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# CTC SENTINEL

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## About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

# The Evidence of Al-Qa`ida's Role in the 2004 Madrid Attack

By Fernando Reinares



A policeman walks alongside a train that was bombed in Madrid on March 11, 2004. - Photo by Christophe Simon/AFP/Getty Images

ON MARCH 11, 2004, a series of coordinated bombings ripped through Madrid's commuter train system, killing 191 people. Although the attacks have been described as the product of an independent cell of self-radicalized individuals only inspired by al-Qa`ida, the extensive criminal proceedings on the Madrid bombings refute this hypothesis.<sup>1</sup> The network responsible for the Madrid attacks evolved from the remnants of an al-Qa`ida cell formed in Spain a decade earlier. It was initiated following instructions from an operative of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group

(LIFG) and included members of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), as well as two former members of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group and Egyptian Islamic Jihad.<sup>2</sup> Although the network also included common criminals who radicalized into jihadists, this cell component was only a late addition.

Eight years after the Madrid terrorist attacks, new intelligence collected since the main judicial sentence in 2007 suggests that al-Qa`ida's senior leadership not only approved the operation, but likely helped facilitate and supervise it. The key connection between al-Qa`ida's central leadership and the Madrid bombing network was Amer Azizi, a Moroccan who lived in

<sup>1</sup> In fact, the judicial sentence on the trial case refers to the militants convicted for the attacks as "members of terrorist cells and groups of jihadist type" and belonging to a "terrorist group or groups of jihadist character." The sentence never alluded to an "independent" cell or similar notion. See Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Segunda, "Sentencia 65/2007," pp. 172, 279.

<sup>2</sup> Egyptian Islamic Jihad merged with al-Qa`ida in June 2001. The Algerian Armed Islamic Group disappeared after its offshoot, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, broke away in 1998.

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Madrid for a decade until November 2001. Azizi was a prominent member of the “Abu Dahdah cell,” an al-Qa`ida cell established in Spain during the mid-1990s.<sup>3</sup> By the time of the Madrid attacks, however, Azizi had become the adjunct to al-Qa`ida’s head of external operations, the Egyptian Hamza Rabia.<sup>4</sup>

This article argues that Azizi initiated plans to conduct a major act of jihadist terrorism in Spain during the second half of 2001. At the time, he was already a committed al-Qa`ida activist, but not yet a ranking member in the organization. By 2002-2003, however, Azizi was serving as the key intermediary between al-Qa`ida’s central leadership and the primary members of the Madrid bombing network, including its local ringleader, Serhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhret (known as “The Tunisian”)—with whom Azizi had ties dating back to the late 1990s.<sup>5</sup> By all accounts, Azizi traveled from Pakistan to Spain at the end of 2003, likely to convey the approval of al-Qa`ida’s senior leadership for the Madrid attack, as well as to finalize

the bombing preparations. This detail and other crucial pieces of information were acquired by at least three Western intelligence services between 2008 and 2010 and shared with this author.<sup>6</sup>

This article first recounts how Azizi became a key member of the Abu Dahdah cell, where he forged connections with the men who would later execute the Madrid attacks. It then provides a chronological narrative of how the decision to attack Spain was made, as well as Azizi’s role in the formation of the bombing network.

#### From the Abu Dahdah Cell to Al-Qa`ida Central

Amer Azizi was born in the Moroccan town of Hedami in 1968 and migrated to Spain in the early 1990s.<sup>7</sup> Once settled in Madrid, he married a native Spaniard, Raquel Burgos, who converted to Islam. Azizi began to attend Tablighi Jama`at gatherings in the capital, and by 1995 he had been radicalized and recruited into al-Qa`ida’s Abu Dahdah cell. Around this time, Abu Dahdah dispatched Azizi to a jihadist military facility in Zenica, Bosnia. By 2000, Azizi had also received military training in the Afghanistan camps, which were managed by al-Qa`ida and its North African affiliates.<sup>8</sup> Azizi’s training experience made him a respected member of the Abu Dahdah cell, within which he became a leading recruiter.<sup>9</sup>

The Abu Dahdah cell had important jihadist connections in several countries worldwide, from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. In Western Europe,

for example, Abu Dahdah was close to Tarek Maaroufi, leader of the Tunisian Combatant Group, who was living in Belgium. Abu Dahdah also traveled to London regularly to bring money to the jihadist ideologue Abu Qatada.

### “The initial groundwork for the Madrid attacks began with a meeting in Karachi in December 2001 between Amer Azizi and Abdelatif Mourafik.”

In the aftermath of 9/11, international security and intelligence investigations revealed that Abu Dahdah had a direct link to the Hamburg cell led by Muhammad `Atta and whose members were responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Abu Dahdah had previous knowledge of `Atta’s plans to strike on U.S. soil and was informed about ongoing preparations.<sup>11</sup>

10 `Atta himself traveled to Spain twice in 2001. During his second trip, between July 8-19, 2001, `Atta met with al-Qa`ida operative Ramzi bin al-Shibh—the so-called “20<sup>th</sup> hijacker”—and one or two unidentified individuals involved in the 9/11 attacks. The meeting took place in two municipalities in the Catalan coastal province of Tarragona. Based on detailed analysis of the physical movement and phone exchanges in the area among Abu Dahdah cell members, Spanish security services are convinced that Abu Dahdah cell members, including Azizi, facilitated the meeting between al-Shibh and `Atta—although it cannot be established with certainty whether any of the Abu Dahdah cell members actually attended the gathering. For details, see Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Tercera, “Sentencia 36/2005,” pp. 203-211; “Informe ampliatorio de las investigaciones realizadas en torno a las visitas a España de Mohamed Atta y Ramzi Binalshibh (sic),” Dirección General de la Policía, Comisaría General de Información, Unidad Central de Información Exterior, October 16, 2002; “Sumario 35/2001,” vol. 6, pp. 1,823-1,869, vol. 53, pp. 16, 614-616, 625, in particular the report “Informe sobre Mohamed Belfatmi, sus relaciones con Amer Azizi y la célula de Abu Dahdah,” Dirección General de la Policía, Comisaría General de Información, April 16, 2004. Also, “Informe sobre estado de las Diligencias Previa 367/01 y solicitud de comisión rogatoria internacional,” Dirección General de la Guardia Civil, Jefatura del Servicio de Información, September 16, 2002.

11 Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Tercera, “Sentencia 36/2005,” pp. 203-211.

3 The cell was founded in or before 1994 by Mustafa Setmariam Nasar (also known as Abu Mus`ab al-Suri) and Anwar Adnan Mohamed Saleh. The Syrian-born Abu Dahdah (whose real name is Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas) became the cell leader in 1995 once Saleh moved to Peshawar to help in al-Qa`ida’s reception of recruited Arabs and their transfer to Afghanistan, and al-Suri to London to assist Abu Qatada in editing the GIA’s magazine, *al-Ansar*.

4 Following the arrest of Khalid Shaykh Muhammad in Rawalpindi in March 2003, Abu Faraj al-Libi took over all charge of al-Qa`ida’s operations and Hamza Rabia became commander for external operations, including operations in the United States and Western Europe. On Azizi’s position as adjunct to Rabia and the intelligence sources for this information, see Fernando Reinares, “11-M: la conexión Al Qaeda,” *El País*, December 17, 2009; Fernando Reinares, “The Madrid Bombings and Global Jihadism,” *Survival* 52:2 (2010), pp. 91-95. Also see the following article on a jihadist website identifying Amer Azizi’s position: [www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=9752](http://www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=9752), accessed June 11, 2010.

5 Fakhret and six others blew themselves up in a flat in the city of Leganés in Madrid’s metropolitan area surrounded by Spain’s National Police on April 3, 2004. The Spanish police detected the hiding place by investigating a prepaid cell phone card used by a previously investigated member of the Abu Dahdah cell. See testimony in the Spanish parliament of the officer in charge in Cortes Generales, “Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados, Comisiones de Investigación, Sobre el 11 de marzo de 2004,” Session of October 25, 2004, p. 4.

6 Personal interviews, senior intelligence officers of two Western governments, one of them European, in December 2011 and, for further documented confirmation, in February 2012.

7 Amer Azizi was also known as Othman al-Andalusi, Jaffar al-Maghrebi and, occasionally, Othman al-Faruq and Ilyas.

8 Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 5, “Sumario 35/2001,” vol. 57, pp. 18, 322-418, 369; Audiencia of September 19, 2003. Also, Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 5, “Declaración judicial. Abdula Jayata Kattan @Abu Ibrahim,” February 4-5, 2004, p. 19.

9 Late in 2001, British soldiers found in al-Qa`ida’s camps in Afghanistan the files of several Moroccans, residents of Spain, who arrived to these facilities in which they stated that it was Othman al-Andalusi [Amer Azizi] who sent them there for training. See “Sumario 35/2001,” pp. 35, 668-735, 679.



Evidence on the connection between the Hamburg and Abu Dahdah cells led Spanish security services to dismantle it. Operation Dátil was launched in November 2001, and most of the Abu Dahdah cell's core members were detained. Several other members were not arrested, however, due to a lack of incriminatory evidence according to the legal standards in effect at the time. These men included Serhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhet, Said Berraj and Jamal Zougam—two years and three months later, they would become the fundamental local operatives behind the 2004 Madrid attacks. Amer Azizi, closely connected to all three of the men, was in Iran when Operation Dátil was launched, coordinating the route to Afghanistan for jihadists recruited in Spain. He evaded arrest and made his way to Pakistan by November-December 2001.<sup>12</sup> Once in Pakistan, Azizi moved up the ranks in al-Qa`ida's central leadership and would become a key facilitator for the Madrid attacks.

#### Intermediary Between Al-Qa`ida and Western Europe

Once joining al-Qa`ida central, Azizi operated alongside Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, a senior al-Qa`ida member who directed incursions into Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> Azizi was also linked to Mustafa Abu'l-Yazid (also known as Said al-Masri), a historical leader of al-Qa`ida and the former head of its financial committee, as well as to al-Qa`ida operative Khalid Habib. Azizi's trajectory in al-Qa`ida since 2002 suggests he was an important and highly valued senior member, with the experience and knowledge to direct terrorist operations in the West in general and Western Europe in particular. A 2005 European Union intelligence report on al-Qa`ida's leadership, for example, mentioned an unidentified al-Qa`ida

<sup>12</sup> Spain's National Police, however, found that he traveled back to Madrid, became aware of the circumstances and that authorities were searching for him, obtained money and arranged other unknown affairs before evading police detection and making his way to Pakistan. See Dirección General de la Policía, Comisaría General de Información, Unidad Central de Información Exterior, "Diligencias no. 18," May 25, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Personal interview, senior antiterrorism officer in the Spanish National Police, November 2009; personal interviews, senior intelligence officers from two Western governments, including one European country, held in December 2011 and, for further documented confirmation, in February 2012.

operative of Moroccan origin, based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan area and considered one of the main al-Qa`ida chiefs in that zone who "formerly acted as intermediary between Abu Faraj al-Libi and Western Europe, where he resided."<sup>14</sup>

Many of the details on Azizi's activities also appeared in a biography published by Tauhid Press as part of a series on "Martyrs of Maghreb al-Aqsa in the Land of the Hindu Kush," and disseminated on jihadist websites in 2009.<sup>15</sup> The biography referred to Azizi by name and

**"In 2002, precisely at the instigation of Mourafik himself, Mustafa Maymouni, a Moroccan, initiated the formation of the local operational cell that would eventually execute the Madrid attacks."**

described his "military activity" and role as "administration responsible" in al-Qa`ida before "the *amir*" trusted him for other important duties, first in "the information team" and subsequently "to lead one of the military sections." Azizi, as the document asserted, finally "assumed the function of adjunct to the commander for external action [Hamza Rabia]" and was involved, among other tasks, in instructing "the lions that came from far away with the end of preparing them to transform the tranquility of the crusaders into a hell."<sup>16</sup>

The biography noted that Azizi's intention to target Spain predated the 9/11 attacks on the United States. According to the story presented in the biography, in 2001 he returned to Spain from Afghanistan with the idea of executing an act of jihad on

<sup>14</sup> Personal interview, intelligence liaison officer based in Brussels, then working in the framework of the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy, October 2007.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, [www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=9752](http://www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=9752), accessed June 11, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

these "usurped lands."<sup>17</sup> Yet his attack plans were frustrated because, as the document explained, "most members of the jihadist cell" were arrested due to the "blessed attacks of New York and Washington." This statement obviously referred to the dismantling of the Abu Dahdah cell two months after 9/11.

#### The Decision to Attack Spain

The initial groundwork for the Madrid attacks began with a meeting in Karachi in December 2001 between Amer Azizi and Abdelatif Mourafik.<sup>18</sup> Mourafik was an operative in the LIFG.<sup>19</sup> The two individuals met initially in Afghanistan at some point in or before 2000, when Azizi received military training at the Shahid Abu Yahya Camp, a facility operated by the LIFG.<sup>20</sup> In addition to LIFG members, recruits for the GICM were indoctrinated and trained there as well; later investigations into the Madrid bombing cell revealed that its members included those affiliated with the GICM.<sup>21</sup>

Toward the end of the 1990s, both the LIFG and GICM agreed to coordinate activities.<sup>22</sup> After 9/11, this agreement became relevant for the Madrid attacks, as senior members of the LIFG and GICM were involved in not only the

<sup>17</sup> This refers to the jihadist idea that non-Muslims currently inhabiting Spain are occupying al-Andalus, the historical denomination for the Moorish dominion that extended over most of the Iberian Peninsula between the eighth and fifteenth centuries.

<sup>18</sup> Personal interviews, senior intelligence officers from two Western governments, including one European country, held in December 2011 and, for further documented confirmation, in February 2012. At the meetings, Azizi and Mourafik also probably planned attacks in Morocco. Some of those involved in planning the Madrid attacks were later arrested for the suicide bombings in Morocco. Mourafik is also known as Malek el-Andalusi and Malek al-Maghrebi.

<sup>19</sup> "Informe general sobre conclusiones de la investigación de los atentados terroristas del 11 de marzo de 2004," Dirección General de la Policía, Comisaría General de Información, Unidad Central de Información Exterior, July 3, 2006, pp. 67, 70-74; Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 6, "Sumario 20/2004," vol. 234, pp. 91, 130-191, 134.

<sup>20</sup> The camp was about 19 miles from Kabul.

<sup>21</sup> The GICM became affiliated with, and supported by, al-Qa`ida beginning in 2001. For details, see Peter L. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know* (New York: Free Press, 2006), p. 279.

<sup>22</sup> Evan F. Kohlmann, "Dossier: Libyan Islamic Fighting Group," NEFA Foundation, 2007, pp. 13-15.

strategic-operational decision to attack targets in Spain, but also in the actual configuration of the network behind the Madrid blasts.<sup>23</sup>

The meeting in Karachi in December 2001 led to a more formal gathering in Istanbul in February 2002. In Istanbul, delegates from the LIFG and GICM, as well as from the Tunisian Combatant Group, agreed that jihad should not be limited to conflict zones, but should also be conducted in countries where their members originated or lived.<sup>24</sup> This argument was subsequently disseminated in Madrid by August 2002 in the early meetings of what would become the basis for the Madrid bombing network.<sup>25</sup> In 2002, precisely at the instigation of Mourafik himself, Mustafa Maymouni, a Moroccan, initiated the formation of the local operational cell that would eventually execute the Madrid attacks.<sup>26</sup> Maymouni

<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Fakhret, as ringleader of the local cell, had cell phone exchanges with Abu Abdullah al-Sadeq (the alias of Abdelhakim Belhadj), then *amir* of the LIFG, a few months prior to the Madrid attacks when Fakhret was in Madrid and al-Sadeq was in Hong Kong. The content of these phone calls is not known. On these exchanges there is a Spanish police report dated June 7, 2005, elaborated with the help of friendly services—presumably British—included in vol. 233 of “Sumario 20/2004,” pp. 90, 730-790, 734. Furthermore, on the evening of March 24, 2010, the day after al-Sadeq was released from jail in Libya, this author had the opportunity to meet him for a brief interview at the home of his siblings in Tripoli. The author was in the company of professor Rohan Gunaratna, head of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at Singapore’s Nanyang Technological University. In the course of the exchange, the former *amir* of the LIFG acknowledged having had what he termed “social relations” with Fakhret. Separately, on April 3, 2004, minutes before Fakhret and six other members of the Madrid bombing cell blew themselves up in Leganés, Fakhret made a cell phone call to a prominent LIFG member who answered the telephone in London. In a personal communication on March 22, 2010, also in Tripoli, and reiterated during a meeting in Madrid in November the same year, Noman Benotman, a former LIFG high ranking member, confirmed this to the author. According to Benotman, he was in London with the man who received the call at the time it was made.

<sup>24</sup> An intelligence note of December 17, 2004 about this meeting and the strategic decision adopted is incorporated in the criminal proceedings for the Madrid bombings. See “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 97, pp. 31-32, 316, 848.

<sup>25</sup> Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 6, Audiencia of July 5, 2006, pp. 64-65.

<sup>26</sup> At the same time, Mourafik instructed Maymouni to create another operational cell in Kenitra, Morocco, a task

had been a friend of Azizi since at least 1999 when the two attended the same Tablighi congregations in Madrid.<sup>27</sup> Azizi recruited him into the Abu Dahdah cell around 2001, and Maymouni became his closest collaborator.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Mourafik likely found Maymouni through Azizi.

#### **Azizi and the Madrid Bombing Network**

In 2002, Maymouni rented the Morata de Tajuña rural house in Chinchón that served as the base of operations for the bombers.<sup>29</sup> He rented the house from the wife of Mohamed Needl Acaid, who was at the time incarcerated in Spain for belonging to the Abu Dahdah cell. In May 2003, however, Maymouni was imprisoned in Morocco, where he had traveled temporarily, after being implicated in the Casablanca attacks, the same charge that moved Turkish police to almost simultaneously arrest Mourafik and extradite him to Moroccan authorities. Due to Maymouni’s arrest, another Moroccan, Driss Chebli, and Serhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhret (“The Tunisian”) came to jointly lead the Madrid local cell. Yet a few months later, Chebli was arrested in Spain and accused of belonging to the Abu Dahdah cell.<sup>30</sup> Fakhret, who had close

for which the latter was assisted by Jamal Zougam. The Kenitra cell was dismantled after the 2003 Casablanca attacks. The secret police intelligence report providing these details is included in “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 191, pp. 74, 588-574, 615.

<sup>27</sup> “Informe general sobre conclusiones de la investigación de los atentados terroristas del 11 de marzo de 2004,” Dirección General de la Policía, Comisaría General de Información, Unidad Central de Información Exterior, p. 73. From at least 2000, Fakhret also frequented these congregations.

<sup>28</sup> When Azizi escaped, Maymouni was ordered by Mourafik to go to Morocco, where Azizi’s wife, Raquel Burgos, a Spanish convert, had moved shortly after the disappearance of her husband, and helped her to rejoin him, first in Turkey and then in Pakistan. See “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 191, pp. 74, 600-674. During its autumn 2009 offensive in South Waziristan Agency, the Pakistani Army found and exhibited to the international press a passport belonging to Raquel Burgos, recovered from the debris of a house, next to the passport of Said Bahaji, a German citizen and associate of the lead 9/11 hijacker Muhammed `Atta. See Katherine Tiedemann, “Passports Linked to 9/11 Found in Northwest Pakistan Military Operations,” The AfPak Channel, October 30, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 21, pp. 5, 583.

<sup>30</sup> Details are included in the court indictment of Amer Azizi, where he was charged with terrorist offenses related to his membership in the Abu Dahdah cell as a “lieu-

ties to Azizi, became the sole chief local organizer. The continuity between the remains of the Abu Dahdah cell and the Madrid bombing network is so evident that Fakhret himself might have exchanged with Abu Dahdah on the plot, since he even visited the latter in prison only five days before the March 11 attacks.<sup>31</sup>

Fakhret was radicalized and recruited by Azizi into the Abu Dahdah cell in the late 1990s.<sup>32</sup> They met each other frequently until the summer of 2001 and communicated by e-mail through

### **“Fakhret was radicalized and recruited by Azizi into the Abu Dahdah cell in the late 1990s.”**

2002 and in 2003, although left no electronic traffic since they saved the e-mails in the draft box of an e-mail account to which they both had login access.<sup>33</sup> It was likely Azizi who—to complete the local operational cell—suggested engaging Jamal Zougam, a Moroccan who the Spanish National Police had already investigated in the Abu Dahdah cell case and also in connection with the Casablanca attacks in 2003.<sup>34</sup> Azizi had been in contact with Zougam before escaping to Pakistan in 2001.<sup>35</sup>

tenant” of the cell leader. See Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 5, “Sumario 35/2001,” Audiencia of September 19, 2003, pp. 15, 17-18.

<sup>31</sup> Personal interview, senior Spanish police officer charged in the past with the criminal investigation of the Abu Dahdah cell, November 2008.

<sup>32</sup> “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 163, pp. 61, 740.

<sup>33</sup> The testimony of a protected witness, a person who lived with Fakhret during 2002 and 2003, was fundamental in knowing about these exchanges, as it is documented in “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 114, pp. 39, 154 and vol. 163, pp. 61, 923-961, 924. The actual content of these e-mails is not known.

<sup>34</sup> “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 17, pp. 4, 411.

<sup>35</sup> For instance, following a formal request from the French authorities, namely from judge Jean-Louis Bruguière, concerning Zougam—who was already suspected of jihadist terrorism activities by 2000—the Spanish National Police searched his home in Madrid and found, in addition to al-Qa`ida propaganda, written contact details for Azizi. See “Sumario 35/2001,” pp. 28, 477-428, 588; “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 163, pp. 61, 679, 785.

Azizi's connections to the bombing network did not end there. Said Berraj, who remains a fugitive for his role in the Madrid attacks, had close ties to Azizi as well. On October 10, 2000, both Azizi and Berraj were temporarily arrested in Turkey on their way to Afghanistan.<sup>36</sup> Azizi was then found in possession of five false Pakistani visas.

In the end, the Madrid bombing network included four separate, though partially overlapping clusters of individuals who all coalesced together between September 2002 and November 2003.<sup>37</sup> Fakhret and Zougam became nodes for their respective

### **“Far from being the product of an independent cell, the Madrid attacks were a complex manifestation of al-Qa`ida’s capabilities in Western Europe after 9/11.”**

clusters, both of which evolved from the remnants of the Abu Dahdah cell. A third cluster was related to the GICM, and its node was Youssef Belhadj, a Moroccan based in Brussels who traveled back and forth to Madrid since 2002, leaving the city for the last time eight days before the train bombings; he knew the date chosen for the attacks since at least October 19, 2003.<sup>38</sup> The fourth cluster

36 “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 17, pp. 4, 414 and vol. 163, pp. 61, 684.

37 Fernando Reinares, “The Madrid Bombings and Global Jihadism,” *Survival* 52:2 (2010).

38 “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 106, pp. 35, 601-635, 614; “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 115, pp. 39, 970-939, 973; “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 163, pp. 61, 608-661, 627; “Sumario 20/2004,” vol. 180, pp. 69, 863. Another individual who knew well in advance about the date chosen for the attacks is Rabei Osman es Sayed Ahmed (also known as Mohamed al-Masri). The Italian police discovered this fact when he was under security surveillance in Milan months after the train blasts. See report from DIGOS, Milano, Sezione Antiterrorismo, to “Procedimento penale 17596/04,” 2004, pp. 48, 55-57. Sayed Ahmed, a former EIJ member who lived in Madrid during 2002 and 2003, was linked to Fakhret and MICG clusters within the Madrid bombing network, and an acquaintance of

and the last one to be chronologically incorporated brought to the Madrid bombing network half a dozen former ordinary criminals. These men joined the network because they followed their leader, Moroccan Jamal Ahmidan (also known as “The Chinese”), who in 1996 already had jihadist views—his radical leanings intensified during a period of imprisonment in Morocco between 2000 and 2003.<sup>39</sup> This last cluster of individuals was introduced for operational and financial purposes.<sup>40</sup>

The al-Qa`ida operative who had ties to most key members in the network was Amer Azizi.

#### **Conclusion**

Both the decision to attack Spain and the mobilization of a terrorist network to accomplish this objective were top down processes. The groundwork started on or before December 2001 in Pakistan and extended until February 2002, involving al-Qa`ida’s North African associate organizations whose delegates gathered in Turkey that month. The track record of Amer Azizi inside al-Qa`ida central since that same year suggests he favored the subsequent approval and facilitation of the plot by al-Qa`ida’s senior leadership. By October 2002, Azizi had likely instructed Mourafik to place Maymouni—who was one of Azizi’s closest collaborators—in charge of the bombing network. The process included interaction between key local organizers and Azizi before and after he was appointed adjunct to al-Qa`ida’s head of external operations, Hamza Rabia.

Far from being the product of an independent cell, the Madrid attacks were a complex manifestation of al-Qa`ida’s capabilities in Western Europe after 9/11. The coordinated explosions on the commuter trains on March 11, 2004 evidenced the existence of jihadist

Azizi. Also see *ibid*.

39 “Sentencia 65/2007,” p. 201.

40 See “Sumario 20/2004,” separate piece no. 11. Separately, at least three other members of the Madrid bombing network were also in contact with a cell of Pakistani men detained in Barcelona in September 2004 and afterwards convicted for sending funds to al-Qa`ida’s senior members in Pakistan. See Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción no. 2, “Auto” of April 11, 2005, p. 6; Audiencia Nacional, Sala de lo Penal, Sección Primera, “Sentencia 39/2007,” pp. 4-5.

networks or cells prone to direction and support, even supervision, from al-Qa`ida’s external operations command through intermediaries with first hand knowledge of the concrete operational scenario and ties to local operatives. Networks and cells that eventually incorporated individuals ascribed to al-Qa`ida’s affiliated entities had a significant presence in Western Europe. They were able to perpetrate sophisticated, coordinated and highly lethal attacks in the region explicitly following al-Qa`ida’s general strategy.<sup>41</sup>

Usama bin Ladin first mentioned the Madrid train bombings a month after the attacks in an audio recording broadcast by al-Jazira and al-Arabiya on April 15, 2004.<sup>42</sup> On the recording, Bin Ladin said, “There is a lesson regarding what happens in occupied Palestine and what happened on September 11 and March 11. These are your goods returned to you.” On November 16, 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri alluded to the March 2004 attacks in a video praising the suicide bombings of July 7, 2005 in London

41 The local operational cell in Madrid followed directives concerning al-Qa`ida’s strategy. On the evening of March 11, 2004, a communiqué signed by the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades/al-Qa`ida, sent by e-mail to the London-based *al-Quds al-Arabi* Arabic-language newspaper, first claimed responsibility for the train bombings. This initial communiqué was most probably sent from Iran, although it could have technically originated in Yemen, Egypt or Libya. A second communiqué from the same origin was posted on the Global Islamic Media Center website on March 18, seven days after the train bombings. It announced that “our leadership has decided to halt all operations in the soil of al-Andalus” until “we are sure of the direction the new government will take,” referring to the Socialist Party victory over the Partido Popular in the Spanish general elections held on March 14, 2004, three days after the attacks. The communiqué was downloaded early the following morning on a computer used by key members of the local cell. This explains the message handwritten by “The Tunisian” and faxed to the press on the morning of April 3, the same day the Leganés safehouse was detected by the police in the evening, announcing “the annulment of our previous truce.” The truce, however, had been declared not by the local cell but by the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades/al-Qa`ida. The local cell simply accepted premises transmitted in advance from above and from abroad. See Reinares, “The Madrid Bombings and Global Jihadism.”

42 On October 18, 2003, nearly five months before the Madrid train bombings, Bin Ladin released a message, broadcast by al-Jazira, threatening Spain.



as “the blessed raid which, like its illustrious predecessors in New York, Washington and Madrid, took the battle to the enemy’s own soil.”

While in U.S. custody at Guantanamo Bay after his arrest in May 2005, Abu Faraj al-Libi, the overall manager of al-Qa`ida’s operations at the time of the Madrid attacks, declared that Hamza Rabia, then the chief external operations planner, “wanted strongly to attack passenger trains in the US or UK following the March 2004 bombing of commuter trains in Madrid.”<sup>43</sup> On July 7, 2005, one year and four months later, suicide bombers struck the London Underground system. The role of the alleged al-Qa`ida mastermind behind this plot, Abu Ubaydah al-Masri, could be compared to that of Azizi in the Madrid attacks.

In December 2005, when a U.S. drone killed Amer Azizi and Hamza Rabia in a North Waziristan home,<sup>44</sup> they were both preparing operatives for a similar strike planned on the continental United States.<sup>45</sup>

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43 The Joint Task Force Guantanamo assessment on Abu Faraj al-Libi, dated September 10, 2008, is available at <http://projects.nytimes.com/guantanamo/detainees/10017-abu-faraj-al-libi>, specifically p. 11.

44 In November 2009, the author received this information from Western intelligence sources who were present in Pakistan at the time, and the author received written confirmation of the accuracy of this information from the Spanish police’s antiterrorism services in December 2009.

45 Personal oral communications with senior intelligence officers of two Western states, one of them European, held in December 2011 and, for further documented confirmation, in February 2012.

## A Pre-Trial Profile of Anders Behring Breivik

By Jacob Aasland Ravndal

ON JULY 22, 2011, anti-Islam terrorist Anders Behring Breivik detonated a 2,100-pound bomb in the Norwegian Government Quarter in the heart of Oslo, killing eight people, before shooting and killing 69 people at Utøya, a small island 25 miles from Oslo. A further 158 people were wounded in the attacks.<sup>1</sup> The trial against Breivik begins in Oslo District Court on April 16, 2012. It will provide insight to many questions that remain unanswered. Before the start of the trial, however, it is useful to recapture what is known about Breivik as a person, his tactics and networks.

This article summarizes information from Norwegian sources<sup>2</sup> to inform an international public. It does not provide a comprehensive overview of the case, but instead covers aspects that have been overlooked or misinterpreted by international media. The article also leaves out the much larger subject

1 During the attacks, 98 people were wounded at the Government Quarter, while 60 people were wounded at Utøya. See “16 fremdeles alvorlig skadet etter terrorangrepet,” VG Nett, August 1, 2011.

2 In addition to Norwegian media, this article draws on a 243-page forensic psychiatry report prepared by two experts nominated by the court. The report provides details from 13 interviews with Breivik carried out by the psychiatrists in jail. During the interviews, Breivik described the different phases of his life, from childhood to the last hours and minutes before the attacks. In addition, the evaluation contains interviews with family and friends, as well as detailed summaries from police interrogations, including the first one that took place on Utøya minutes after Breivik was arrested. The report is available in Norwegian at [www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/oslobomben/psykiatrisk\\_vurdering/](http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/oslobomben/psykiatrisk_vurdering/). The report has not been officially released, but was leaked to the press by unknown sources. Citing from a leaked document is not unproblematic, but the author has chosen to do so here for several reasons. First, the report carries no classification label. Second, the document is already in the public sphere and has been widely cited in the press. Third, the leaked version of the report has already been redacted to conceal the most sensitive personal information. The author has taken the additional precaution of citing the document only on points that concern Breivik himself. Finally, Norwegian authorities have not taken legal measures against those who leaked the report, nor have they explicitly warned others against citing it in academic publications.

of Breivik’s ideology. In summation, the findings suggest that Breivik had a less privileged childhood than was initially thought, that he committed tactical mistakes during his attack preparations, and that questions remain about the extent to which he radicalized completely on his own.

### Anders Behring Breivik

There has been much debate and speculation about Breivik’s mental health. At stake is not only the issue of due legal process, but also the question of whether Breivik represents a broader ideological movement. After 13 conversations with Breivik in jail, the first court-appointed forensic psychiatrists concluded that Breivik suffers from paranoid schizophrenia. The diagnosis sparked intense public debate in Norway because it implies that Breivik is criminally insane, and therefore not legally responsible for the killings according to Norwegian law.<sup>3</sup> The evaluation was soon leaked to the press and has been widely criticized by both psychiatrists and non-psychiatrists for failing to contextualize Breivik’s statements and worldview.<sup>4</sup> The controversy was such that the court made the unprecedented decision of commissioning a second evaluation by another team of psychiatrists, which will conclude its work in early April 2012. Rather than addressing the issue of Breivik’s mental state, however, this article will summarize key aspects of his biography.

The first years of Breivik’s life were marked by instability and an absent father figure. Breivik’s parents separated when he was a year-and-a-half-old. His father would mostly live abroad, working as a Norwegian diplomat. His mother found raising Breivik and his older sister alone to be challenging, and she therefore applied for a weekend home for her son when he was two-years-old. In the application, Breivik was described as a demanding child who exhausted his mother both

3 Some experts have suggested that “paranoid psychosis” is a more likely diagnosis, which would define Breivik as criminally insane anyway. For details, see “Psykiatriprofessor: Breivik må ha vært psykotisk,” fvn.no, January 6, 2012.

4 “Truer psykiatriens omdømme?” VG Nett, February 22, 2012; Tore Bjørgo, “Med monopol på vrangforestillinger,” *Aftenposten*, December 7, 2011.

physically and psychologically.<sup>5</sup> The application was approved, and Breivik spent several weekends with another family.<sup>6</sup>

Two years later, in 1983, Breivik spent a month in a national center for children and youth psychiatry together with his mother and half-sister.<sup>7</sup> At this point, Breivik's father filed for custody. The case was presented to the court, which decided that his mother should have full custody, pending further examination. Meanwhile, his father withdrew his case.<sup>8</sup> The year after, Norwegian child welfare filed a letter of concern leading to further investigations of the family conditions. The authorities considered moving Breivik into foster care, but this was eventually deemed unnecessary, and the case was closed.<sup>9</sup>

Breivik's teenage years were also somewhat troubled. At age 14, he was charged twice with graffiti and vandalism. Later the same year, he was detained by police at Oslo central station having just arrived from Denmark with 43 graffiti aerosol spray cans in his bag.<sup>10</sup> His mother was unaware of his Denmark trip, a fact which prompted talks between the Breivik family and child welfare in which his mother expressed concerns about her son pursuing a criminal career.<sup>11</sup> According to Breivik's mother, his father became furious when he heard about the graffiti incidents, and "closed the door" on his son.<sup>12</sup> Breivik also explained that the graffiti incident led to a break of regular contact between him and his father, with whom he lost all contact at the age of 22.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to describe Breivik as a delinquent. He has also been described as a caring son. For example, when he turned 15, his mother fell ill and was hospitalized for

some time. Breivik cared for her when she returned home, and he even had his military service postponed to look after her.<sup>14</sup> The same year, Breivik chose to be baptized and confirmed in the Norwegian State Church,<sup>15</sup> an incident which has led some foreign commentators to suggest he is a Christian fundamentalist. This is a misunderstanding. The majority of Norwegian youth are confirmed at this age, which does not necessarily mean that they are particularly religious.<sup>16</sup>

At 16, Breivik began high school, but disliked it and changed schools after the first year. He spent one more year in a second high school, before dropping out for good.<sup>17</sup> He moved out from his mother's home in 2001, and lived in a shared flat for a year. Between 2002 and 2006, he lived by himself in a rented apartment. During this period, Breivik started and managed several small companies.<sup>18</sup>

In 2006, Breivik's mother suggested he should move back home because she figured he could save money as his various companies did not turn out to be successful.<sup>19</sup> Breivik agreed to it, and claims it was at this time the thought of martyrdom struck him. He therefore decided to "take a year off to play videogames" as a "martyr gift" to himself.<sup>20</sup> He largely withdrew from social life while his mother paid the

rent, did his laundry, and cooked for him.<sup>21</sup>

In 2007, Breivik told his mother he was going to write a book.<sup>22</sup> She describes his behavior from this time forward as odd, as he became increasingly obsessed with the book project. It culminated in 2010. He would get angry whenever she disturbed him, and she felt like being "locked in" with her son.<sup>23</sup> He would

**"Breivik originally wanted to build three bombs, but realized he was running short of time and finances, and decided to make only one."**

also accuse her of being a Marxist and a feminist.<sup>24</sup> From 2010, he forbade her to sneeze and would complain about the food. He told her he was not as attractive anymore, and that he was considering plastic and dental surgery.<sup>25</sup>

In the autumn of 2010, Breivik told his mother that the book project was completed. He would talk more and more about politics, and make comments that she considered "crazy."<sup>26</sup> She describes her son as very "intense," and in the final year they lived together he more or less locked himself inside his room. He expressed fear of being contaminated by her because she talked to too many people, and he would not eat in the kitchen, only in his own room. He would walk around in the apartment holding a hand in front of his face, and would sometimes wear a gauze mask.<sup>27</sup>

That autumn, Breivik purchased what his mother understood to be a bullet-proof suitcase and a shotgun, which he kept in his room. In early 2011, she also noticed he had bought a large pistol. He would also dress up in his self-made "survival outfit" in the apartment. He

5 "Les de psykiatriske rapportene om Breivik," VG Nett, undated.

6 Kjetil S. Ostli and Tor Arne Andreassen, "Gransker bekymringsmeldinger om Anders Behring Breiviks barndom," *Aftenposten*, November 26, 2011.

7 "Les de psykiatriske rapportene om Breivik," p. 46.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

14 According to Breivik's mother, he applied for postponement of military services several times, until he was finally dismissed. "Les de psykiatriske rapportene om Breivik," p. 77.

15 For more details, see Anders Behring Breivik, "2083: A European Declaration of Independence," available at <http://2083europe.wordpress.com>, p. 1,405.

16 Confirmation is a Christian tradition symbolizing the transition from childhood to adulthood. Although an increasing share of youth today choose a non-religious or humanist confirmation, more than 50% of Norwegian youth still choose to be confirmed in church, not necessarily meaning that they are particularly religious. This was likely the case for Breivik.

17 Breivik never pursued any further formal education, although he claims to have undertaken between 15,000-16,000 hours of self-study.

18 One of the companies produced fake diplomas. He also sold outdoor advertising space and IT-support services. His various companies were all closed down after some time, and the last one filed for bankruptcy in 2006/2007. For details, see "Les de psykiatriske rapportene om Breivik," p. 218.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 78.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 218.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 78.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*

26 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 80 and 133.



told her about the coming of a civil war and received large packages by airmail. She also noticed he was storing strange equipment in the basement, including large rucksacks filled with stones and four large containers with lids. When she asked what it was all for, he would become angry. During the spring of 2011, Breivik's mother once saw her son coming out of his room with a red uniform jacket with emblems sewed onto it.<sup>28</sup> On May 7, Breivik moved all his equipment to a farm he rented at Åsta in Hedmark County, where he would build the bomb.

#### Breivik's Tactics

The car bomb Breivik detonated at the Government Quarter weighed about 2,100 pounds (950 kilograms) and its main components were fertilizer and diesel. Breivik used online recipes to build it, and purchased the ingredients from retailers in Norway and abroad. He ordered six tons of fertilizer from the Norwegian cooperative Felleskjøpet on May 4, 2011.<sup>29</sup> The aluminum powder—a core ingredient in fertilizer bombs—was bought online from a Polish company.<sup>30</sup> Breivik originally wanted to build three bombs, but realized he was running short of time and finances, and decided to make only one.<sup>31</sup> After July 22, police found great quantities of leftover bombmaking materials at Breivik's farm.

Most of Breivik's special equipment was purchased on eBay, including a tactical rifle foregrip from a Hong Kong-based trader, a zoom spotting scope from a Chinese supplier, and a LaserLyte pistol bayonet from a U.S.-based retailer.<sup>32</sup> He also bought 15 vinyl air bags that may have been used to stabilize the car bomb during transport.<sup>33</sup>

As for the weapons Breivik used on July 22, his initial plan was to buy them on the black market in countries he considered as "European criminal network hubs."<sup>34</sup> This somewhat naive idea led Breivik into one of his tactical misfortunes as he drove all the way to the Czech Republic to actively approach people he believed to be criminals. In his book, which is also known as his "compendium,"<sup>35</sup> he described the trip as a complete failure as everyone he approached thought he was crazy.<sup>36</sup> He therefore lost his motivation and returned empty-handed.<sup>37</sup>

Surprisingly, acquiring weapons legally in Norway proved much easier than buying them on the black market abroad. Breivik simply used his hunting license and pistol club membership to buy a Ruger Mini 14 (semi-automatic rifle) and a 9mm Glock 17 (semi-automatic pistol).

There are other incidents suggesting Breivik may not have been as cool-headed as is commonly portrayed. For instance, he was kicked out of a bar in Oslo one year before the attacks, having annoyed a Norwegian celebrity by talking extensively about crusades, Islam, and Templar Knights. While being escorted out of the bar, he reportedly shouted at the celebrity: "A year from now, I will be three times as famous as you!"<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, in March 2011, Breivik apparently called the central switchboard of Norwegian ministries, threatening to kill members of The Workers' Youth League (AUF) at Utøya. This incident was logged, but never forwarded to the Police Secret Service as it was considered an empty threat. Breivik later acknowledged making the call, but said he does not remember its contents.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, not everything went according to Breivik's plan on the day of the attacks. His original idea was to be in Oslo and start the distribution of the compendium at 3:00 AM the night before, and to detonate the vehicle around 10:00 AM.<sup>40</sup> The bomb,

**“The most critical question for Norwegian investigators has been whether Breivik had any accomplices. To date, there are no indications of him receiving any help with the operational planning or execution of the July 22 attacks.”**

however, was not detonated until 3:25 PM.<sup>41</sup> The precise reasons for the delay are not clear. Breivik himself claims to have been delayed back at the farm and not having made it to Oslo until 11:00 PM, after which he went to sleep because he was tired.<sup>42</sup> It has later become known, however, that Breivik, on the night before the attacks, visited the same bar in Oslo from which he had been kicked out of a year before.<sup>43</sup>

In any case, Breivik did not wake until 8:00 AM the next morning, and started the day installing a new computer modem and configuring Microsoft Outlook on his personal computer, presumably in preparation for the e-mail distribution.<sup>44</sup> This took more time than expected, which caused him to panic slightly.<sup>45</sup> He decided to go on an additional reconnaissance trip to the Government Quarter before returning

28 Ibid., p. 24.

29 Torgeir P. Krokfjord and Line Brustad, "Breivik kjøpte seks tonn kunstgjødsel i mai," *Dagbladet*, July 23, 2011.

30 Breivik bought 330 pounds of aluminum powder for 2,000 euros. For more details, see Rune Christophersen, Oyvind Lefdal Eidsvik and Tron Strand, "Gransket firmaet Breivik bestilte fra," bt.no, November 24, 2011.

31 "Les de psykiatriske rapportene om Breivik," p. 141.

32 Mark Hughes and Gordon Rayner, "Norway Killer Anders Behring Breivik had Extensive Links to English Defence League," *Telegraph*, July 25, 2011.

33 Ibid.

34 For more details, see Breivik, p. 920.

35 Note that since July 22, the media has referred to Breivik's compendium as his "manifesto." Breivik, however, either refers to the document as his "book" or his "compendium," both in the compendium as well as during conversations with psychiatrists. He never used the word "manifesto."

36 Breivik, pp. 1422-1423.

37 "Les de psykiatriske rapportene om Breivik," p. 137.

38 Torgeir P. Krokfjord et al., "Om ett år er jeg tre ganger mer kjent enn deg," *Dagbladet*, August 23, 2011.

39 "Breivik erkjenner telefon til regjeringskvartalet," *Af-*

*tenposten*, January 27, 2012. During interrogation, Breivik has acknowledged making the call.

40 "Les de psykiatriske rapportene om Breivik," p. 143.

41 "Politiet justerer tidspunktet for terrorbomben," tv2.no, September 23, 2011.

42 "Les de psykiatriske rapportene om Breivik," p. 143.

43 Torgeir P. Krokfjord et al., "Breivik festet på kjendisbar natta før massemordet," *Dagbladet*, August 19, 2011.

44 "Les de psykiatriske rapportene om Breivik," pp. 143-144.

45 Ibid., p. 144.

to his mother's home to upload the movie trailer on YouTube. He claims that he wrote the last message in the compendium at 2:45 PM.<sup>46</sup> When he finally decided to initiate his plan, many people had already left work at the Government Quarter. In his own mind, he failed his first mission because he was delayed and not enough people were killed. During an interview, he claims that he could have surrendered immediately if more people would have been killed in the first attack.<sup>47</sup>

### Breivik's Networks

The most critical question for Norwegian investigators has been whether Breivik had any accomplices. To date, there are no indications of him receiving any help with the operational planning or execution of the July 22 attacks. Moreover, investigators say they have yet to find evidence that the Knights Templar organization described in the compendium is anything but a product of Breivik's imagination. In the years leading up to the attack, however, Breivik did communicate with people and groups sharing his anti-Islamist ideas. He has also been linked to convicted terrorists with similarly murky political views. While these links do not amount to organized collaboration, it may be too early to draw conclusions about the extent to which other activists played a role in his radicalization process.

One reason is that Breivik traveled extensively. From Breivik's room, police retrieved two passports, one of which documented travels to Turkey (1998), Liberia (April 2002), Ivory Coast (April 2002), Malta (April 2004), Estonia (April 2004), Croatia (August 2004), China (July 2005) and Lithuania (travel date unknown).<sup>48</sup> Norwegian police have also confirmed large money transactions from Breivik to unknown persons abroad.<sup>49</sup> He also laundered money in Latvia through a company called Brentwood Solutions.<sup>50</sup>

46 Ibid. In the compendium, the last entry in the "Knights Templar Log" was dated July 22 at 12:51, p. 1,472.

47 "Les de psykiatriske rapportene om Breivik," p. 140.

48 Sindre Granly Meldalen et al., "Passet avslørte Breiviks verdensturne," *Dagbladet*, February 3, 2012.

49 One of the transactions amounted to \$40,000. For more details, see Sindre Granly Meldalen et al., "Grillet Breivik om mystiske dollar," *Dagbladet*, March 2, 2012.

50 "Breivik skal ha hvitvasket penger i Latvia," VG Nett, March 3, 2012.

In his compendium, Breivik claims he visited a Serb "war hero" in Liberia in 2002, before attending the ordination meeting of his alleged Knights Templar organization in London later that year. Norwegian police have confirmed that Breivik spent approximately a week in Liberia in April 2002.<sup>51</sup> Exactly whom he met remains unknown, but speculation has centered on Milorad "Legija" Ulemek,<sup>52</sup> a former commander of The Red Berets.<sup>53</sup>

It has also been confirmed that Breivik visited Belarus in 2005. While early commentators suggested he may have gone for paramilitary training,<sup>54</sup> a more trivial reason has now been confirmed: Breivik went to see a woman he had met on a matchmaking website. The woman in question has since told the police that she dated Breivik for awhile, but left him because he was such a chauvinist.<sup>55</sup>

On May 17, 2009, the Norwegian Constitution Day, Breivik registered the company "Breivik Geofarm," which later became his cover for buying fertilizer.<sup>56</sup> Two Swedish citizens are currently under investigation for having listed the company as their employer on Facebook. Both individuals had links on their Facebook sites to known war criminals and fascists from the Second World War, in addition to the Serb paramilitary leader Arkan.<sup>57</sup>

During 2009, Breivik also contacted members of the English Defence League (EDL) on Facebook. He used the nickname Sigurd Jorsalfare, alluding to the Norwegian king Sigurd Magnusson

51 "Politiet har fått bekreftet Behring Breiviks Liberia-tur," *Aftenposten*, December 23, 2011.

52 Runar Henriksen Jørstad et al., "Etterforsker Breivikspor til serbisk kommandør," nrk.no, February 4, 2012.

53 This was a special unit of the Serbian secret police, formed during the former Yugoslavia conflict. In 2007, Ulemek was sentenced to 40 years in prison for the 2003 assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in Belgrade. For more details, see Igor Jovanovic, "More Red Beret arrests in Serbia," *Southeast European Times*, September 26, 2011.

54 "Hevder Breivik fikk militær trening i Hviterussland," *Aftenposten*, July 29, 2011.

55 Torgeir P. Krokfjord et al., "Dette var Breiviks håndplukkede konekandidater," *Dagbladet*, January 19, 2012.

56 For a previous listing of this company, see www.guindex.no/o/Breivik\_Geofarm/994089269.

57 Bent Skjærstad, "Mystiske svensker kobles til Breivik," tv2.no, July 29, 2011.

(1090-1130) who earned the eponym "Jorsalfare" after his combined crusade and pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1108-1111. It has also been alleged that Breivik attended EDL-demonstrations in Newcastle and West London in 2010.<sup>58</sup> This has yet to be confirmed, although a senior leader in the EDL has said Breivik met with EDL leaders in March that year during a visit to London to listen to Geert Wilders speak.<sup>59</sup> Breivik also joined the Norwegian Defence League (NDL) in 2010, but former NDL leader Lena Andreassen now says she personally threw him out because his views were "too extreme" (she has not said when she threw Breivik out or to which of his statements she reacted).<sup>60</sup>

There have also been rumors that Breivik met with representatives from the now banned Russian neo-Nazi group Slavic Union, including the infamous Vjateslav Datsik.<sup>61</sup> The rumors have been confirmed by the former leader of the Slavic Union, Dmitrij Demusjkin, but not by other sources.<sup>62</sup> Breivik has also been linked to an organization called Order 777, a self-proclaimed "paraintelligence service" and "Christian brotherhood" structured in "special operation units" to fight the threat of Islamic terrorism.<sup>63</sup> The group has three key members: 1) the former neo-Nazi and convicted terrorist Nick Greger from Germany; 2) the former loyalist paramilitary fighter and convicted terrorist Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair from Northern Ireland; and 3) Paul Ray from England, known as one of the initial founders of the EDL.<sup>64</sup>

58 Ryan Parry, "Norway Massacre: Anders Behring Breivik Plotted Killing Spree for Nine Years," *Mirror*, July 25, 2011.

59 Hughes and Rayner.

60 "Hevder Breivik var for ekstrem," bt.no, July 26, 2011.

61 Torbjørn Brandeggen, "Breivik skal ha møtt Datsik," tv2.no, August 3, 2011.

62 Vladimir Pimonov, "Breivik i kontakt med russiske nazister," *Ekstra Bladet*, August 3, 2011.

63 According to its homepage, Order 777 operates on three levels: (i) operations to expose Islamic terrorists, their networks and activities; (ii) spiritual warfare to fight Islam itself; and (iii) assistance in founding citizen militias with purpose of self-protection of communities which are directly terrorized by jihadists. For more details, see www.globalresistance.webs.com/aboutus.htm, accessed March 2, 2012.

64 For details, see the following video: www.youtube.

There are striking similarities between Order 777 and Breivik in terms of their use of Templar iconography and counterjihad rhetoric. Moreover, the Serb commander Milorad "Legija" Ulemek features in several of the videos posted by Order 777 on YouTube.<sup>65</sup> Paul Ray, however, has explicitly distanced himself from Breivik. He was initially accused by the media for being the person Breivik refers to as his mentor and a founding member of his Knights Templar: Richard the Lionhearted.<sup>66</sup> Paul Ray uses the nickname Lionheart which is also the name of his blog.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, Ray leads an anti-Islam group called The Ancient Order of the Templar Knights.<sup>68</sup> Ray argues that he has been framed and that Breivik has merely copied his ideas. Ray admits that Breivik tried to become his Facebook friend, but claims he denied the request because he "didn't like the look of him."<sup>69</sup> Instead, Paul Ray has indicated that Alan Ayling (also known as Alan Lake) may be the person Breivik refers to as his English mentor.<sup>70</sup> Ayling is the alleged financier and strategist behind the EDL, and another of its founding members.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, Breivik has been linked to a network of counterjihadist writers active on websites such as Gates of Vienna and the Brussels Journal.<sup>72</sup> This network comes across as more intellectual and less militant than the above-mentioned groups. A key person in this regard is Peder Nøstvold Jensen (also known as Fjordman). Breivik copied 39 of Fjordman's essays in his compendium, and refers to him as his main source of intellectual inspiration. Fjordman has been investigated thoroughly by the

police, and there are no indications that he knew about Breivik's terrorist plans. He met Breivik on the Norwegian forum Document.no and they later exchanged a few e-mails.<sup>73</sup>

#### Conclusion

The number of loose ends in the Breivik case makes it all the more important to remain critical of claims concerning his connections, intellect and persona. For now, more information is required before qualified conclusions can be offered on whether July 22 was a case of an ideology that created a madman, or a madman that used an ideology to cultivate his own hatred and confusion.

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## The Rabbani Assassination: Taliban Strategy to Weaken National Unity?

By Michael Gabbay

THE ANNOUNCED DRAWDOWN of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan and the accompanying transition of the counterinsurgency mission to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is a major milestone in the conflict, affecting the strategic calculus of all its participants. Recent Taliban actions suggest that they have entered a new phase in their strategic decision-making. Their intent to open a political office in Qatar and to hold discussions with the United States may signal that the Taliban are interested in a negotiated resolution to the conflict. Recent high profile attacks, however, appear to point in the opposite direction: in particular, the September 2011 assassination of Afghan High Peace Council chairman, Burhanuddin Rabbani, and the coordinated bombings of Afghan Shi'a processions on Ashura in December 2011, a striking introduction of Iraq-style mass sectarian attacks into Afghanistan. These conflicting signals raise important questions. Are the Taliban sincere about entering into peace negotiations? Are spoilers trying to scuttle Taliban peace efforts by conducting high profile attacks such as the Rabbani and Ashura incidents? If the Taliban are not sincere about negotiations, then what is their strategy?

This article first considers the Rabbani assassination and finds it unlikely that it was conducted by "spoilers" distinct from the Taliban central leadership. The killing of the head of Afghan reconciliation efforts with insurgents is on its face a Taliban rejection of negotiations with the Afghan government, the only party with whom a meaningful peace settlement can be made. Analysis of his position within the network of government elites, however, suggests that the Taliban's overriding motive in targeting Rabbani was not to punctuate a rejection of peace talks, but rather to exacerbate ethnic cleavages within the Afghan government, thereby weakening its cohesion and isolating President Hamid Karzai. Chipping away

com/watch?v=jelXXAvGoOg.

65 For details, see the video "Order 777: A Introduction [sic]," at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GY9Dzoqk-ww](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GY9Dzoqk-ww).

66 Breivik, p. 1,416.

67 For details, see [www.lionheartuk.blogspot.com](http://www.lionheartuk.blogspot.com).

68 Jamie Armstrong, "I'm Not Anders Breivik's British Mentor," *Vice.com*, accessed March 19, 2012.

69 Duncan Gardham and James Orr, "Oslo Attacks: EDL Member Paul Ray Admits he May Have Been Anders Breivik's Inspiration," *Telegraph*, July 29, 2011.

70 For details, see [www.lionheartuk.blogspot.com](http://www.lionheartuk.blogspot.com).

71 For more details, see Tash Shifrin, "EDL Strategist 'Alan Lake' Suspended from Manager Job in City," *Searchlight Magazine*, February 3, 2012.

72 For details, see [www.gatesofvienna.blogspot.com](http://www.gatesofvienna.blogspot.com) and [www.brusselsjournal.com](http://www.brusselsjournal.com).

73 Breivik informed Fjordman about his book project and wanted to meet him, a proposal Fjordman claims to have rejected. Breivik also offered Fjordman 5,000 Facebook contacts to boost the distribution of a book Fjordman was working on, but this offer was also rejected. It appears Breivik was familiar with Fjordman's real identity at the time, and the blogger asked him to reveal as little as possible about him as he was still not ready to become a public figure. During police interrogations, Fjordman has admitted to meeting with Alan Lake/Ayling in 2007 or 2008, and says he strongly disliked him because he was so controlling. For more details, see Hans Henrik Torgersen et al., "Slik var kontakten mellom 'Fjordman' og Breivik," *VG Nett*, December 23, 2011.



at Afghan national unity is a companion political strategy in service of the military objective of weakening the ANSF who, given the U.S. drawdown, will form the primary obstacle to Taliban control of either the Pashtun belt in the south and east or the country as a whole.

Although at odds with their nationalist rhetoric that projects a message of unity among all Afghans, a strong strategic case can be made for the Taliban's stoking of ethnic tensions. They would do so for instrumental, not ideological, reasons, as a means of undermining the support of non-Pashtuns for the government and pushing them to provide for their own security rather than relying on the ANSF. The Ashura bombings, although condemned by the Taliban, and a recent attack in Taloqan that inflicted heavy casualties on non-Pashtun civilians would be consistent with this strategy. The article concludes by outlining potential policy responses to counter such a Taliban strategy including the forging of a new consensus among Afghan government powerbrokers and the reorienting of the narrative put forth in U.S. media statements aimed at Afghans.

### The Rabbani Assassination

Burhanuddin Rabbani was a former president of Afghanistan and the longtime leader of Jamaat-i-Islami, one of the major mujahidin factions in the anti-Soviet insurgency and currently the main Tajik political party. On September 20, 2011, in his capacity as chairman of the High Peace Council, he was meeting with a person whom he believed to be a high-level Taliban emissary. Instead, the "emissary" killed Rabbani and himself with a bomb placed under his turban. Although the Taliban have consistently targeted leaders who belonged to their former enemy, the Northern Alliance, this attack was exceptional given both Rabbani's stature—he is the most high profile Afghan government figure to have been killed by insurgents—and his role as chief peace envoy. Due to its unavoidable interpretation as an assault on peace talks, the question as to whether the attack was organized by a spoiler seeking to subvert tentative but sincere peace overtures endorsed by the Taliban central leadership or,

alternatively, was authorized by the central leadership itself is crucial.<sup>1</sup>

An examination of Taliban media statements before and after the event points toward the central leadership as being responsible. First, less than two weeks before his killing, the Taliban issued a dedicated statement critical of Rabbani, portraying him as an opportunistic liar motivated by U.S. cash.<sup>2</sup> This fits a previous pattern where attacks against senior Northern Alliance figures Marshal Fahim and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf were also presaged shortly beforehand by dedicated Taliban statements critical of them.<sup>3</sup> Second, Reuters reported an initial claim of the attack by the most prominent Taliban official spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, who said it was planned by the Taliban's central leadership. Although the Taliban subsequently denied having made the claim in the first place, Reuters rebutted the Taliban's disavowal of making the claim, citing repeated contact with Mujahid concerning it.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the Taliban official media has never actually denied responsibility for the attack itself, which one would expect the Taliban to do if they had not in fact executed it.<sup>5</sup> The final point

concerns the existence of a spoiler faction itself. Despite having announced their willingness to engage the United States via the Qatar office, the Taliban have repeatedly emphasized their lack of interest in talking with the Afghan government since that announcement, although a peace settlement cannot be reached without doing so.<sup>6</sup> A spoiler can only really be considered as such if it is working against the dominant faction's wish to pursue negotiations. Yet assuming that the Taliban media office reflects the interests of the central leadership (and one has little choice but to assume that), there is no reason to believe that the dominant faction within the Taliban leadership has an interest in reaching an agreement with the Afghan government.<sup>7</sup>

Although the weight of evidence implicates the Taliban central leadership in Rabbani's assassination, it is puzzling as to why they would choose to do so at the same time they were exploring talks with the United States. During their rule over Afghanistan, the Taliban were not adept at the art and practice of diplomacy, but surely they anticipated that Rabbani's killing would significantly diminish their credibility as a negotiating partner with the United States, even if their ultimate purpose is to enhance their military position rather than reach a peace settlement. Perhaps then there was an overriding factor in favor of the attack that outweighed the cost to their credibility in negotiations. As to what that may have been, it is revealing to consider another element of the public reaction to Rabbani's death beyond the general despondency over

1 Al-Qa`ida has been suggested as a possible spoiler who may have killed Rabbani. See Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, "Lessons Learnt," Arts & Humanities Research Council, January 2012.

2 "Liar Has No Memory," *Voice of Jihad*, September 8, 2011.

3 The Fahim attack (claimed by the Taliban) occurred in July 2009, preceded by this statement: "The Alliance of the Antagonist Brothers, the Return of the Bulldozer Assassin, Muhammad Fahim, to the Afghan Scene," *al-Samud*, May 27, 2009. The Sayyaf attack (unclaimed) occurred in November 2009, preceded by this statement: "Sayyaf: You Studied Inside Me...But," *al-Samud*, October 1, 2009. Taliban statements whose title and focus are dedicated to a particular Afghan government elite (other than Karzai) are rare. A search of Taliban official online media (*Voice of Jihad* and *al-Samud*) concerning the nine non-Karzai elites in Figure 1 yielded only the three statements dedicated to Rabbani, Fahim, and Sayyaf that were followed by assassination attempts.

4 "Taliban Says Won Rabbani Trust in Order to Kill Him," Reuters, September 21, 2011; Michael Georgy, "Analysis: Mixed Taliban Messages on Killing May Show Divide," Reuters, September 21, 2011.

5 Curiously, in December 2011, the Taliban released an unusual written martyrdom statement in which neither the author nor the target of the attack were specified. This is contrary to typical Taliban practice in which suicide bombers and their targets are identified. The statement

appears to come from a learned, articulate individual and refers to "rented" religious scholars who condemn suicide attacks as un-Islamic—a frequent theme of Rabbani's in the months before his death—and then proceeds to defend suicide attacks by citing examples from early Islamic history. It is of course speculative but it is possible that this was Rabbani's assassin, identified in press reports as Mullah Esmatullah. See "The Message of a Suicide Bomber!" *Voice of Jihad*, December 15, 2011, translation courtesy of the Naval Postgraduate School.

6 Nick Paton Walsh and Masoud Popalzai, "Taliban Will Not Talk Peace with Karzai Government, Spokesman Says," CNN, February 14, 2012.

7 A Taliban commander reportedly said that only a "small group" within the Taliban is in favor of talks with the Afghan government. See "The Taliban Will Not Hold Talks with the Government of Hamid Karzai," Afghan Islamic Press, January 30, 2012.

the prospects of peacefully resolving the insurgency: the outrage of ethnic Tajiks that their most senior and respected leader had been killed.<sup>8</sup> It is possible that the intent of this attack was to elicit just this reaction.

**Network of Afghan Government Elites**

An understanding of Rabbani’s special position within the elites who are aligned with the Afghan government yields insight as to why the Taliban may have thought he was worth targeting despite the inevitable blow to the perception of their sincerity regarding negotiations. Figure 1 shows a “factional map” of 10 elites within the Afghan government.<sup>9</sup> With the exception of Karzai, they are all regional powerbrokers who have independent power bases among Afghanistan’s ethnic groups and regions. The diagram shows their relative power (circle area), significant cooperative relationships between them (links), and their stances on two key issues: 1) policy toward insurgents (i.e., how amenable they are to negotiations and accommodating insurgent political power); and 2) state centralization (i.e., their support for a strong central state, like the current presidential system, or a more decentralized one, such as a federal system). The diagram was generated on the basis of a survey that elicited the judgments of six analysts of Afghan politics, completed prior to Rabbani’s death.<sup>10</sup> One striking feature of Figure 1 is Karzai’s relative isolation in the issue space: only the two other Pashtun (red) co-ethnics are more dovish than he is regarding the insurgency, and he is alone in favoring a highly centralized state. Rabbani is seen to be in the middle of the issue space and, importantly, is the least hawkish of the Tajiks (green) and the other non-Pashtuns as well.

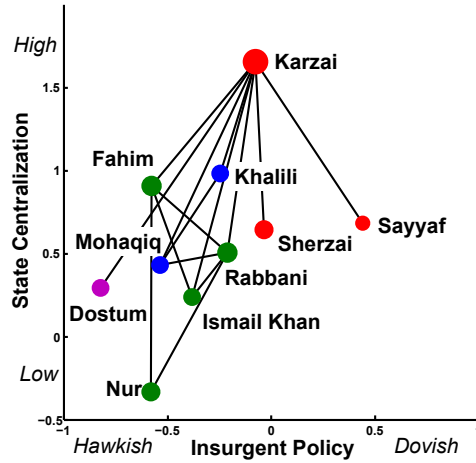


Figure 1.<sup>11</sup>

This illustrates his key position as someone who could help Karzai in getting non-Pashtun hawks to support his policy of reaching out to the Taliban and a hoped-for peace agreement. Indeed, it has been suggested that Karzai chose Rabbani as chairman of the High Peace Council for this exact reason. If that is the case, then the opposite effect should also be true: the loss of Rabbani serves to deepen Karzai’s isolation from Tajik elites, and that may have been the Taliban’s goal.

**Rationale for Taliban Incitement of Ethnic Tensions**

Two other attacks on non-Pashtuns in December 2011 have also seriously inflamed ethnic tensions: 1) the Ashura bombings in Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Kandahar targeting ethnic Hazaras, killing more than 60 people and wounding over 200;<sup>12</sup> and 2) a suicide bombing in the northern town of Taloqan, striking a funeral ceremony, killing at least 20 civilians (wounding dozens more) and an ethnic Uzbek member of parliament, Abdul Mutalib Baig.<sup>13</sup> Neither of these attacks

were claimed by the Taliban. The raw sectarian character of the Ashura attacks marks a qualitative departure for the current Afghan conflict and was claimed by the Pakistani anti-Shi’a group, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi.<sup>14</sup> This group, however, had never before claimed an attack in Afghanistan, and it seems highly unlikely that they could have executed coordinated bombings in geographically disparate locations without the cooperation of a significant Afghan insurgent faction. Regarding the Taloqan attack, it is no surprise that the Taliban would target Baig, a former Northern Alliance commander.<sup>15</sup> Yet to do so at a funeral, heedless of civilian casualties, was sure to provoke outrage among non-Pashtuns.<sup>16</sup> The Rabbani and Taloqan attacks can be reasonably attributed to the Taliban and indicate, at best, that the Taliban have a tin ear with respect to the ethnic repercussions of their actions. The possibility must also be considered, however, that these incidents along with the Ashura

Campaign Against Political Rivals,” *The Long War Journal*, December 25, 2011.

14 While the Taliban leadership council issued a statement condemning the Ashura attacks, they mostly used it as an opportunity to polemicize against U.S. efforts to create rifts in Afghanistan, directly attributing the attacks to a U.S. plot. In this light, their instruction to Taliban fighters to be on guard against such incidents rings hollow. A truly sincere and forceful condemnation would have blamed fellow insurgents, as eventually Sunni nationalist insurgents in Iraq came around to criticizing the targeting practices of al-Qa`ida in Iraq. See “Report on the Gathering of the Leadership Council of Islamic Emirate and its Statement Regarding the Recent Bombings on Ashura,” *Voice of Jihad*, December 11, 2011.

15 Baig’s name had been listed in a Taliban statement accusing certain figures of being war criminals in October 2011. This bears a similarity with the pattern of criticizing government-allied leaders shortly before attacking them as noted above. See “From Torture in Government Prisons to Mass Graves in Takhar,” *Voice of Jihad*, October 26, 2011, translation courtesy of the Naval Postgraduate School.

16 It should be noted that suicide bombings against funerals have occurred previously in the Pashtun belt and that many Pashtun civilians have been killed by insurgents. Although it can be fairly said that the Taliban are an equal opportunity deployer of violence, similar tactics may be used for different ends: the violence against Pashtuns is aimed at coercing their support; the violence directed at non-Pashtuns, as will be argued here, may be aimed at inciting ethnic tensions so that non-Pashtuns mobilize against the Taliban but apart from, and thereby weakening, the Afghan government.

8 As an example, the governor of Balkh Province, Atta Mohammad Nur (tipped as a potential successor to Rabbani as Jamaat-i-Islami party leader) called for “revenge” against “bloodthirsty predators.” See Michael Georgy, “Analysis: Mixed Taliban Messages on Killing May Show Divide,” Reuters, September 21, 2011.

9 For a previous use of factional maps, see Michael Gabbay, “Mapping the Factional Structure of the Sunni Insurgency in Iraq,” *CTC Sentinel* 1:4 (2008).

10 The survey was administered in the spring of 2011. The analysts consisted of scholars from academia and think tanks and independent consultants. A companion survey assessing key insurgent leaders such as Mullah Omar, Mullah Baradar, the Haqqanis, and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was also administered.

11 The individuals in this figure were chosen to represent key government-allied leaders for the four largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan: Pashtuns (red) - Hamid Karzai, Gul Agha Sherzai, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf; Tajiks (green) - Rabbani, Marshal Fahim, Ismail Khan, Atta Mohammad Nur; Hazaras (blue) - Karim Khalili, Mohammad Mohaqiq; Uzbeks (purple) - Abdul Rashid Dostum.

12 Sharifullah Sahak and Rod Nordland, “Karzai Says He Will Talk to Pakistan Over Attacks,” *New York Times*, December 7, 2011.

13 Ernesto Londono and Javed Hamdard, “Afghan Lawmaker who Fought Taliban is Among 20 Killed in Funeral Bombing,” *Washington Post*, December 25, 2011; Matt Dupee, “Takhar Attack: Taliban Continue Their

attacks are in fact concordant notes in a deliberate Taliban campaign to incite ethnic tensions. Given that they portray themselves as Afghan nationalists, the Taliban would not do so on ideological grounds but a strong case can be made on strategic grounds.

In presenting this case, it is assumed that the Taliban, as the Rabbani assassination attests, are seeking a military solution to achieve their goals. Their ultimate goal may be a limited one of controlling only the Pashtun belt in the south and east, or a maximal one of seizing central state power in Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup> For either one, however, consideration of the hierarchy of their potential military foes—U.S. forces, the ANSF, and non-Pashtun ethnic militias—shows that the ANSF is the linchpin.

For the goal of Pashtun belt control, it is clear that the counterinsurgency fight will be mainly conducted by the ANSF given the announced U.S. transition plans. Weakening the ANSF would naturally be a primary objective of a Taliban campaign to consolidate power there. If the Taliban goal is to reconquer Afghanistan, the fight would be more symmetric in nature than asymmetric, as it is improbable that the Taliban could foment a broad-based insurgency among non-Pashtuns in the north and west, who are extremely wary of a Taliban return to power. A relatively small U.S. residual force and the associated air power would be sufficient insurance against a Taliban overrun of the north and west. Whereas the U.S. military can work with the ANSF, it would be much more difficult for the United States to maintain a residual force if it had to deal with a diversity of loosely controlled ethnic paramilitaries with little or no allegiance to the formal Afghan government and prone to engaging in violence against Pashtun civilians. Even if the United States were to effectively remove all of its troops from Afghanistan, the ANSF would still present a more formidable opponent than would fragmented ethnic militias and one much easier for the

United States to supply and support. Accordingly, for seizing central power, the key Taliban objective is also to weaken the ANSF; both in its own right as a military foe and as a critical enabler of a U.S. residual force that would be decisive in defeating the Taliban in the conventional force-on-force battles necessary for their conquest of the north and west.<sup>18</sup>

Politically, the Taliban can further their objective of weakening the ANSF by eroding the sense of national unity among those aligned with the government. On an elite level, this entails weakening and isolating Hamid Karzai. President Karzai is both a symbol of Afghan national unity and an active agent thereof given his role as a bridge between Pashtun and non-Pashtun elites (as apparent via the network links in Figure 1). Raising ethnic tensions will make it more difficult for him to bridge that divide. If he sides firmly with the non-Pashtuns, then he will lose support among Pashtuns as will the ANSF, in which Tajiks are already overrepresented in the officer corps and southern Pashtuns are highly underrepresented.<sup>19</sup> If he sides firmly with the Pashtuns, then non-Pashtuns will increasingly pull support from the ANSF and seek to rearm their militias.

The Taliban strategy to isolate Karzai is proving effective. Although Karzai moved to a hawkish stance in line with non-Pashtuns immediately after Rabbani's assassination, he has since drifted back to his usual dovish position, more in line with the desire of Pashtuns to reach an accommodation with the Taliban. Dissatisfaction with Karzai among non-Pashtuns is presently intense. A number of opposition multi-ethnic political coalitions are coalescing around a platform based on decentralizing government and a

hawkish line versus the Taliban as would be expected from Figure 1.<sup>20</sup> A prominent Tajik figure and Karzai's former chief of intelligence, Amrollah Saleh, recently spoke of Karzai losing allies and becoming isolated; he even mentioned the possibility of the political opposition overthrowing the government—hyperbolically to be sure, but a clear signal of the readiness of non-Pashtuns to take matters into their own hands.<sup>21</sup>

### Policy Implications

In response to the Taliban's goal of weakening support for the ANSF by creating dissension in the Afghan government, it is critical that the United States implement a political strategy that reinforces its own military objective of handing over combat responsibilities to the ANSF. An essential component of this political strategy would be forging a new elite consensus among Afghan powerbrokers, a consensus that is desperately needed. This could be achieved by revising the constitution to a more decentralized system, as has been argued is historically better suited for Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup> Karzai's political opposition has not pushed for regional autonomy, mostly arguing more modestly for a parliamentary-based system and for the direct election of provincial governors. Although Karzai has stated that he will oppose a revision of Afghanistan's political system, there is no broad-based support for his position as Figure 1 implies; he would likely back down (as he has on a number of important issues), especially if the United States were to add its weight in favor of such a change.<sup>23</sup> Establishing a new consensus among Afghan leaders would re-energize the Afghan government, increasing its support among non-Pashtuns and

17 In the companion survey regarding the insurgents noted above, the majority of analysts assessed that seizing central power is the goal of Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

18 It has been argued that the Taliban leadership recognizes that it could not prevail in a civil war even against ethnic militias. See Anatol Lieven, "Afghanistan: The Best Way to Peace," *New York Review of Books*, February 9, 2012. However, this is far from clear and, in contrast, on the companion insurgent survey, five of six analysts assessed that Mullah Omar believed that the Taliban would prevail over non-Pashtun ethnic groups in the event of a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

19 "A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army," International Crisis Group, May 12, 2010.

20 For instance, the newly formed National Front coalition is led by the Tajik Ahmad Zia Masood, the Hazara Mohammad Mohaqiq, and the Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostum. See "Mohaqiq Skeptical of Taliban Peace," *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 31, 2012.

21 Interview with Amrollah Saleh, Tolo News, February 18, 2012.

22 Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

23 A revision to the constitution could also afford Karzai an opportunity to continue to serve as Afghan leader (albeit one with reduced powers) after his term expires in 2014, which might attract his support.



Pashtuns alike. It would also allow for a stronger, more unified approach toward the insurgency with respect to both military and reconciliation efforts.

Another key component of the political strategy would be to commit in the near future to a long-term residual U.S. force, small but of sufficient size to prevent the Taliban from overrunning the northern and western regions of the country including Kabul, thereby making it clear that the Taliban could not prevail in a civil war. It is this specter of ethnic civil war that is becoming the dominant conflict logic in the strategic calculus of Afghan political actors, and the United States needs to adapt its media strategy accordingly as another element of its response. A narrative frame should be emphasized in which the Taliban are portrayed as seeking to exploit ethnic divisions and plunge the country into civil war in a drive for central power, whereas the United States serves as a bulwark against the disintegration of Afghanistan that such Taliban ambitions could very well precipitate. A corollary to this narrative shift would be for the United States to drop its present theme stressing the fragmentation of the Taliban and Mullah Omar's loss of control over his fighters.<sup>24</sup> While appropriate as part of a media strategy highlighting military success against insurgents, it could inadvertently serve to facilitate a surreptitious Taliban campaign designed to inflame ethnic tensions through violence by helping their central leadership skirt responsibility for such acts.<sup>25</sup>

Currently, it is the Taliban who, in a riff on their standard resistance frame depicting themselves as nationalists fighting against foreign occupiers, are painting the reverse narrative in which it is the United States that is deliberately sowing discord among Afghan ethnic groups. The Taliban resistance frame

taps into the proud narrative of Afghan rebellion and victory against foreign invasion, a frame that the United States has always struggled to counter. Yet the U.S. drawdown is bringing to the fore a less proud narrative, one which all Afghans grimly recognize from their recent past: civil war. It is possible to establish the facts on the ground that would give the U.S. and Afghan governments the upper hand in the battle of narratives: on the one side, a much lighter U.S. presence buttressing a less centralized but more unified government composed of all Afghan ethnic groups; on the other, an expansionist insurgency overwhelmingly dominated by one ethnic group (the primarily Pashtun composition of the Taliban is understood and should not be emphasized). By reorienting the conflict narrative along an axis of looming civil war, Pashtuns potentially sympathetic to the insurgency may instead come to view the Taliban as leading them toward a future of bloody and fruitless ethnic conflict, and a Pashtun belt effectively cut off from the rest of Afghanistan. Although there are very important differences between the two cases, Sunnis in Iraq faced a similar choice in 2006-2007 and Iraqi nationalist Sunnis rejected the future of an al-Qa`ida-led "Sunnistan." Afghan nationalist Pashtuns, including those in the ranks of the Taliban, may likewise choose to reject the future of a disconnected, bottled-up, and restive "Pashtunistan"; a prospect that Pakistan may also find unpalatable and which may eventually lead the Taliban to sit at the negotiating table in earnest.

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## Assessing Al-Qa`ida's Presence in the New Libya

By Andrew Lebovich and Aaron Y. Zelin

A YEAR AFTER Libyans rose up against Colonel Mu`ammar Qadhafi, Western governments and observers continue to watch the security situation in that country with trepidation, concerned with instability in the wake of Qadhafi's ouster but also watchful for a possible spread of al-Qa`ida in the sparsely populated, oil-rich country.

This article provides an overview of the history of Libyans in jihadist organizations (including al-Qa`ida), an assessment of al-Qa`ida and affiliated media activities following the Libyan uprising, an analysis of available evidence of a potential al-Qa`ida presence in Libya, and an evaluation of the possible role the group could occupy in a new Libya.

### The LIFG and Al-Qa`ida

Soon after fighting erupted in Libya, analysts pointed to the longstanding interest of al-Qa`ida in Libya and the key role played by Libyans (especially former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group combatants, such as Abu Layth al-Libi and Abu Yahya al-Libi) in the organization. Others referenced the Sinjar Records that were recovered in 2007 that showed Libyans comprising the second-to-highest<sup>1</sup> concentration of foreign fighters to enter Iraq to fight U.S. and other coalition forces.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) traveled in similar ideological circles as al-Qa`ida, it did not appear to condone the group's broader strategy of targeting the West. The LIFG's central leadership never publicly supported Usama bin Ladin's vision of global jihad. Although the

<sup>24</sup> J.P. Morgan, "Battle for the Airways: Some People Say the Taliban is Winning the IO campaign War," COIN Common Sense, ISAF, May 2011.

<sup>25</sup> For instance, the practice in U.S. military statements issued in response to insurgent attacks against civilians of challenging Mullah Omar to condemn such attacks implicitly admits the possibility that he is not in fact responsible. For example, see "NATO and ISAF Leadership Join President Karzai to Condemn Suicide Attacks Across Afghanistan," ISAF Press Release, December 6, 2011.

<sup>1</sup> Although Libyans formed the largest contingent of fighters per capita, Saudis still formed the largest overall group of foreign fighters. Additionally, the Sinjar Records do not represent the total number of foreign fighters in Iraq, but rather a selection of approximately 600 foreign fighters.

<sup>2</sup> Noman Benotman and James Brandon, "Briefing Paper: The Jihadist Threat in Libya," Quilliam Foundation, March 24, 2011; Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, "The Enemies of our Enemy: Al-Qaeda and the Libyan Rebels," *Foreign Policy*, March 30, 2011.

LIFG was in Sudan and Afghanistan at the same time as al-Qa`ida, the LIFG was training to topple the Qadhafi regime. During the 1990s, the limited attempts the LIFG made to reach out to regional extremist groups such as the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) ended in disaster; LIFG members were arrested in Algeria after attempts to link up with militants, and a group of the LIFG's most hardened and experienced fighters disappeared after a trip to the country, leading many to believe that the GIA killed them.<sup>3</sup>

As Noman Benotman, a former member of the LIFG's *shura* council, stated in a 2005 interview: "The LIFG has always been wholly focused on Libya. Our ultimate objective was the creation of an Islamic state in Libya."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the LIFG never congratulated al-Qa`ida on attacks they conducted such as the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings, the *USS Cole* bombings, or even the 9/11 attacks. Rather, the LIFG only commented on the U.S. retaliation in Sudan and Afghanistan for the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, LIFG leaders reportedly broke with Bin Ladin in a 2000 meeting in Kandahar, cautioning the latter against staging a large-scale attack against the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Just after the 9/11 attacks, Shaykh Hasan Qa'id (Abu Yunis al-Sahrawi), better known today as Abu Yahya al-Libi, penned a *fatwa* against the United States.<sup>7</sup> Al-Libi, still a member of the LIFG at the time, argued that it was legitimate to attack the United States in Afghanistan.

3 Camille Tawil, *Brothers in Arms: The Story of al-Qa`ida and the Arab Jihadists* (London: Saqi Books, 2010), p. 135.

4 Mahan Abedin, "From Mujahid to Activist: An Interview with a Libyan Veteran of the Afghan Jihad," *Spotlight on Terror* 3:2 (2005). Since giving this interview, Benotman has been a frequent media presence on the LIFG and jihadist issues, and helped negotiate a deal that allowed imprisoned LIFG leaders to go free in return for renouncing al-Qa`ida's global jihadist agenda.

5 "Statement #14: Regarding the American Aggression against Sudan and Afghanistan," Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, August 25, 1998.

6 Camille Tawil, "The Changing Face of the Jihadist Movement in Libya," *Terrorism Monitor* 7:1 (2009); Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling: The Jihadist Revolt Against Bin Laden," *New Republic*, June 11, 2008.

7 Shaykh Hasan Qa'id (Abu Yunis al-Sahrawi), "Fatwa About the American Crusader Attacks on Afghanistan," September 23, 2001.

Yet when Abu Yahya, along with Abu Layth al-Libi, "officially" joined al-Qa`ida in 2006, the senior leadership of the LIFG refused to endorse what al-Qa`ida's Ayman al-Zawahiri called a merger between the groups, indicating that Abu Layth, Abu Yahya, and others joined in an individual capacity.<sup>8</sup>

Turning to Iraq, many have pointed to the high number of Libyans involved in that recent conflict as proof of LIFG involvement with al-Qa`ida. The LIFG condemned the United States for its occupation of Iraq and agreed with the stance that the fight against the United States was a "defensive jihad."<sup>9</sup> The Sinjar documents showed that a disproportionately high number of Libyans passed through or were involved with al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) networks. There is little hard evidence, however, about how many Iraq veterans survived their fight to return to Libya, nor how many were actually members of the LIFG to begin with.

It is thus possible that not all Libyans who went to Iraq—or those who would eventually return—were infected by al-Qa`ida's particular brand of radicalism, although some may still have picked up military skills that would be used against their home governments upon their return from Iraq.

Unfortunately, a lack of available information limits investigation beyond anecdotal analysis of the impact of the war in Iraq on foreign fighters who eventually returned home, including those who would take part in the Libyan revolution.

8 It should be noted that the senior leadership of LIFG was imprisoned in Libya at the time, and it was not until the following year that the leadership began a dialogue with the Libyan regime, a dialogue that would ultimately lead to the group's "revisions." For a discussion of this process, see Camille Tawil, "What Next for the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group after Rebuff from the Libyan Regime?" *Terrorism Monitor* 7:24 (2009).

9 "Statement #21: Regarding the Occupation of Iraq," Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, April 11, 2003.

### AQ/AQIM Messaging and Online Jihadist Support for the Revolution

Prior to the anti-Qadhafi uprising, al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghrib (AQIM) had not released any statements focusing specifically on Libya.<sup>10</sup> Four statements issued following the outbreak of violence warned Libyans not to trust NATO, appealed to Libyans to become involved in jihadist activities, and called for the creation of an Islamic state and the establishment of Shari`a. Yet the group was vague on how to enact such change, and AQIM has not put forth specific objectives or an agenda for Libya.

AQIM has also made it a point to emphasize, praise, and congratulate Libyans for overthrowing Mu`ammar Qadhafi. The organization's statements repeatedly referred to Libyans as the "descendants" and "grandsons" of the anti-colonial leader `Umar al-Mukhtar, attempting to link the organization to Libyan nationalist narratives.<sup>11</sup> Yet the group did not produce any Libyans to deliver these messages, unlike al-Qa`ida central, whose messages on Libya featured Abu Yahya al-Libi as well as Attiyatullah al-Libi, revealed for the first time in March 2011 to have been from the Libyan city of Misrata.<sup>12</sup>

In March 2011, both Attiyatullah and Abu Yahya issued statements "congratulating" Libyans on shaking off Qadhafi's rule, focusing on the primacy

10 Aaron Y. Zelin, "Is al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghrib Gaining Influence in Libya?" *al-Wasat*, November 1, 2011.

11 For AQIM's messages related to the Libyan uprising, see "Support and Backing for the [Libyan] Revolution of our Family, the Free, Descendants of `Umar al-Mukhtar," al-Andalus Media, February 24, 2011; Abu Mus`ab `Abd al-Wadud (Abdelmalek Droukdel), "Support for the Free, Descendants of `Umar al-Mukhtar," al-Andalus Media, March 18, 2011; Abu Mus`ab `Abd al-Wadud (Abdelmalek Droukdel), "Congratulations on the Victory of the Descendants of `Umar al-Mukhtar," al-Andalus Media, October 2, 2011; Shaykh al-Hasan Rashid al-Bulaydi, "Open Letter to the Muslims in Libya," al-Andalus Media, October 27, 2011; Shaykh Abu Uyyan `Asim, "Khutbah `Id al `Adha For The Year 1432 H," al-Andalus Media, November 18, 2011.

12 Christopher Anzalone, "Al-Qaeda Loses its 'Renaissance Man,'" *Foreign Policy*, September 9, 2011. For the statements, see Abu Yahya al-Libi: "To Our People in Libya," al-Sahab, March 12, 2011; 'Atiyatullah Abu `Abd ar-Rahman, "Tribute To Our People in Libya," al-Sahab, March 18, 2011; Abu Yahya al-Libi: "What is Intended For Libya?" al-Sahab, December 5, 2011.

of instituting Shari`a as the sole source of legislation in the new Libya, and warning against the potential that the United States or Libyans with links to Qadhafi's regime could usurp the rebels' victory. Attiyatullah, however, called for reconciliation if possible with those who "made mistakes and wrong choices in the previous era."

In December 2011, however, Abu Yahya's message was more forthcoming on specific suggestions to Libyans, including recommendations for: the "formation of a board...to oversee the realization of the revolution's demands"; a call for rebels not to give up their weapons; an invitation for Islamic scholars to form an independent committee that would have a direct role in formulating Libya's constitution; and the severing of any ties the rebels had with Western governments. Indeed, this statement is one of the more substantive points made by an al-Qa`ida central senior leader regarding the Arab Spring. Despite passing mention from other leaders such as al-Zawahiri, it seems that al-Qa`ida central left Libyan messaging to the group's Libyans, although it is not known who within al-Qa`ida actually formulated the group's messaging on Libya.

#### Whispers of Jihad

The first indications that jihadists might be benefiting from the unrest in Libya came not long after violence broke out, as regional leaders and press reports suggested that AQIM had gained weapons from abandoned Libyan stocks, including surface-to-air missiles.<sup>13</sup> Others suggested that the group had forged connections with Libya's rebels, and that AQIM or al-Qa`ida central might seek to implant itself in Libya.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, many questioned whether the once-imprisoned LIFG leaders who renounced al-Qa`ida in 2009 would hold to their past positions now that they were free and some commanding anti-Qadhafi fighters.<sup>15</sup> Of particular concern were leaders such as the

eastern city of Darnah's Abdel-Hakim al-Hasadi and Sufyan bin Qumu. Al-Hasadi personally recruited fighters to go to Iraq and was accused briefly in February 2012 of having established an "Islamic emirate" in the city of Darnah, which produced nearly half the recorded Libyan fighters who traveled to Iraq.<sup>16</sup> Both Hasadi and Bin Qumu are said to have trained anti-Qadhafi fighters in Darnah, although Bin Qumu's role in the town's militias, especially the Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade, is in dispute.<sup>17</sup>

This concern grew as former LIFG leader Abdelhakim Belhadj, who was once in U.S. custody, emerged at the head of Tripoli's Military Council, a powerful militia that played a key role in seizing Qadhafi's compound in August 2011.<sup>18</sup>

In November, AQIM commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar confirmed that the group had benefited from the Libyan uprising, using the ensuing chaos as a chance to acquire weapons.<sup>19</sup> In the same interview, however, Belmokhtar explicitly denied that AQIM had played a direct role in the fighting against Qadhafi, although he did call on Libyan rebels to refuse attempts to have them give up their arms.<sup>20</sup>

16 "Al-Qaeda Sets Up 'Islamic Emirate' in Eastern Libya," Agence France-Presse, February 23, 2011.

17 Charles Levinson, "Ex-Mujahedeen Help Lead Libyan Rebels," *Wall Street Journal*, April 2, 2011; Rod Nordland and Scott Shane, "Libyan, Once a Detainee, is Now a U.S. Ally of Sorts," *New York Times*, April 24, 2011.

18 Omar Ashour, "Ex-Jihadists in the New Libya," *Foreign Policy*, August 29, 2011; Omar Ashour, "Fears Over Islamists Within Libyan Rebel Ranks," BBC, August 31, 2011; Nic Robertson, "Former Jihadist at the Heart of Libya's Revolution," CNN, September 5, 2011.

19 Aboul Maaly, "Entretien exclusif avec Khaled Abou Al-Abass, alias 'Belouar,'" *al-Akbar*, November 9, 2011.

20 For detailed analysis of this interview, see Andrew Lebovich, "AQIM's Mokhtar Belmokhtar Speaks Out," *al-Wasat*, November 21, 2011. AQIM has not provided evidence of acquiring weapons, although a number of Western government and other figures have confirmed AQIM's acquisition of missiles and other advanced weaponry. See Olivia Lang, "Fears Over Libya's Missing Missiles," BBC, September 8, 2011. Also see for instance Ben Wedeman and Ingrid Formanek, "Missiles Looted from Tripoli Arms Warehouse," CNN, September 7, 2011; Régis Soubrouillard, "Trafic d'armes: La Libye, un arsenal à ciel ouvert," *Marianne*, October 14, 2011; Isabelle Laserre, "Des armes de Qadhafi récupérées par Aqmi au Sahel," *Le Figaro*, July 1, 2011; Ursula Soares, "Accrochage au nord d'Arlit, au Niger: la piste d'Aqmi se précise," Radio

Finally, just before the new year, two reports came out that reinforced fears that al-Qa`ida had begun to move back to Libya in force. In the *Guardian*, Jason Burke reported that at least two senior al-Qa`ida figures as well as a group of "North Africans" had made their way from Afghanistan to Libya, although some were arrested along the way.<sup>21</sup> CNN's Nic Robertson and Paul

**"Ultimately, while there are more than 'flickers' of al-Qa`ida in Libya, there is not enough information to determine if the group has the means, or even the desire, to set up a durable presence in the country."**

Cruickshank reported days afterward that al-Qa`ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri sent a senior Libyan al-Qa`ida member who once lived in Britain, "AA," to Libya, and that between May and December 2011 he had recruited around 200 fighters in eastern Libya.<sup>22</sup>

Hints of an al-Qa`ida presence or sympathy in Libya have also made it to the internet. Posters on popular jihadist forums such as Shamukh al-Islam have provided what could be anecdotal evidence of sympathy for al-Qa`ida in Libya. These forums have featured some videos and pictures purportedly showing Libyan jihadists. There have been multiple rallies in Tripoli that showcased a caravan of cars as well as individuals holding flags resembling those used by AQI.<sup>23</sup> A similar flag was raised over a Benghazi courthouse in October 2011, and other photos have emerged on forums and

France International, June 15, 2011; Bradley Klapper and Kimberly Dozier, "U.S.: Libyan Chemical, Nuclear Material Secure," Associated Press, August 26, 2011.

21 Jason Burke, "Al-Qaida Leadership Almost Wiped out in Pakistan, British Officials Believe," *Guardian*, December 25, 2011.

22 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "Source: Al Qaeda Leader Sends Veteran Jihadists to Establish Presence in Libya," CNN, December 30, 2011.

23 Aaron Y. Zelin, "On Flags, Islamic History, and al-Qa`ida," *al-Wasat*, November 6, 2011.

13 Lauranne Prozenvano, "Liaisons dangereuses entre Aqmi et les insurgés libyens," *Jeune Afrique*, March 30, 2011.

14 Benotman and Brandon.

15 Alison Pargeter, "Are Islamist Extremists Fighting Among Libya's Rebels?" *CTC Sentinel* 4:4 (2011).



in media sources showing the flags in various cities and towns.<sup>24</sup>

Forum members also posted a picture of an alleged jihadist compound in Benghazi, which featured a message spray painted on an outside wall in Arabic that said “written by Qa`ida al-Jihad in the Islamic Maghrib.” Late last year, on November 27, forum members posted pictures and a description of an event in Tripoli that announced the creation of a new Libyan jihadist media outlet, Himam (Endeavor) Media Foundation.

### Jihadists and the Revolution

While the role of former LIFG members and fighters with experience in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in combating Qadhafi is without doubt,<sup>25</sup> little is known about what these veteran fighters actually think; after all, the LIFG’s own complicated history with al-Qa`ida<sup>26</sup> shows the diversity of jihadist thought in the country. As one expert who spent significant time reporting from Libya, Barak Barfi, told one of the authors, “The jihadist camp was split [after NATO’s intervention in March 2011]. Once NATO entered the conflict, some jihadists withdrew from the battlefield, declaring they would refuse to fight with infidels...Other jihadists continued to fight, under the auspices of brigades from Darnah and the February 17 units.”<sup>27</sup>

Barfi added that, in his view, the LIFG leadership’s 2009 renunciation of al-Qa`ida’s violent agenda was “genuine, and not merely a ploy to win release from prison” and that he and others saw little evidence of foreign fighters entering Libya to fight on the side of the rebels.<sup>28</sup> In September 2011, an anonymous American official said that officials believed some foreign fighters had entered the country, but that the numbers were “in the dozens” and not more widespread, as in Iraq.<sup>29</sup>

24 Ibid. Also see William McCants, “Black Flag,” *Foreign Policy*, November 7, 2011.

25 Personal interview, Camille Tawil, December 7, 2011.

26 Omar Ashour, “Post-Jihadism: Libya and the Global Transformations of Armed Islamist Movements,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23:3 (2011).

27 Personal interview, Barak Barfi, December 20, 2011.

28 Ibid.

29 Chris Lawrence, “Libya the New Terrorist Haven?” CNN, September 14, 2011.

Moreover, while the possibility of al-Qa`ida recruiting locally in places such as Darnah is a real and troubling risk, this information is linked (at least in the open source) to a single source, and has not been publicly confirmed elsewhere. It is also not known how potential al-Qa`ida recruits are being trained in Libya, and even if they will attempt to operate in Libya. The country suffers from multiple rivalries among heavily armed militias<sup>30</sup> and internal sectarian and ethnic divides<sup>31</sup> that could make life difficult for a fledgling jihadist movement.

Additionally, the fighters within Libya may receive little help from regional sympathizers. While Benotman and James Brandon, citing intelligence sources, say as many as 40 Libyans joined AQIM in recent years,<sup>32</sup> other specialists put the number considerably lower.<sup>33</sup>

This is not to downplay the possibility of jihadist expansion in Libya. Both al-Qa`ida and the LIFG have histories of clandestine organization in troubled areas,<sup>34</sup> and the limited public evidence of an al-Qa`ida presence in Libya does not necessarily indicate that it is not there. Furthermore, even if elements sharing al-Qa`ida’s radical views are few in Libya today, this may well change. Belhadj complained to scholar Omar Ashour in 2010 that many young Libyan militants do not respect the former LIFG leadership, and could break from the group, leaving them prey to more extreme elements within the jihadist community.<sup>35</sup>

30 Clashes occur regularly in Tripoli and elsewhere. For a thorough discussion of the problems posed by rival militias and large-scale opposition movements, see Alastair Macdonald and Oliver Holmes, “Libya – Divided it Stands,” Reuters, December 16, 2011; Patrick Haimzadeh, “Libya Still Under Arms,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 2011; “Holding Libya Together: Security Challenges After Qaddafi,” International Crisis Group, December 14, 2011.

31 Steve Sotloff, “In Libya, a Fundamentalist War Against Moderate Islam Takes Shape,” *Time Magazine*, January 18, 2012.

32 Benotman and Brandon.

33 Personal interview, former European counterterrorism analyst, February 2011.

34 Ashour, “Post-Jihadism.”

35 Omar Ashour, “Ex-Jihadists in the New Libya,” *Foreign Policy*, August 29, 2011.

Regardless of whether jihadist violence takes root in Libya, unrest appears to be spreading far beyond the country’s borders. Regular clashes have also taken place between Algerian and Tunisian security forces and arms smugglers, as well as extremists; Algerian security forces say that they arrested 214 traffickers in the south and east of the country in 2011,<sup>36</sup> including 87 Libyans they said were linked to terrorist groups (although this information is only sourced to the Algerian government).<sup>37</sup> Also according to Algerian forces, 13 fighters, including a Libyan, were killed in a confrontation in Tebessa in early January.<sup>38</sup> In Tunisia, authorities in February closed the major border crossing with Libya in an attempt to stem weapons flows,<sup>39</sup> and a little over a week later Tunisian authorities said they disrupted a “terrorist organization” that included members trained in Libya.<sup>40</sup>

In December, *Le Figaro* reported that a key commander for Abdelhakim Belhadj, Abdel-Mehdi al-Harati, was leading a detachment of Libyan fighters supporting Syrian rebels along the border with Turkey.<sup>41</sup> This may rekindle bad memories of the kind of “jihadist international” that formed and spread throughout Europe and the Middle East after the Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, although it is interesting that Belhadj, the cause of so much anxiety during the Libyan revolution, appears to be sending his fighters and a key commander elsewhere instead of concentrating on securing his gains in Libya.

### Conclusion

Since the uprising against Qadhafi began in February 2011, Libya has become a source of attention for jihadists and grave concern among regional and

36 Chawki Amari, “Sahel: le trafic d’armes se porte bien, merci,” *Slate Afrique*, January 20, 2012.

37 Walid Ramzi, “Algeria Thwarts Arms Smuggling Attempt,” Magharebia, January 16, 2012.

38 “Des hommes armés connectés à AQMI captures à il-lizi et à l’Est,” *Le Courrier d’Algérie*, January 9, 2011.

39 “La Tunisie s’inquiète d’un trafic d’armes libyennes sur son territoire,” Radio France International, February 5, 2012.

40 Tarek Amara, “Tunisia Says it Cracks Islamist ‘Terrorist’ Unit,” Reuters, February 13, 2012.

41 Edith Bouvier, “Des Libyens épaulent les insurgés syriens,” *Le Figaro*, December 23, 2012.

Western leaders. There are clear signs of jihadist efforts to infiltrate Libya, and even signs of some possible success for al-Qa`ida in establishing a limited presence in Libya. Security officials must be vigilant for signs of support for al-Qa`ida among Libyan militias and further expansion of the group's reach, especially evidence of training and indoctrination of Libyans by al-Qa`ida-linked figures.

It appears that AQIM in particular has chosen to profit from the Libyan unrest by seizing weapons, but have remained ensconced in safe havens in northern Mali and Algeria. The same cannot be definitively said for other al-Qa`ida-linked figures, who are accustomed to operating clandestinely when setting up funding and operational networks and may be doing the same in Libya. Given al-Qa`ida's expressed interest in the country and the key role Libyan militants have historically played in the organization, this concern cannot be easily dismissed.

For the moment, though, armed jihadists—especially those sharing al-Qa`ida's extreme ideology—do not appear to be in a position to contest the fragile Libyan state. Ultimately, while there are more than the “flickers” of al-Qa`ida in Libya first suggested by NATO commander Admiral James Stavridis in March 2011,<sup>42</sup> there is not enough information to determine if the group has the means, or even the desire, to set up a durable presence in the country—especially when Western governments and special forces are keeping a keen eye on Libya, and opposing armed militias remain ready to protect their own power and influence.

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<sup>42</sup> Adam Entous, Keith Johnson, and Charles Levinson, “Amid Libya Rebels, ‘Flickers’ of al Qaeda,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2011.

## U.S. Gang Alignment with Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations

By Mark Schmidt, U.S. National Gang Intelligence Center

MODERN GANG MEMBERS, while continuing their stereotypical fights for territorial control or boasting gang allegiance through colors, tattoos, and symbols, also adapt to their environment for survivability. One aspect of this adaptation is making money through criminal ventures; more specifically, their ability to create alliances with other criminal enterprises for the purpose of financial gain that benefits the gang and its members. Accordingly, American gang alliances with Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations (MDTOs) is a logical step for gangs in establishing and maintaining control over the street level sales of illegal drugs in many U.S. cities.

This article provides background on the history of modern drug trafficking in the United States, how MDTOs leverage U.S. gangs for narcotics distribution and enforcement purposes, and identifies the linkages between MDTOs and U.S. gangs in Chart 1.

### Background on Modern Drug Trafficking

During the 1980s, Miami was the epicenter of drug trafficking. Colombian traffickers sold narcotics and laundered money in real estate and expensive cars, opening U.S. bank accounts to wire money back to Colombia. During this time, Colombians were the primary traffickers of cocaine into the United States, mostly through Florida, and sold their supplies to U.S.-based criminal organizations in wholesale, and also to U.S.-based Colombian sellers. By the end of the 1980s and through the 1990s and 2000s, however, new laws and greater federal enforcement operations targeted the traffickers; this caused trafficking routes to expand in an effort to thwart law enforcement intervention. This was accomplished by the increased participation of additional trafficking organizations, such as the Dominicans, Jamaicans, and even Mexican traffickers, who joined the Colombians. The Colombians, while still involved in trafficking drugs into the United States, slowly began to refocus their

operations more on production, letting transportation be the concern of other trafficking groups.

As a result, the Mexican cartels, some of which had been in business dating back to the Prohibition Era in the United States, took on more responsibility in trafficking—not just moving cocaine for the Colombians, but rather actually buying the cocaine, then selling it directly into U.S. markets and reaping the profits. As drug proceeds significantly increased for Mexican cartels, so did the desire to expand operations to increase profits, and expansion usually meant encroachment into rival cartel territory. The result has been an estimated 47,000 dead in Mexico from 2006 to 2011,<sup>1</sup> as the cartels continue to fight the Mexican authorities and each other for control of the lucrative drug smuggling routes into the United States.

### Cooperation with U.S. Gangs

Today, while illegal drugs are smuggled into the United States in every conceivable way, the preponderance of cocaine is shipped from the southwest border.<sup>2</sup> U.S. gangs operating along the southwest border appear to have been the first gangs to enhance their relationship with MDTOs; however, there has always been some level of a relationship between the southwest border criminal enterprises. Cross-border familial ties and knowledge of criminal activities occurring in one's territory are aspects that aided southwest border gangs in establishing working relationships with MDTOs.

Modern U.S. gang expansion into trafficking operations was slow and integral. Prior to 2006, the gangs along the southwest border would buy their drugs from the traffickers for street-level sales. Then, gangs aided traffickers by providing protection for drug shipments into the United States. Gangs also took on a more logistical support role for the traffickers once the shipment entered the United States. Gangs would not only protect drug warehouses, but also began protecting shipments across the border, bulk money shipments back into

<sup>1</sup> Randal Archibold, “Mexico's Drug War Bloodies Areas Thought Safe,” *New York Times*, January 18, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> “National Drug Threat Assessment 2010,” National Drug Intelligence Center, U.S. Department of Justice, February 2010.

## CHART 1: MDTOs Alliances and Rivals

<b>Cartel</b>	<b>Aligned With</b>	<b>Rivals</b>
The Sinaloa Cartel (aka Guzman-Loera Organization or Pacific Cartel)	Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos New Mexico Syndicate Los Carnales Latin Kings Mexican Mafia (California) Sureños MS-13 Arizona Mexican Mafia (Old & New) Wet Back Power Sinaloa Cowboys West Texas Tangos Los Negros Valencia Cartel (Considered a branch of the Sinaloa Cartel) Sonora Cartel (Considered a branch of the Sinaloa Cartel) Colima Cartel (Considered a branch of the Sinaloa Cartel) Border Brothers (California) Border Brothers (Arizona)	Los Zetas Cardenas-Guillen Cartel (Gulf) Tijuana Cartel Beltran-Leyva Cartel Juarez Cartel
La Familia Michoacana Cartel (Formerly part of Los Zetas under the authority of the Gulf Cartel)	Sinaloa Cartel Cardenas-Guillen Cartel (Gulf) Sureños MS-13 West Texas Tangos	Los Zetas Cardenas-Guillen Cartel (Gulf Cartel) The Beltran-Leyva Cartel Vincente Carrillo-Fuentes Cartel (Juarez Cartel)
Los Zetas	Vincente Carrillo-Fuentes Cartel (Juarez) Beltran-Leyva Cartel Barrio Azteca Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos Mexikanemi Texas Syndicate MS-13	Arellano-Felix Cartel (Tijuana) Cartel de la Sierra (Sierra Cartel) Sinaloa Cartel La Familia Michoacana Cartel Cardenas-Guillen Cartel (Gulf)
Cardenas-Guillen Cartel (Gulf Cartel)	Sinaloa Cartel La Familia Michoacana Cartel Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos Partido Revolutionary Mexicano Raza Unida Texas Chicano Brotherhood	Los Zetas La Familia Michoacana Cartel The Sinaloa Cartel
Vincente Carrillo-Fuentes Cartel (Juarez Cartel)	Los Zetas Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos Barrio Azteca New Mexico Syndicate Los Carnales	The Sinaloa Cartel La Familia Michoacana Cartel
The Beltran-Leyva Cartel (expected to soon be taken over by the Sierra Cartel)	Los Zetas	La Familia Michoacana Cartel
Arellano-Felix Cartel (Tijuana Cartel)	Mexican Mafia (California) Sureños Arizona Mexican Mafia (Old & New) Border Brothers (California)	Los Zetas The Sinaloa Cartel

\* Source: 2011 National Gang Threat Assessment – Emerging Trends



Mexico, as well as cars and weapons. Eventually, gangs would also help MDTOs conduct enforcement operations aimed at traffickers in the United States who owed money, as well as other rival MDTOs attempting to encroach into claimed territory. Currently, many national-level U.S. gangs have established relationships with MDTOs to bypass the so-called “middle man”<sup>3</sup> and purchase larger quantities of drugs, and disperse them to their markets directly. A February 2010 National Drug Intelligence Center Assessment of drug trafficking by gangs estimated that gangs’ wholesale purchase of drugs, that were subsequently divided and shipped to the gang’s controlled territory, cut the price of cocaine by a third—essentially increasing the gang’s drug trafficking profit more than 30%. This also allows gangs to undercut competitive dealers and monopolize and expand their market share of street-level drug sales.<sup>4</sup>

The working relationship between gangs and MDTOs became more transparent over the past five years as news of horrific violence poured out of Mexico. One shocking example was the U.S. Consulate murders in Ciudad Juarez, where Barrio Azteca members, a U.S. prison gang working directly with the Vincente Carrillo-Fuentes Cartel (Juarez Cartel), murdered a U.S. Consulate employee and her husband on March 13, 2010.<sup>5</sup>

MDTOs were in search of U.S.-based partners who would not cooperate with law enforcement. Accordingly, the loyalty and discipline attributes of gangs made them ideal partners. Theoretically, the loyalty and discipline of U.S. gangs would hinder cooperation with law enforcement, and thus better protect the drug trafficking operation. The success of their working relationship is, in part, because gangs and Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) are like-minded

organizations. As criminal enterprises, loyalty, discipline, and territoriality are cornerstone philosophies on how gangs and MDTOs manage their respective organizations. This is because criminal enterprises must function in a covert capacity if they wish to survive law enforcement intervention and rival criminal takeover. Without loyalty to the organization, whether a gang or a DTO, rivals and law enforcement could easily infiltrate and dismantle the organization from the inside. Discipline is paramount to keep members inline so that their actions do not disrupt the organization or its operations. Controlling and expanding one’s territory is also important to the survivability of the organization as it protects the economic area of operation from competitors.

#### Outlook

Aside from possible personality conflicts that could arise, there is no apparent reason for either group to end their mutually beneficial relationship. With U.S. gangs able to increase their profit by taking over wholesale distribution that in many instances were operated by domestic drug trafficking networks, and MDTOs gaining increased reliance on their U.S.-based partners, criminal enterprises on both sides of the border benefit from their shared cooperation. As such, the symbiotic relationship of gangs and MDTOs stands to only strengthen over the foreseeable future, giving U.S. gangs greater access to wealth through their increased control of wholesale and street-level sale of illegal drugs in the United States.

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## The Emergence of the Difa-e-Pakistan Islamist Coalition

By Arif Rafiq

IN OCTOBER 2011, more than 40 Islamist and right-wing parties and groups in Pakistan joined together to establish the Difa-e-Pakistan Council (DPC), or the Defense of Pakistan Council. Led by Jama`at-ud-Da`wa (JuD), the front group for Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LeT), the DPC’s stated focus is to prevent Pakistan from strengthening ties with both the United States and India. Specifically, it opposes the reopening of NATO’s Pakistan-based supply route to Afghanistan, U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan, and granting most favored nation trading status to India. The DPC has held sizeable rallies in Pakistan’s major urban centers, creating speculation that the group is supported by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in a bid to sideline mainstream political parties in Pakistan by bolstering the political role of Islamists.<sup>1</sup>

Fears of the DPC’s influence, however, are overblown at this time. Pakistan’s Islamist and right-wing parties are divided, and the DPC’s members only have marginal electoral influence. Economic concerns and patronage politics, which the DPC’s constituents are poorly positioned to exploit, will be the primary drivers in Pakistan’s next general elections that will occur between late 2012 and early 2013.

Nonetheless, the emergence of the DPC and the increasingly public role played by JuD suggests a failure in Pakistan’s counterterrorism strategy. Since the 1980s, Pakistan’s military apparatus has become dependent on Islamists and jihadists to weaken secular political parties, expand the country’s reach in Afghanistan and contain a strengthening India. With the anti-state shift by a sizeable percentage of the country’s jihadists in the wake of 9/11, Pakistan’s military lacks a coherent strategy to contain its domestic jihadists. Rather than developing a comprehensive counterradicalization program, Pakistan’s military instead

<sup>3</sup> In this context, the “middle man,” or “men,” refers to drug trafficking criminal enterprises that solely operated inside the United States, but purchased large quantities of drugs from MDTOs, which they resold to gangs and other street-level drug salesmen across the United States.

<sup>4</sup> “National Drug Threat Assessment 2010.”

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Borunda and Adriana M. Chavez, “Federal Case Linked to Consulate Deaths Yields Racketeering Pleas,” *El Paso Times*, September 23, 2011.

<sup>1</sup> Imtiaz Ahmad, “ISI Behind New Political Party, Difa-e-Pak,” *Hindustan Times*, February 21, 2012.

attacks jihadists in some parts of the country, while encouraging jihadists in other parts of the state. It pursues a strategy of “divide and rule,” but this has only strengthened the phenomenon of jihadism over time. The emergence of the DPC is a symbol of the long-term challenge of violent Islamism in Pakistan.

### The DPC Emerges Amid Strategic Uncertainty for Pakistan’s Military

Military-backed, broad-based Islamist and right-wing coalitions are not new to Pakistan. In 1988, the ISI helped group the center-right Pakistan Muslim League with Jamaat-i-Islami and other Islamist parties in the form of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), or Islamic Democratic Alliance.<sup>2</sup> The IJI, created to counter the military’s rival Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), won a majority of seats in the 1990 general elections and formed a short-lasting government.<sup>3</sup>

More than a decade later, Pakistani Islamists—leveraging anti-American sentiment after coalition forces invaded Afghanistan and unseated the Taliban—formed the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) party. Like the IJI, the MMA is alleged to have ISI support.<sup>4</sup> The MMA voted in favor of the controversial Seventeenth Amendment, which diluted parliamentary sovereignty and empowered the office of the president held by military ruler Pervez Musharraf, much to the consternation of the country’s democratic opposition. The MMA swept the polls in the border regions with Afghanistan, forming the government in what was then known as the North-West Frontier Province and leading the governing coalition in Baluchistan Province.

Today, with the formation of the DPC, similar allegations of ISI involvement have been made.<sup>5</sup> While there is no publicly-available evidence to prove the allegation, ISI support for an Islamist alliance would not only be consistent

with the spy agency’s operational history, but it would also help advance the Pakistan military’s current objectives. The fact that the DPC’s chief coordinator is Hamid Gul, who formed the IJI alliance in 1988 while serving as ISI director-general, has helped to fuel this perception. On the other hand, Gul could simply be reusing a strategy from an old playbook, with little involvement of the ISI.

The Pakistan military’s strategic environment is presently shaped by five major factors: upcoming general elections that could alter the civil-military balance; troubled relations with the United States, which is both a patron and competitor; the commencement of the endgame in Afghanistan; a possible resumption of Indo-Pak peace talks; and an uncertain future for jihad in South Asia with anti-state jihadists in Pakistan weakened and a possible U.S. departure from Afghanistan.

The DPC provides Pakistan’s military with the opportunity to put pressure both on the United States and the civilian government. Pakistan’s military can leverage the specter of a rising radical opposition to the U.S.-Pakistan partnership and suggest that concessions made to Washington will be attached with a significant price. Furthermore, the DPC can serve as a means to slow the civilian government’s attempts to advance rapprochement with India, which the military opposes. Finally, by amplifying the public presence for pro-state jihadists, the DPC can also be a way for Pakistan’s military to channel jihadist activity away from the Pakistani state and toward India and the United States.

A test for how close the DPC is to the military will come when Pakistan decides to reopen the NATO supply route to Afghanistan. Will the DPC back away from the issue or will it elevate its criticism of the civilian government and include the military? While members of the DPC have issued limited criticism of the military, many of its members have offered strong praise for the institution. Indeed, Maulana Ahmed Ludhainvi, head of the anti-Shi`a Ahl-e Sunnat wal-Jammat (ASWJ), said that “the army is the largest institution of this country, so it holds

a lot of importance for us and we are willing to fight for them.”<sup>6</sup>

### Ethnic and Factional Divisions Weaken Islamist Unity Efforts

The growing public presence of radical groups such as the ASWJ and LeT through the DPC is a worrisome trend that portends the radicalization of Pakistani civil society. While the DPC could develop into a coherent pressure group—using its street presence to lobby political and military officials—it lacks the ingredients for formal success in Pakistani politics.

None of the DPC’s constituent organizations have representation in the federal parliament or provincial assemblies. Although the rising Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf party (PTI), a DPC member, is likely to perform well in the next general elections, it has kept a safe distance from the organization. PTI is likely using the DPC to bolster its nationalist and Islamist credentials, but it maintains its own independent agenda and does not want to be seen by foreign observers as being sympathetic or tied to militant and terrorist organizations.

While the DPC serves as the latest umbrella organization for Pakistan’s Islamists, it is weakened by the lack of participation by the Fazlur Rehman faction of the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam-Fazlur (JUI-F) party, which is the Islamist party with the greatest number of parliamentary seats. Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the leader of the JUI-F, has been highly critical of Pakistan’s military-intelligence establishment in recent months.<sup>7</sup> He is positioning himself for an electoral alliance with one of Pakistan’s two major parties, the center-right Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz or the center-left Pakistan Peoples Party. Given his political weight and current opposition to the military, Fazlur is unlikely to play “second fiddle” to the military’s ally, the JuD. He could be amenable, however, to an Islamist electoral alliance led by his party.

2 “Hameed Gul Admits he Formed IJI,” *The News International*, August 30, 2009.

3 Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006).

4 Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2004).

5 Mujahid Husain, “The Mullah Media Alliance,” *Viewpoint*, March 2, 2012.

6 Taha Siddiqui, “Difa-e-Pakistan Part 2/2: Who is Aiding the Jihadis’ Resurgence?” *Express Tribune*, February 12, 2012.

7 Saba Imtiaz, “We Will Make Pakistan an Islamic Welfare State”: JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman,” *Express Tribune*, January 27, 2012.

The DPC's growth will also be stifled by internal rivalries and divisiveness inherent to Pakistan's political culture and religious communities. An ASWJ supporter criticized fellow DPC members Gul and Ijaz-ul-Haq at the Islamabad rally in February 2012.<sup>8</sup> A prominent politician from neighboring Rawalpindi, Shaykh Rashid Ahmed, did not attend the Islamabad gathering.

Furthermore, the DPC has had difficulty gaining traction in Pakistan's smaller provinces. It has held rallies in the capital as well as large cities in Punjab and Sindh. Yet Baluch nationalist parties have refused to participate in the group's Quetta rally planned for April 2012 and civil society activists have opposed the DPC's Peshawar rally.<sup>9</sup>

#### The Dangers in Pakistan's Strategy

Pakistan's post-2009 counterinsurgency operations have successfully pushed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) out from the settled areas near the country's population centers and back into the tribal areas. The TTP is a weakened organization mired by internal divisions and plummeting public support.<sup>10</sup> While the TTP is a far less potent insurgent threat, it remains a significant terrorist threat, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

Moreover, Pakistan remains home to what is perhaps the world's greatest concentration of jihadist organizations. Groups such as the LeT that do not pose a direct threat to the Pakistani state today could become its adversaries in the future. A major lesson of the post-9/11 era for Pakistan is that allied jihadist groups can become foes with the right amount of strain on the relationship. Additionally, despite the loyalty of senior members of jihadist groups, low to mid-level commanders can defect and rebel against their former handlers.

The government of Pakistan has no coherent nationwide counterradicalization strategy. While Pakistan's military has initiated a comprehensive deradicalization campaign in the Swat area, elsewhere in the country it has allowed jihadist groups to flourish.<sup>11</sup> Pakistan's military remains committed to utilizing jihadist groups as force multipliers and non-conventional weapons against neighboring states. It lacks the ability and will to dismantle the jihadist infrastructure in the country as a whole and simply focuses on pitting jihadists against one another or redirecting their focus away from Islamabad and toward Kabul and New Delhi. The risks of continued jihadist support by the state are clear. The thousands of Pakistani civilians and security personnel killed by insurgents and terrorists since 9/11 demonstrate that today's "good" jihadists can become tomorrow's "bad" jihadists.

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## Attacking Drug Cartels Through Undercover Money Laundering Operations

By Robert Mazur

FEDERAL UNDERCOVER MONEY laundering operations are a vital tool in law enforcement's efforts to build legal cases against the hierarchy of drug cartels and associated criminal networks. In the last few months, however, critics have suggested that federal undercover money laundering operations blur the line between effective law enforcement and "facilitating crime," ignore the sovereignty of other governments, and have not produced results that impact cartel leadership. Detractors of this tool argue for more stringent congressional review of these operations, with suggestions that they are counterproductive.

This article, however, argues that undercover money laundering operations are one of the most effective and critical weapons to identify and prosecute those involved in the command and control of global narco-terrorist organizations. Much of the analysis in this article is based on the author's 27-year career as a federal agent, including five years of long-term undercover work operating as a money launderer for drug cartels.

#### The Threat from Drug Cartels to the United States

Drug cartels threaten U.S. national security. They move hundreds of tons of illegal drugs into American communities, resulting in increased domestic crime as well as thousands of drug-related murders. Drug money corrupts law enforcement, as well as military, political, judicial, legislative and even media personnel in various countries. It provides funding for terrorist organizations such as Hizb Allah, the Taliban, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) that prioritize the murder of Americans. Several prosecutions brought during the past few years as a result of the dedicated work performed by the DEA's Special Operations Division, including the November 2011 indictment of Ayman Joumaa and members of his Colombian/Lebanese drug money laundering operation, substantiate this

8 Kalbe Ali, "One-Upmanship Mars Latest Defence of Pakistan Rally," *Dawn*, February 21, 2012.

9 "Major Baloch, Pakhtun Political Parties to Boycott Difa-e-Pakistan Organized Meeting," ANI, February 27, 2012; Iftikhar Firdous, "Peshawar Civil Society Demands Ban on Difa-e-Pakistan," *Express Tribune*, March 6, 2012.

10 "Internal Rifts Within TTP Over Peace Talks with Pakistan," *Agence France-Presse*, March 9, 2012.

11 Fazal Khaliq, "Strategic Discussions: Radicalisation - Causes, Remedies Discussed," *Express Tribune*, July 5, 2011; "Jaish-e-Muhammad Builds Huge Base in Bawalpur," *Daily Times*, September 14, 2009.



fact.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, the prosecutions of Khan Mohammed,<sup>2</sup> Haji Juma Khan,<sup>3</sup> and many others confirm the strong narco-terrorist connection.<sup>4</sup>

While U.S. resources have been concentrated on waging wars in the Middle East and South Asia, the danger from drug cartel activity in Latin America has only gained momentum. These organizations are operated by sophisticated individuals. They hide behind surrogates or frontmen while they attempt to corrupt the infrastructure of the countries from which they operate. Some of the world's most sophisticated international bankers and businessmen cater to them and make tens of billions of dollars guarding their fortunes.

The illegal drug trade globally generates more than \$400 billion per year.<sup>5</sup> Reports estimate that in North America cocaine sales alone generate roughly \$35 billion. Factor in other drugs, and at least \$65 billion is being made from the sale of illegal drugs in the United States each year. At the same time, less than \$1 billion in drug proceeds are seized in the United States per year.<sup>6</sup> Law enforcement never even sees 99% of cartels' annual revenue. No matter where in the world big drug deals take place, most often they involve U.S. dollars. Therefore, as was the case with European drug proceeds traced through the money laundering organization of Lebanese-based Ayman Joumaa,<sup>7</sup> the trail of the greatest portion of illicit drug sales around the globe runs through the U.S. banking system.

### The Importance of Undercover Money Laundering Operations

One of the few law enforcement tools that genuinely worries cartel leaders is undercover money laundering operations. Cartel leadership recognizes that targeting their money supply is one of the only ways that law enforcement can build solid proof of their role in command and control, and that this technique could potentially undermine the entire organization. Yet they have no choice but to expose themselves to this risk because unlauded "dirty" money provides them with far less power and security than tainted funds that appear legitimate.

The reality is that a segment of the international banking and business community solicits business relationships with people who possess "flight capital," which constitutes money-seeking-secrecy from governments. This author learned this fact first hand during months of debriefings of convicted international bankers.<sup>8</sup> This money-seeking-secrecy comes in different forms. Beyond drug proceeds, at a minimum it includes funds from: illegal arms dealing; the unlawful movement of funds to sanctioned nations; tax evasion; the evasion of customs duties; white collar crime; and the pilfering of national assets by individuals with political influence.

Law enforcement benefits greatly from having an undercover methodology to access the corrupt segment of the international banking and business community involved in laundering funds for those in control of "flight capital" because sophisticated launderers serve a large number of criminal organizations. Prosecuting these individuals has value because they can identify those involved in the command and control of large scale drug trafficking and other illegal enterprises, they have key records, and they can identify the current location of massive illegal fortunes.

To justify this type of approach to undercover money laundering operations, one need only look at the list of international banks that have admitted criminal guilt in connection with their servicing of "flight capital" during the past five years. They

include: Bank Atlantic (2006) - fined \$20 million;<sup>9</sup> American Express Bank International (2007) - forfeited \$55 million;<sup>10</sup> Union Bank of California (2007) - fined \$21.6 million;<sup>11</sup> Wachovia Bank (2010) - fined \$160 million;<sup>12</sup> Lloyds (2009) - fined \$350 million;<sup>13</sup> UBS (2009) - fined \$780 million;<sup>14</sup> Deutsche Bank (2010) - fined \$553 million;<sup>15</sup> Credit Suisse (2009) - fined \$536 million;<sup>16</sup> ABM Amro Holding NV (2010) - fined \$500 million;<sup>17</sup> and Barclays Bank (2010) - fined \$298 million.<sup>18</sup>

This author acted as the primary undercover agent in several long-term undercover money laundering operations during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. During one, two-year undercover operation, this author and his team laundered \$34 million. This amounted to 1/100th of one percent of the \$800 billion in drug proceeds generated during those two years and proves that successful undercover money laundering operations do not require the laundering of significant amounts of the cartel's fortunes.

Yet through this \$34 million, this undercover money laundering operation recorded more than 1,000 conversations with cartel leaders and launderers, which would not have been possible if the network had not been infiltrated through an undercover money laundering operation. As a result of the operation, the U.S. Department of Justice:

- prosecuted more than 100 drug traffickers and money launderers, including people who reported directly to Pablo Escobar;

1 *U.S.A. v. Ayman Joumaa*, Eastern District of Virginia, 2011.

2 "Kahn Mohammed," press release, U.S. Department of Justice, December 22, 2008.

3 "Haji Juma Khan," news release, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, October 14, 2008.

4 *U.S.A. v. Lebanese Canadian Bank*, Southern District of New York, 2011.

5 "Estimated Illicit Financial Flows Resulting From Trafficking & Other Transnational Organized Crimes," United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, October 2011.

6 This information is available on the U.S. Department of Justice's Asset Forfeiture Fund website.

7 "Ayman Joumaa," press release, U.S. Department of Justice, December 13, 2011.

8 Robert Mazur, "Institutional Will - The Organized Crime Remedy," *Journal of Money Laundering* 15:2 (2012).

9 "Bank Atlantic," press release, U.S. Department of Justice, April 26, 2006.

10 *U.S.A. v. American Express Bank International*, Southern District of Florida, 2007.

11 *U.S.A. v. Union Bank of California*, Southern District of California, 2007.

12 *U.S.A. v. Wachovia Bank*, Southern District of Florida, 2010.

13 *U.S.A. v. Lloyds TSB Bank PLC*, District of Columbia, 2009.

14 *U.S.A. v. UBS AG*, Southern District of Florida, 2009.

15 "Deutsche Bank AG," press release, U.S. Department of Justice, December 21, 2010.

16 *U.S.A. v. Credit Suisse AG*, District of Columbia, 2009.

17 *U.S.A. v. ABN Amro Bank N.A.*, District of Columbia, 2010.

18 *U.S.A. v. Barclays Bank PLC*, District of Columbia, 2010.

- seized about 3,200 pounds of cocaine;
- seized more than \$100 million in cash and assets;
- collected over \$500 million in fines;
- forced the world's 7th largest privately held bank then, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, to plead guilty and forfeit their licenses to operate in 72 countries (essentially dismantling the bank);
- convicted and imprisoned many senior bank executives involved in laundering hundreds of millions in drug proceeds;
- executed search warrants around the world that resulted in the seizure of truckloads of records documenting hundreds of millions in laundered drug proceeds, including the records that proved Panamanian General Manuel Noriega had, as drug dealers claimed, taken more than \$50 million in cash payments in return for the free passage of untold amounts of drugs and money.<sup>19</sup>

Without the tool of an undercover money laundering operation, these successes would not have been possible. Unlike other traditional law enforcement efforts that often rely on the testimony of paid informants, surveillance or wiretaps, undercover money laundering operations readily enable law enforcement to collect certain types of highly reliable evidence, including the documents that provide the money trail that leads to those involved in command and control of criminal organizations. In addition, they routinely involve recorded conversations made by a sworn law enforcement officer, rather than highly paid informants, acting in an undercover capacity. Those recordings offer airtight evidence against professional money launderers who are otherwise painted by defense counsel to juries as victims of untrustworthy informants and an overreaching government prosecution unjustly accusing "pillars of the community." The prosecution and imprisonment of professional money launderers leads to their cooperation, their testimony relative to the owners of the money they laundered, and access to additional unknown records that will support otherwise unachievable prosecutions of the highest level members of criminal organizations, as well as the seizure of their organization's

fortunes—thus dismantling their whole enterprise. The 1,000 consensual recordings made by undercover agents with money launderers, traffickers and bank officers in the operation that targeted the Bank of Credit and Commerce International enabled the prosecutors to convict every defendant that went to trial, which led to their cooperation and the dismantling of the bank.

With the help of a half dozen informants and concerned citizens, it took nearly two years to establish a sophisticated front as a corrupt businessman involved in verifiably operating businesses, including an investment company, mortgage brokerage business, air charter service, jewelry chain, and stock brokerage firm with a seat on the NY Stock Exchange. Once established, this author used his undercover identity to build relationships with suspected corrupt businessmen and bankers around the world. Without that detailed planning, the operation would have never succeeded. In today's era of databases and high-tech background capabilities, this type of undercover front complexity is a minimum requirement to realistically gain access to those truly in control of the underworld's financial maze.

#### **How to Improve Undercover Money Laundering Operations**

To identify and seize the 99% of drug proceeds that currently evades law enforcement, the sophistication of law enforcement's undercover money laundering operations should be improved. Most often, law enforcement puts an undercover money laundering operation together in reaction to a set of case specific facts gathered by informants or other sources. Because undercover identities and business fronts are rarely created in advance of their need, authorities tend to use informants to fill significant roles in undercover money laundering operations, which later makes it necessary to have informants carry a heavy burden testifying about critical facts. That flaw offers an appetizing scenario in the perspective of a defense attorney. The jury is typically reminded repeatedly that the entire credibility of the government's case lies on the shoulders of a deal the government made with a "snitch."

The undercover companies and businesses routinely used in undercover operations are generally thrown together in an effort to catch up to a case specific opportunity and most often deal with a single drug organization or corrupt institution, rather than slowly building a sound front that can be used to attack several criminal organizations simultaneously. Establishing an effective undercover money laundering operation is no different than devoting resources to develop any other type of weapon used in the defense of the country; it should and could easily be used in more than one battle.

In almost every case, U.S. authorities rely on "cooperative financial institutions" to establish undercover accounts, a fact that looms as a detriment to the security of the operation for several reasons beyond the potential inadvertent leak. It is naïve to think that senior management in an international bank will not be made aware of the opening of undercover accounts.<sup>20</sup> If an undercover operation is soundly established, provided that the sovereignty of other countries is respected, it is far more secure to open accounts covertly, rather than with the knowledge and involvement of bank personnel at any institution.

In general, long-term undercover operations, especially those involving money laundering operations, should be used sparingly. Undercover agents selected for these assignments should be vetted through an undercover school process that involves experienced trainers and psychological testing/monitoring. These operations should be monitored and managed to ensure that they truly infiltrate cartel leadership and their money laundering partners in the international bank and business community. What matters most is that, on a continuing basis, each operation continues to identify new violators and evidence of new crimes. The old standard of justifying these operations

<sup>20</sup> All of BCCI's convicted senior management were previously employed by many other international banks and maintained a close relationship with their colleagues in other institutions. If the other accounts used in the operation had been opened with the knowledge of the account initiators that the accounts were undercover accounts, the security of the undercover operation would have been needlessly jeopardized.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Mazur, *The Infiltrator* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2009).

by seizing funds equal to the amount laundered is archaic and ill advised. Each operation should strive to launder the least amount of money to get the maximum evidence, but seizures during the undercover operation should only be done when a certainty exists that doing so will not cast doubt about the credibility of the undercover agent.

The DEA should lead a multiagency initiative to selectively launch one highly efficient and well planned money laundering undercover operation every year so that an ongoing resource of highly skilled undercover operatives infiltrate the hierarchy of the underworld on a global basis. To be effective, multinational resources through ally partnerships need to support these operations, and each operation should run for an average of two to three years. Operational care should be taken to ensure that litigation brought as a result of one such operation does not legally necessitate the exposure of any other undercover money laundering operation. In 10 years, cartel leadership and others who possess underground fortunes would suffer a lethal blow and the international banking community would finally learn that the stench of tainted funds carries too great a risk for business.

By enhancing the sophistication of undercover money laundering operations, the authorities who take on the cartels and their money managers will be afforded a much clearer aim at the Achilles' heel of the underworld.

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## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

February 1, 2012 (PAKISTAN): Pakistan said it killed an al-Qa`ida-linked Azerbaijani national in Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. As reported by *Dawn*, "The militant, identified as Aslanov Zaur, was among the six foreign militants who were killed during clashes with security forces in the Jogi area of Central Kurram Agency...The passport (passport number 3503893), issued from the Azerbaijani capital Bakku in February 2009, shows Zaur belonged to the city of Sumaqyit, located at a distance of 31 kilometers from the capital and was born on September 25, 1981...The travel documents also reveal that he had entered the city of Astar, the capital of Gilan province of Iran on March 26, 2009 (evident from the entry stamp), and since than [sic] had gone underground. He is suspected to have entered Afghanistan and then Pakistan through unfrequented routes." - *Dawn, February 4*

February 2, 2012 (IRAQ): Militants bombed an Asiaceq equipment building near Mosul, Ninawa Province, disrupting mobile phone service in some areas. According to Reuters, "The attackers, some of whom wore military uniforms, held guns to the heads of security guards late on Thursday and planted four large explosives in the building, which houses routing and switching equipment." - *Reuters, February 3*

February 2, 2012 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants ambushed a police patrol in Lakki Marwat District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, killing three officers. - *Dawn, February 2*

February 2, 2012 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine's military killed 15 al-Qa`ida-linked militants in an airstrike on a rebel camp on Sulu Island in the southern Philippines. At least two of the dead were allegedly from Jemaah Islamiya. Authorities believe that among the dead was Malaysian bomb expert Zulkippli bin Hir (also known as Marwan), although they have yet to find his body. Later reports suggested that Bin Hir escaped the attack, but was badly wounded. - *Reuters, February 2; AP, February 3; New York Times, March 13*

February 3, 2012 (SOMALIA): Kenya's military bombed a convoy of al-Shabab fighters in Dalayat village in southern Somalia, killing an estimated 100 militants. - *Reuters, February 4*

February 5, 2012 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle at a police parking lot in Kandahar city, killing at least seven people. "Kandahar had been relatively quiet for months, but there have been a series of suicide bombings since Jan. 11, when there was a foiled attack on the police headquarters," explained the *New York Times*. "An official for the Afghan intelligence department in Kandahar said that informers and captured insurgents have told investigators recently that the city is in insurgents' cross hairs. Taliban commanders have been ferrying would-be suicide bombers to the city and organizing attacks, the intelligence official said." - *New York Times, February 5*

February 5, 2012 (PAKISTAN): A military convoy was hit by a roadside bomb in Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing one Pakistani soldier. - *RFE/RL, February 5*

February 6, 2012 (UNITED STATES): Chicago cab driver Raja Lahrasib Khan pleaded guilty to providing material support to a terrorist group. According to Bloomberg, "A naturalized U.S. citizen, Khan, 58, was arrested in March 2010 after his son was apprehended at a London airport carrying \$700 of \$1,000 in marked \$100 bills that a U.S. undercover agent had given the cab driver for delivery to Ilyas Kashmiri. Kashmiri was allegedly an ally of the al-Qaeda terror network and a fighter in the movement to expel Indian forces from Kashmir, the disputed territory between Pakistan and India and where Khan was born. He was reportedly killed in a U.S. missile strike last year. Khan today admitted meeting Kashmiri twice in Pakistan." - *Bloomberg, February 6*

February 6, 2012 (UNITED STATES): Somali-American Ahmed Hussein Mahamud, 27, of Westerville, Ohio, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization. Mahamud admitted raising money to send Minnesota men to Somalia to join al-Shabab. As stated in the Associated



Press, "Mahamud admitted that from 2008 through February 2011, Mahamud and others conspired to provide money and people to al-Shabab, knowing the group was a designated foreign terrorist organization. Specifically, Mahamud said that in the summer of 2008, he and others told members of Minnesota's Somali-American community that they were raising money for a local mosque or for orphans in Somalia. Instead, Mahamud said, the \$1,500 went toward airline tickets for men who would eventually go to Somalia." - *AP, February 7*

February 6, 2012 (YEMEN): Three suspected al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula militants escaped from a prison in southern Abyan Province. - *Yemen Post, February 7*

February 7, 2012 (NIGERIA): A suicide bomber reportedly detonated an explosives-laden vehicle outside a military barracks near the northern city of Kaduna. A spokesman for Boko Haram claimed responsibility. The spokesman also claimed credit for an attempted attack on an air force base. - *Global Post, February 8; BBC, February 8*

February 8, 2012 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed 10 Pakistani Taliban militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *Los Angeles Times, February 9*

February 8, 2012 (SOMALIA): A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle near the popular Hotel Muna in Mogadishu, killing at least 15 people. Officials blamed al-Shabab for the attack. - *RTTNews, February 8; Voice of America, February 8*

February 9, 2012 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new statement saying that the Somali-based group al-Shabab has officially joined al-Qa`ida. - *Voice of America, February 9*

February 9, 2012 (UNITED KINGDOM): A British judge sentenced nine men, all British Muslims, to prison for their involvement in al-Qa`ida-inspired plots to bomb the London Stock Exchange, as well as to establish a terrorist training camp. The prosecution said that although the men were not members of al-Qa`ida, they were inspired by the

terrorist group as well as the sermons of Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi. - *AP, February 9*

February 9, 2012 (TURKEY): A potential female suicide bomber died in Istanbul after explosives she was carrying detonated. She appeared to be the only casualty. Authorities suspect that she belonged to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). - *AFP, February 10*

February 9, 2012 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed Badur Mansoor, a top Pakistani Taliban commander who was also reportedly serving as an al-Qa`ida operative. The attack occurred in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *Los Angeles Times, February 9*

February 10, 2012 (UNITED STATES): Federal prosecutors in the United States released new details about the Christmas Day terrorist plot in 2009, alleging that Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi directed and approved it. "Awlaki's last instructions to him [Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab] were to wait until the airplane was over the United States and then to take the plane down," the court papers said. Al-`Awlaqi was killed by a U.S. drone in Yemen in 2011. - *Reuters, February 10*

February 10, 2012 (UNITED STATES): A federal judge sentenced Mohammed Wali Zazi to four and a half years in prison on charges that he obstructed a terrorism investigation and intentionally misled authorities. Mohammed Wali Zazi is the father of Najibullah Zazi, the convicted would-be suicide bomber who plotted to detonate explosives in New York City subways. - *CNN, February 10*

February 10, 2012 (SYRIA): Suicide bombers in two explosives-laden vehicles targeted security compounds in Aleppo, killing 28 people. According to the Associated Press, "The morning blasts in Aleppo, Syria's most populous city, ripped apart the facades of the local headquarters of the Military Intelligence Directorate and a barracks of the Security Preservation forces. At the Directorate, windows were shattered and a large crater was torn into the pavement outside the entrance... Security officials said suicide bombers in explosives-packed vehicles tried to smash through the entrances of both

sites." It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the attack. - *AP, February 10*

February 11, 2012 (SYRIA): Gunmen assassinated a Syrian general, Issa al-Kholi, outside his home in Damascus. - *Bloomberg, February 12*

February 12, 2012 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new video message expressing support for the uprising in Syria. Al-Zawahiri urged Muslims in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq to join the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad's "pernicious, cancerous regime." - *Voice of America, February 12*

February 13, 2012 (UNITED KINGDOM): Abu Qatada, who at one time was allegedly al-Qa`ida's senior operative in Europe, was released on bail from a high security British prison. The European Court of Human Rights told the United Kingdom to release Qatada because he had not been charged with a crime. The British government, however, cannot deport Abu Qatada to his native Jordan because the court believes that the Jordanian government will torture him for information. He will be kept in virtual house arrest. - *NBC News, February 13; New York Daily News, February 13*

February 13, 2012 (AFGHANISTAN): The Taliban announced that Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, one of their top officials, died in a Pakistani prison almost two years ago. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Mullah Akhund, who died in March 2010, "had been a senior lieutenant of Mullah Mohammed Omar, the movement's supreme commander, and served as the Taliban defense minister during their reign over Afghanistan in the 1990s. He was also one of Osama bin Laden's main allies within the Taliban during the time when the two organizations were closely linked." - *Los Angeles Times, February 13*

February 13, 2012 (SOMALIA): Al-Shabab insurgents held rallies across Somalia to celebrate their acceptance into al-Qa`ida. Al-Qa`ida chief Ayman al-Zawahiri announced the merger of the two groups on February 9. - *AFP, February 13*

February 14, 2012 (THAILAND): An Iranian man blew off both his legs in a failed bombing in Bangkok. According to ABC News, “an Iranian named Saeid Moradi was in a rented house in downtown Bangkok when a cache of explosives detonated, apparently by accident, taking off a section of the roof. Thai police say that Moradi, wounded by the explosion, tried to flag down a cab on the street.” After the cab driver refused to take Moradi, he “allegedly threw a grenade at the taxi, injuring the driver, and started running. When he tried to hurl a second grenade at police, the bomb bounced off a tree. It exploded near Moradi and took off his legs.” Authorities are investigating why the Iranian man had explosives in his house. – *ABC News, February 14*

February 14, 2012 (YEMEN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives in front of a Yemeni election committee office in Aden. The bomber was the only casualty. – *Reuters, February 14*

February 15, 2012 (UNITED STATES): A U.S. judge sentenced Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried to down a U.S. aircraft on Christmas Day 2009, to multiple life sentences. According to Agence France-Presse, “Abdulmutallab showed no emotion as Judge Nancy Edmunds handed down the maximum sentences for the eight counts to which he pleaded guilty in October [2011], which amount to four consecutive life sentences and an additional 50 years behind bars.” – *AFP, February 15*

February 16, 2012 (SYRIA): U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said that the recent terrorist bombings in Damascus and Aleppo “had all the earmarks of an Al-Qaeda-like attack...And so we believe Al-Qaeda in Iraq is extending its reach into Syria.” He added, “Another disturbing phenomenon that we’ve seen recently, apparently, is the presence of extremists who have infiltrated the [Syrian] opposition groups. The opposition groups in many cases may not be aware that they’re there.” – *AFP, February 16*

February 16, 2012 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked Pakistani volunteers part of a pro-government militia in Upper Dir District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, killing one person. – *Dawn, February 16*

February 16, 2012 (PAKISTAN): Two U.S. drone strikes targeted militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Approximately 13 militants were killed. – *Dawn, February 16*

February 16, 2012 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted a police vehicle in Peshawar, injuring five policemen. – *The Nation, February 16*

February 17, 2012 (UNITED STATES): The Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested Amine El Khalifi, a Moroccan, after he attempted to bomb the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. The man, however, never posed a danger as he was carefully monitored by authorities as part of an undercover sting operation. He was arrested in a parking lot near the Capitol wearing what he thought was an explosives vest, as well as a MAC-10 gun that authorities rendered inoperative. El Khalifi had been living in Alexandria, Virginia, and was unemployed, according to officials. – *Chicago Tribune, February 17; New York Times, February 17*

February 17, 2012 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed at least 26 people outside a mosque in a Shi`a neighborhood in Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *Reuters, February 17*

February 17, 2012 (SOMALIA): A car bomb tore through a police compound in Mogadishu, destroying part of the facility’s perimeter wall. Two people were wounded. – *AFP, February 18*

February 19, 2012 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber in a vehicle detonated explosives outside a police academy in Baghdad, killing 15 people. Most of the victims were reportedly students applying to join the police force. – *AFP, February 19*

February 20, 2012 (YEMEN): Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula announced that a senior member of the group, Tariq al-Dahab, died in a bloody family feud. – *AP, February 20*

February 21, 2012 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan President Hamid Karzai invited the Taliban for direct talks with his government. “In order to realise the objectives of the peace process, I invite the leadership of the Taliban to

engage in direct talks with the Afghan government,” Karzai said in a statement. – *AFP, February 21*

February 23, 2012 (IRAQ): A wave of attacks targeting mostly Shi`a Muslims killed at least 55 people. The attacks hit six different provinces. The al-Qa`ida-linked Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility. – *Voice of America, February 23; New York Post, February 23; AP, February 24*

February 23, 2012 (PAKISTAN): A car bomb tore through a bus station in Peshawar, killing 13 people. – *Dawn, February 24*

February 23, 2012 (NIGERIA): Nigeria’s military chief claimed that the Islamist sect Boko Haram has ties to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. His statement marked the first time a top security official in Nigeria linked the group to al-Qa`ida. – *AFP, February 23*

February 24, 2012 (IRAQ): Al-Qa`ida in Iraq released a statement warning that a coming war between Sunni and Shi`a Muslims in Iraq was inevitable. – *AP, February 24*

February 24, 2012 (PAKISTAN): Taliban suicide bombers attacked a police station in Peshawar, killing four officers. – *AP, February 24*

February 25, 2012 (AFGHANISTAN): A gunman shot to death two U.S. military advisers inside a heavily guarded ministry building in Kabul. According to one press report, “The Taliban claimed responsibility for the Interior Ministry attack, saying it was retaliation for the Quran burnings, after the U.S. officers—a lieutenant colonel and a major—were found dead on the floor of an office that only people who know a numerical combination can enter, Afghan and Western officials said.” – *Seattle Times, February 25*

February 25, 2012 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani authorities began to demolish the house in Abbottabad that served as the home for al-Qa`ida chief Usama bin Ladin until he was killed there by U.S. forces. – *ABC News, February 27*

February 25, 2012 (YEMEN): Hours after the newly-elected Yemeni president was sworn in, a suicide bomber drove a vehicle into the gates of a presidential

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palace in the port city of Mukalla, killing at least 26 people. Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula claimed responsibility. – *Reuters, February 25; CNN, February 29*

February 26, 2012 (UNITED STATES): U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned against arming rebels in Syria. “We really don’t know who it is that would be armed,” she told reporters. “Are we supporting Al-Qaeda in Syria? Hamas is now supporting the opposition. Are we supporting Hamas in Syria?” Clinton contrasted the situation in Syria with Libya, saying, “This is not Libya, where you had a base of operations in Benghazi, where you had people who were representing the entire opposition.” – *AFP, February 26*

February 26, 2012 (AFGHANISTAN): Eight U.S. soldiers were wounded during a violent protest outside a U.S. forward operating base in Kunduz Province. The soldiers were injured after a protestor reportedly threw a grenade into the compound. – *NBC News, February 26*

February 26, 2012 (NIGERIA): A suicide bomber in a vehicle detonated explosives outside a church in the central city of Jos, killing at least three people. Boko Haram claimed responsibility. According to the BBC, “The bombing sparked a riot by Christian youths, with reports that at least two Muslims were killed in the violence.” – *Australian Broadcasting Corporation, February 27; BBC, February 26*

February 27, 2012 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber in a vehicle killed at least nine people at Jalalabad airport in eastern Afghanistan. The airport also serves as a forward operating base. The Afghan Taliban claimed responsibility. – *BBC, February 27; Guardian, February 27*

February 28, 2012 (PAKISTAN): Gunmen disguised in military fatigues forced 18 Shi`a Muslim men off buses in Kohistan District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The men were then executed. – *AFP, February 27*