

# MILITANT LEADERSHIP MONITOR

## Personalities Behind the Insurgency

p.1

Brief

*Jacob Zenn*

p.2

Abdul Rehman Makki:  
the Leader of Pakistani  
Militant Group Jamat-  
ud-Dawa

*Syed Fazl-e-Haider*

p.4

Suhail Shaheen: The  
Perilous Promises of the  
Afghan Taliban's Most  
Prominent International  
Voice

*Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai*

p.7

A Post-Mortem Analysis  
of ISKP Senior Military  
Commander Saad  
Emirati

*Abdul Sayed*

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### **Kasturi Mahkota Emerges as Potential Broker in Thai Insurgency Peace Talks**

*Jacob Zenn*

Since November 2011, Kasturi Mahkota has been the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO)'s leader. He rose to that position after his tenure as the PULO's Foreign Affairs Chief and Vice President, and he attained the leadership position through a vote by the organization's Central Committee members ([nationthailand.com](http://nationthailand.com), November 4, 2011). For the half-decade prior to that vote, Kasturi had been involved in a secret dialogue process with the Thai government's National Security Council (NSC). Now almost 20 years since the dialogue started, Kasturi is once again playing the role of game breaker, or even potential spoiler, in the peace negotiations between ethnic Malay Muslim militants in southern Thailand and the Thai government, which have been picking up the pace since Ramadan began in April ([Terrorism Monitor](http://Terrorism Monitor), July 29).

### **Beginning the Secret Dialogue with Thailand**

The secret dialogue that began in 2005 was under the direction of Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont, who sought to explore non-military solutions to the conflict that had led to 5,000 deaths at the time ([nationthailand.com](http://nationthailand.com), November 11, 2011). However, Kasturi was soon afterward faced with factionalism from within PULO's ranks in 2011, spearheaded by the leader whom Kasturi replaced, Noor Abdulrahman ("Abu Kamae"). While Kasturi claimed legitimacy from the Majlis Kepimpinan Pulo (MKP), otherwise known as the Central Committee, Abe Kamae asserted that he was elected leader in 2009 at a separate MKP meeting in Syria and that the 2011 decision to name Kasturi as leader was illegitimate.

Kasturi, meanwhile, had been living in exile during the secret negotiations, similar to other PULO commanders. He had also acquired Swedish citizenship by this point and was secretly living in Sweden ([sverigesradio.com](http://sverigesradio.com), January 23, 2006). While there, Kasturi distinguished himself

from other PULO leaders whom he believed wanted to duplicate Jemaah Islamiya (JI)'s attacks in Indonesia by stating that he was firmly against terrorism.

Unlike JI, Aceh separatists who concluded a peace agreement with the Indonesian government in 2005 and then saw their leaders return to Aceh from exile became Kasturi's model ([jakartapost.com](http://jakartapost.com), November 14, 2015). The Acehnese received special autonomy status from the Indonesian government, albeit not formal independence, and recognition of the Acehnese right to implement sharia. This was evidently suitable enough for Kasturi and demonstrates the parameters of what would be possible for a peace deal between a Kasturi-led PULO and the Thai government. However, the Thai government itself has been unwilling to go to that extent in granting concessions to the ethnic Malay Muslim militants in southern Thailand.

### **Kasturi's Rationale**

One of Kasturi's reasons for avoiding carrying out attacks in Bangkok or the tourism mecca of Phuket has been due to his belief that if PULO is ever placed on an international terrorism list, the group will never be successful ([RAND](http://RAND), 2008). As a result, PULO and southern Thai ethnic Malay Muslim militants generally have been among the few Muslim militants globally to avoid being influenced by global jihadist movements like al-Qaeda and Islamic State (IS). Further, when a series of bombings occurred across southern Thailand in July 2016 and killed four people, Kasturi announced that he "personally strongly condemns the recent incidents that targeted innocent civilians." ([aa.com.tr](http://aa.com.tr), August 23, 2016).

Those attacks in Bangkok were conducted by a PULO faction that had rejected Kasturi's leadership, which means Kasturi himself did not order or necessarily condone those attacks ([rsis.edu.sg](http://rsis.edu.sg), July 4, 2016). Besides this internal challenge from within PULO, the Barisan Revolusi Nasional

(BRN) has become the premier ethnic Thai Muslim Malay militant negotiator with the Thai government, including with backing from the Malaysian government ([benarnews.org](http://benarnews.org), August 2). This has meant Kasturi has struggled to avoid being marginalized not only within the PULO, but also within the broader southern Thai militant milieu.

Despite leading the peace talks with the Thai government, BRN has continually conducted attacks, including in August when a ceasefire was intended for Buddhist Lent ([wionews.com](http://wionews.com), August 17). PULO, meanwhile, was blamed for attacks during Muslim Ramadan earlier in the year, but Kasturi disassociated PULO, or at least his faction of it, from those attacks ([kfgo.com](http://kfgo.com), August 17). This all highlighted the apparent lack of influence Kasturi has over militancy in southern Thailand and even over his own organization

### **Conclusion**

Kasturi is the longest-standing ethnic Malay Muslim militant still active in the PULO in southern Thailand. The movement, however, is fractured and has secured neither military victory, nor a sustainable peace to satisfy the militants' desire for autonomy. Kasturi's future standing will depend on his ability to reign in PULO factions under his leadership and work with the BRN to present a unified front in dealing with the Thai government.

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### **Abdul Rehman Makki: the Leader of Pakistani Militant Group Jamat-ud-Dawa**

*Syed Fazl-e-Haider*

Hafiz Abdul Rehman Makki is the leader of the Pakistani-based militant group, Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD). The 74-year-old

Makki is a U.S.-designated terrorist and, under its Rewards for Justice program, the U.S has announced a reward of up to \$2 million for information on Makki ([Reward for Justice](#), June 17). JuD is the charity and political arm of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which is also a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO). In addition, at the United Nations meeting on June 17, the U.S and India proposed to designate Makki as a global terrorist. China, Pakistan's close ally, put a hold on that in communications with the UN Security Council's ISIL and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee ([Economic Times](#), June 18).

### **Life and Career**

Born in 1948 in the Bahawalpur district of Pakistan's Punjab province, Makki is the brother-in-law of Hafiz Saeed, the leader of LeT. Makki joined LeT in 1990, and later had a son who also joined the organization and was killed in Bandipora district of India-administered Kashmir during a clash with Indian security forces in November 2017 ([Asiana Times](#), June 18; [DNA India](#), November 19, 2017). He then served within LeT as the head of its foreign relations department ([Economic Times](#), June 18).

He further served as an instructor at the Islamic University of Madinah in Saudi Arabia, where he taught Islamic studies. During his tenure, he often declared that *fedayeen* (martyrdom) operations were not, in fact, "suicide" attacks. While in Saudi Arabia in 2004, Makki also released a book titled "Showing How Fedayeen Operations are not Suicide Attacks" ([Asiana Times](#), June 18).

In 2016, the appointment of Makki as foreign affairs head and second-in-command in LeT by Hafiz Saeed raised eyebrows within the party because there were other senior and founding members who could have been appointed to the position ([Outlook India](#), February 3). In these capacities, Makki raised funds for the group's operations, recruited and radicalized youth, and planned terrorist

attacks inside India, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir ([Asianet News](#), June 17).

### **Indian Allegations**

Indian authorities allege that Makki has been backing the insurgency in Kashmir since the early 1990s and that he played a key role in planning suicide attacks on targets in Kashmir ([The Print](#), May 20, 2019). In 2012, India's security and intelligence authorities alleged that Makki was very close to Taliban supreme commander Mullah Omar, and al-Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri. According to Indian authorities, Makki took part in several meetings in which the leadership of the Taliban and al-Qaeda planned attacks on India's interests in Afghanistan ([Times of India](#), April 5, 2012).

Along with Hafiz Saeed, Makki is also believed to be one of the masterminds behind the 2008 Mumbai attack which left 166 people dead in the financial epicenter ([Fandom](#), June 17). Today, the attack is considered the deadliest act of terror in Indian history ([Indian Express](#), November 26, 2021). Two years later in 2010, a bomb blast at a German Bakery in the Indian city of Pune killed nine people, including four foreigners and injuring at least 50 people ([One India](#), February 14, 2010).

The Indian authorities accused Makki of foreshadowing the blast 10 days before it occurred in a speech. On February 4, 2010, for example, Makki delivered an anti-India speech at the Kashmir Solidarity Day conference held in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. There, he mentioned forthcoming attacks on Indian cities, including in Pune, and stated the mujahedeen "will teach India a lesson" ([NDTV](#), February 15, 2010).

### **Conclusion**

In May 2019, Makki was finally arrested by Pakistani authorities as a result of his speeches, amid a crackdown against proscribed groups ([SuchTV](#), May 15, 2019). He was then kept under house

arrest in Lahore and, in 2020, was tried and convicted by a Pakistani court in a terrorism financing case and sent to jail. Last year, in 2021, Makki was given a six-month jail term by a Pakistani court in a terror financing case ([Dawn](#), November 7, 2021). Finally, in April 2022, an anti-terrorism court in a Lahore, Pakistani court sentenced him to another six-month imprisonment ([Express Tribune](#), April 8)

At the same time, Pakistani authorities have been asking India for solid evidence against Makki for his involvement in terrorism activity in Jammu and Kashmir, instead of only allegations. However, the reality is that there is not a single militancy-related case registered against Makki in Jammu and Kashmir ([The Print](#), May 20, 2019). Makki nevertheless has been facing trial and imprisonment over terrorism-related charges in Pakistani courts for the last three years. Indeed, bringing all militant leaders, including Makki, to justice in Pakistan through a fair trial will not only help improve Pakistan's image in the world community, but may also discourage other militants from becoming involved in terrorist activities inside or outside of the country.

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## **Suhail Shaheen: The Perilous Promises of the Afghan Taliban's Most Prominent International Voice**

*Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai*

Muhammad Suhail Shaheen is the spokesman for the Afghan Taliban's political office in Doha, Qatar and the Afghan Taliban's representative-designate to the United Nations. He was also a member of the Taliban's 21-member

negotiation team in Doha when it was negotiating with the U.S. These negotiations resulted in the Doha agreement of February 2020 that provided for the subsequent U.S withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Shaheen was born in Paktia, Afghanistan in the late 1970s and belongs to the Pashtun sub-tribe called Totakhel. He received his higher education from Kabul University and the International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan ([Afghan biographies](#), April 15). He is also fluent in Pashto, Urdu, Dari and English and currently resides in Doha along with his family, including two daughters and three sons who are being educated in state-run schools in Doha ([The Print](#), April 13).

Shaheen is one of the key figures of the Taliban, who as a diplomat and member of the negotiation team, has significant experience in diplomacy. Living in Doha, he is familiar with global trends more than other Taliban leaders who lack a broader worldview. Hence, he has the potential, albeit not necessarily the will, to influence the Taliban to allow girls' education and to provide women their rights, as his own daughters go to school in Doha ([Twitter/@NasimiShabnam](#), May 11). Although he has not been directly involved in militancy, he has always played a role as the Taliban's mouthpiece while defending its policies, including the ban on girls' education, and numerous attacks.

### **Career as a Diplomat and Afterward**

During the Taliban's first regime from 1996-2001, Shaheen was the editor of the state-run newspaper *Kabul Times* and was later appointed by the Taliban as the deputy ambassador in Pakistan ([Afghanistan Analyst Network](#), June 24, 2013). That Afghanistan embassy was the only embassy in Islamabad that was functional for a short period after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Shaheen served as the acting ambassador. In an interview in October 2001, he expressed his view that Afghanistan would

be the “next Vietnam” for the U.S. ([Youtube](#), October 8, 2001). Sometime later, after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, he was believed to be residing in the Shamshatu refugee camp near Peshawar, which was under Hizb-i-Islami’s supervision. There he wrote for a newspaper of Hizb-i-Islami and allegedly worked for the United Nations in Pakistan ([Afghanistan Analysts Network](#), June 24, 2013).

When the “new” Taliban emerged and the movement gained momentum in 2005, Shaheen re-connected with the Taliban leadership. Before the opening of the Taliban’s political office at Doha, Taliban activities had remained underground. However, after the Taliban moved above ground, Shaheen became an active member and when the U.S. initiated peace talks with the Taliban in 2010, Shaheen became a member of the Taliban delegation. [1] Moreover, in December 2011 when the Taliban was negotiating with the U.S. to pave the way for its political office in Doha, Shaheen accompanied Tayyab Agha, who was former private secretary to Mullah Umar, and Shahbuddin Dilawar. [2]

When the Taliban finally opened a political office in Doha in June 2013, Shaheen was appointed as its spokesperson alongside Muhammad Naeem [3] and he briefed the media about the future process of negotiations with the U.S. ([The Express Tribune](#), June 20, 2013). Shaheen further added that the Taliban would first talk to the U.S. because it was the main party to the conflict. The Taliban, therefore, since the start of the talks with the U.S. emphasized achieving an agreement with the U.S. and then the Afghan government. The talks lasted until the Doha agreement was signed with the U.S. in late February 2020. Shaheen frequently appeared in the media, including the BBC and CNN, and was active on Twitter, where he had more than 600,000 followers as of June 2022 ([Twitter/suhailshaheen](#), June 24). Shaheen remained the Doha office spokesperson until he was replaced by Muhammad

Naeem in September 2021. Since then, he has been in charge of the Doha political office and is the Taliban’s representative-designate to the United Nations. The Taliban is, however, still awaiting diplomatic recognition.

### **Shaheen on Girls’ Education and Afghanistan’s Future**

Shaheen is among the more “moderate” Taliban leaders and has remained engaged with the Western media throughout his career. Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, he frequently gave interviews to various news agencies and channels about the future of Afghanistan under the Taliban. In all his interviews and tweets, he reiterated that the Taliban would not take any revenge on its rivals and political opponents and would respect human rights, freedom of speech and media and girls’ education ([YouTube](#), August 15, 2021; [Suhail Shaheen on Twitter](#), November 19, 2021). However, contrary to his claims, girls have yet to return to schools in Afghanistan nearly one year after the Taliban took power. Previously, the Taliban had announced that girls would return to schools by the end of March 2022, but that did not happen ([Dawn](#), January 16). Although Shaheen does not seem to be against girls’ education, there are differences on the matter inside the Taliban *shura* that delayed the opening of girls’ schools. Shaheen admitted that his daughters attend schools in Qatar for which he was widely criticized because it is perceived that the Taliban has double-standards ([NDTV](#), May 12).

Shaheen considers himself an Afghan nationalist and in an interview in 2020 he stated, “We have no properties or houses in foreign countries, while the Afghan politicians have houses and everything abroad; if Afghanistan destabilizes, they will go there. However, we have no properties abroad or any intention to live abroad but to liberate our masses from the foreign occupation.” He further added that since the U.S. invasion, the Taliban wanted



to stabilize Afghanistan, but the U.S. did not listen to the Taliban and ignored its desire for a negotiated settlement. [4] It is pertinent to note that the Taliban wanted to become more mainstream following its collapse in late 2001, but the U.S. was not ready to accept this at the time. [5]

In September 2021, Shaheen was nominated as the representative-designate to the United Nations by the Taliban leadership following the takeover of Kabul ([Pajhwok Afghan News](#), September 22, 2021). Shortly after, in February 2022, he was appointed as the head of the Taliban's Doha political office ([Tolo News](#), February 23). After this appointment, the Taliban sent a letter to the United Nations General Secretary António Guterres requesting that he allow the Taliban's representative to take Afghanistan's UN seat. The Taliban's interim foreign minister, Amer Khan Muttaqi, wrote in the letter that as Ashraf Ghani's government was ousted and, his designated envoy no longer could represent Afghanistan ([Dawn](#), September 23, 2021). Despite this, the General Secretary dismissed the request on procedural grounds. If the United Nations had allowed the Taliban to have Shaheen as its representative-designate to address the General Assembly session, it would have given the impression that the United Nations was recognizing the Taliban before the Taliban had fulfilled many commitments it made before the takeover regarding women rights, girls' education, the freedom of media and press, and an inclusive government, among others.

## Conclusion

Suhail Shaheen has made significant progress rising in the ranks of the Taliban leadership in the past two decades. Despite his promises, the Taliban could not uphold many of its commitments. When the Taliban announced its interim government in early September 2021, it consisted of Taliban militant veterans with no representation from other militant groups or ethnic communities except two Tajiks and one Uzbek in the cabinet, which further

undermined the idea of an inclusive Taliban government ([Gandhara](#), September 8, 2021). Unlike many leaders in the Taliban, Shaheen has long been accustomed to the media spotlight due to his prominent role as Taliban spokesman in Doha. Recently, however, when Shaheen has faced the international media, the non-fulfillment of the promises made by Taliban has put the Taliban spokesman on the back foot in his media interviews. This in turn has created a difficult if not embarrassing role for a person long accustomed to the media spotlight in the West.

*Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai, author of The Troubled Triangle: US-Pakistan Relations under the Taliban's Shadow (Routledge, 2021). He tweets @yousafzaiZafar5*

## References:

[1] Author's interview with Suhail Shaheen, April 2020.

[2] Shahabuddin Dilawar is a senior member of the Taliban who was a member of the Taliban negotiation team since 2013 and now is the Minister of Mining and Petroleum. He has also served as the Taliban ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan during the Taliban regime from 1996-2001.

[3] Muhammad Naeem, the member of Doha political office, replaced Suhail Shaheen and was made Qatar office spokesperson in September 2021.

[4] Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai, *The Troubled Triangle: US-Pakistan Relations under the Taliban's Shadow* (London/New York: Routledge, 2021), p. 126.

[5] For details, see Bette Dam's report, *The Secret life of Mullah Umar*, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bf5692f4611a019a7c69ea6/t/5c77f4fdeef1a10b17f2abda/1551365379168/Secret+Life+of+Mullah+Omar-FINAL3.pdf>.

## **A Post-Mortem Analysis of ISKP Senior Military Commander Saad Emirati**

*Abdul Sayed*

Saad Emirati was a senior founding military commander of the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) who died in 2016 after leading the ISKP war against the Afghan Taliban, the U.S army, and Afghan armed forces in eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar province. However, little was known about him or how he contributed to ISKP's sudden rise before his death. ISKP only since 2021 has released his biography and other details of his life, which means now we finally have insights into how Emirati rapidly turned ISKP into a challenger to the Taliban. This previously was a very murky matter.

Emirati's biography is based largely on Emirati's interview in Pashto with ISKP's Voice of Khorasan al-Bayyan radio, which was recorded in early 2016. This interview was later published in Arabic in the 123<sup>rd</sup> issue of IS's al-Naba weekly newsletter in March 2018 with several additions ([al-Naba #123](#), March 15, 2018). Pro-ISKP social media channels then released the original audio interview and published the Pashto text version in 2021 to debunk the Afghan Taliban's anti-ISKP propaganda narratives that declare ISKP as a conspiracy of the U.S and regional intelligence agencies operating in Afghanistan ([Youtube/Zabihullah Mujahid](#), October 31, 2021).

By republishing this biography, ISKP not only aimed to refute this propaganda about ISKP, but also appealed to the Taliban's foot soldiers by reminding them that ISKP is the heir of the "pure and sincere" Afghan and Pakistani jihadists who fought to establish an independent jihadist base in the region after 9/11. However, they were marginalized by the Afghan Taliban, which waged jihad instead under Pakistani intelligence's influence.

Moreover, Emirati's biography, in his words, reveals ISKP's resilience, despite severe setbacks and defeats the group has faced from the Taliban on one end and the former Afghan government and U.S forces' onslaughts on the other end for the last five years. His biography also shows the complexities of the militant landscape in the Afghanistan and Pakistan region that became fertile soil for the establishment of the Islamic State (IS), which sought to undermine existing regional jihadist networks predominated by al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Furthermore, Emirati's account contributes to explaining how ISKP succeeded in rapidly revamping its military operations in Afghanistan, which expanded to the northwestern Khyber Pukhtoonkhawa Province (KPK) of Pakistan after ISKP's territorial collapse in Afghanistan in early 2020. [1] These attacks showed ISKP's robust support and clandestine network in Afghanistan and KPK that resulted in its operational resilience.

### **Saad Emirati's Background**

Saad Emirati's real name was Abdul Hadi, and he was born in 1983 in the Afghan capital, Kabul, adjacent to Logar province. His family, however, migrated with millions of Afghans to neighboring Pakistan to escape the Soviet troops' invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s. As a result, he grew up in an Afghan refugee camp on the outskirts of the KPK provincial capital in Baghwanan, Peshawar. This camp was only a few kilometers from the Afghan refugees' largest camp in Pakistan, Shamshatoo, which hosted hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees and was the headquarters of the two prominent Afghan jihadist groups—the Khalis and Hikmatyar factions of Hizb-e-Islami ([Terrorism Monitor](#), May 24, 2007). Emirati studied in the camp until 12<sup>th</sup> grade and acquired basic English and computer technology skills through private courses.

Emirati narrated that he started his jihadist career with the U.S-led NATO invasion of Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001

attacks. He fought his first battle against U.S and Afghan forces in the Manogi district in Kunar in 2003 as part of the brigade of the notorious Afghan militant commander, Ismail (also known as Ahmad Shah). The brigade brought down a U.S forces helicopter in Manogi, resulting in several casualties to the U.S troops ([CNN](#), June 20, 2005). However, Shah was killed in an ambush by the security forces in Peshawar in April 2008 ([Dawn](#), April 20, 2008).

Emirati's jihadist journey did not end after Shah's death. Rather, he moved to the greater Paktia region, where he fought under the Afghan Taliban's Haqqani network and became a prominent commander. Emirati narrated that he was under the mentorship of the prominent Afghan jihadist ideologue Ustad Yasir, who played an influential role in the post-9/11 Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan ([Twitter/Ab. Sayed](#), July 9, 2020). He stated that when the Pakistani security forces arrested Yasir at his home in Peshawar in December 2008, he moved with his comrades to southern Afghanistan's Kandahar region from Paktia ([Dawn](#), January 4, 2009). He then fought in Kandahar, Zabul, and Helmand provinces.

### **The Question of Jihad Beyond Afghanistan**

The years 2008-2009 represented a crucial stage for the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan when it expanded and became more lethal ([VOA](#), September 8, 2021). The Pakistani government also categorized the Taliban into two categories at that time: the "good" and "bad" Taliban. [2] The former were those who fought in Afghanistan alone, and the latter fought against the Afghan and Pakistani governments and declared them both U.S stooges in the war against the jihadists. The Afghan Taliban's Haqqani Network further became a prominent example of the "good" category that avoided fighting outside Afghanistan. [3] Although Yasir was a senior official of the Afghan Taliban, Usama bin Laden's confidential letters

revealed that al-Qaeda appointed Yasir to mobilize a jihadist network in Afghanistan and the Pashtun belt of Pakistan. Thus, he and his hundreds of post-9/11 recruits, like Emirati, had a jihadist agenda beyond Afghanistan and declared Pakistan the prime target for its role in the US-led Global War on Terror ([al-Naba #123](#), March 15, 2018).

Emirati never mentioned Haqqani Network's cordial ties with the Pakistani state and the latter's arrest of Yasir as a reason for his separation from the Haqqani Network. However, Emirati's shifting from Paktia to the Kandahar region and later establishing a parallel jihadist network to the Haqqani Network in his native Logar Province under the Pakistani Taliban banner supports this assumption. He also noted that the Afghan Taliban's policy of limiting its fight to jihad in Afghanistan pushed him to establish a jihadist platform like ISKP that calls for a "borderless jihad."

Emirati further stated that he eventually came under the mentorship of Shahidullah Shahid (also known as Shaikh Maqbool Orakzai) after Yasir was arrested. Orakzai was a Salafi-jihadist ideologue who was the TTP spokesperson and an influential leader with a close relationship to the TTP emir Hakeem Ullah Mehsud ([Dawn](#), March 4, 2015). Orakzai later became a founding ISKP figure, who then influenced his former co-TTP senior leaders, including ISKP's founding emir Hafiz Saeed Khan, to pledge allegiance to Abubakar al-Baghdadi ([The News](#), January 13, 2015). As a result, Emirati became an ISKP founding commander with more than a dozen Afghan and Pakistani Taliban commanders who pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi in a large gathering presided by Orakzai in late 2014.

### **A Pre-ISKP Challenge to the Taliban Monopoly**

Emirati established his jihadist front in Logar under the TTP Saad Bin Abi Waqas brigade. The TTP central media arm Umar Media, published propaganda videos of



Emirati and his fighters' attacks in Logar ([Umar Media](#), January 2012). This was an exceptional extension of the TTP in Afghanistan because the TTP fighters fought in Afghanistan under the Afghan Taliban platform and did not run parallel jihadist networks or brigades. There has always been the strict instruction to allied jihadists that the Afghan Taliban must have a monopoly over leading the Afghanistan insurgency to avoid internal strife. Orakzai's support for Emirati and the TTP's interest to have a powerful commander in its ranks might have forced Emirati's group to commit this "violation."

The Haqqani Network and TTP were headquartered in the North Waziristan tribal district of KPK, where Emirati would spend time with Orakzai and Mehsud. Some Haqqani Network commanders planned to eliminate Emirati for his rebellion, but its leader, Siraj Uddin Haqqani, disapproved of his assassination because this would result in Haqqani Network infighting with the TTP. [4] Al-Naba's biography of Emirati nevertheless claims he escaped several assassination attempts by the Afghan Taliban after he rebelled against its policy of fighting only in Afghanistan.

ISKP founder Hafiz Saeed Khan finally appointed Emirati as emir for the Paktia region to establish ISKP's jihadist network there and to eliminate the Haqqani Network and Taliban monopoly. Although Emirati failed to achieve this goal, Khan still appointed him as ISKP's military chief in Nangarhar province. ISKP subsequently captured large territories in Nangarhar and was in a massive conflict with Afghan and U.S forces and the Taliban. Thus, ISKP deployed its greatest military strength there to defend its sharia implementation in its territories. Emirati was, however, killed in the Kot district of the Nangarhar province in direct fighting with the Afghan forces in July 2016 ([Khama News](#), July 26, 2016). This abruptly ended his influential jihadist career.

## Conclusion

Emirati's biography shows that the post-9/11 militant generation in Afghanistan and Pakistan prepared the ground for ISKP's quick rise and expansion in the region, which later took the form of fierce resistance against the Taliban. However, these militants were disaffected in the Taliban ranks due to differences over strategic, policy, and sectarian matters. They were inspired by the global jihadist agenda, whereas the Taliban limited its fighters to fight only on Afghan soil. Thus, they were soon marginalized in the Taliban, although they played an instrumental role in the post-9/11 insurgency in Afghanistan.

ISKP provided these fighters with a platform involving both global ambitions and fighting against the Afghan government, U.S forces, and the Taliban. Moreover, Taliban policies after the August 2021 capture of Kabul further limited the movement's efforts to state-building focused on Afghanistan instead of a global jihadist agenda. This helped ISKP to resurrect its narrative against the Taliban by declaring it as a nationalist movement that deviated from the jihadist path. [5] As such, ISKP uses all propaganda efforts to recruit hardliners within the Taliban for its jihadist agenda beyond Afghanistan.

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## Notes:

[1] For details, on the ISKP resurgence, see, Amira Jadoon, Abdul Sayed and Andrew Mines, "The Islamic State Threat in Taliban Afghanistan: Tracing the Resurgence of Islamic State Khorasan," *CTC Sentinel* 15, No. 1

[2] Mona Kanwal Sheikh, "Disaggregating the Pakistani Taliban: Does the Good, the Bad and the Ugly Taliban Distinction

Represent a Failed Policy?" Danish Institute for International Studies.

[3] Sheikh, "Disaggregating the Pakistani Taliban: Does the Good, the Bad and the Ugly Taliban Distinction Represent a Failed Policy?"

[4] Author interview with a Haqqani network commander, Kabul, May 2022.

[5] Declaring the Afghan Taliban as a nationalist movement deviated from jihadist path and remains ISKP's main anti-Taliban propaganda. For details see, for example, "We Returned," Khalid Media, February 2021.