EDM.

According to Dr. Savin, Islamic extremists who are ethnic Kazakhs are now becoming more active in southern Kazakhstan than ethnic Uzbek radicals. Because Uzbeks are traditionally more religious than Kazakhs, the first propagandists of Islamic radicalism were Uzbeks. Yet, since about 2005, the situation began to change. The religiousness of Kazakhs is increasing and religious converts, as a rule, are more radical and inclined to violence. Moreover, as Savin has noted, Kazakhstan’s Uzbek community has consciously tried to keep a lower profile in the country. In comparison with Kyrgyzstan, where the proportion of the Uzbek population is much higher, Kazakhstani Uzbeks understand that due to their small number, they have to avoid any conflicts with the authorities.

“Indeed, until recently, the highest percentage of Islamic radicals has traditionally been among the more religious Uzbeks and Uyghurs. However, the situation is changing rapidly. The most active terrorist organizations are those that consist of Kazakh-neophytes [new converts]. For example, the executors of all terrorist attacks in 2011 were Kazakhs,” Dosim Satpaev, the director of Almaty-based think-tank “Risks Assessment Group,” told EDM on June 23.

In Satpaev’s opinion, the new generation that has formed in post-Soviet Kazakhstan is oriented toward religious values. On the other hand, from the political scientist’s point of view, most of them have a very poor religious education. “The religious views of these young people exhibit an intricate mixture of Sufi, Salafi, Sunni, and even Shiite Islam. Exactly such young people following a confused religious ideology often become terrorists,” Dosim Satpaev noted.

Due to this confused ideology, in the near-future, Islamic radicalism will not be a serious problem for Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, but nevertheless its influence will grow. As Satpaev points out, “In post-Nazarbaev Kazakhstan, the Islamic and Nationalist-patriotic rhetoric will be actively used as well.”

Situation in Southern Kyrgyzstan Continues to Smolder Two Years Since Ethnic Riots

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By: Igor Rotar

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In June, 2010, an armed conflict between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz occurred in the south of Kyrgyzstan. According to official statements, around 500 people were killed; according to unofficial data – more than 2,000. Most victims were

Uzbeks. According to official reports, 3,746 houses were destroyed during these tragic events, and most of these homes belonged to Uzbeks. Consequently, more than 5,000 criminal cases were opened, and 79 percent of the defendants were Uzbeks. Criminal proceedings were brought against 545 people, 400 (73.3 percent) of which are Uzbeks and 133 (24.4 percent) are Kyrgyz (Agency Fergana, June 9).

The events of 2010 have dramatically changed the situation in the south of Kyrgyzstan. After this tragedy, the discrimination of Uzbeks in the South increased dramatically. Until June 2010, ethnic Uzbeks constituted about 17 percent of police officers; now they make up to only 2-3 percent. Uzbek radio, television and newspapers have been closed. The police regularly extort money from Uzbeks, who returned from working abroad in Russia. The number of Uzbek-owned shops and restaurants also dramatically decreased. According to Lada Khasanova, the manager of a guest-house chain in the south of the country, prior to June 2010, the service industry, particularly restaurants and hairdresser salons, had been dominated by Uzbeks. After the June 2010 events, however, Uzbek cafes and restaurants practically disappeared in the South (Agency Fergana, June 9).

Drastic changes have taken place in religious life, as well. Uzbeks are generally more religious than the Kyrgyz (who were nomads in the past). Therefore, the majority of imams in the country's mosques were Uzbeks until the June 2010 clashes. As Abdumalik Sharipov, an activist from the Kyrgyzstani human rights organization "Justice," told EDM on June 12, following the summer 2010 riots, under pressure from the authorities, many ethnic Uzbek imams have been replaced with ethnic Kyrgyz imams. Authorities also appointed ethnic Kyrgyz as deputies to Uzbek imams who were not replaced.

As Sharipov claims, the government pressure on underground Islamic organizations has also sharply increased. The largest underground organization in Kyrgyzstan is the party Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which advocates for the creation of an Islamic state in Central Asia. In Kyrgyzstan, almost all members of this party are ethnic Uzbeks. Prior to the June 2010 events, in contrast to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan practically did not face repressions from authorities, and members of this organization were free to express their views. However, after the violent June 2010 clashes, mass arrests of Hizb-ut-Tahrir began; the group's activity within Kyrgyzstan is now largely undetectable.

Nevertheless, the senior political science researcher of the Russian Academy of Science, Dr. Alexander Knyazev, who lives in Bishkek, thinks that the decline of Islamist activity in Kyrgyzstan is a very alarming symptom. "Today, the situation in Kyrgyzstan is similar to that in Uzbekistan. Now, just as in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Islamists had to deeply hide their activity. However, secrecy generates the radicalization of views. As a result, terrorist attacks have become commonplace in Uzbekistan. Now, the same can be expected in Kyrgyzstan," Alexander Knyazev told EDM.

According to the analyst, the dismissal of Uzbek imams and the repression against Islamists are rather beneficial for Islamic radicals who are trying to translate the inter-ethnic conflict into religious terms. This point of view is implicitly shared by the Kyrgyzstani authorities.

When addressing the parliament in April 2011, Kyrgyzstan's National Security State Service chief, Keneshbek Dushebyaev, said that 400 citizens of the country, mainly ethnic Uzbeks, are currently training in terrorist camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan. "After the June events, they went to southern Kyrgyzstan," Dushebyaev said, describing them as "separatists" (Bishkek-based news agency AKIpress, April 29, 2011).

Notably, the location of ethnic clashes is spreading to the north of the republic. Such clashes are occurring between Kyrgyz and different ethnic (not only Uzbeks) groups: Meskhetian Turks, Uyghurs, as well as Dagestani ethnic groups. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there are 147 zones of potential ethnic conflicts in Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek-based news agency AKIpress, January 26).

Direct Kyrgyz-Russian conflicts have not been recorded, but there were incidents of indirect persecutions of Russians. In August 2011, a Russian Orthodox cemetery was desecrated in the north of Kyrgyzstan where unidentified vandals destroyed over 30 tombs. About 20 Protestant churches (most Kyrgyzstani Protestants are Russians) have also been robbed in the republic. Prosecutors in Kyrgyzstan demanded an eight-year prison term for ethnic Russian blogger and journalist Vladimir Farafonov, who has been charged with inciting ethnic hatred through the media (RIA Novosti, May 18).

The charges stem from a series of analytical articles Farafonov wrote for the website of the Moscow-based foundation "Russian Unity" and for several regional news websites. In his articles, the journalist criticized Kyrgyzstan's politics and the spread of nationalism in the Kyrgyz-language media (RIA Novosti, May 18). The Committee to Protect Journalists called on authorities in Kyrgyzstan to drop the politically-motivated extremism charges against Vladimir Farafonov (The Committee to Protect Journalists, February 29).

Tensions between Russians and Kyrgyz are especially dangerous for many reasons. First, Russians (12.5 percent of the republic's population) are the second most numerous (after Uzbeks) ethnic minority in Kyrgyzstan. Secondly, Russia would inevitably involve itself in the conflict should a clash erupt between Kyrgyz and local Russians inside Kyrgyzstan. Finally, the Kremlin could use the argument of needing to protect Russians being persecuted in Kyrgyzstan as a pretext for reinforcing Russia's troops stationed in the republic.

"The Uzbek-Kyrgyz conflict is a very serious problem. But new ethnic conflicts may be even more catastrophic than the Uzbek massacre. Kyrgyzstan is a

multiethnic country, and ethnic clashes will cause the demolition of Kyrgyzstan's nationhood," Knyazev told EDM.

TERRORISM MONITOR

China Claims Uyghur Militants Are Seeking a Syrian Battlefield

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By: Raffaello Pantucci

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Chinese security officials informed reporters in late October that members of the East Turkistan Islamic Party (ETIM, a name used frequently by Chinese officials to refer to the Turkistan Islamic Party - TIP) and the East Turkistan Educational and Solidarity Association (ETESA) had slipped into Syria to join anti-government forces operating there (*Global Times* [Beijing], October 29). The report came at the end of a month in which the TIP released a number of videos and magazines on jihadist web forums showing their forces training at camps, calling for more support and generally highlighting the group's ongoing struggle. However, neither the videos nor reports from Syria were supported by any visible action or evidence to support the claims. Questions also continue to be raised about the group's ability to launch effective attacks in China, Syria or elsewhere.

According to the newspaper, which is owned by the Communist Party of China, the ETIM or ETESA members slipped across the border from Turkey into Syria from May onwards. Officials talking anonymously to the *Global Times* indicated that people had been recruited amongst those who had fled from the western Chinese province of Xinjiang, had been trained and then re-directed by "al-Qaeda" to the frontlines in Syria. The actual number of recruits was believed to be relatively small. The story was given an official imprimatur the next day when it was mentioned during the regular press briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where emphasis was placed on the close connection between ETIM and "international terrorist organizations [that] not only seriously harm China's national security, but also pose a threat to the peace and stability of other countries." [1] The remarks highlighted the alleged connection between militants belonging to China's Turkic and Muslim minority and the international terrorist threat of al-Qaeda as it is currently expressing itself in Syria; towards the end of the *Global Times* report, mention was made of the recent video in which al-Qaeda leader Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri called for fighters to go to Syria.

What was striking about the report was the specific mention of the East Turkistan Educational and Solidarity Association (ETESA). This is the first time Chinese officials have spoken openly about the group, suggesting it is a terrorist organization along the lines of TIP/ETIM. Based in Istanbul, the group's site proclaims that its intention is "to educate and bring up Turkistani Muslims....meeting their Islamic, social, cultural, spiritual and earthly needs" as well as to "fundamentally end the ignorance in Eastern Turkistan." [2] The group strenuously denied the claims by the Chinese government, publishing a statement on their site in English and Turkish that rubbished the Chinese claims

and accused the Chinese government of casting blame on them in an attempt to distract from Beijing's support for the Assad regime. [3] The Turkish government also rejected claims that ETIM forces were operating outside Turkish territory and declared that it was "comprehensively" cooperating with the Chinese in handling terrorism threats (*Global Times*, October 29). Certainly, the broader Sino-Turkish relationship has been going relatively well of late with a successful visit by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Urumqi (provincial capital of Xinjiang) and Beijing in April (*Hurriyet*, April 9). This was followed in September by a meeting between Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan and former Chinese leader Wen Jiabao in Urumqi on the fringes of the 2nd China-Eurasia Expo (Xinhua, September 2). China has actively encouraged Turkish investment in Xinjiang – the province dissident Uyghurs refer to as East Turkistan – including the establishment of a joint trade park just outside Urumqi. It would therefore seem counter-productive for Turkey to be actively supporting violent groups like the TIP.

What seems more likely is that the ETESA is falling under the same Chinese brush as the World Uyghur Congress (WUC), a U.S.-based dissident group that China has in the past accused of being behind trouble in Xinjiang, including the July 2009 riots in Urumqi that claimed some 200 lives (Xinhua, July 7, 2009). Both the WUC and ETESA use bases abroad to further political efforts to "liberate" Xinjiang. So far there have been no independent links made between ETESA or the WUC and the violent terrorist groups TIP or ETIM.

Far clearer than Beijing's Syrian-related claims is the continuing presence of fighters claiming affiliation to TIP in the lawless tribal regions of northwest Pakistan along the border with Afghanistan. From this base, the group released from the middle of October onwards a series of videos displaying the group's ongoing exploits and providing advice for other militant groups. For example, in a video released on October 17 they offered advice to their "Muslim brothers in East Turkistan," and in an October 21 video they offered advice "for our Muslim brothers in Turkey." [4]

What is notable is that while these videos demonstrate the group's ongoing intent and existence, they do not seem to advance the cause in a practical way. While there continue to be sporadic incidents of violence in Xinjiang, the link to the TIP is increasingly underplayed officially and the group itself has not claimed any recent operations. An example of Beijing's new approach is found in a report published on the fringes of early November's 18th Party Congress that quoted both Xinjiang Communist Party chief Zhang Chunxian and chairman Nur Bekri that touched upon a number of incidents that have taken place in the province that have elsewhere been linked to the TIP/ETIM, but were cited in the report without reference to either group (*China Daily*, November 10). There was also no reporting in the mainland Chinese press of an alleged October 23 incident in the Xinjiang city of Korla in which a group of Uyghurs reportedly attacked police or a separate incident in Yecheng County in which a Uyghur man was claimed to have driven his motorcycle into a border post (Radio Free Asia, October 23; October 12). No independent confirmation of what took place is available in either case

and neither Chinese officials nor TIP/ETIM chose to acknowledge them. Given the low level of the attacks, however, it seems unlikely that these incidents were directed by the TIP.

It seems clear that the TIP/ETIM continues to exist, that it is a concern to Chinese security officials, and that Xinjiang continues to be an ethnically troubled province that provides a motivating narrative for the group. At the same time, however, the ongoing lack of public evidence of TIP/ETIM attacks in China raises questions about what exactly they are doing. The movement does appear to be active in Waziristan, where their videos are presumably shot and where their cadres are periodically reported to have been killed in drone strikes. So far the movement has not released a video specifically praising the Syrian insurgency or encouraging their units to go there, though given their affiliation with the global jihadist movement, it would not be entirely surprising if some members had elected to join the Syrian jihad. However, in terms of advancing their core agenda of attacking China, the latest round of videos and activity does not seem to provide much evidence that the movement is moving in this direction in any effective way.

Notes:

1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei's Regular Press Conference on October 29, 2012," October 30, 2012, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/t983693.htm>.
2. ETESA, "Brief Introduction to the Eastern Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association and Its Mission," 2012, <http://maarip.org/en/?p=131#more-131>.
3. ETESA, "Statement of ETESA on Fake Chinese Blames," November 1, 2012, <http://maarip.org/en/?p=192>.
4. Hizb al-Islami al-Turkistani, "Advice to Our Muslim Brothers in Eastern Turkistan," Sawt al-Islam, October 17, 2012
<https://alfidaa.info/vb/showthread.php?t=49344>; Hizb al-Islami al-Turkistani, "Advice to Our Muslim Brothers in Turkey," Sawt al-Islam, October 21, 2012, <http://www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=181814>

Kazakhstan Struggles to Contain Salafist-Inspired Terrorism

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Kazakhstan has experienced a rise in militant activity carried out by Salafist groups on its territory and periphery since late 2011. The Salafists' rejection of secularism and other types of Islam and their call for a return to the ways of the *Salaf*, or pious ancestors who lived at the time of Muhammad and the first four Caliphs, are regarded by the Kazakh government—and most Kazakhs—as incompatible with the country's political and social institutions and the native brand of Islam that is strongly flavored by Kazakh customs and traditions. [1] For this reason, Kazakhs often refer to Salafists as Wahhabis, denoting the puritanical form of Sunni Islam prevalent in Saudi Arabia that has made inroads into Central Asia in the post-Soviet era.

In the words of Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev, "radical and extremist elements" in Kazakhstan have "put enormous pressure on the state and on society as a whole" (Astana Times, July 13). This article tracks recent developments in Salafist militancy in Kazakhstan and the Central Asia region and reviews Kazakhstan's "counter-Salafism" strategy, the long-term impact of which will likely be diminished by forces beyond Kazakhstan's control.

Jund al-Khilafah and Domestic Militancy

In the last three months of 2011, three Jund al-Khilafah (Army of the Caliphate) cells carried out the first terrorist attacks in Kazakhstan's history, targeting government buildings and personnel in Atyrau, Taraz and Almaty. According to sources in Kazakhstan, one of Jund al-Khilafah's founders from Atyrau became a Salafist militant when he was arbitrarily denied permission by Kazakh authorities to study Islam in Saudi Arabia. With two companions from Atyrau, he then fled to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, where they established Jund al-Khilafah while maintaining networks with Salafists in Kazakhstan who could carry out attacks on the home front. [2] Jund al-Khilafah also heightened its profile through posts on online jihadi forums, such as al-Qaeda's Ansar al-Mujahideen forum, claiming responsibility for each of the three attacks. The movement also issued video statements denouncing the 2011 "massacre" of striking oil workers in Zhanaozen and President Nursultan Nazarbayev's religious policies, which Jund al-Khilafah claims prohibits government officials from praying in state institutions, men from growing beards and women from wearing the *hijab*. [3]

Jund al-Khilafah has not carried out attacks in Kazakhstan in 2012, but another Salafist group in Kostanay (northern Kazakhstan) was uncovered facilitating the travel of Salafists to Afghanistan by providing them with fraudulent documents. Elsewhere, members of a group in Atyrau, possibly related to Jund al-Khilafah,

were caught sending money to Kazakh militants abroad through bank transfers to Pakistan (Interfax, July 3). In addition, a group in Tausamaly (a village outside of Almaty) set off a gas explosion in a safe-house on July 11, while creating a home-made bomb, killing 8 persons. A search of the premises uncovered guns, ammunition, religious literature and police and SWAT team uniforms (Kazakhstan Today [Almaty], July 17). In an August 17 follow-up operation to arrest the leaders of that cell, Kazakh security forces killed nine people who reportedly refused to surrender (Regnum.ru, August 17). During the investigation it was revealed the suspects kept their wives locked up in apartments to prevent them from communicating with the outside world. Most recently, on September 12, a special forces operation in Atyrau raided a flat where suspected terrorists who set off an accidental explosion that killed one person on September 5 were believed to be residing (Interfax [Atyrau], September 12).

Salafism on Kazakhstan's Periphery

The rise of militancy north of Kazakhstan, in the Russian republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, may be connected to the rise of militancy in Kazakhstan. Ravil Kusainov, one of the founders of Jund al-Khilafah, declared in an interview to the jihadi media outlet Minbar Media that Jund al-Khilafah consists of nationals from different countries (www.vesti.kz, November 10). His name and the name of another founder, Rinat Habiulla, are also distinctly Tatar.

On July 19, a Salafist militant group injured Tatarstan's chief *mufti*, Idrus Faizov, in a car-bomb assassination attempt in Tatarstan's capital, Kazan. One hour before that attack, different members of that group succeeded in killing the chief of the education department of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Tatarstan, Valiulla Yakupov, in a shooting outside his residence. Both religious leaders were known for their efforts to cleanse Salafism from Tatarstan's religious institutions. The "Mujahideen of Tatarstan" issued a pair of videos on YouTube, the first of which announced the formation of the group on the morning of the attacks. In this video, "Muhammad," the military *amir* of the group, said that the Tatarstan Mujahideen were prepared to carry out attacks on the orders of Caucasus Emirate leader Dokku Umarov, who has sought to establish a front in Russia's Volga and Far East regions for nearly a decade (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, August 12). [4]

According to Russian officials, there is an entire generation prepared to carry out extremist activity in Tatarstan, with well over 100 people having been arrested for extremist activity there since 2006. These include the owner of a company that organizes pilgrimages, the head of a mosque in Tatarstan and an Uzbekistan national who are all suspects in the recent shootings of two religious leaders (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, March 3, 2011; *Kommersant*, July 20).

Tatarstan's neighbor Bashkortostan has also seen growing signs of militancy. Bashkortostan's southern border is only 300 kilometers from the northern Kazakhstan city of Aktobe, where four members of a Salafist militant cell were convicted in October 2011 for carrying out police shootings. In June 2012, five members of a Hizb ut-Tahrir cell were arrested in Bashkortostan for preparing

and distributing leaflets, books, brochures and videos propagandizing “extremist views” (Perviy Kanal, May 25). In addition, an eight-person cell was arrested in late 2011 while preparing experimental explosions for an attack on Bashkortostan’s district headquarters. Like Jund al-Khilafah’s founders, the suspects were alleged to have planned an escape to Afghanistan through Kazakhstan (MediaKorSet, December 16, 2011).

Other Regional Developments

To Kazakhstan’s south, the Salafist-influenced group Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) has taken advantage of Kyrgyzstan’s weak internal security. HuT was founded by diaspora Palestinians in 1952 and believes it is obligatory for every Muslim to work toward the reestablishment of the Islamic Caliphate; that no other system of law but Sharia is permissible; and that it is *haram* (forbidden) for Muslim states to seek protection from America or other *kufr* (non-Islamic) states. [5] HuT has been repressed to near extinction in Uzbekistan, where it first gained popularity in Central Asia in the 1990s, and most of Kazakhstan, but in Kyrgyzstan HuT has reemerged with an estimated 20,000 to 100,000 members. [6] Moreover, after the ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010, HuT made inroads into northern Kyrgyzstan and areas near the Kazakhstan border, especially among the internally displaced people from the south now living near Bishkek, where Kazakhs have been among those arrested for proselytizing for HuT (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, July 16). Although HuT members profess non-violence, some of them have been radicalized by way of their increased contacts with Afghanistan. Notably, Kyrgyz fighters are believed to comprise the majority of fighters in Jund al-Khilafah. [7]

In the North Caucasus, where Dokku Umarov’s Caucasus Emirate is based, Kazakhs have been found among captured or killed militants more frequently than any other Central Asian nationality, although it might be possible that many of these “Kazakhs” are ethnic Chechens who have returned to their homeland more than half-a-century after Stalin deported the entire Chechen population to Kazakhstan in the 1940s (RFE/RL, April 20, 2011). The proximity of the North Caucasus to Atyrau and Western Kazakhstan and the trade and transportations links that connect the two Caspian Sea coastal areas may also explain the rise of Salafism in Western Kazakhstan. Religious extremist groups were historically only found in southern Kazakhstan’s Shymkent and Kentau regions, which are home to Kazakhstan’s more religiously conservative Uzbek minority, but the estimated 5,000 Salafists between the ages of 13 and 30 in Atyrau is a sign of Salafism’s spread to ethnic Kazakh regions of the country (Tengrinews, November 17). In addition, Jund al-Khilafah and other Central Asian Salafist groups continue to propagate the militant ideas of Aleksandr Tikhomirov, an ethnic Buryat Russian who converted to Islam with an adopted name Said Buryatsky and was killed in battle in the North Caucasus in March 2009.

Further abroad, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the emergence of Salafist political parties in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia provide newfound legitimacy for political Islam—a challenge to the secular, Nazarbayev-centric

regime in Kazakhstan. Salafists in the Middle East have shown strong opposition to the Kazakhstan government, including the radical Mauritanian Sheikh Abu-Mundhir al-Shinqiti, who issued a *fatwa* in March 2011 saying that it is legal for Muslims to attack police in Kazakhstan and that there is an obligation for the Muslims of Kazakhstan to not be patient, but rather to engage in jihad (Kavkaz Tsent, March 19, 2011). The revolutions in the Arab world have also emboldened groups like Jund al-Khilafah, which has urged Kazakhs to "to draw lessons from the Arab Spring and get rid of their governments" and sent a message to President Nazarbayev in a video statement saying that his regime would follow the same path as those in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya because of its "anti-Muslim" policies (www.vesti.kz, November 10). Leading Kazakhstani political analysts who contributed to a report in late August 2012 called "Central Asia-2020: An Inside View" have estimated that the probability of Islamists coming to power in Central Asia through revolution or mass protests, such as those in the Arab World, is as high as 30% in the mid-to-long term (Interfax, August 20). Similarly, Maulen Ashimbayev, the chairman of the Committee for International Affairs, Defense and Security of the Majlis (the Kazakh Parliament's lower house) says that:

Kazakhstan is probably interesting to [Salafists] by the fact that we are situated relatively not far from such complicated regions as the North Caucasus, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. Our territory is a transit one for movements between southern and northern 'hot spots.' Therefore, the radical forces have the wish to entrench themselves here. They are purposefully working on recruiting supporters from within the country, attracting, first of all, young people to their ranks (Kazakhstan Today [Almaty], September 10).

Countering Salafism

Although Kazakhstan has a reputation for dealing out harsh punishments with insufficient due process to terror suspects, the country has taken a more calibrated approach to countering Salafism. The Kazakh approach recognizes the role of the intelligentsia, religious leaders, NGOs, public organizations and the mass media in preventing isolated Salafist groups from becoming a large-scale problem in the country (Kazakhstan Today [Almaty], September 10).

One way in which Kazakhstan has sought to prevent youths from being recruited into extremist organizations is through educational initiatives. For example, the Astana mayor's Domestic Policy Department established a "Center for Research on Religious Problems and for Psychological Rehabilitation" in October 2011 to provide alternative religious education for youths whose parents or teachers believe they have been influenced or "brainwashed" by "non-traditional religiosity," such as Wahhabism (Central Asia Online [Almaty], October 13, 2011). Similarly, in southeastern Kazakhstan's Zhambyl province, the Department of Religious Affairs has begun holding roundtable discussions, debates, seminars and public opinion polls to help youths distinguish "between traditional religion and the harsh rules of destructive cults" (Central Asia Online [Taraz], May 12,

2011). The Zhambyl city of Taraz also unveiled a memorial depicting the famous Kazakh folk couple Kozy-Korpesh and Bayan-Sulu after the November 2011 terrorist attack in the city “to symbolize the struggle against terrorism and to promote love” (Central Asia Online [Taraz], February 15).

Other strategies to counter the Salafist ideology include:

- Opening the new Nur-Astana mosque, one of Asia’s largest, in Astana in July 2012. The mosque can seat up to 5,000 worshippers and is designed to buttress the government’s religious credentials.
- Efforts to shut down religious facilities where Salafists have been reported preaching, including the Saudi Arabian cultural center in Almaty.
- Placing theologians and psychologists on the military draft boards to check for signs that indicate whether new recruits have been influenced by Salafism.
- Monitoring more than 10,000 websites for extremist content and blocking access to more than 100 such websites.

Conclusion

Some of Kazakhstan’s approaches to addressing the spread of Salafism may be effective in preventing youths from falling into the trap of an inflexible ideology which has a tendency towards militancy. Nonetheless, with Salafism’s success in winning recruits on Kazakhstan’s periphery, it will be difficult for Kazakhstan to succeed in containing the ideology without the successful efforts of neighboring states such as Russia and Kyrgyzstan, both of which have seen Salafism spread in recent years. For this reason, Kazakhstan has hosted regional forums to address Salafism, including a conference in Astana where anti-extremism cooperation between Turkic-speaking countries was discussed on September 6 (Interfax [Astana], September 6).

However, one of the key domestic issues Kazakhstan will need to address is the country’s political future and whether religious groups will be able to openly and freely partake in politics in a post-Nazarbayev Kazakhstan as in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia now. If Salafist-influenced groups were allowed to participate in politics, the Kazakh government would have to develop a political model that is more attractive to the country’s citizens than the religious model that has won Salafist political parties votes in formerly secular countries like Egypt and Tunisia. It is not yet clear what ideology will guide the next generation of Kazakh leaders who do not have the legitimacy of Nazarbayev, the country’s first ever president

Finally, there is also the issue of the hundreds of Central Asians fighting in Afghanistan who may eventually return home and bring with them not only the ideology of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, but also fighting expertise that could make the militancy of Jund al-Khilafah today seem small in comparison.

Notes:

1. Andrew McGregor, "Ambivalence or Radicalism? The Direction of Political Islam in Kazakhstan," *Modern Kazakhstan: Between East and West*, Conference at the Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, December 5, 2003.
2. Author's discussion with Kazakhstani official, September 2012.
3. See Statement of Jund al-Khilafa regarding the events of Zhanaozen: "Overthrow the tyrant," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tByoCBFKyxA>, December 18, 2011.
4. The two videos may be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHo_CVDy8oQ&feature=youtu.be, July 27, 2012; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4xEvysQZVw>, August 4, 2012 (summary of the latter at Umma News, August 4).
5. McGregor, *op cit*.
6. Statistics according to Saule Mikhametrakhimova of the Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). See Aleksandr Shustov, "Radical Islam Attacks Central Asia," Strategic Culture Foundation, <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2010/11/26/radical-islam-attacks-central-asia.html>
7. See endnote 2.

Uyghur Militants Respond To New Chinese List Of "Terrorists"

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The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) released a response in late April to the latest list of Uyghur "terrorists" prepared by China's Ministry of Public Security. The TIP communiqué was entitled "A Statement Regarding the Declaration of a 'Terrorists' List for the Third Time by the Chinese Government" (Islam Awazi, April 23).

The Chinese list of six suspects, complete with descriptions, aliases and photos, is consistent with previous Chinese statements that describe Uyghur militants as members of the now defunct Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) rather than members of the TIP. [1] Leading the list of suspects is Nurmemet Memetmin, who is described as the "commander of the ETIM." [2] According to the Chinese list, Memetmin was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in a "South Asian country," (i.e. Pakistan, which is always described this way in statements with possible implications for Chinese-Pakistani relations), but had escaped in 2006 to take up the planning of new attacks against China, including the July 30-31, 2011 attacks on civilians in Kashgar allegedly led by the late Memtieli Tiliwalidi (see *Terrorism Monitor*, April 26).

The TIP used the statement to reject their categorization as “terrorists” by the Chinese Ministry of Public Security:

No doubt those who were accused of terrorism by the oppressive Chinese government are the martyrs who died in the torture chambers defending their religion, honor, and all their rights deprived by the aggressive Chinese...

Let everyone know that the jihad in Turkistan is not a terrorist act but rather it is an *aqida* [belief] and religious obligation and responsibility that is laid on our shoulders because of the aggressions of the Chinese against us... It is a legitimate right for the Muslims of Eastern Turkistan and it is prohibited for any person to describe it by another name.

The Uyghur Islamists see in the latest list an effort to create divisions within the Islamic community in Xinjiang:

The purpose of the Chinese government in [making] these lists is to cut the link between the mujahideen and the Muslims morally and materially, and safeguard its rule in Eastern Turkistan, but how could they do that, since our proud Muslim Turkistani people, who have intelligence and foresight, knows the cunning of communist China and the extent of its crimes?

The TIP concluded their statement with a call to the international Muslim community to “answer the call to jihad and join the ranks of the mujahideen” in the struggle against the “atheist communist government of China.”

China’s Ministry of Public Security also announced that the suspects’ funds and assets would be frozen, though this was likely to be little more than a formality given the unlikelihood any of the six have funds or investments of any significance in Chinese financial institutions.

Given the arms used in many of the attacks recently attributed by China to the ETIM (knives, agricultural implements, etc.) and the apparent lack of planning or coordination in these attacks, the remark of a Ministry of Public Security spokesman that the ETIM was “the most direct and real safety threat that China faces” can only be interpreted as an indication that Beijing believes there are no other significant threats to China’s security (Xinhua, April 6). Nonetheless, a spokesman for China’s foreign ministry, Hong Lei, did not refrain from suggesting the Uyghur militants posed a major international threat: “The evidence is incontrovertible that this organization's violent terror activities seriously threaten not only China's national security, but also the peace and tranquility of the region and the world” (Reuters, April 6).

Meanwhile two Uyghur prisoners in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp have been freed after ten years imprisonment without charges and four years after a U.S. court ordered their release. China has demanded their extradition though

the United States, which has determined Uyghur prisoners will suffer persecution at Chinese hands, has banned the prisoners' entry to U.S. soil. The Uyghurs will thus be settled in a willing third party nation, in this case El Salvador, following earlier resettlement of released Uyghur prisoners in small nations such as Switzerland, Bermuda, Albania and Palau (Reuters, April 20).

Notes:

1. For the list, see: The Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China, April 6, 2012, <http://www.mps.gov.cn/n16/n1237/n1342/n803715/3197850.html>. For an earlier list, see *Terrorism Focus* Brief, October 20, 2008.
2. Other transliterations of the name from the Chinese include Memtimin Memet, Memetiming Memeti and Nurmamat Maimaitimin.

The Indigenization of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

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By: Jacob Zenn

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The last major attacks in Uzbekistan associated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) were carried out in 2004, a year in which gunmen and suicide bombers, including females, struck the U.S. and Israeli embassies, markets, and police stations in Tashkent and Bukhara (*Guardian*, April 7, 2004; Arab News, July 31, 2004). While the government blamed Hizb al-Tahrir and al-Qaeda as well as the IMU for the April 2004 attacks, responsibility for both these and the embassy attacks was claimed by the Jama'at al-Jihad al-Islami (Islamic Jihad Group), believed to be a variant name of an IMU offshoot, the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU). [1]

In 2009, the IJU claimed an attack on Uzbek border officials in the city of Khanabad, near Kyrgyzstan, and in Andijon, a city in the Ferghana Valley, where the IMU first emerged (RFE/RL, May 27, 2009). However, with the exception of these attacks, the IJU, like the IMU, has also focused its operations and propaganda outside of the Ferghana Valley for the past decade. Both IMU propaganda and operations have apparently shifted in focus from the movement's "homeland" to its current operational space in the tribal areas of northwest Pakistan.

The IMU's shift from the objectives it had in the late 1990s and early 2000s - overthrowing the regime of President Islam Karimov, "liberating" the Ferghana Valley, and establishing an Islamic caliphate across Central Asia - to its current goals, including "the liberation of Muslim people from their sufferings" and their protection from "Western infidels" and "NATO invaders." reflects the IMU's

“indigenization” in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region and its response to new priorities that have emerged in that region. If IMU fighters are able to return to northern Afghanistan as American and NATO forces withdraw from the region in 2014, Ferghana may come back into the IMU’s focus (RFE/RL, December 8, 2010). President Karimov has warned that the departure of American forces from Afghanistan will bring “an increased threat of the expansion of terrorist and extremist activities” and “the creation of a permanent source of instability” in Uzbekistan (Trend.az [Tashkent], January 14).

Background

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, IMU militants were forced out of Uzbekistan by Islam Karimov’s ruthless crackdown on Islamists. They were able, however, to establish bases in Tajikistan, taking advantage of the country’s instability following a 1992-1997 civil war and in areas of northern Afghanistan under Taliban control. With the American invasion of Afghanistan to root out the Taliban and its allies in October 2001, the IMU fled to Pakistan. From 2001 to 2007 it set up training camps in South Waziristan under the protection of Waziri Taliban commander Maulvi Nazir, whose fighters were taking advantage of their mountainous homeland to regroup and launch attacks against American forces in Afghanistan.

The IMU was evicted in 2007 from South Waziristan to other parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) by Maulvi Nazir partly because Uzbek fighters offended local customs and acted like an “occupying” force in Pashtun territory (see *Terrorism Monitor*, January 14, 2008). When the IMU joined Baitullah Mehsud’s faction of the Taliban, it had to accept Mehsud’s priorities, foremost of which was fighting the Pakistani state.

The IJU, which was first called the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG), was founded in 2002 in South Waziristan by two ethnic Uzbeks who were former IMU fighters, including Abu Yahya Muhammad Fatih (a.k.a. Najmiddin Jalolov). In contrast to the IMU, which had its roots in Namangan in the Ferghana Valley in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, the IJU had its roots in the post- 9/11 multi-ethnic jihad environment of the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier in which America was defined as the main enemy.

Even though Fatih may have intended for the IJU to focus on Uzbekistan, from its inception the IJU appealed to young and internationally-minded “foreign” fighters, including Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Germans, and Turks, to fill its ranks. Some Uzbek fighters in Pakistan continued to follow Tahir Yuldash (or Yuldashov), the leader of the IMU from its formation in 1998 until his death in a 2009 U.S. drone strike. Yuldash prioritized overthrowing the “apostate” regime in Uzbekistan and other regimes in “Turkistan” (the name for Central Asia preferred by Islamists), but fighters in the IJU were too preoccupied with expelling the American forces in Afghanistan to focus on Central Asia.

Indigenization

Over the course of the 2000s the international agenda of the IJU gained popularity among IMU fighters, with the organization eventually dropping the liberation of the Ferghana Valley as its top priority. So long as the IMU was based in Pakistan, the Uzbekistan regime led by President Islam Karimov was less of a direct threat to the IMU than the Pakistani army or international forces operating in the region. Yuldash was recorded in a video released shortly after his death saying, “Our goal is not only conquering Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. Our goal is to conquer the entire world” (*Die Welt*, January 10, 2010).

The ethnic and national composition of the IMU became so “indigenized” that the IMU ceased to be “Uzbek” except in name. For example, the IMU’s current “mufti” (expert in Islamic law), Abu Zar al-Burmi, is an Urdu and Arabic-speaking Pakistani national of Burmese Rohingya descent with neither a trace of Uzbek blood nor proficiency in the Uzbek language (see *Militant Leadership Monitor*, November 2011). Several thousand Uzbek fighters may have joined the Taliban in Helmand and other provinces in Afghanistan after being evicted from South Waziristan in 2007, further diluting the Uzbek contingent in the IMU (*Guardian*, March 25, 2007). In addition, hundreds of Uzbeks who remained in Kanigurum, South Waziristan until 2009 simply integrated into the Taliban (*The Nation* [Lahore], November 2, 2009).

In late November 2011, the IMU released a list of 87 of its members “martyred” in 2011. [2] Only four of the martyrs came from Uzbekistan while 64 others came from Afghanistan, ten from Tajikistan, six from Kyrgyzstan and one each from Germany, Pakistan and the Russian Republic of Tatarstan.

In the preface of the list of martyrs, the IMU does not even mention Uzbekistan. An excerpt from the preface says:

As in previous years, this year Afghan members of the community made the greatest sacrifice in order to honor Allah’s religion. 64 Afghan mujahideen consisting of *hafeez* (reciters) and *taliban* (students) of the Koran engaged in devastating attacks against U.S. and NATO soldiers, the Afghan National Army, and the hypocritical band of Arbakai [government-supported community defense groups]. Jihad operations took place in the following provinces: Kunduz, Takhar, Baghlan, Samangan, Badakhshan, Faryab, Sar-e-Pol, Kabul, Zabul, Ghazni, Panjshir, and Kapisa. This year in Afghanistan, one helicopter was shot down and several tanks exploded together with enemies inside. We consider it one of our greatest achievements that 45 Americans were killed as a result of *fidai* (sacrifice) operations in Panjshir; 35 apostate hypocrites were killed as a result of *fidai* operations in Kunduz, and 137 NATO troops were killed in the night battle in Baghlan.

At the same time, however, the list of martyrs did show pride in Uzbek ethnicity and was written in Uzbek language, so the group is retaining some of its Uzbek character. This could be a sign that the IMU is strategically focusing on Afghanistan-Pakistan until a more suitable time arises to target Uzbekistan, at which point it will need Uzbek recruits. Profile no. 76 was of Sayfulloh Wazir, who came from Wana in South Waziristan. According to the profile: “Sayfulloh was a student at school in 2002 when IMU comrades came to Pakistan. He was envious to see armed jihadi warriors. He ran away from home and joined the Movement in 2004. He learned Uzbek and Tajik languages and became a real Uzbek...”

Pan-Turkic Revival

Of note was the absence of Uyghurs or Kazakhs in the list of martyrs, possibly because Uyghurs and Kazakhs in Afghanistan-Pakistan are now affiliated with two groups that represent Uyghur and Kazakh causes: the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), which was established in 2008 and targets Xinjiang, and Jund al-Khilafa (JaK), which was founded in 2011 and targets Kazakhstan (for the JaK, see *Terrorism Monitor*, November 23, 2011).

From their bases in North Waziristan, the TIP and JaK may have delivered attack orders to fighters in Xinjiang and Kazakhstan. The TIP claimed that Memtieli Tiliwaldi, who participated in a July 2011 attack in Kashgar, was a TIP member and showed footage of Tilwaldi allegedly recorded in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region several months prior to the attack. [3] Memtieli Tiliwaldi and another suspect were shot dead by police in a cornfield a day after the attack (Reuters, August 2, 2011). Similarly, an investigation of two botched bombings in Atyrau, Western Kazakhstan in October 2011 revealed that the cell responsible for the bombs had received orders from JaK leaders in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area (Interfax [Astana], November 9).

The division of labor emerging between the TIP and JaK resembles a cell of the Islamic Jihad Group (predecessor of the IJU) in the early 2000s. The cell, called “the Mujahideen of Central Asia,” consisted of a Kazakh branch and an Uzbek branch which were led by a Kyrgyz and Uzbek respectively. Some of the perpetrators of the 2004 attacks in Tashkent had been affiliated with this cell and reportedly received orders from the movement’s leadership in Pakistan. [4]

The Mujahideen of Central Asia, with its specific “Uzbek” and “Kazakh” branches and its style of leadership with orders sent from a command group in Pakistan, appears to be a prototype of the way the TIP and JaK operate today. The TIP and JaK represent their respective homelands, take orders from leaders based in Afghanistan-Pakistan, and cooperate on operations. If the IMU returns to the focus on Ferghana it had under Tahir Yuldash, then it may once again carry out attacks in the name of an Islamic Caliphate based in Uzbekistan, if not Tajikistan and Kazakhstan as well.

Looking Ahead To 2014

In 2014, nine provinces in northern Afghanistan are scheduled to come under Afghan government control as American and NATO forces withdraw. In December of the same year, Islam Karimov will be 76-years old and preparing for “re-election” or a transfer of power in December, possibly passing the presidency along to his Harvard-educated daughter, 39-year-old Gulnara Karimova, or the current head of the Senate, Ilgizar Sobirov. Karimov pushed through amendments to the Uzbek Constitution in 2011 that appointed the head of the Senate to the position of head of state in the event that the president is no longer able to carry out his duties. However, if Karimov is “unable to carry out his duties,” he will still be able to run the country from behind the scenes as a “senator-for-life” or hold sway over his potential successor, Sobirov, who is from Khorezm, a remote province with a traditionally weak power base in government (Uznews.net, March 23, 2011).

In light of the protests over fraudulent elections in Russia in 2011 and political upheavals of the Arab Spring, any move by Karimov towards hereditary succession, a “for-show” election, or “Putin-like” governance from behind-the-scenes will contravene trends in both the Islamic world and Russia and provide recruiting ammunition for the IMU. At the same time, a genuine democratic transition could result in a period of instability, which, together with the departure of American forces from northern Afghanistan, could make Uzbekistan vulnerable to terrorist attacks. The IMU could exploit these circumstances to return to northern Afghanistan and launch a terror campaign against Uzbekistan.

One other possibility exists. In 2014 Kyrgyzstan will shut down American access to Manas airbase. The United States may search for a new way to project power in Central Asia and Uzbekistan, currently a vital part of the Northern Distribution Network and the former host of an American air base in Qarshi, is a possible partner (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, November 14, 2011). If this occurs, the IMU’s reorientation toward its “homeland” will simply be a matter of following American forces from Afghanistan to Central Asia.

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Notes:

1. Based on its claims of responsibility for these attacks, the IJG/ IJU was proscribed by the UN the following year. See Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, 1267/1989, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE11905E.shtml>.

2.

See http://furqon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=195:-1432-2011-&catid=1:2011-08-26-10-42-51.

3. A video link is available

at: <http://jihadology.net/2011/10/15/%E1%B9%A3awt-al-islam-media-foundation-presents-a-new-video-message-from-the-amir-of-%E1%B8%A5izb-al-islami-al-turkistani-turkistan-islamic-party-shaykh-%E2%80%98abd-al-shakur-damala-on-the-occas/>

4. See Steinberg, Guido. A Turkish al-Qaeda: The Islamic Jihad Union and the Internationalization of Uzbek Jihadism, Strategic Insights, Center for Contemporary Conflicts. July 2008.

Jund al-Khilafa Operations Expand in Kazakhstan

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By: Jacob Zenn

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=38789

Jund al-Khilafa (JaK) has carried out a string of deadly attacks within Kazakhstan since October. While JaK has come no closer to achieving its goal of bringing down the government of Nursultan Nazarbayev and creating an Islamic state, it has rattled Kazakhstan in a way that the country has never experienced. Attacks on policemen and clashes with security forces are occurring with increased frequency.

A December 3 shootout in Boraldai village outside of Almaty highlights the type of threat JaK poses in Kazakhstan. Five members of a JaK cell, including the leader, and two Kazakh Special Forces soldiers were killed in a night raid on the cell's safe-house after the terrorists refused to surrender despite being outmanned and outgunned. The members of the cell were responsible for killing two Almaty police officers in the same village in a roadside shooting on November 8 and were planning new attacks in Almaty (Tengrinews, December 5). This cell may also have been involved in a similar November 11 shooting in which two police officers in Almaty were killed (Central Asia Online, November 11).

In the JaK statement issued three days after the Boraldai village shootout, the group said "We are ready to be killed in the thousands in order to support [Islam], and losing our lives is a cheap price that we pay for this cause." As in previous statements, JaK taunted "the apostate forces of the Nazarbayev regime" that JaK says "attacked a base where the five lions of the al-Zahir Baybars Battalion of Jund al Khilafa were gathered..." [1]

The composition of the Boraldai village cell resembles the cell of Maksat Kariyev, a former expert rifleman in the Kazakh army who went on a two-hour drug-induced murderous rampage in Taraz on November 12. He killed five security officers, one gun-shop guard, and himself in a suicide explosion that took out one police commander. Kariyev's cell was comprised of six to seven members and had a spiritual leader (Tengrinews, November 30; RFE/RL, November 30).

Jund al Khilafa issued a statement praising Kariyev's "martyrdom" four days after his attack (ansar1.info, November 16). The speed with which JaK released the statements about Kariyev's attack and the Boraldai village shootout and the accurate details they contained show that the JaK leaders based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region are well informed about the operations of JaK cells in Kazakhstan.

Kariyev's attack, however, was planned within Kazakhstan. After six members of Kariyev's cell were arrested in mid-November, the investigation showed that the spiritual mentor and other cell members had drawn up the attack plans for Kariyev and purchased and stored the RPG-26 grenade launcher, RGD-5 grenade, Makarov pistol and two sawed-off shotguns that Kariyev used in the attack (Tengrinews, November 30).

In contrast, the JaK leadership provided direct instructions for an ultimately botched October 31 operations to a cell in Atyrau from their base near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The cell members were only responsible for buying the components for the explosives in local pharmacies, assembling the bombs, and carrying out the attacks according to JaK's orders (Interfax [Astana], November 9).

The operation in Atyrau failed when one bomb detonated without effect in a garbage can and the other device blew up the militant before he reached his target. This was perhaps a reflection of the fact that the attackers in Atyrau were radicalized Muslims with no previous military experience. They had connected to JaK only after they independently decided to carry out a terrorist attack. JaK may have selected more experienced militants like Kariyev if the plan had originated with the JaK's leadership.

JaK has shattered the idea that Kazakhstan can continue to remain insulated from the violence 1,000 miles south in Afghanistan and across the Caspian Sea in the North Caucasus. In December 2006, Kazakh security forces dismantled Hizb ut-Tahrir's (HuT) networks and seized computers, printing presses and 25,000 pamphlets belonging to HuT (Interfax-Kazakhstan, December 22, 2006). In November 2006, Kazakh authorities arrested eleven people from the terrorist cell Stepnogorsk Jama'at, which was planning hostage sieges, explosions, and robberies to fund attacks on state officials (Izvestiya Kazakhstan, December 26, 2007). From 2007 to 2011, there were no major terrorist attacks in the country despite Nazarbayev's policies of restricting religion and maintaining authoritarian control of the country's politics and resources.

As JaK's violent spree shows, Kazakhstan can no longer remain unaffected by regional geopolitics for several reasons:

- The havens in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region provide the JaK leadership with the operational space and connections to plan attacks with the Taliban, conduct media campaigns and recruit new fighters. In addition, many Kazakh students now in Pakistan have become radicalized and if they return home they could present a long-term threat to the country (Tengrinews, October 20).
- The Arab Spring has made secular autocracies in the Muslim world more vulnerable by destroying the myth of their invincibility. The JaK said in an October 21 statement that the Nazarbayev regime would follow Tunisia, Egypt and Libya because of Nazarbayev's anti-Muslim policies (*Noviy Regyon* [Moscow], October 26). [2]
- Kyrgyzstan's weak internal security can be exploited by Kazakh terrorists as a means to smuggle weapons into the country. Kazakh terrorists may also be able to hold meetings and hideout in Kyrgyz territory without coming under the surveillance of Kazakh authorities (*Kabar* [Bishkek], November 14).
- The North Caucasus has become a source of Salafist influence in Kazakhstan, especially in the Western part of the country where Atyrau is located. Said Buryatsky (a.k.a Aleksandr Tikhomirov), the late Russian-born Islamic convert who became a jihadi ideologue in the North Caucasus before he was killed in a Russian special operation last year, served as the source of inspiration for the Atyrau cell (Tengrinews, November 9). In the JaK message after the Boraldai village shootout, the group blamed Russia for "the repression of the Kazakh people."

Given the geopolitical factors surrounding JaK's rise, the group is unlikely to fade away like the Stepnogorsk cell or lose influence like Hizb ut-Tahrir five years ago. Rather, Jund al Khilafa will likely continue attacks on Kazakhstan security forces similar to those carried out by the Kariyev cell and the Boraldai village cell.

Notes:

1. <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/jund-al-khilc481fah-22on-the-death-of-five-of-its-members-in-the-state-of-almaty-kazakhstan22.pdf>
2. For the video, see: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xly24k_yyyyyyyyyy-yyyyyyyyyy_news#from=embediframe

“By the Hands of Men Who Don’t Fear Death” – Jund al-Khilafa Launches Islamist Insurgency in Kazakhstan

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By: Jacob Zenn

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=38701

Since the Kazakh militant group Jund al-Khilafa (Army of the Caliphate) released videos in September and October of two attacks that it claimed to have led against U.S. forces in Afghanistan, the group has risen to prominence on the international jihad scene. The group’s three Kazakh founders, Rinat Khabidolla, Urynbasar Munatov and Damir Znaliyev may have been among numerous foot soldiers in the Haqqani network’s foreign legions, but their savvy in using the internet to promote jihad in Kazakhstan has brought significant attention to their cause (*Tribune* [Astana], November 9). Already Jund al-Khalifa ranks with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP)/ East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as one of the most prominent indigenous Central Asian jihadi organizations. In fact Jund al-Khilafa, which claims to have 90 percent Kazakh fighters, may be a sub-unit of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (Tengrinews, November 2).

In a statement posted on the Ansar al-Mujahideen Islamic Forum on November 17, Jund al-Khilafa lashed out against President Nazarbayev’s policies to close down mosques and his pawning to Russian interests in the country, governmental corruption, and the torture of Muslims in Kazakh prisons. [1] In an earlier October 21 video statement, Jund al-Khilafa threatened to “make a move” against the government if it “insisted on its position” with regard to laws forbidding prayer in public institutions and the wearing of headscarves (*Noviy Regyon* [Moscow], October 26). Through statements focusing on domestic Muslim concerns, Jund al-Khalifa has portrayed itself as the legitimate representative of jihad against the Kazakh State, while the two videos of attacks in Afghanistan have won the group credibility internationally.

When Jund al-Khilafa released the video on October 26, it had still never conducted or claimed an attack on Kazakh soil. But within one week of the video, on October 31, one attacker blew himself up next to an apartment building and another bomb was detonated in a garbage can in Atyrau (Tengrinews, November 1). Jund al-Khilafa claimed credit for the explosions and provided a statement on November 1 saying, “We deny that the last attack was made by a suicide bomber. It looks like the bomb exploded accidentally causing the martyr death of the carrier... Both of these blasts were just warnings for the government and we intentionally did not aim for deaths and injuries, as we don't want to harm a lot of people” (Tengrinews, November 1).

The “martyr” was identified as a 23-year old resident of Atyrau, and on November 7, three other men were also arrested in the *oblysy* (province, from the Russian *oblast*). The provincial prosecutor’s office alleged that the cell responsible for the

explosions was formed in 2009 under the influence of Russian-born Islamic convert Said Buryatsky (a.k.a. Alexander Tichomirov) and received orders to carry out the October 31 explosions from Jund al-Khilafa leaders based in Afghanistan (Tengrinews, November 9). Atyrau is an oil hub in the western part of Kazakhstan directly across the Caspian Sea from the North Caucasus where Buryatskiy made his name as a jihadi leader before Russian forces killed him in 2010 (see *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, March 11, 2010). That Atyrau was the site of the October 31 attack may be symptomatic of growing extremism in the *oblysy*. 90 percent of the province's 8,000 practicing Muslims, are believed to be between the ages of 13 and 30, and 70% of the young people are influenced by Salafism (Tengrinews, November 17).

If the October 31 attack was the work of Jund al Khalifat, its failure may point to the group's inexperience. However, Jund al-Khilafa will have support from their jihadi allies in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region to hone their operational capabilities. The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), which represents Uyghur Muslims fighting Han Chinese rule in Xinjiang, frequently claimed credit for attacks in China that it had nothing to do with when it first appeared in online statements and videos in 2008, but by October 2011 the TIP had succeeded in striking Xinjiang several times with deadly terror attacks carried out by militants who had trained in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.

The Taliban has accused Kazakhstan of "protecting American interests instead of taking into account the aspirations of their people and the regional interests" and called for Kazakhs to "stand against this wrong policy of their rulers" (*China Daily*, May 22). This statement is but one indication that the Taliban will aid Jund al-Khilafa in fighting the Nursultan Nazarbayev regime in Kazakhstan.

Jund al-Khilafa claimed another strike on November 12, this time in the eastern city of Taraz, which lies along the Kazakh border with Kyrgyzstan. In a two-hour noon-time rampage, a 34-year-old former senior rifleman in the Kazakh army, M.K. Kariyev, hijacked a car by threatening the driver with a gun; robbed arms from a gun shop, killing a shopper and a guard in the process; stole a police car by killing two special security police officers and taking their Kalashnikov and Makarov guns; drove home to pick up an RPG-26 grenade launcher; then drove to the regional office of the National Security Committee (NSC – the post-Soviet successor to the KGB) and launched one shot from the grenade launcher and several shots from automatic weapons at the walls of the building. At this point Kariyev drove away and shot and wounded two more policemen before he was finally wounded by police in a shootout. When a commander arrived to seize Kariyev, he blew himself up killing the commander as well. In total, there were five killed, besides Kariyev (Tengrinews, November 13).

Jund al-Khilafa said in a statement the day after the attack that, "In Taraz, you saw with your own eyes what one soldier did to you, and Insha'Allah you will see horrors by the hands of men who don't fear death and give their souls easily to support the religion of Islam and defend the honor of the Muslims" (ansari.info,

November 16).

There is no denying that there is a terror problem in Kazakhstan. Kariyev's attack in Taraz followed a string of violent incidents in the country, including:

- The country's first-ever suicide bombing when an attacker entered the NSC headquarters in the northwestern city of Aktobe on May 17, killing himself and two others. In this incident the government blamed the attack on "mafia" grudges against the Security Bureau (Eurasianet, May 17)."
- The government ruled out terrorism in a May 24 nighttime car bombing outside the NSC headquarters in Almaty that killed the driver and a passenger and for a June 30 incident in which two police officers were murdered in a village 250 km from Aktobe (Central Asia Today, May 24).
- The government arrested more than 20 terror suspects with links to terrorists in Pakistan in an October 31 operation in Atyrau (Tengrinews, September 2).
- On November 12, one day before Kariyev's attack, a bomb killed one person and injured several others when it exploded next to the Taraz *oblysy* administration building. Several other explosions were reported throughout the city on the same day (Tengrinews, November 12).

Jund al-Khilafa is well positioned to take credit for all of the violence in Kazakhstan because of its online monopoly of the Kazakh jihad. It hopes that attacking state institutions will trigger an Arab Spring type of revolution in Kazakhstan. In its October 26 statement, Jund al-Khilafa said, "Know that the policy that you [Nazarbayev] are following is the same that was applied in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt; however, as you have seen, it only caused loss to those who exercised it."

If Nazarbayev cannot maintain stability in Kazakhstan, then even the majority of religiously non-affiliated Kazakhs may question the purpose of his two-decade rule, which, like Mubarak's Egypt, has been characterized by the trade-off of people giving up democratic rights for the stability provided by dictatorship. Whereas the Arab Spring was triggered by liberal secularists and then taken advantage of by Islamists, in Kazakhstan the Islamists may trigger the leader's downfall, though it may be the moderate Kazakh citizenry that reaps the spoils.

Note: [1] <http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?p=132853#post132853>.

Jihad in China? Marketing the Turkistan Islamic Party

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By: Jacob Zenn

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=37662

Since its creation in 2008, the Uyghur-based Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) has vowed to carry out jihad against the Chinese occupiers of Xinjiang, the massive western province of China that is known to its Muslim inhabitants as East Turkistan. While evidence of actual operations in China is slight and the movement appears to remain confined to its training camps in tribal Pakistan, the TIP has tried to reach out to the larger Islamic world through a sophisticated and glossy internet magazine, Islamic Turkistan.

All eight editions of Islamic Turkistan have been written exclusively in the Arabic language. Thus, the intended readership is not the Muslims of Turkistan. The majority of Muslims in Xinjiang Province are Uyghurs who speak a Turkic language unrelated to Arabic, but there are also significant numbers of other Muslim Turkic peoples in Xinjiang, such as Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Kyrgyz, few of whom read or speak Arabic aside from the Islamic clergy and scholars. The only non-Arabic text in the entire publication is in the TIP's logo, where the Arabic, Uyghur, and English names of the movement are inscribed around two swords and a Koran.

The content of the magazine is not intended for Muslims in China either. For example, the sixth, seventh and eighth editions of Islamic Turkistan feature articles titled, "Get to Know the Muslims in China." The installment in the sixth edition introduces the Dungan minority group (commonly known as "Hui" in Mandarin and English) and reviews the history of the Dungan Muslims in China, from the first delegation of Arabs who brought Islam to the "Sultanate of Dunganstan" in 651 C.E. to the present. The magazine addresses the important question of why China's large Hui community has shied from joining the jihad. The author blames several "historical" factors for why "we don't see any groups or individuals from the Dungan in jihad." These factors include:

- Using the same language as the "infidel Chinese."
 - Calling the land of China home.
 - The absence of Islamic movements calling for Dungan/Hui independence.
 - The ability of China to manipulate the Muslim Uyghurs and the Dungan/Hui into being enemies for over three centuries.
 - The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood on the Dungan/Hui in the 1950s and 1960s which caused them not to participate in jihad activities.
- What Happened to Abd al-Haq al-Turkistani?

Notably, the most recent issues of Islamic Turkistan do not discuss the death of Abd al-Haq al-Turkistani, the TIP leader killed by a U.S. drone strike in North Waziristan in February 2010 (see *Terrorism Monitor*, March 11, 2010). Although these editions include articles dated after his death and the seventh edition even features a speech by al-Turkistani, the editors have deliberately chosen not to include a story about his death in the section “Our Martyrs” or anywhere else in the magazine.

Since its inaugural issue in July 2008, al-Turkistani was featured prominently in Islamic Turkistan. Abdullah Mansour wrote an article in the first issue, stating that al-Turkistani became the military commander of the TIP after former leader Hamad Mahsum was killed by Pakistani forces in 2003. In the same issue, al-Turkistani wrote the concluding article, “Save Turkistan before It’s Too Late,” warning of the threat to Islam in Xinjiang and chastising Muslims elsewhere for turning a blind eye to the region’s Muslims. [1] The second, third and fourth editions of Islamic Turkistan contained a three article-series on al-Turkistani’s life. The third article in the series, “Interview with Brother Abd al-Haq, Emir of the Turkistani Islamic Party,” details al-Turkistani’s life in Kabul in 2001 and his retreat into Waziristan after 9/11 and the fall of the Taliban. It is unclear why the sixth and seventh editions do not say who succeeded al-Turkistani as TIP’s new leader or provide information on his death, but the TIP’s inability to carry out attacks against China or U.S. forces in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region to avenge him may provide the reason for the silence on this major setback to the group.

The TIP and the Islamic World

The language and content of Islamic Turkistan show that the main purpose of the publication is to introduce TIP ideology to the Arabic-speaking global jihadist community and, possibly, to attract funding from the sympathizers in the ummah, al-Qaeda, or the Taliban. The publication is less about presenting the group’s militant achievements and qualifications than other jihadist publications, presumably because there is no evidence that TIP has ever carried out a successful attack in China, despite TIP claims in videos released in 2008 that it had coordinated three bus bombings before the 2008 Beijing Olympics. China often blames demonstrations and violence in Xinjiang on Muslim and Uyghur “splittists” and “terrorists,” but China has not offered credible evidence to justify its claims.

Paradoxically, claims of terrorism by the TIP and the Chinese government – whether true or not – can benefit both parties. The war against terrorism allows the Chinese government to justify its heavy-handed policies to suppress Uyghur activism in Xinjiang while crediting the TIP for violence it was not responsible for enhances the TIP’s jihadi resume.

A selection of articles from Islamic Turkistan’s seventh issue gives some idea of the publication’s mix of religious inspiration, jihadi ideology and ethnic

nationalism:

- The editorial is called “The Heart of the Thief is Trembling” and talks about China’s plans to build 30 airports in East Turkistan, claiming the expansion in air facilities is due to China’s internal and external security concerns rather than to further the prosperity of the region: “The thieves of the land are afraid of their safety, therefore they plan to protect themselves.” The writer predicts that China will replace America as the global superpower after America collapses, but warns the “Chinese aggressors” that the TIP will continue to wage jihad against China for the sake of the people in the region.

- “Turkistan Seeks Help...Is There a Supporter?” is based on a lecture given in Afghanistan by Shaykh Abu Mohammed al-Turkistani (Abdul Haq al-Turkistani), who reminds listeners of the importance of being prepared for fighting both spiritually and externally. Al-Haq gives an introduction to Turkistan’s geography and its wealth and resources. He says (incorrectly) that Turkistan is the second biggest oil-producing region in the world. The final paragraph is about the war against Muslims in Turkistan to end the region’s Islamic identity and annihilate the mujahideen. This is what he says gave rise to the emergence of the Turkistani Islamic Party in May 1988.

- "Get to know Muslims in China" focuses on the religious, ethnic and historical ties between the Muslims of East Turkistan and Kazakhs. It highlights the failure of the Chinese rule to sow discord between Uyghurs and Kazakhs despite the oppression of Muslims in Central Asia.

- "The Commandment of the Martyr Abdullah Azzam," is a reminder to all that jihad is a duty for every Muslim. "Your life is jihad...Your pride is in al-jihad...Your existence is closely linked to Jihad." The Jordanian-Palestinian jihad ideologue and spiritual founder of al-Qaeda Abdullah Azzam recommended that Muslim scholars, women and children focus on the religious duty of Jihad.

Profiling Martyrs

A regular feature in Islamic Turkistan is “Our Martyrs,” which profiles TIP fighters killed in action. The most recent issue profiles the martyr Abdul Salaam. According to the article, Abdul Salaam’s original name was Roz Mohammed and he was born in 1985 in the city of Lop in the state of Xotan, Xinjiang Province. He grew up with a loving, Muslim family who wanted him to become a scholar. After primary school his family took him to Pakistan on their way to the Hajj. He entered a school in Lahore where he trained in reciting the Koran, but did not finish his education after hearing the call of jihad in Afghanistan in 1999 from Abu Mohamed, leader of the TIP. Abdul Salaam then went to Kabul to study at the School of Hijra and Jihad, which was for Turkistanis. There he obtained training in weapons that were prohibited in China.

By 2001, Abdul Salaam was at a camp in Tora Bora with Arabs and fellow Turkistanis. His camp was hit by U.S. airstrikes on October 7, 2001. Some of his

“brothers” were killed in that battle but he still participated in the fight against the Americans and their local allies. When the mujahideen withdrew over the border into Pakistan they were captured because a Shi’a tribe in Bujnar, Pakistan betrayed them. According to the account, the government of Pakistan sold the prisoners to the Americans, though Abdul Salaam was placed in a Pakistani prison because of his young age until he was released with the help of tribal leaders. The young jihadi then joined the TIP in Khorasan [i.e. the tribal regions of northwest Pakistan] and trained with the mujahideen there, remaining with them even when many fighters abandoned the jihad after the fall of the Taliban’s Emirate of Afghanistan.

Abdul Leith (presumably Abu Laith al-Libi, d. 2008, is intended here) asked TIP leader Abdul Haq if Abdul Salaam could join him. The two then became like father and son and Abdul Leith said, “Among a couple of the trainees Abdul Salaam was young, fast in his movements, and keen in his training.” Abdul Salaam joined Abdul Leith in many battles before he considered fighting against the Communists in Turkistan. He was well trained in the use of man-portable surface-to-air missiles and in 2007 invented a modification to improve their performance. However, the second time the modified weapon was used it exploded, killing the shooter and fatally wounding Abdul Salaam, who was videotaping the launch. His wife was pregnant when he died and delivered his son two months later. The profile concluded by noting Abdul Salaam is regarded as an example for all Muslims

Conclusion

As a 50-plus page magazine written in Arabic with detailed color graphics and a diverse array of historical, religious, and current events articles, Islamic Turkistan is as sophisticated as other leading jihadi publications, such as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula’s English language jihadi journal, Inspire. In some ways, the two publications are similar. They both feature martyrdom biographies, interviews with prominent jihadis, and religious justification for their jihad.

However, there are also important differences. Whereas Inspire is written in English for an international audience and with the intent of attracting recruits from the West, Islamic Turkistan is aimed neither at the West nor the Uyghur and other Turkic-language speaking Muslims it purportedly represents in Turkistan. The magazine tries to position the struggle in Xinjiang and Central Asia as part of the global jihad movement on a par with Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Unlike Inspire, which provides specific details on bomb-making, Islamic Turkistan focuses on familiarizing the readership with the struggles of Xinjiang’s Muslims and the reasons for TIP’s jihad against Communist China, but the publication does not provide lessons on how to carry out militant operations. As there have been no confirmed attacks in China attributed to or inspired by the TIP, the publication cannot be considered effective on an operational level.

With eight issues released between July 2008 and March 2011, the effort to produce Islamic Turkistan is evidently worth the time, even though the TIP has not gained traction in Xinjiang and Central Asia or become a strategic concern for the Chinese government. For now, the only benefit achieved through publication may be that it puts the TIP on the radar of funders who support insurgency movements in northwest Pakistan and builds the TIP's reputation as a legitimate international jihad movement.

Note:

1. Kirk Sowell, "Promoting Jihad Against China: The Turkistani Islamic Party in Arabic Jihadist Media," An Independent Report Commissioned by Sky News. August 1, 2010.

MILITANT LEADERSHIP MONITOR – Personalities Behind the Insurgency

A Portrait of Uzbekistan's Dissident Cleric In Exile: Obidhon Nazarov

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http://mlm.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=40260&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=539&cHash=1535ac6bf65696b093e2cbf33a4871do



Supporters of Nazarov following an attempt on his life (Fergana News)

Obidhon Nazarov, an Uzbek imam, was shot in front of his home in the Swedish town of Sundsvall on February 22. Since then, he has been in a coma. The gunman, who Swedish investigators identified as Yuriy Zhukovskiy, was arrested by the police in Russia. He reportedly had in his possession passports of the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan (Fergananeews.com, October 17). The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) detained him at the request of their Swedish counterparts and Zhukovskiy's extradition to Sweden is currently being arranged (*Expressen* [Stockholm], October 13).

A married Uzbek couple, Bahodir Pulatov and Nodira Aminova, were accused of aiding Zhukovsky in the attempted assassination; however, there was not enough evidence to prove their guilt and the Uzbek couple was set free by a court in Stromsund (Fergananeews.com, October 17).

Tulkin Karaev, an Uzbek journalist and refugee, told Jamestown from the Swedish city of Timro on December 11 that "most Uzbek refugees in Sweden are sure that Yuriy Jukovskiy, Bahodir Pulatov and Nodira Aminova were hired for this 'job' by the Uzbek intelligence service." Karaev explained "Obidhon Nazarov is a very serious enemy of Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov...he does not have enemies except for Uzbekistan's authorities." [1]

Nazarov, a famous imam and dissident from Uzbekistan, was born in 1958 in Namangan, a city in Uzbekistan's part of the Ferghana Valley. Notably, Namangan is also the hometown of the leaders of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Tahir Yuldashev and Juma Namangani. From 1980 to 1984, Nazarov studied at the Islam Institute in Tashkent, which prepared imams. From 1985 to 1990, he was the imam of the Tilla Shaykh mosque in Tashkent and in 1990 he became imam of the Tukhtaboi mosque—the main mosque in Tashkent. [2]

Over one thousand Muslims used to meet in the 1990s in the Tukhtaboi mosque to listen to Nazarov's preaching. Recordings of his sermons, which the authorities have outlawed, are still being distributed throughout Uzbekistan. [3]

Uzbekistan's former chief mufti, Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, generally considered to be independent of President Karimov, told Jamestown that Nazarov could be identified as "a typical representative of a new generation of Uzbekistan's imams [who operate] independently of the authorities." [4] Yusuf explained, "During the Soviet period, imams unquestioningly obeyed all orders of the communist authorities. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, most imams kept obeying the government of Uzbekistan, but some imams turned out to be independent of the official authorities. Obidkhon Nazarov was the most famous among the independent imams."

According to Yusuf, Nazarov is one of the so-called "Wahhabis." "Mr. Nazarov has very good connections with Saudi Arabian theologians; he regularly visited Saudi Arabia. He wants to spread the Saudi Arabian version of Islam, in spite of the fact that Uzbeks traditionally follow Sufi Islam; but it does not follow from this that he is a terrorist," said Yusuf. [5]

The first "Wahhabis" appeared in Central Asia at the beginning of *perestroika*—the movement toward political reform of the Soviet Union and Communist Party, begun in the 1980s under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Islamic preachers from Arab countries set off for the Soviet Union's Muslim regions and provided young Muslims from Central Asian republics their first chance to study in religious schools in Muslim countries. [6]

Wahhabism strives for what it regards as an Islam purified of later additions and innovations. It rejects the veneration of holy places and construction of expensive gravestones, seeing this as idolatry. Strictly speaking, the movement is linked to the Hanbali *madhhab* (school) of Sunni Islam, which has become the official faith of Saudi Arabia. However, it would be quite a stretch to say that the Central Asian "Wahhabis" are actually adherents of this current in Islam. Rather, the label "Wahhabi" is widely used as a term of abuse for devout Muslims in Central Asia. It is most often applied to anyone who criticizes the official clergy; but these "Wahhabist" individuals are not homogenous and they make up various groups of Muslims that generally differ significantly from each other.

“To be more accurate, the so-called ‘Wahhabis’ are Salafists [a collective term for Muslim religious leaders who, at various periods in history, have called on people to return to the faith and way of life of the early Muslim community] or fundamentalists,” Akbar Turadjonzoda, the *qadi* (Islamic judge) of Tajikistan and one of the leaders of Tajikistan’s opposition, told Jamestown in 1998. [7]

Nevertheless, while he was active, Nazarov has voiced views that are typical of the Hanbali *madhhab*. In 2006, Nazarov told Jamestown that he strongly opposed the veneration of holy places and favored a ban on music at weddings. He also expressed his belief that women should wear the *paranja* (a full-length robe designed to completely hide the outline of a woman’s body). Furthermore, Nazarov believes that Muslims should live in an Islamic (non-secular) state. [8]

In Sweden, Nazarov has taught refugees from Uzbekistan not to allow their children to attend music and physical education classes in school. He believes that Western music is sinful. Furthermore, according to Nazarov, Uzbek children—as Muslims—cannot attend physical education lessons in Sweden because students there wear shorts and t-shirts (Fergananeews.com, March 6).

Nazarov was forced to leave Uzbekistan to avoid arrest in 1998, after publicly criticizing the authorities’ decision to ban beards and the *hijab*. Authorities in Uzbekistan arrested several of his relatives and one of his sons disappeared without a trace. Nazarov himself was accused *in absentia* of undermining Uzbekistan’s constitutional order and was denounced as a leader of the country’s Wahhabis.

In exile in Sweden, Nazarov continued to criticize the Karimov regime. Additionally, Muslim Uzbeks from Europe as well as the United States regularly visited the imam. Each Saturday and Sunday began with a sermon in the community along with discussions on the political situation and methods of political struggle against the regime in Uzbekistan (Fergananeews.com, October 17).

Nazarov maintains a website where he strongly criticizes Uzbekistan’s authorities. CDs featuring Imam Nazarov’s sermons, in which he preaches against the Karimov regime, are also illegally distributed in Uzbekistan. “Obviously Obidhon Nazarov is not just a religious activist, but a very influential politician. He is the political leader of all religious Uzbeks, and his elimination is very beneficial for the Karimov regime,” journalist Tulkin Karaev told Jamestown in October. [9]

Because Nazarov was born in Namangan and has a lot of relatives there, it is likely that he was familiar with some members of the IMU. Yet, according to Karaev, although Obidhon Nazarov never criticized the IMU, he has condemned any violent activity against the Karimov regime. So unlike the IMU, Nazarov unites Muslims who want to establish an Islamic state in Uzbekistan by peaceful

methods. “There were two wings in the Uzbek Islamic opposition: a peaceful [wing], which was led by Imam Nazarov and the IMU, [which] fought against the regime with arms,” Karaev told Jamestown. [10] After the attempted elimination of Nazarov, and especially if he does not awake from his coma, many heretofore peaceful Islamists may now switch their support to the more extreme IMU.

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Notes

1. Tulkin Karaev, interview by author, Timro, Sweden, December 11.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, interview by author, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, June 2006.
5. Ibid.
6. Igor Rotar, “Under the Green Banner: Islamic Radicals in Russia and the Former Soviet Union,” *Religion, State & Society* 30(2), June 2002.
6. Akbar Turadjonzoda, interview by author, 1998.
7. Obidhon Nazarov, phone interview by author, October 2006.
8. Tulkin Karaev, interview by author, Timro, Sweden, October 24.
9. Tulkin Karaev, interview by author, Timro, Sweden, December 11.

A Post-Mortem Analysis of Turkistani Amir Emeti Yakuf: A Death that Sparked More Questions than Answers

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http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=40043



Emeti Yakuf (Ministry of Public Security, People's Republic of China)

In late August, a series of drone strikes in Northern Waziristan were reported to have killed a number of jihadist leaders. Most media attention focused on the possible demise of Badruddin Haqqani, son of the fabled mujahedeen leader, with conflicting reports about whether he had died or not. Almost as an afterthought, some of the stories highlighted that the strikes were believed to have also killed Emeti Yakuf, the current leader of the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) (Dawn, August 24). This overshadowed death reflected the generally low profile that TIP is often given amongst jihadist groups, and highlighted once again the difficulties in obtaining information about the mysterious China-focused terrorist organization.

Emeti Yakuf first achieved prominence in the wake of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when the Chinese Ministry of Public Security (MPS) published a list of eight individuals it identified as members of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM). [1] Considered by the government as a “key member” of the organization, he was reported to also use the aliases Aibu Adubureheman and Saifula. According to Chinese MPS information, he was born on March 14, 1965, and was reported to have fled Xinjiang for “a South Asian country” (believed to be Pakistan) in November 1996. Once there, he is believed to have risen rapidly in the ranks of the organization and by 1998 was a leader in the group. By 2001, he was directing operations, recruiting individuals and generally serving the organization in a leadership role (Xinhua, October 21, 2008).

He moved into a new role of orchestrating attacks against China starting with the Beijing Olympics in 2008. A year before the Olympics, Chinese authorities believe he dispatched a team of ten from his base in Pakistan to carry out poisonings and bombings against Chinese citizens within and beyond China. During the Olympics, he is believed to have been the “Commander Seyfullah” figure who was responsible for a series of videos that directly threatened the Olympic games in Beijing. According to Chinese official claims, he “issued several

directives to his followers to conduct terrorist activities targeted at the Beijing Olympics” (Xinhua, October 21, 2008).

Around this time he was allegedly in contact with extremists in Norway as well. In these communications that were overheard by Norwegian authorities, he purportedly identified Mikael Davud, a Uyghur-Norwegian citizen who was arrested two years later, as the leader of an Oslo-based cell that was apparently plotting to carry out an unspecified attack under direction from Rashid Rauf and other senior members of al-Qaeda (VG, July 30, 2010). This was the same network of cells that included Najibullah Zazi’s aborted attempt to attack New York’s subway system in 2009; it is unclear, however, whether he was involved in that plot at all. [2] Whilst under interrogation, Davud claimed to be planning to target the Chinese Embassy in Oslo, and his Uyghur heritage makes the ETIM (or Turkistan Islamic Party, TIP, as they were by now identifying themselves) connection likely, the plot seemed to be something that was in fact directed by the al-Qaeda core. But it is worth bearing in mind other factors going on at this time. In May 2011, another prominent TIP member, Abu Sakoor Turkistani, was promoted to assume control over al-Qaeda’s operations in Pakistan. He played a key interlocutor role directing operations for the group, as well as being the amir of the Uyghur contingent in Pakistan. [3]

Additional reinforcement of Yakuf’s importance is his appearance as the seemingly key individual in a recording that the organization released in the wake of the July 2009 riots in Urumqi. Published with an Arabic transcript, the audio recording by Yakuf (using his title Commander Seyfullah) threatens revenge for Han Chinese actions in the province, calling them “genocide.” What is interesting about this recording is that it was released through the Al-Fajr Media Center, in contrast to the numerous videos that the organization released around the Olympics the year before which were for the most part released via YouTube. The Al-Fajr stamp suggests an official al-Qaeda imprimatur. Given the fact that now defunct al-Qaeda ideologue Abu Yahya al-Libi released a long video in October 2009 calling attention to the Uyghurs’ plight in China, it seems possible to conclude that the rioting in Urumqi seems to have acted as a catalyst that the TIP profited from to draw the organization closer to al-Qaeda.

Timings here are useful to note, as it seems that Mikael Davud, the Uyghur-Norwegian, was in Waziristan during this time. Whilst Davud is reported to have trained at a separate camp from the other members of the network that Rashid Rauf and others were directing to carry out attacks in New York and northern England, he was in contact once he was back in Oslo with the same “Ahmad” who was acting as the point of contact for the U.K. and U.S. cells. According to court documents, Davud returned to Scandinavia in October 2009. [4] One thesis is that in the wake of the closer alignment between TIP and al-Qaeda, the TIP might have offered its European passport-bearing recruit to al-Qaeda. Given Yakuf’s prominent role and his connections to Davud, it would not be surprising if he had played a role in this link.

Much of this, however, remains speculative conjecture at this point. In court documents that emerged from Davud's trial, there is no mention of Emeti Yakuf or Commander Sayfullah. Also, aside from the 2008 official biography provided by Chinese authorities, there is very little information about Yakuf available in the Chinese press. Further adding confusion to this picture is the fact that there is no mention of Yakuf or any of his aliases in a series of recent videos or the latest issue of *Sawt al Islam* released by TIP. Whether this is because the publications were prepared prior to his death or because he was not killed is unclear. What is interesting, however, is that the organization seems to have suddenly surged into action, publicizing itself once again. Whether this presages an assault—possibly something to coincide with the upcoming leadership transition in China—is unclear, but given the group's low record of achievement in the past few years it seems unlikely that they would suddenly be able to carry out an attack of this sort. Whether this capacity is something that has been notably reduced by the death of Yakuf is unclear, though his death will doubtless complicate TIP's connection with the al-Qaeda core, as well as further weaken both organizations' ability to launch attacks anywhere around the world.

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Notes: [1] www.mps.gov.cn/n16/n1237/n1342/n803715/1634373.html.

[2] For more on this network, please see Raffaello Pantucci 'Manchester, New York and Oslo: Three Centrally Directed al Qaeda plots,' CTC Sentinel, vol. 3, no.8, August 2010.

[3] For more on Abdul Shakoor Turkistani, please see Jacob Zenn, "Al-Qaeda's Uighur Jihadi: A Profile of the Turkistan Islamic Party's Abdul Shakoor Turkistani," *Militant Leadership Monitor*, vol. 2, no.12, December 2011.

[4] Oslo court documents, January 30, 2012.

Tajikistan's New Most Wanted: A Profile of Warlord and Narco-Trafficker

Tolib Ayombekov

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By: Igor Rotar

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Tolib Ayombekov (Source: Radio Free Europe)

On July 24, Tajikistan's government launched an operation against an illegal armed group. The special operation was initiated in reaction to the incident on July 21 when regional security chief General Abdullo Nazarov was pulled from his car, allegedly by rebel fighters, and stabbed to death as he was returning to Khorog from the Ishkashim area to the South (al-Jazeera, July 25, 2012). Tajik government helicopter gunships were strafing Khorog, the capital of the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomy (southeast Tajikistan). Twelve government personnel were killed and twenty-three injured in the day's fighting, according to officials. Government forces detained 40 rebels, including eight Afghan citizens, and killed 30 others, he said, adding that there have been no civilian casualties (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 26).

Officials blamed the killing of General Nazarov on Tolib Ayombekov, another former rebel supporter who is now Ishkashim's border-police commander. (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 25).

Background

The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province is a special region of Tajikistan. Located in the Pamir Mountains, it makes up 45 percent of the land area of the country but only 3 percent (218,000) of the population (Population of the Republic of Tajikistan as of 1 January 2008, State Statistical Committee, Dushanbe, 2008). Pamir ethnic groups essentially differ from Tajiks. There are several dialects of the Pamir language and almost all Pamir people adhere to the Ismaili sect of Shia Islam. Pamiri people are not strong believers. There are no Islamic radicals among them. The Pamiris have close linguistic, cultural and religious ties with the people in the Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan.

During the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-97), the Pamiris supported the opposition. But due to the remoteness and inaccessibility of the Pamirs (the region is connected with other parts of Tajikistan by only one road), the

government troops could not reach Gorno-Badakshan. So, this war is the first conflict to occur in Pamirs in the post-Soviet era.

Many Tajik experts are of the opinion that the murder of General Nazarov is not politically motivated but is clearly a criminal case. Moreover, these experts believe that Abdullo Nazarov and Tolib Ayombekov actually were competitors in drug smuggling. (Fergananeews.com, July 25). However, there is a danger that this criminal conflict might transform into an interregional confrontation. General Abdullo Nazarov was a Sunni Muslim from the Khatlon province in southern Tajikistan and Tolib is a Pamir Ismaili.

Tolib Ayombekov

Tolib was little-known in Tajikistan before the murder of General Nazarov. Tolib is 47 years old. He had four sons and one daughter. One of his sons was killed during the fighting in Gorno-Badahshan during the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997). Tolib was a field commander of the Tajik opposition but there is no information about his participating in any battle during the civil war.

Tolib was better known as the younger brother of a famous Pamir warlord and drug-dealer, Abdumalon Ayombekov, alias Alyosha the Hunchback. In 1993, Pamir fighters elected Abdumalon as the self-defense force commander of Pamir. De-facto, Abdumalon became the leader of Gorno-Badahshan. The author first met Abdumalon in 1993 when he covered the Tajik civil war. Abdumalon's height was not more than 160 cm, and on his back, one could see a huge hump. It was quite ironic that while this man appeared disabled, all Pamir militants unquestionably obeyed him.

During a private conversation with the author, Abdulamon did not deny his involvement in drug smuggling. He explained that he spent the smuggling money to help Pamiris. "Pamir people would be hungry without my money" he said. He also claimed that his main goal was to prevent government troops consisting of natives from the Kulyab region (Southern Tajikistan) from entering the Pamir. "If Kuliabis invade Pamir, then they will start ethnic cleansing. My task is not to let them do this," Abdulamon told the author.

Abdulamon was killed in 1993 when a mine set by unknown individuals exploded in his office. After the end of the civil war, the Tajik government appointed Tolib as a deputy of the head of the Ishkashim border patrol unit. Tolib got this position only as a result of his brother's influence. According to a source in the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, the president of Tajikistan allowed Tolib to conduct "free business" (smuggling drugs and tobacco) under the condition that he did not interfere in politics (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 24).

A Restive Region

Tolib has denied accusations that he is responsible for the murder of Nazarov and supporters have claimed that the attack was orchestrated by the government. Tension has always existed between the weak government of Tajikistan that lacks popular support, and the isolated Badakhshan Province that has always resisted the control of the central government. At the end of the civil war in 1997 many local militant leaders were given positions in their localities, wielding them political and economic power. The central government has since been working to remove these figures from their positions to regain power.

Corresponding with the existing tension, there has been a constant threat of ethnic cleansing in the Pamir which remains high. As *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* recently noted, Tajik authorities have used Nazarov's murder as an excuse to cleanse the Pamirs of former field-commanders from the Tajik opposition. According to the newspaper, the rumors that one may expect a special operation in Pamir against the remaining so-called opposition groups (the participants of the fight against the government during the civil war, 1992-1997), appeared on July 3, when the Defense Ministry of Tajikistan started military exercises "Hafiz-2012 in a neighborhood of Khorog (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 25).

Since the Pamir is connected with the other regions of Tajikistan only by one road passing through the remote, hard-to-reach, mountainous region, Pamir fighters can easily block it and cut off the region from Tajikistan. The situation is also complicated by the fact that the militants may hope for the help from Afghan Ismailis. According to the Ferghana news agency, now on the Afghan side of the mountain Badakhshan, one may watch groups of about 200 fighters who are ready to help their co-religionists in the Tajik Pamir (*Ferghananews.com*, July 25).

Many experts on Tajikistan do not believe that a real large-scale war will begin in Pamir. "Most panic articles about the situation in Pamir were published by Russian media," a famous Tajik political scientist and journalist Hairullo Mirsaidov told EDM on July 25. "Now, the Kremlin and Dushanbe are discussing the future of Russian military bases in Tajikistan and for Moscow, it is profitable to make Emomali Rahmon scared. The president of Tajikistan is planning to visit Khorog in August. He will take a lot of money and gifts. He will be able to make an agreement with the Pamir elite, and as to small military groups, they will be destroyed without a hesitation."

Analyst Igor Rotar often writes for Jamestown Foundation's Eurasia Daily Monitor. He has previously written for Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Komsomol'skaia Pravda, Izvestia, Rossia, Novie Izvestia, as well as the Forum 18 News Service.

A Mosaic of IMU Leaders, Killed or Captured in Afghanistan

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By: Jacob Zenn

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The Afghan newspaper *Arman-e-Malli* carried one of the first reports about members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) operating in Afghanistan's Kunduz province in August, 2009. In January 2010, Kunduz governor Mohammad Omar, who was assassinated seven months later in a bombing at a mosque in Takhar province, confirmed these reports when he said that the Taliban and al-Qaeda were setting up bases in Kunduz and other north-eastern provinces to prepare for attacks in Central Asia. NATO confirmed both these reports in April, 2010 when it announced that its forces had captured an unnamed IMU leader and two other IMU fighters in Kunduz.

It has become increasingly clear in 2012 that the IMU is entrenched in northern Afghanistan. There have been more than 25 operations by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Afghan army to capture IMU leaders in the country's northern provinces in the first nine months of 2012. This article profiles ten IMU leaders who have been captured or killed in northern Afghanistan since 2011.

IMU leaders

1. Qari Yahya was the IMU leader responsible for carrying out improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in Kunduz province, which were the cause of nearly half of ISAF soldier deaths in the first half of 2012 throughout Afghanistan. In addition, Qari Yahya maintained communications and logistics ties between senior IMU leaders and Taliban leaders in Qal-al-ye Zal district, Kunduz. He was killed in a joint military operation carried out by Afghan and ISAF forces in Kunduz on September 19, 2012 (Khaama Press [Kabul], September 20).

2. Nurullah Bai was an IMU leader who, like Qari Yahya, specialized in IED attacks on Afghan officials. He also ran the drug trafficking networks between Afghanistan's northeastern Badakshan province and Tajikistan. He was killed by ISAF forces in a raid on January 25, 2011 in Takhar province (ISAF News [Kabul], January 27, 2011).

3. Bilal Konduzi was the senior IMU leader and liaison between the IMU and the Taliban in Kunduz. He was killed in an ISAF air strike in Samangan province on March 11, 2011 along with Shad Mohammad, the IMU leader for Samangan (ISAF News, March 11, 2011).

4. Shad Mohammad was the IMU leader for Samangan. He was killed in an ISAF air strike in Samangan on March 11, 2011 along with Bilal Konduzi.

5. Makdum Nusrat was the highest-ranking IMU leader in Afghanistan and was responsible for attacks on Afghan and ISAF forces in northern Afghanistan beginning in mid-2011. Before his death, he was plotting the assassination of an Afghan Parliament member in Kabul. He was killed in a battle with ISAF and Afghan army in the Shirin Tagab district of Faryab province on March 26, 2012. (ISAF News [Kabul], March 27).

6. Osmani Sahib was appointed leader of the IMU after the death of Makdum Nusrat on March 26, 2012, but was killed by ISAF and Afghan forces only two weeks later on April 7 in a battle in Almar district, Faryab province, together with a number of other IMU fighters.

7. Ammar Sahib was responsible for providing weapons, ammunition, and equipment to IMU fighters in northern Afghanistan and for recruiting suicide bombers from IMU networks in Pakistan for attacks against Afghan officials. He was believed to have orchestrated the 2006 bombing of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Faryab province that killed two civilians and two members of the PRT and an April 4, 2012 suicide bombing in Maimanah, Faryab province that killed three NATO soldiers from the Ohio National Guard. He was killed a week later on April 12 in a joint ISAF and Afghan army raid in Faryab province. He had worked closely with Makdum Nusrat and Osmani Sahib (ISAF News [Kabul], April 12).

8. Ilhom was an IMU leader in Taloqan district, Takhar province, who was responsible for training suicide bombers, including the suicide bomber who carried out a December 25, 2011 attack that killed an Afghan member of parliament, Abdul Mutalib Baig, and 20 other Afghans at a funeral in Taloqan. Ilhom was captured on January 29, 2012, after his fighters attacked Afghan and ISAF forces with fragmentation grenades in Taloqan (ISAF News [Kabul], February 3)

9. Mullah Anwar was the senior IMU military leader in Burkah district, Baghlan province, and was responsible for the assassination of the Ishkamish district mayor on August 13, 2012 (Central Asia Online [Takhar], August 17). On the same day, he also orchestrated an IED attack claimed by the Taliban that killed a representative of the Afghan High Peace Council, which is responsible for negotiations with the Taliban (Pajhowk Afghan news, [Kunduz], August 13). He was killed in air strike in Takhar on August 16, 2012.

10. Qari Hamza (Khadim) was an explosives expert responsible for recruiting and training IMU fighters for suicide attacks on Afghan and Coalition forces in northern Afghanistan. He was killed by special operations forces in the Chahar Darah district of Kunduz on July 23, 2012 (ISAF News [Kabul], July 24).

There have also been several unnamed IMU leaders who have been killed or captured in northern Afghanistan, southern Afghanistan and southern Tajikistan, but whose areas of responsibility included operations in northern Afghanistan.

- An IMU commander was captured in Helmand, southern Afghanistan on February 3, 2012. He had been appointed by the Taliban to direct operations, including weapons distribution and tax collection, in Badghis and Faryab provinces in northern Afghanistan (ISAF News [Kabul], February 3).
- On March 21, 2012, Afghan and ISAF forces captured an IMU leader in Sholgarah district, Balkh province, who was responsible for running IMU training camps and facilitating the movement of IMU fighters to Samangan from training camps in Pakistan (ISAF News [Kabul], March 21).
- On May 11, 2012, a suspected regional IMU leader Zilmurod Eshonkhonov and two other fighters were arrested in southern Khatlon Province, Tajikistan, which borders Kunduz (RFE/RL [Dushanbe], May 11, 2012).

The IMU leaders in northern Afghanistan are working in coordination with the Taliban and, in many cases, on the orders of the Taliban. The operations of IMU leaders in northern Afghanistan show that the IMU is furthering the Taliban's goals in the region, in particular by assassinating Afghan government officials and attacking ISAF and Afghan forces. The Taliban is dominated by Pashtun militants and its bases and main areas of support are in southern Afghanistan, which has a majority Pashtun population. Thus, the IMU's Tajik, Uzbek and other Central Asian fighters may help the Taliban project power in the ethnically Tajik and Uzbek areas of northern Afghanistan where Pashtun fighters face greater resistance from the local population than they do in southern Afghanistan. [1]

The IMU's main leadership is still based in Pakistan, including the IMU's *mufti* (Islamic scholar) Abu Zar al-Burmi and Usman Ghazi, the current IMU leader who replaced Usman Odil in August 2012 (for al-Burmi, see Militant Leadership Monitor, November 2011; for Odil, see Militant Leadership Monitor Briefs, August 2012). These leaders do not appear to have responsibilities in Central Asia, despite the IMU's founding goal to overthrow the regimes of Central Asia, with Islam Karimov's regime in Uzbekistan as the priority, before establishing a Central Asian Islamic Caliphate. The group has mounted large-scale operations in Pakistan, such as the Bannu prison break in May, 2012 that freed Adnan Rashid, a former member of the Pakistan air force who was on death row for allegedly plotting to assassinate then-President Pervez Musharraf in 2004. With the shift of leaders to northern Afghanistan, especially those with recruiting and funding networks in southern Afghanistan and Pakistan, a number of IMU cells are returning to northern Afghanistan where they were based before the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in the months following September 2011.

Given the IMU's "indigenization" in Afghanistan, it is unclear whether it will

refocus on attacks Central Asia in the near future, or whether the IMU still has the operational connections in Central Asia to launch an insurgency northwards. However, the emergence of an IMU faction in Tajikistan, Jama'at Ansarullah, as well as the emergence of other Central Asian militant groups that share the same objectives as the IMU, such as Kazakhstan's Jund al-Khilafah, may allow the IMU to remain in northern Afghanistan after 2014 (Asia-Plus [Dushanbe], August 31). An IMU presence in northern Afghanistan would support the Taliban in efforts to retake control of the region following the U.S. withdrawal, while allied militant groups could focus on Central Asia, possibly using IMU bases in northern Afghanistan as a "launching pad." Most likely, the border between northern Afghanistan and Central Asia will become more fluid following the U.S. withdrawal, with IMU leaders in northern Afghanistan leading operations both in Afghanistan and in Central Asia.

Note:

[1] A list of IMU martyrs who fought in Afghanistan and Pakistan was posted on furqon.com by the IMU in 2011. It showed that the majority of martyred fighters were Afghans (64), though there were also a number of Tajiks (10), Kyrgyz (6), Uzbeks (4), Tatars (1), Germans (1), and Pakistanis (1). Available at: http://furqon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=195:-1432-2011-&catid=1:2011-08-26-10-42-51.

IMU Announces Usman Ghazi As New Amir After Months Of Deliberation

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By: Jacob Zenn

http://mlm.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Bsword%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=central%20asia&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39791&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=539&cHash=fdce2db5e04e256e7e557d1c6147bdb4



Usman Ghazi (Source: Long War Journal)

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) announced in a statement that Usman Ghazi is the IMU's new *amir* (high-ranking Sheikh), taking over the position from the late Abu Usman Adil, who was killed in a drone strike in Miranshah, North Waziristan, Pakistan in April 2012 (furqon.com, August 3, 2012). Although Usman Ghazi was previously Usman Adil's deputy, it took the IMU four months to announce Ghazi's promotion, possibly because of the lack of consensus within the IMU leadership about Ghazi's suitability for the position. Ghazi, who is believed to be 40-years old and a non-Uzbek, has a criminal past in arms smuggling and drug trafficking (Central Asia Online [Tashkent], August 2012). However, for an IMU leader, this is consistent with the *modus operandi* of the movement. After having been based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region for nearly a decade, the IMU is now comprised mostly of non-Uzbek fighters and has taken advantage of the lucrative drug trade from Afghanistan to Central Asia, Russia, and further beyond to Europe to sustain itself financially.

The IMU has reportedly moved so far from its Uzbek roots that it has tried to rebrand itself under the Persian Dari name for the group, "Tehreek-e-Islami-e-Uzbekistan," rather than the Uzbek name for the group, "Uzbekistan Islami Harikati" (Central Asia Online [Miranshah], August 6, 2012). Therefore, if, as reported, Usman Ghazi speaks Arabic, Russian and English, but not Uzbek, he should still be sufficiently equipped to communicate with the fighters under his leadership and other militant organizations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, such as the Taliban, on which the IMU depends for logistical support.

The IMU has carried out more than 20 attacks in northern Afghanistan alone in

2012, and in April 2012 the IMU helped the Taliban to execute the prison break in Bannu, Pakistan, which freed Adnan Rasheed, who was accused in 2003 of conspiring to assassinate Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf (*See Militant Leadership Monitor, Volume 3, Issue 5*). Despite the IMU's wide area of operations, the IMU is hardly relevant in Uzbekistan anymore, which may be one reason why some of the leaders have concerns about Usman Ghazi and took several months to announce his leadership. In less than two years, the United States is expected to withdraw from Afghanistan. At that point, the IMU may set its sights on northern Afghanistan and the movement's homeland once again. While Usman Ghazi might be the right leader for the moment, he may not be the right leader for the next phase of IMU's operations, especially if the movement intends to target Uzbekistan again.

Al-Qaeda's Uighur Jihadi: A Profile of the Turkistan Islamic Party's Abdul Shakoor Turkistani

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December 30, 2011 02:36 PM Age: 1 yrs

By: Jacob Zenn

The Progeny

The third Uighur to lead the jihad against the Chinese state over the “occupation” of Xinjiang, Abdul Shakoor Turkistani is the “Amir” of the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). [1] [2] In this role, he succeeds two prominent Uighur leaders—Abdul Haq al-Turkistani and Hahsan Mahsum—and carries on their legacy by dually holding a high-ranking position in al-Qaeda.

Like Mahsum and Abdul Haq, Abdul Shakoor and his fighters in the TIP want independence for Xinjiang Province and for the province to become an Islamic State by the name of East Turkistan. Alternatively, if all of Central Asia is “liberated” from the current “apostate” and “infidel” governments, then Xinjiang would become part of a greater Central Asian caliphate called Turkistan, a name which refers to the Turkic ethnic groups that populate the region, including the Uighurs, Uzbeks, Karkalpaks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Tatars.

Mahsum was killed in October 2003 by Pakistani troops in Northwest Frontier Province (NFWP-now known as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province-KP). He had led a group of as many as 250 Uighur fighters in northern Afghanistan and received financing from Osama bin Laden to found the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as early as 1997. [3] Abdul Haq ran a training camp for Uighur fighters in the infamous Tora Bora area prior to the US bombardment of Afghanistan in October 2001. He was appointed to al-Qaeda's Shura Majlis in 2005 and chosen by bin Laden to lead the TIP in 2008, which he did until a U.S. drone strike killed him in the North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in March 2010.

Abdul Shakoor gained notoriety for the first time after Abdul Haq's death when he took over the leadership of the TIP and Uzbek militants in North Waziristan (Asia Times, October 26, 2011). [4] Approximately one year on, in April 2011, Abdul Shakoor was promoted to Commander of al-Qaeda forces in the FATA. [5] Abdul Shakoor's close relationship with the late Tahir Yuldashev of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), who was on the Shura Majlis with Abdul Haq, as well as his familiarity with various factions of Taliban explains his rapid ascendency.

In addition, Abdul Shakoor's rapid rise in al-Qaeda's ranks can be attributed to him being the progeny of Mahsum and Abdul Haq, two Uighur "martyrs" who dedicated more than one decade of their lives to jihad in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their careers gave the al-Qaeda leadership, including Bin Laden who was still alive when Abdul Shakoor was promoted to Commander of al-Qaeda in FATA, the confidence that Abdul Shakoor would carry out jihad with the same fervor of Mahsum and Abdul Haq before him.

Written and Video Statements

If the terrorist attack in July 2011 in Kashgar, Xinjiang Province is any indication, Uighur militants in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region are benefitting from Abdul Shakoor's leadership and connections with the IMU, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban. These terrorist organizations have trained and operated together since the time of Hahsan Mahsum and their coordination remains strong.

The TIP's use of training camps in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region to prepare fighters for attacks on China was confirmed with undisputable evidence when Abdul Shakoor released a written statement in August 2011 and a corresponding oral statement in a video message in October 2011. [6] [7] The statement and video were both posted on the jihadi Shumukh al-Islam online forum and titled "On the Occasion of the Military Operations in the Prefectures of Hotan and Kashgar in East Turkistan." The statement was written in identical Arabic and Uighur language versions, while in the video Abdul Shakoor spoke in Uighur but a dubbed voiceover in Turkish was also released. [8]

In the written statement, the content of which was very similar in content to the video, Abdul Shakoor says, "Every policy that you, the Communist government of China, implement is aimed at undermining the identity and the conservative traditions of the Muslims...."

According to Abdul Shakoor, these policies include:

- Mandatory education, which he says has caused the apostasy of Muslims from their religion;
- The policy of enforced bilingual education (Mandarin Chinese is required for Uighurs);
- The emigration of Muslim females from Xinjiang to the "Chinese region," which is usually related to finding employment;
- The policy of birth control, which he describes as "threatening;"

- The policy of densely settling in the Chinese in the Muslim population, which he says has led to the marginalization of the Muslims;
- The policy of looting and transporting out Turkistan resources by “night and day;”
- The testing of nuclear weapons in Xinjiang.

In the video statement, Abdul Shakoor focuses on retaliation against the Chinese. He states:

- “My brothers, without fighting the Chinese and with only talking they will not leave our land. The land they took over by using guns can only be taken back with guns;”
 - “Whoever attacks you, you attack them back;”
 - “The only way for us to get rid of this tyranny is to do the jihad ibadet,” or prayer, which he says is an obligation equal to fasting during Ramadan.
- [9]

Photos included in the written statement and clips in the video showed Memtieli Tiliwaldi in a TIP training camp wrestling with other fighters. This was the same Memtieli Tiliwaldi who was killed by Xinjiang police on August 2 in a corn field outside of Kashgar two days after 10 Uighur attackers and Tiliwaldi detonated two bombs on a popular shopping and dining street frequented by the Han Chinese and then shot and stabbed Han Chinese people indiscriminately (Xinhua, August 2, 2011). In the attacks on July 30, 2011 and July 31, 2011 in Kashgar more than ten civilians were killed and 40 people wounded while eight attackers, including Tiliwaldi, were killed and four other attackers detained. The July 30, 2011 and July 31, 2011 attacks were unique for the high number of fighters who participated in the operations and because the attacks were carried out over the course of two days. Previously, Uighur terrorists in Xinjiang had conducted similarly styled attacks—ramming police with trucks, detonating low-impact bombs, and stabbing people—but the attacks usually involved one or two people and occurred in a single phase. Previous attacks also targeted Han or Uighur policemen and soldiers, but these attacks explicitly targeted civilians.

The attack’s greater level sophistication and the choice of civilian targets may be a sign that al-Qaeda’s penchant for killing civilians has seeped into the TIP’s strategy. This is consistent with Abdul Shakoor’s dual role as both an al-Qaeda and TIP leader. In addition, neither the ETIM under Hahsan Mahsum nor the TIP under Abdul Haq, who desired to internalize the jihad by attacking Chinese interests abroad, achieved anything noteworthy for the Uighurs in Xinjiang (al-Jazeera, March 2, 2010). The Chinese “settlements” in the province only increased, Chinese security and economic arrangements with other Central Asian states solidified, and Beijing’s crackdown on the protests in Urumqi in 2009 showed that China would meet any challenge to its authority in Xinjiang with lethal and repressive force.

Abdul Shakoor’s claim in the statement and video that the TIP orchestrated an attack on July 15, 2011 in Hotan is more dubious than his Kashgar claim. The Hotan incident appeared more likely to be criminal violence stemming from a

protest over the detainment of Uighurs than a planned terrorist attack. Nonetheless, the protestors in Hotan could have been influenced by the TIP propaganda and some of them may have trained in TIP camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

New Directions

TIP Videos were released with increasing frequency in 2011, including a five-part video series called “Lovers of Paradise,” two other videos called “Provisions of Jihad” and “Tourism of the Believers,” and a notable video titled “Message to the Chinese People” released in May 2011 in which the speaker, Faruq Turisoon, speaks in Mandarin for the first time in TIP media (see *Terrorism Monitor*, June 23, 2011). Previous videos and written statements had only been in Uighur, Arabic or Turkish.

In the August TIP video in which Abdul Shakoor claimed the Kahsgar and Hotan attacks, Abdul Shakoor’s face is blotted out, while in the May video Turisoon’s face is unguarded as he speaks surrounded by armed fighters. Although Abdul Shakoor and Turisoon wear the same style black turban, sport long black beards, and discuss similar themes (family planning, Han “settlements,” displacement of Uighur women, etc.), there is nothing to indicate that Abdul Shakoor also goes by the name of Faruq Turisoon or that it was Abdul Shakoor who delivered the “message to the Chinese people” in May. That is in fact highly unlikely considering that it would not make sense for Abdul Shakoor to forfeit an opportunity to propagate his name.

However, the significance of the Turisoon video from a leadership perspective is that it shows that below Abdul Shakoor in the TIP and al-Qaeda hierarchy are other Uighur fighters ready to carry on the jihad and take on a leadership role should Abdul Shakoor follow his predecessors Mahsum and Abdul Haq into “martyrdom.”

Conclusion

Abdul Shakoor has become one of the highest ranking al-Qaeda figures and the most powerful Uighur jihadi leader since Hahsan Mahsum and Abdul Haq al-Turkistani. Pakistani forces killed Mahsum, U.S. drones took out Abdul Haq, and with the Chinese cooperating even more closely with Islamabad after the July Kashgar attacks—and possibly even operating secret bases in Pakistan—the future of the TIP’s embattled leadership appears dim. China certainly will attempt to have its intelligence agents hunting for Abdul Shakoor in the FATA, though this will assuredly be a difficult task in a Pakistan that is increasingly fretting about its national sovereignty while militants in the region are constantly on the lookout for spies, who, when caught, are swiftly executed by ad hoc sharia courts. Though Uighur militancy is weaker in the present as well as under constant threat from drone strikes and Pakistani military incursions in the areas where TIP members operate, the lack of any real improvement in Uighur national aspirations in the face of an implacable Beijing will continue to stoke rage among Communist China’s demographically embattled Turkic peoples.

Notes:

[1] His name has also appeared as Abdul Shakoor Damla in other videos and statements.

[2] The TIP is pronounced in Arabic as Hizb al-Islami al-Turkistani or in Uighur as Turkistan Islam Partisi. In the most recent video statement featuring Abdul Shakoor Turkistani, however, the group is called Turk Islam Cemaat, which also roughly translates to “Turkistan Islamic Party.”

[3] It remains unclear whether the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) is a continuation of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) or a different organization that shares the same objectives. ETIM is believed to have faded into extinction shortly after Hahsan Mahsum’s death in 2003, while the TIP emerged around 2008.

[4] The Uzbeks, an ethnic Turkic group with a language mutually intelligible to a degree with Uighur, have been closely associated with the Uighurs in Afghanistan and Pakistan since Mahsum’s time. Both the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the TIP tout pan-Islamism over ethno-nationalism and harbor the broader ambition to create an Islamic caliphate including all of the Turkic ethnic groups and Muslims in Central Asia.

[5] In his role as Commander in the FATA, Abdul Shakoor succeeded the Egyptian Saif al-Adel, who left the FATA in April 2011 to escape frequent drone strikes in the area. Later al-Adel became the interim al-Qaeda number one after bin Laden’s death.

[6] www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php

[7] www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php

[8] Though Uighur is traditionally written using a modified Arabic script, the spoken language is a branch of the Turkic family unrelated to Arabic.

[9] The three bullet-points are taken from the Turkish dubbing of the original Uighur language video and are as follows: Kardeşlerim işgalci çinlilerle savaşmadan sadece söz söylemekle vatanımızdan çıkıp gidecek değillerdir. Silahla gasp ettikleri topraklarımızı ancak silahla geri alabiliriz; Kim size saldırırsa sizde ona misilleme olacak kadar saldırın; and Üstümüzdeki zulümden kurtulmanın tek yolu cihad ibatedini yerine getirmekle olur.

In His Own Words, Abu Zar al-Burmi: The Mufti of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

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By: Arif Rafiq



Abu Zar al-Burmi

Background

A ferociously combative polemicist, Abu Zar al-Burmi (a.k.a. Abu Zar Khanjari; Abu Zar Azzam) has been recently identified on jihadi forums as the mufti of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), one of the most radical groups based in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). [1] Al-Burmi, however, has described himself in the past as being part of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). [2]

Fluent in Arabic and Urdu, he is believed to be a Pakistani national of Burmese ancestry or nationality, which only makes his theological leadership of an ethnolinguistically unrelated militant group all the more curious. His Arabic-style *nom de guerre* includes the *nisba*—an adjectival suffix ubiquitous in Islamic culture—“al-Burmi,” meaning “the Burmese” or “of Burma.” Perhaps due to his unconventional background, belonging to the marginal Rohingya community inside Pakistan and in the jihadi community, al-Burmi appears to have little sentimental value for anything not purely Islamic, including the complex background of Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. For this reason, he does not seem to be interested in the Taliban movement as a Pashtun nationalist—as some analysts interpret such nationalist sentiments—but as a force for implementing Islamic law in the tribal areas under their nominal control. Al-Burmi's online recordings include an extremely hostile debate with a religious scholar likely linked to the Pakistan Army as well as a number of lectures.

Pakistan in Need of a Jihadi Revolution

Al-Burmi's stated *hads* (goal) is to transform Pakistan into a pure Islamic state through the *rasta* (course) of jihad. Echoing the call of other late jihadis, such as Osama bin Laden and Abdul Rashid Ghazi, he states that the goal of Muslims should be *shariat ya shahadat* (Islamic law or martyrdom). Al-Burmi makes clear that the sources of *manba* (proof) or emulation should be restricted to the Quran, the Sunnah, Ijma—the consensus view of Islamic community, and

comparative analogies of the Quran and hadith known as Qiyas. He claims that the Prophet Muhammad established sharia law through jihad and that to make Islam dominant in a territory, the aforementioned *manba*, *rasta*, and *hadf* must be adhered to. He asserts again that Pakistan's constitution and judicial system are based on an infidel system, known in Urdu as *kufri nizam*, inherited from the British.

Anger at the Elite

Al-Burmi is opposed to Pakistan's elite who derive much of their power from the inequality of the country's stubborn feudal system. He states that the TTP and their allies (such as the IMU) are waging jihad against the current status quo in Pakistan. In pursuit of a pure Islamic system, their targets are Pakistan's rulers, bureaucracy, intelligence agencies, army, courts, lawyers, and judges. His jihad will not stop as long as Allah's law is not implemented and the sharia of the era of the Prophet Muhammad is not ruling the land.

In a series of lectures under the title of *Qanun-e Pakistan Ka Kufr* (The Disbelief of the Laws of Pakistan), al-Burmi describes Pakistan's laws as "satanic." [3] He criticizes those who state that Pakistan's constitution and laws are based in Islam and that the country's woes stem simply from its morally corrupt ruling class. Al-Burmi states that there is a double *fasad* (transgression) exemplified by Islamabad. He believes the problem resides with both the *usuli* (fundamental) and *amali* (practical) elements of Pakistan's political system.

Al-Burmi outlines his view as to why Pakistan's political system is fundamentally un-Islamic:

- It takes away the right to make laws from Allah and gives it to an elected parliament;
- It gives immunity to many individuals and institutions from prosecution (from both Islamic and non-Islamic injunctions);
- It gives the president the right to pardon criminals or suspend/change their punishment. But according to Islamic law, this is solely the right of the victim/victim's family. Pakistan's "satanic" constitution takes this right away from them and gives it to the president;
- There are no stipulations for qualifications for being a judge. Neither are judges for the Supreme Court/High Court/Sessions Court required to be Muslim nor must their rulings be bound by sharia law;
- Islam requires that judges be Muslim and that their rules be bound by Islamic law. Al-Burmi cites the lauded Sunni Hanafi jurist Imam al-Kasani's view of Islamic stipulations for one to be eligible to be a judge (that he cannot be mentally ill, a non-Muslim, mute, a slave, or a child). To make his point, he mentions that Justice Rana Baghwandas, a Hindu *mushrik* (polytheist) served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. In al-Burmi's intolerant view, the laws intended to govern Muslims cannot be upheld by a Hindu;
- There is no requirement that the president must be a male, but this is the *ijma*(consensus) of all the ulema. He cites two Quranic verses:
 - "Men are to be the guardians of women." Surah Nisaa (4:34);

- "Men are a degree above them [women]." (2:228) He states that the fatwa of the ulema declare that it is impermissible for a woman to be head of state.
- Its constitution and penal code are largely from non-Islamic sources. Mixing Islamic laws with non-Islamic laws, al-Burmi claims, is like mixing milk and urine. A pure or edible thing is rendered impure or inedible by mixing it with something unclean. The constitution of Pakistan states that a person cannot be punished for a crime that was committed prior to the act being declared illegal and a punishable offense. Al-Burmi states that this means that if one drank alcohol prior, an obvious offense under Islamic law, but Pakistan had yet to ban alcohol consumption until 1977, then it is not a prosecutable offense. Al-Burmi insinuates that this indicates that the Pakistani constitution trumps Allah's law. This means that the *aqidah* (creed) of Pakistan's legal system and sharia are not the same;
- Pakistan's parliament can reject or change Islamic criminal punishments;
- The ultimate arbiter of the law is not Allah, but man.

Upon the election of Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister, he stated that "unfortunately" neither does sharia allow a woman to lead prayer nor does it allow a woman's leadership in determining the affairs of the country, but given that the masses have elected a woman as prime minister, he has little choice but to respect the *rai*(opinion/choice) of the masses. He states that this behavior is that of unbelievers and begs Allah for forgiveness. Al-Burmi then lists a number of Quranic verses that state that hukm (lawmaking) is only for Allah:

- The constitution forbids any other punishment for a crime other than that designated under Pakistani law;
- Islamic elements of the system have to be approved by the parliament and harsh *hudood* punishments implemented under the late dictator General Muhammed;
- Zia-ul-Haq can be commuted or dismissed by the president.

Al-Burmi's Passion for Sharia Law

Al-Burmi states this is similar to those early Muslims who wanted to do 50/50 split in jurisprudence, (20:34) and rule by Islamic law and Quraishi law every other year. The Prophet Muhammed rejected this notion and the Surah al-Kafirun, which delineates a clear demarcation between believers and unbelievers, was revealed.

Al-Burmi insists that the implementation of Islamic law must be an all encompassing 100 percent and that even 99 percent would not be acceptable. He then labels President Asif Ali Zardari *khabees* (evil) *zinakar* (fornicator) and Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani *khinzeer-e-azam* (the great pork), a grave insult in Islamic culture. Al-Burmi lambasts Pakistan's leaders to make his point that expecting sharia from them is disrespecting the idea of sharia itself. He said those who are working to implement Islam through the parliament are insulting

Islam. He announces that in addition to Orakzai Agency in the FATA, sharia has been successfully established in Kurram Agency. These gains, while significant in al-Burmi's view, are merely a start. He purportedly prays for sharia in all of Pakistan, Hindustan (India), and the rest of the world. Al-Burmi states that establishing a pure Islamic state within Pakistan's border and abolishing its Anglo-Saxon-based legal code is impossible without jihad.

Al-Burmi has deep personal anger toward the Pakistan army. He frequently shouts in his sermons, describing the Pakistan Army as *kambakhton* (hapless). Al-Burmi claims that during the *bayans* (sermons that precede the obligatory elements of the Friday prayers) of the TTP, members of the Pakistan Army curse at the group's members and blast Indian (read: Hindu or Sikh) pop music.

At War With Pakistan's Origins

In a debate with an Islamic cleric apparently backed by the Pakistan Army, al-Burmi states that he rejects the official title of Quaid-e Azam (the Great Leader) for the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He regards Jinnah as *Kafir-e-Azam* (the Great Infidel), a tremendous insult to Pakistan's driving visionary and founding father. He states that Jinnah was of Ismaili Sevener Shia origin and that his father's last name was not even a Muslim one. This derogatory pun on Jinnah's title was used by Jinnah's contemporary Islamic detractors, including the Jamaat-e Islami's Maulana Abu 'Ala Mawdudi as well as many Deobandi clerics. Al-Burmi comes from a Deobandi background and thus bases his ideology on Deobandi thought rather than any political persuasion even remotely secular such as ordinary nationalism or ethno-nationalism. This may be due to his belonging to one of Pakistan's more obscure minority groups with no traditional political power base such as Punjabis or Pashtuns.

Al-Burmi's Jinnah bashing amounts to a political heresy in Pakistan's nationalistic politics where his legacy is considered sacrosanct. Pakistani Deobandis and political Islamists have had to come to terms with Jinnah's paramount role in Pakistan's official self-history, and have backtracked or even denied their opposition to Jinnah. Some revisionist ultra-nationalist Islamist commentators such as Zaid Hamid have gone beyond this, arguing that Jinnah had been a pious man and intended for Pakistan to be an Islamic state, a notion Jinnah himself would likely have found abhorrent (Pakteahouse.net, March 6, 2010).

Criticism of Pakistan's Religious Parties

Al-Burmi goes on to criticize Pakistan's Islamist religious parties. He states that their *umoomi kirdar* (general role) is they do not base their opinions on implacable positions but that they keep modifying their stances on constitutional/legal/policy issues in a bid to stay relevant in Pakistan's ever fluid polity. Neither are these parties fit for leading the Muslim ummah, nor are they equipped to battle against the Crusader onslaught to al-Burmi. He states that the objective is not to make individual people targets of his wrath but to ensure that

the ummah does not continue to go astray from what he sees as Islam's true path.

Al-Burmi acknowledges that Pakistan's constitution does in fact contain Islamic elements and these cannot be denied. He then repeats the analogy he used in previous lectures: that if a few drops of urine are dropped into a bowl of milk, the contents of the bowl cannot be considered clean milk, let alone any type of milk. Refutation of the "Propaganda" against the Taliban

Abu Zar al-Burmi condemns the "propaganda" against the Taliban, including claims that they are oppressors and transgressors. He states that though the Taliban are cursed by others, the people need not fear them as they are the righteous believers according to al-Burmi. He states that all sorts of weapons have been used against them—tanks, planes, the army, drones and CIA officers like Raymond Davis. But from the blood of every martyr will come a thousand mujahideen. He concludes by calling on his listeners to embrace jihad, be prepared to sacrifice everything—including their families and enter the battlefield standing firm with paradise awaiting them all.

Notes:

[1] Pakistani officials have regularly listed the IMU as among their greatest challenges in FATA as described in a leaked diplomatic cable from the American consulate in Peshawar. They were close allies of Baitullah Mehsud and remained tied to the TTP until today. Dawn, May 20, 2011; Al-Burmi, Greetings to the Muslim ummah Eid al-fitr 2011, see (Arabic), [videos.videopress.com/QZnGwZob/islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-abc5ab-dhar-al-bc5abrnc4ab-e2809cgreetings-to-the-muslim-ummah-on-c4abd-al-fie1b9adre2809d_dvd.mp4](https://www.videos.videopress.com/QZnGwZob/islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-abc5ab-dhar-al-bc5abrnc4ab-e2809cgreetings-to-the-muslim-ummah-on-c4abd-al-fie1b9adre2809d_dvd.mp4).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Al-Burmi's sermons titled "Fawji Mufit Mubuhasa" can be heard at www.archive.org/details/Mufti_733.