AUGUST 2011 . VOL 4 . ISSUE 8

COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

CTC SENTINEL

OBJECTIVE . RELEVANT . RIGOROUS

Contents

FEATURE ARTICLE

1 **AQAP's 'Great Expectations' for the Future**
By Bruce Riedel

REPORTS

4 **The Revival of Shi` a Militancy in Iraq**
By Ramzy Mardini

8 **Al-Qa` ida's Confused Messaging on Libya**
By Barak Barfi

12 **Germany Increasingly a Center for Terrorism in Europe**
By Sajjan M. Gohel

16 **Islamic Activism in Europe: The Role of Converts**
By Emmanuel Karagiannis

19 **The Rise of Salafists in Tunisia After the Fall of Ben Ali**
By Aaron Y. Zelin

21 **Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity**

24 **CTC Sentinel Staff & Contacts**

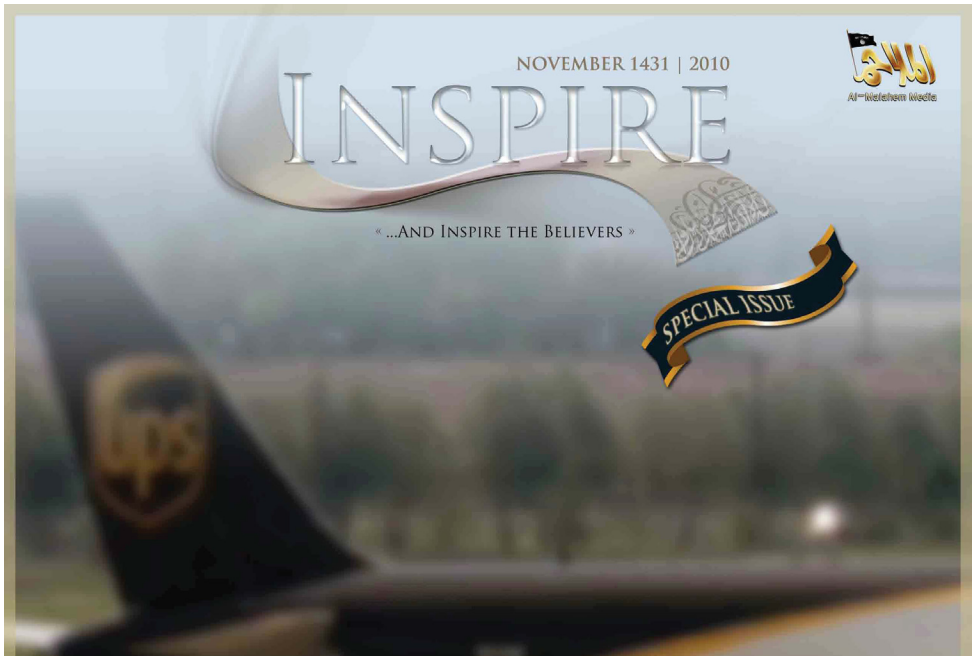
About the CTC Sentinel

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.

AQAP's 'Great Expectations' for the Future

By Bruce Riedel



American counterterrorism officials recently warned that al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is trying to produce the lethal poison ricin to be packed around small bombs for use in attacks against the U.S. homeland.[1] This latest development is further evidence of AQAP's growing threat to the United States. The group has demonstrated remarkable resiliency and adaptability in its history, surviving several leadership changes and major crackdowns in both Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Its success in the face of adversity is a model for other al-Qa`ida units now threatened. In particular, with al-Qa`ida's core in Pakistan under severe pressure due to Usama bin Ladin's death in May 2011, AQAP provides insights into the jihad's capacity to rally back from defeat.

AQAP has done far more than just survive. In the last two years, it has emerged as a potent al-Qa`ida threat to the U.S. homeland, staging two attacks on American cities and inspiring other attacks by American Muslims, including U.S. Army soldiers attracted to AQAP's message.[2] AQAP has developed a new strategy for attacking the United States which emphasizes small and simple operations designed to undermine the economy and "hemorrhage" a country in the midst of a severe economic crisis.

1 Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, "Qaeda Trying to Harness Toxin for Bombs, U.S. Officials Fear," *New York Times*, August 12, 2011. As stated by the *New York Times*, "For more than a year, according to classified intelligence reports, Al Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen has been making efforts to acquire large quantities of castor beans, which are required to produce ricin, a white, powdery toxin that is so deadly that just a speck can kill if it is inhaled or reaches the bloodstream."

2 For example, U.S. Army Major Nidal Malik Hasan and Private First Class Naser Abdo.

AQAP has also led the jihadist movement in adapting the traditional al-Qa`ida narrative and ideology to the new paradigm of the "Arab Spring." AQAP embraced the revolutionary "tsunami" both in name and action. It articulated a new narrative for al-Qa`ida that seizes on the Arab Spring and puts it into a jihadist context. In Yemen, the terrorist group has exploited the chaos and confusion around the revolution against President Ali Abdullah Salih to expand its room for maneuver and safe havens.

AQAP is an ambitious organization that has by its own statements "great expectations" for the future. The United States will need a focused but comprehensive policy and significant assistance from Saudi Arabia to deal with AQAP's operatives.

This article highlights al-Qa`ida's resiliency in the Arabian Peninsula, examines its strategy of defeating the United States and its allies through "a thousand cuts," and identifies the group's local and regional ambitions.

Resiliency: Bouncing Back

Al-Qa`ida has long been active in Yemen, the ancestral homeland of Usama bin Ladin. One of its earliest major terrorist attacks was conducted in Aden in 2000 when an al-Qa`ida cell nearly sank the *USS Cole*. It has also been active in Saudi Arabia since the late 1990s when it tried to attack the U.S. Consulate in Jidda during U.S. Vice President Al Gore's visit in 1998.[3] The head of al-Qa`ida in Yemen, Abu Ali al-Harithi, was killed by a U.S. drone in Yemen in 2002, which disrupted the group's activities for several years. Al-Qa`ida in Saudi Arabia was ordered by Bin Ladin to rise up against the House of Saud in 2003, and for the next two years it waged a bloody campaign across the kingdom to topple the Saudi monarchy. The Saudi authorities fought back with clever and resourceful counterattacks that devastated al-Qa`ida's infrastructure in the country.

In January 2009, the al-Qa`ida franchises in Saudi Arabia and Yemen merged after the Saudi branch had been effectively repressed by Saudi authorities. Bin Ladin and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri helped orchestrate the merger. A Yemeni with close ties to Bin Ladin, Nasir al-Wihayshi, was chosen to lead the group with a Saudi deputy, Said al-Shihri. Both had been in prison already for their al-Qa`ida beliefs. Al-Wihayshi had escaped from a Sana`a jail in February 2006, while al-Shihri had been released from Guantanamo to Saudi custody in December 2007. Together they rebuilt the shattered remnants back into a deadly force relatively quickly. The group's ability to recover from adversity demonstrates that al-Qa`ida franchises are adept at bouncing back when they have smart leadership like al-Wihayshi and al-Shihri.[4]

"It is difficult to determine the extent to which AQAP has actually expanded its power base, and caution should be used in assessing claims of its victory or defeat in any particular location. What is clear is that Yemen is increasingly chaotic and the central government, always weak outside the urban areas, is becoming weaker still and is preoccupied with the struggle for power."

They were joined by others including a skilled bombmaker, Ibrahim al-Asiri. Al-Asiri, who is probably around 29-years-old, is the Saudi master bombmaker for AQAP. He constructed the bomb that his brother Abdullah used in a failed suicide assassination attempt against Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism chief, Prince Muhammad bin Nayif, in August 2009. He built the bomb that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian, used in his attempt to blow up Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on Christmas Day 2009 as it was descending over southern Ontario to Detroit. He also built the parcel bombs that AQAP dispatched to Chicago on the eve of the U.S. elections in October 2010, trying to blow up UPS and FedEx planes that were instead found in Dubai and England due to a tip from Saudi intelligence. AQAP claims a similar parcel bomb was responsible for blowing up a UPS delivery aircraft in Abu Dhabi on September 3, 2010.

AQAP also has an American face, the New Mexico-born and Colorado-educated Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi. Some suggest that al-`Awlaqi is the head of the group's foreign operations. He is also one of the movers behind AQAP's innovative English-language web journal, *Inspire*, which serves as the group's principle propaganda outlet to the West. It is produced by AQAP's al-Malahim production studio.[5]

Strategy of a Thousand Cuts

AQAP devoted the third issue of *Inspire* to the parcel bomb plot and to outlining its strategy for defeating the United States. It expanded beyond traditional al-Qa`ida strategic thinking. AQAP claims it now has a team of crafty bombmakers producing its wares that can supposedly get through the most sophisticated airport surveillance equipment in the world. It says its goal is to "hemorrhage" the U.S. economy by conducting waves of small-scale attacks similar to the parcel bombs (a "thousand cuts") and the Christmas Day plot that force added security countermeasures. The cover proudly proclaimed that the parcel plot cost just $4,200 to execute. The Detroit operation has already produced expensive new security measures at airports from Amsterdam to Auckland.

3 Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 114. Hegghammer's book is the best study to date on al-Qa`ida's Saudi roots and development.

4 For a number of articles on the development and leadership of AQAP, see Ramzy Mardini ed., *The Battle for Yemen: Al-Qaeda and the Struggle for Stability* (Washington, D.C.: The Jamestown Foundation, 2010). On the merger, see Michael W.S. Ryan, "Al-Qaeda's Purpose in Yemen Described in Works of Jihad Strategists," *Terrorism Monitor* 8:4 (2010).

5 *Inspire* magazine's issues can be found on a number of websites, including Flashpoint Partners.

These new attacks are notable for their relatively small footprint. They are harder to defeat because they are less complex. Unlike the 9/11 plot or the 2006 failed attempt to blow up 10 airliners en route from London to North America, these efforts are conducted by a small number of people. Only a few participated in the planning and execution, and the plots went from concept to action in a few months. Abdulmutallab, for example, was recruited and trained for his mission in Shabwa Province only a few weeks before his attack.[6]

The recent intelligence on AQAP's attempts to acquire ricin fit within this strategy. According to U.S. officials cited in the *New York Times*, "evidence points to efforts to secretly concoct batches of the [ricin] poison, pack them around small explosives, and then try to explode them in contained spaces, like a shopping mall, an airport or a subway station."[7]

As part of this strategy, AQAP is using its propaganda message to inspire American Muslims to act on their own to attack targets on U.S. territory. Al-`Awlaqi says he encouraged Major Nidal Malik Hasan to conduct his carnage at Fort Hood in Texas on November 5, 2009, an attack that killed 13 people. More recently, another U.S. soldier of Palestinian descent, Naser Abdo, tried to carry out an attack at the same base.[8] The police found a copy of an article from *Inspire* in his possession.[9]

Together with what al-Qa`ida calls the "bleeding wars" in Iraq and Afghanistan, and perhaps another one some day in Yemen, these smaller attacks are designed to wear the United States down through attrition just as they believe the mujahidin war in Afghanistan in the 1980s bled the Soviet Union until it collapsed. The terrorists said they had such great hopes for the parcel bomb plot in October 2010 that they included a copy of the novel *Great Expectations* in the mailing envelope concealing the bombs. Apparently, the Dickens masterpiece is a favorite of al-`Awlaqi.

6 Adam Nossiter, "Lonely Trek to Radicalism for Terror Suspect," *New York Times*, January 16, 2010.

7 Schmitt and Shanker.

8 "U.S. Soldier Indicted in Texas Bomb Plot," Agence France-Presse, August 9, 2011.

9 Ibid.

Great Expectations: Local and Regional

Although AQAP is plotting against the U.S. homeland, it does not want to replace the al-Qa`ida core in Pakistan as the leader of the global jihad. AQAP leader Nasir al-Wihayshi publicly proclaimed his group's allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri as the new *amir* of al-Qa`ida in July 2011. The most recent edition of *Inspire* was dedicated to Bin Ladin's memory and martyrdom, and it clearly endorses al-Zawahiri as the leader of global jihad, saying "now Shaykh Ayman carries the banner" of jihad. Yet AQAP does aspire to play a much larger role in Yemen, the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab world as a whole.

In Yemen, it has taken advantage of the uprising against the Salih regime to expand significantly its area of operations, especially in the southern provinces. In Abyan, Hadramawt, Marib, Shabwa and other remote provinces it is more active than ever before. In Abyan's capital, Zinjibar, under the banner of Ansar al-Shari`a (Followers of Islamic Law), it has taken over significant parts of the city.[10] The extent of al-Qa`ida's gains in Yemen in the last few months is unclear. It says in *Inspire* that "the country is falling apart and our brothers are busy picking up the pieces, its like walking into an orchard of ripe fruit that is falling off the branches and all you have to do is walk through with a basket over your head."[11]

Much of this is true. Yemen has splintered between Salih loyalists led by his son, Ahmed—who commands the Republican Guard—the democracy movement, defecting army commanders, tribal warlords, southern secessionists and Islamic groups of many different varieties. The Salih forces, however, like to label all opposition as al-Qa`ida, the reformers accuse the government of allowing al-Qa`ida to advance to scare the West and the Saudis, and AQAP has every reason to exaggerate its own successes. As a result, it is difficult to determine the extent to which AQAP has actually expanded its power base, and caution should be used in assessing claims of its victory or defeat in any particular location. What is clear is that Yemen is increasingly chaotic and the central government, always weak outside the urban areas, is becoming weaker still and is preoccupied with the struggle for power. Al-Qa`ida is not a player in the future of Sana`a. It will not take over the country as a whole. Yet with a weak central government, al-Qa`ida will face reduced counterterrorism pressure from the Yemeni authorities.

Yemen, of course, suffers from numerous other challenges that divert attention from AQAP. It is running out of both oil and water, it has a huge unemployment and underemployment crisis, the median age of its rapidly growing population is 19, and much of the population is addicted to qat, undermining work habits and productivity. Whatever regime replaces Salih will have to focus on these fundamental challenges, leaving AQAP with space and time to export terrorism.

"The Arab Spring was not created by al-Qa`ida, and the vast majority of Arabs are not seeking al-Qa`ida's help in removing their dictators. Yet the winter of peaceful change has given way to violence from Tripoli to Hama to Aden. In this more complex and chaotic world, al-Qa`ida will have opportunities to thrive and develop."

A strengthened AQAP in Yemen is certain to try to put more pressure on Saudi Arabia and to strike Saudi targets. AQAP's military chief Qasim al-Raymi warned the Saudi leadership in July 2011 that they are still regarded as "apostates."[12] Al-Raymi specifically put Saudi King Abdallah, Crown Prince Sultan, Interior Minister Prince Nayif

10 Hakim Almasmari, "Al Qaeda Seizes Town in Southern Yemen, Residents Say," CNN, August 18, 2011.

11 *Inspire*, Summer 1432, 2011, p. 3.

12 "Qaeda Chief Wants Saudi Leaders Dead," *Kuwait Times*, July 30, 2011.

and his son, Muhammad bin Nayif, on the target list.[13]

The group also has ambitions to expand its cooperation with the al-Shabab movement across the Gulf of Aden in Somalia. Al-Shihri has spoken in grandiose terms about the two movements some day being capable of blockading the Bab al-Mandab Strait to prevent oil traffic from moving through the strategic choke point at the end of the Red Sea. It is more realistic to anticipate the two groups cooperating in attacking individual tankers. Al-Qa`ida did attack a French tanker, the *MV Limburg*, in October 2002, causing spillage of 90,000 barrels of oil into the Gulf.

Perhaps AQAP's most important accomplishment, however, has been in the ideological arena. Al-Qa`ida was caught off guard by the revolutions that started in Tunisia and Egypt in the winter of 2010-2011 (albeit so was the rest of the world). The early responses from al-Zawahiri and the al-Qa`ida core in Pakistan were hesitant and often incoherent. The popular mass demonstrations did not have an Islamic message at their core in the early days and did not embrace jihad. No one in Tunis or Cairo was calling for Usama bin Ladin to lead the revolution. Al-Qa`ida looked out of date and irrelevant.

AQAP has helped fill the propaganda vacuum. It called the revolutions a "tsunami" of change, and while candidly admitting al-Qa`ida was not leading them, embraced the tsunami as good for jihad and good for al-Qa`ida. The downfall of traditional al-Qa`ida enemies such as Hosni Mubarak, Bashar al-Assad, Mu`ammar Qadhafi and Ali Abdullah Salih is a positive development for the global jihad. Anwar al-`Awlaqi was particularly articulate and clear in arguing that these changes would open doors for al-Qa`ida to exploit in the future and should be seen as the result of al-Qa`ida's years of struggle against the "apostates."[14] Al-Zawahiri has since reiterated many of the same points.

AQAP is probably correct. The Arab Spring was not created by al-Qa`ida, and the vast majority of Arabs are not seeking al-Qa`ida's help in removing their dictators. Yet the winter of peaceful change has given way to violence from Tripoli to Hama to Aden. In this more complex and chaotic world, al-Qa`ida will have opportunities to thrive and develop. As the region becomes more convulsed with change, AQAP will serve as a role model for other al-Qa`ida franchises to copy due to its resiliency and adaptability.

Conclusion

AQAP is a complex challenge and threat to the United States. Covert action and intelligence operations have a role to play in disrupting AQAP, but they will need to be part of a much larger strategy that helps to rebuild the Yemeni state, address its daunting socioeconomic challenges, and attacks the ideology of the jihadists. Drones alone are not enough, as former U.S. Ambassador Edmund Hull has rightly noted.[15]

Given the serious economic crisis in the United States and the magnitude of Yemen's problems, only its neighbor Saudi Arabia has the resources to fully address the challenge. For decades, American and Saudi officials have tried to work together to help Yemen. Today, however, their challenge is greater than ever before.

Bruce Riedel is a Senior Fellow in the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution and a professor at Georgetown University. He has advised four U.S. presidents on Afghanistan and was asked by President Barack Obama in January 2009 to chair an interagency strategic review of American policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, which was completed in March 2009. He is the author of The Search for Al Qaeda: its Leadership, Ideology and Future. *His latest book,* Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America and the Future of Global Jihad, *was published in early 2011.*

The Revival of Shi`a Militancy in Iraq

By Ramzy Mardini

THE U.S. MILITARY is required to completely withdraw its forces from Iraq no later than December 31, 2011, in accordance with the bilateral U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement signed in December 2008 by outgoing President George W. Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. As Iraq struggles to normalize its institutions and international relations, renewed efforts by various insurgent groups have sought to showcase their influence on the backdrop of the U.S. withdrawal. In late July 2011, a report released by the U.S. inspector general for Iraq reconstruction asserted worsening security conditions as compared to the previous year, and a higher risk for U.S. personnel. Indeed, for the entire year of 2010, the U.S. military suffered 22 fatalities due to hostile fire. This year, and only as of July 2011, 31 U.S. soldiers have been killed in Iraq, mainly at the hands of Shi`a militants backed by Iran.

The severe political impasse in Baghdad, an increasingly frustrated population, and an unpopular and ineffective central government are contributing to anti-regime violence in Iraq, especially among Sunni insurgents such as al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) and the Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al-Naqshabandi (JRTN) movement.[1] These factors, however, are not underlying the revival in Shi`a militancy in the country. Instead, the fundamental principle driving the unstable environment is the heightened level of uncertainty, both on the local and regional stage. The national debate surrounding the continuance of the U.S. presence dominates the local environment, while the regional factor is driven by the uneasiness ushered in by the upheavals of the "Arab Spring." In the final analysis, both make available a strategic logic for Iran and its Shi`a proxies to exploit the Iraqi scene in hopes of influencing a particular outcome that favors their interests.

13 Ibid.

14 As stated in *Inspire*, "The Tsunami of Change. The unfolding revolution has brought with a wave of change. Shaykh Anwar explains." See *Inspire*, Spring 1431, 2011.

15 Edmund Hull, "To Save Yemen," *Foreign Policy*, June 2, 2011.

1 For more on the JRTN movement, see Michael Knights, "The JRTN Movement and Iraq's Next Insurgency," *CTC Sentinel* 4:7 (2011).

Local Level: Uncertainty and the U.S. Presence

The neighboring presence of the U.S. military in Iraq has been central to Iran's national security interests. Tehran wields significant clout in the security and politics of post-Saddam Iraq. At various periods of the Iraqi insurgency and political process, Iran has intensified its influence and resources in Iraq toward achieving particular objectives. The uncertainty surrounding the U.S. withdrawal has provided a strong underlying rationale for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and their surrogate Shi`a militant groups to participate in the debate.

Tehran's strategic logic at the local level is largely two-pronged: to coerce the United States to withdraw from Iraq by manipulating and raising the costs of remaining, while deterring the Iraqis from accepting an extended U.S. presence by demonstrating their power in creating troubles in Iraq. As one senior Iraqi official said, "They [Iran] show not only that they were instrumental in forcing the U.S. out of Iraq, but to show our prime minister that they still have power and that al-Maliki should take Iran into consideration."[2] In addition, the Shi`a militants are also campaigning for value and prestige in advancing the perception that their efforts had driven the United States out of Iraq. "Their intent is to bleed U.S. forces on the way out of Iraq for some sort of moral victory, as well as to reestablish coercive control over Iraqi governors in the south by showing off their capacity to carry out these kinds of sophisticated attacks," said recently-retired U.S. Army Lieutenant General Michael Oates, the former commander of all U.S. forces in southern Iraq.[3]

In June 2011, 14 U.S. soldiers were killed by hostile fire, representing the largest monthly toll for U.S. forces since June 2008. Twelve of those fatalities were attributed to three extremist Shi`a groups: Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), Kataib Hizb Allah (KH), and the Promised Day Brigades (PDB).[4] All three organizations are directly tied to the IRGC Qods Force, led under the direction of the enigmatic Brigadier General Qasem Soleimani.[5] Their attacks and operations are "reflective of Iranian training," said a U.S. military official under condition of anonymity. "Not amateurs, they're professional."[6]

Rocket and mortar attacks on the International Zone and U.S. bases in central and southern Iraq are a frequent occurrence. This year, there were 162 attacks targeting U.S. forces in April, up from 128 in March, and 93 in February.[7] Aside from the frequency of attacks, a concerning trend is that Shi`a militants trained by Iran have now learned how to effectively employ an improvised rocket-assisted mortar (IRAM), which has been responsible for many of the recent U.S. fatalities. "IRAMs are devastating," said a U.S. military official. "They're getting more sophisticated, more lethal, and more precise in targeting."[8]

Among the three Shi`a groups, KH has demonstrated to be the most advanced and sophisticated. "They're much more experienced," asserted the same military official. "It's a learning process. They have better facilities, more money and backing, more experienced fighters, and better recruiting."[9] On June 6, 2011, KH carried out multiple IRAM attacks on Camp Loyalty in eastern Baghdad that led to the deaths of five U.S. soldiers, the most in a single incident since April 2009.

Another major trend is the noticeable increase of attacks involving a roadside bomb known as an explosively-formed penetrator (EFP), a signature weapon used by Iranian-backed Shi`a insurgents. Of the types of roadside bombs used, EFPs represent a small fraction, but are one of the deadliest weapons in Iraq because of its ability to penetrate even the strongest armored vehicles used by the U.S. military.[10] Most recently, on July 7, 2011, two U.S. soldiers were killed by an EFP-attack just outside Camp Victory near Baghdad International Airport. In the past, one or two EFPs would be used in a single attack; some of the recent attacks, however, have involved as many as 14 EFPs.[11]

The frequency and type of operations by Iranian-sponsored Shi`a insurgents has demonstrated their higher level of confidence and freedom of movement in Baghdad and southern Iraq. This is partially the result of the elevated political influence of the Sadrist Trend in key southern provinces since the March 2010 parliamentary elections. Occupying 40 seats out of the 325-seat Council of Representatives, the Shi`a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr holds more representation in parliament than any individual party in Iraq. His political weight is heavily considered by al-Maliki, as the latter retained the premiership after finally securing al-Sadr's support during last year's government formation crisis.[12] The Sadrist Trend has continuously threatened to take drastic measures, including armed resistance against U.S. personnel, in an effort to deter Iraqi politicians from accepting an extended U.S. presence. They have utilized high-profile visits by senior U.S. officials to their advantage by intensifying Iraqi nationalism on the street.[13]

2 Personal interview, senior Iraqi official, Iraq, July 2011.

3 Yochi J. Dreazen, "Record Number of U.S. Troops Killed by Iranian Weapons," *National Journal*, July 28, 2011.

4 For a detailed analysis on these three Iranian-backed Shi`a groups, see Michal Harari, "Status Update: Shi'a Militias in Iraq," Institute for the Study of War, August 16, 2010.

5 For a biography of Qasem Soleimani, see Ali Alfoneh, "Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani: A Biography," *Middle Eastern Outlook*, January 2011; Martin Chulov, "Qassem Suleimani: The Iranian General 'Secretly Running' Iraq," *Guardian*, July 28, 2011.

6 Personal interview, U.S. military official, Iraq, July 2011.

7 Ben Lando, "Iraq Militants Ratchet up Attacks on U.S. Bases, Personnel," *Wall Street Journal*, May 24, 2011.

8 Personal interview, U.S. military official, Iraq, July 2011.

9 Lando.

10 Michael Gordon, "Deadliest Bomb in Iraq is Made by Iran, U.S. Says," *New York Times*, February 10, 2007.

11 Dreazen.

12 For instance, in return for al-Sadr's backing, al-Maliki reportedly yielded Maysan Province's governorship, originally held by al-Maliki's Islamic Da`wa Party, to a candidate from the Sadrist Trend. For details, see "Maysan Council Postpones Governor's Resignation Until After Id Holidays," *Aswat al-Iraq*, November 17, 2010; Ahmad Wahid, "Deal Between the al-Sadr Trend and the al-Maliki Bloc to Change Governors," *al-Hayat*, November 13, 2010; "Ali Dway New Missan Governor," *Aswat al-Iraq*, December 29, 2010.

13 In April 2011, the debate on the U.S. withdrawal made a sudden entrance into Iraq's political mainstream as outgoing U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates made his last official visit to Iraq. The visit heightened suspicions

The U.S. military asserts that members of the Iranian Qods Force are entering Iraq and working to re-arm their surrogate Shi`a groups. According to Major General Jeffrey Buchanan, the top U.S. military spokesman in Iraq, the volume of weapons crossing into Iraq from Iran is considered the highest in years.[14] In the last six months, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) have uncovered a higher quantity of weapons caches throughout the country, including EFP materiel, roadside bombs, and rockets, some with manufacturing dates as recent as 2010.[15] One discovered stockpile contained 49 prepared EFPs.[16]

A significant amount of the weapons and materiel is believed to be entering Iraq through legal "ports of entry," including during religious pilgrimages. Others include decades-old smuggling routes that cross into Maysan Province, where the city of Amara serves as a distribution point. In late June 2011, after receiving pressure from the United States, the ISF carried out operations in southern Iraq to confront the Shi`a groups and disrupt their smuggling routes and networks.[17] The operation, however, was diluted in robustness and scope, and was largely superficial in results. Only low-profile Shi`a insurgents were arrested, while operations were suspended as Iraqi forces were diverted toward protecting Shi`a religious pilgrims traveling to Karbala.

The Iraqis had not met the expectations of the U.S. military, which desired simultaneous operations to occur in multiple provinces. "Without multiple locations, you lose a lot of surprise," said a U.S. military official, "and the bad guys will walk across the border."[18] The U.S. military cited a lack of both will and capability on the part of Baghdad to confront the Shi`a groups. According to a senior Iraqi military official, however, the decision to diminish the operation was political: "There are some targets, known targets. We have not been allowed to go after them."[19]

Regional Level: Strategic Implications of the Arab Spring

The upheavals of the Arab Spring and the enduring uncertainty and fervor sweeping across the region have not gone unnoticed in Iraq's state of affairs. Both Baghdad's Tahrir Square and Sulaymaniyah's Saray Square have experienced much activity this year as thousands of Iraqi Arabs and Kurds have taken to the streets, expressing their frustration over endemic corruption and the lack of basic services and political rights.

Although these demonstrations have largely remained in the political sphere, the greater threat to Iraq's security posed by the Arab Spring is the changing dynamics in the region. For some Arab states, the final form and structure of government will remain to be seen for the foreseeable future. Yet at the regional level, the uncertainty caused by the Arab Spring has had strategic implications on the Middle East and the balance of power, which have provided Tehran a strategic logic to intensify and enhance its influence and interests in Iraq.

Before Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak's fall from power due to massive street demonstrations in February 2011, Egypt had aligned with the concerns of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Gulf states regarding Iran's regional interests and nuclear ambitions. Their commonly held threat perceptions represented an informal Sunni Arab counterbalance to Iran.[20] Yet the recent indications of rapprochement between Cairo and Tehran are causing unease among Arab states about Egypt's future role in the region.[21] "We are opening a new page," stated Ambassador Menha Bakhoum, a spokeswoman for the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. "Egypt is resuming its role that was once abdicated."[22]

The inclination of a future adjustment in Egyptian foreign policy has upset the regional balance of power, and exacerbated tensions and suspicions among rivals. "The cold war is a reality," said a senior Saudi official in April 2011. "Iran is looking to expand its influence…we don't have the luxury of sitting back and watching events unfold."[23] Like Lebanon, Iraq also sits at the crux of a heightened geopolitical rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, where regional competition for power and influence seeps into Iraq's security, economy, and politics.

Riyadh's new regional vigilance is of concern. Yet given the strong rhetoric from Iranian leaders and the immense power and influence at risk for Tehran, it is likely that the unrest plaguing

on the Iraqi street, causing anti-occupation demonstrations to crop up across the state. On April 9, 2011, just after Gates' departure, tens of thousands of Sadr loyalists flooded the streets in Baghdad to mark the eighth anniversary of the fall of Saddam, demanding an end to the U.S. presence. See "Shiite Sadrist Trend Demonstrate in Baghdad Against Foreign Existence in Iraq," *Aswat al-Iraq*, April 9, 2011.

14 Tim Arango, "Weapons Retrieved in Iraq Point to Iran," *New York Times*, July 25, 2011.

15 Jane Arraf, "US Military Officials in Iraq Warn of Growing Iranian Threat," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 27, 2011.

16 Ibid.

17 Michael Schmidt, "Iraq Cracks Down on Iran-Backed Shiite Militias," *New York Times*, July 1, 2011.

18 Personal interview, U.S. military official, Iraq, July 2011.

19 Personal interview, Iraqi military official, Iraq, July 2011.

20 According to an April 2009 U.S. diplomatic cable acquired by Wikileaks, then director of Egyptian intelligence, Omar Suleiman, had begun to recruit agents in Iraq and Syria to counter Iranian espionage and "sent a clear message to Iran that if they interfere in Egypt, Egypt will interfere in Iran." Suleiman stated that Egypt was confronting both Lebanese Hizb Allah and Iran, and indicated that Iran was attempting to smuggle arms to Hamas in Gaza via Egyptian territory, posing a "serious threat to Egyptian national security," according to the cable. In April 2010, an Egyptian court convicted more than two dozen individuals for plotting attacks in Egypt on behalf of Lebanese Hizb Allah. See Heather Langan, "Egypt Sought Spies in Iraq, Syria to Check Iran Espionage, Wikileaks Show," Bloomberg, November 30, 2010.

21 Iran had cut off diplomatic relations with Egypt in 1980 after Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat made peace with Israel and offered asylum to the shah of Iran. Relations further worsened when Egypt backed Iraq during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War. Iran responded by changing the name of a street in Tehran to Khaled Islambouli, in honor of al-Sadat's assassin. Just a week after Mubarak fell in February 2011, however, Egypt allowed two Iranian warships to pass through the Suez Canal. In March 2011, then newly appointed Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi told reporters that Egypt was now "turning over a new leaf with all countries, including Iran." See "Iran Welcomes Egypt's Call to Mend Relations," Voice of America, March 30, 2011.

22 David D. Kirkpatrick, "In Shift, Egypt Warms to Iran and Hamas, Israel's Foes," *New York Times*, April 28, 2011.

23 Bill Spindle and Margaret Coker, "The New Cold War," *Wall Street Journal*, April 16, 2011; Karin Laub, "Iran Courts Post-Mubarak Egypt, Worrying Allies," Associated Press, July 26, 2011.

Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad is a key force driving Tehran's strategic calculus to redouble its activities in Iraq. For example, it was reported that Tehran even went all the way to pressure Baghdad to support al-Assad's regime with $10 billion, masked in the recent and various economic agreements reached between Iraq and Syria.[24]

The Iran-Syria axis is the most enduring alliance in the Middle East.[25] Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad made Syria the first Arab state to recognize the Islamic Republic of Iran and was its only Arab partner throughout the devastating 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War. While serving as a linchpin for Iran's reach to the Arab world, including the Palestinian Territories, Syria is also Iran's bridge to Lebanese Hizb Allah. The consequences of al-Assad succumbing to the same fate as Mubarak could limit Lebanese Hizb Allah's influence and mobility. In response, reports indicate Tehran is intensifying its efforts to reproduce the Lebanese Hizb Allah model by grooming various Shi`a proxy groups in Iraq to extend its interests in the Arabian Gulf and the greater Middle East.[26] To add to this rationale, Iran has also recognized its failure to seize an effective role in shaping the Shi`a uprisings in Bahrain and counterbalance Saudi Arabia's political weight and reach in the Arabian Gulf.

In addition, Turkey's sudden change in behavior toward Syria and al-Assad has alarmed Iran. Ankara is already competing with Tehran over political influence and economic interests in Iraq. The recent opening of a Turkish investment front in Basra is part of Turkey's intention to build an economic corridor through Iraq that reaches the Arabian Gulf.[27] If the Turks continue to harden their criticism and pressure on al-Assad, "serious issues are sure to follow," stated an IRGC-based media outlet. "We will be put in the position of having to choose between Turkey and Syria."[28] Indeed, Tehran has even signaled the possibility of military attacks against Turkish NATO bases should Ankara play a role in the toppling of al-Assad.

Iraqi officials have expressed deep concerns about the developments and uncertainty surrounding Syria. Some senior political and security figures privately believe that the recent surge of attacks against U.S. forces by Iranian-backed Shi`a militants are meant to serve as a warning to President Barack Obama: the risks of continuing to put pressure on al-Assad will be coupled with the loss of American lives in Iraq.[29] Due to the physical presence of 46,000 U.S. military personnel, Iraq serves as a venue for regional actors to exert leverage over the United States.

According to Arab media reports, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had asked Iraqi President Jalal Talabani during his visit to Tehran in late June 2011 to convey a position to the United States that "Syria is a red line" for Iran and any outside intervention into Syria's affairs is unacceptable.[30] In early July 2011, "informed Iraqi sources" cited by the pan-Arab *al-Hayat* newspaper stated that Iran had relayed a message to the United States via Iraqi mediators that consisted of a possible *quid pro quo*: Iran allows an extended stay for a smaller U.S. presence in Iraq and works to prevent attacks by the Iranian-backed Shi`a groups; in exchange, Washington would refrain from supporting efforts that seek regime change in Syria.[31] Should the Syrian regime fall, Damascus is unlikely to serve Tehran the critical geopolitical role that has defined the Iran-Syria axis for over three decades.

Conclusion

It is uncertain whether a new security agreement will be arranged between the United States and Iraq that allows for an ongoing U.S. military footprint. Iraq's highly fragmented and convoluted politics has forced the debate on the presence of U.S. troops to be tied to the politics of various, unrelated, and ongoing disagreements between Iraq's political blocs that stem from the March 2010 parliamentary elections.[32] Due to the sensitivities involved and the unresolved politics between the major blocs, Iraq's leaders have, until recently, delayed making a decision on starting the negotiation process.[33] Absent an agreement, by late summer the primary mission for U.S. commanders will be to withdraw the remaining 46,000 soldiers and equipment from the country.

Senior U.S. administration officials have communicated their concerns directly to al-Maliki about Iran's targeted campaign against U.S. soldiers based in Iraq. In early August 2011, however, outgoing chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, stated that efforts taken by Iraqi security forces and the political leadership to address these Shi`a groups have resulted in a "dramatic reduction" of violence in recent weeks.[34] General Lloyd Austin III, commander of U.S. Forces-Iraq, reiterated the same conclusion.

24 Ma'ad Fayad, "Iran Orders Iraqi Allies to Support Syrian Regime Financially," *Asharq al-Awsat*, August 3, 2011; Hemin Baban Rahim, "Allegations of Iraq Funding Syria Shakes Political Establishment," *Rudaw*, August 10, 2011; Michael Schmidt and Yasir Ghazi, "Iraqi Leader Backs Syria, with a Nudge from Iran," *New York Times*, August 12, 2011.

25 Jubin M. Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran: Diplomatic Alliance and Power Politics in the Middle East* (New York/London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2009).

26 "Tehran Grooms Mahdi Army," Intelligence Online, June 2, 2011; "Iran Grooms Mehdi Army for Gulf Ops," United Press International, June 9, 2011.

27 "Turkey Uses Basra Launchpad for Financial Assault on the South," Kurdistan News Agency, July 2, 2011.

28 The statement can be read at www.sobhesadegh.ir. Also see Reza Kahlili, "Iran Warns Turkey to Butt Out of Syria," Fox News, July 25, 2011.

29 Personal interviews, Iraqi officials, Iraq, July 2011.

30 The *al-Abram* article is cited in a report from Middle East Berlin, located at www.middleeastberlin.de.

31 "Iran Reportedly Sets Conditions to Agree Extension of U.S. Forces' Stay in Iraq," *al-Hayat*, July 5, 2011. According to the report, a second demand issued by Iran involved the exclusion of Lebanese Hizb Allah members from UN indictments regarding the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

32 In December 2010, Iraq's bickering parties brokered a power-sharing agreement that concluded a nine-month government formation crisis, which began after no single bloc received a majority of votes in the March 2010 general elections to form the next government. Under the so-called "national partnership government," all of Iraq's political blocs were brought together to form a governing coalition. Since then, however, little confidence remains about the value and stability of an all-inclusive government in Iraq.

33 On August 2, 2011, Iraq's political leaders finally asked al-Maliki's government to begin negotiations with the United States that could allow some U.S. troops to remain after this year to train Iraqi security forces. See Lara Jakes, "Iraq to Negotiate Continued US Troop Presence," Associated Press, August 2, 2011.

34 Thom Shanker, "U.S. Military Claims Success Curbing Attacks in Iraq with Iranian Weapons," *New York Times*, August 1, 2011.

To be certain, Iraqi security forces have returned to only Maysan Province in a more concerted effort to disrupt smuggling routes and confront the Shi`a militants attacking U.S. forces. Although the rationale behind al-Maliki's decision to intensify and return to Maysan is unclear, two broad arguments provide a degree of skepticism on the sustainability and continuity of these efforts.

First, Iraq's forces are not facing al-Sadr and the Jaysh al-Mahdi militia as they previously had in Operation "Charge of the Knights" in the spring of 2008. Rather, the ISF is facing Iran's surrogates in Iraq and likely the direct policies driven by the IRGC. This is a major distinction between the two Iraqi campaigns against Shi`a militancy. It is unlikely that al-Maliki attains the resolve and fortitude to challenge Brigadier General Qasem Soleimani.

Second, the recent surge of Shi`a insurgent attacks directed against U.S. forces may be more than just a localized campaign to shore up prestige or influence the debate on the U.S. military's future presence. The United States perhaps overstresses the "prestige motivation" behind the revival of Shi`a militancy, and by default overlooks the broader dynamics playing out in the region as a source of instability in Iraq. Indeed, the strategic implications carried by the Arab Spring—the consequences of developments in Syria, heightened Saudi-Iranian rivalry, and a new assertive Turkish foreign policy in both Iraq and the region—will largely characterize Iraq's security environment for the foreseeable future.

Ramzy Mardini is a research analyst at the Institute for the Study of War, and an adjunct fellow at the Iraq Institute for Strategic Studies. From 2007-2010, he served as a Middle East analyst at The Jamestown Foundation, and he also previously served on the Iraq desk at the U.S. State Department. Mr. Mardini is the editor of the book, Volatile Landscape: Iraq and its Insurgent Movements *(2010).*

Al-Qa`ida's Confused Messaging on Libya

By Barak Barfi

FRUSTRATION WITH THE excesses and corruption of authoritarian Arab regimes has provided al-Qa`ida with powerful propaganda over the years to recruit disaffected Arabs. The "Arab Spring," however, has upset this dependable formula. It has left al-Qa`ida and its affiliates scrambling to logically and coherently explain the changes taking place in the Middle East and to offer policies that future regimes should adopt. In doing so, the organization has demonstrated key weaknesses and an inability to offer a convincing alternative to the historical narratives its secular adversaries have proffered.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Libya, where rebels appear close to defeating the regime of Mu`ammar Qadhafi. Al-Qa`ida has struggled to place the country and the uprising in an Islamic context. It has failed to contextualize the revolution by offering historical precedents that Muslims there have experienced in previous centuries. It has been unable to propose what a future Libya should look like beyond offering vague religious slogans and recycled criticisms of Western democracy.

These failures will become clear by examining four statements by al-Qa`ida leaders—two from its leaders based in Pakistan and two from its North African affiliate, al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Exiles Pine for their Homeland

Al-Qa`ida's Pakistan-based leaders released two videos about Libya.[1] Both were issued by Libyans in the organization, illustrating how the group uses nationals to target their compatriots. Jamal Ibrahim Ishtawi al-Misrati released a 10-minute video in February.[2] His message was composed of six points: 1) the revolt should be an atonement for the past sins of Libyans who failed to confront the Qadhafi regime; 2) an Islamic era will follow his downfall, which should prioritize establishing a future constitution based on Shari`a (Islamic law); 3) if the new situation in Libya is unable to incorporate Islamic warriors, then it should strive to avoid harming them. Moving beyond an Islamic context, al-Misrati: 4) urged Libyans to safeguard their fraternity and the ties that bind them; 5) recommended they forgive those affiliated with the regime and its excesses (excluding Qadhafi's associates); and 6) warned Western powers not to attack the country or interfere in Libya's affairs.

Al-Misrati's recording was a personal and intimate message from a Libyan to his countrymen. He offered them guidelines for the post-Qadhafi era. In doing so, al-Misrati placed his counsel within an Islamic framework, emphasizing the centrality of religion to the revolt and the country's future, noting, "I swear Islam is indeed coming anew."

Muhammad Hassan Qayyid Idris, known as Abu Yahya al-Libi, issued a 30-minute video in March.[3] Although entitled "To the Sons of Our People in Libya," the message provided few details about the conflict in Libya and no guidelines for its citizens.[4] Instead, it was a rambling polemic against Arab authoritarian regimes and their Western backers.

Regarded as an inspirational preacher, Abu Yahya's message was as passionate as it was eloquent. Yet within his motivational framework, he neglected to offer Libyans a road map for their revolution. He was unable to move beyond the typical al-Qa`ida

1 Al-Qa`ida's new leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has spoken about the Libyan revolution as well, but only in passing. See Ayman al-Zawahiri, "The Message of Hope and Joy to Our People in Egypt," May 22, 2011, available on various jihadist web forums.

2 Jamal Ibrahim Ishtawi al-Misrati, "Greetings to Our People in Libya," February 25, 2011, available on various jihadist web forums.

3 For his biographical details, see Hamid Barrada, "La 'Nouvelle Star' d'al-Qaïda," *Jeune Afrique*, April 28, 2008. For his ideology, see Michael Scheuer, "Abu Yahya al-Libi: Al-Qaeda's Theological Enforcer - Part 1," *Terrorism Monitor* 4:25 (2007); Michael Scheuer, "Abu Yahya al-Libi: Al-Qaeda's Theological Enforcer - Part 2," *Terrorism Monitor* 4:27 (2007).

4 Abu Yahya al-Libi, "To the Sons of Our People in Libya," March 2011, available on various jihadist web forums.

propaganda, critical of the West while focusing on the venality of Arab leaders and the poverty of their citizens. He provided only ambiguous slogans about what policies a post-Qadhafi Libya should adopt, noting, "true happiness, prosperity and pure freedom come from a true and serious return to the law of the Lord of worshippers."

Regional Affiliates Seek to Make Inroads

AQIM also chimed in on the Libyan revolution.[5] The organization's leader, Abdelmalek Droukdel (also known as Abu Mus`ab `Abd al-Wadud), issued a statement in March.[6] Like al-Misrati's recording, the letter was composed of a number of points: 1) the Arab revolutions are continuing the battle jihadists have been fighting against the Arab tyrants and the crusading Western powers; 2) the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are enemies who should not be trusted; 3) the Arab leaders are conspiring to defeat the revolution; and 4) only Libyans' fervent devotion to their religion will prevent Western powers from plundering their wealth and controlling their country.[7]

Droukdel's letter was more bitter than al-Misrati's cordial message. It highlighted the Western plots and Arab conspiracies scheming to defeat the Libyan revolution. Rather than focusing on the future by offering Libyans advice about how to build a new state, Droukdel dwelled on past crimes and the collusion between Western powers and their Arab authoritarian clients. He accused the West of aspiring "with every last ounce of its strength to deviate these revolutions from the source of their power, to find an alternative to the tyrants who are less hostile to them and more prepared to concede sovereignty." In contrast, al-Misrati discounted fears of an American-European invasion, terming them "Satanic illusions." Whereas al-Misrati framed his recording as advice to his Libyan compatriots, Droukdel's message was a stern warning laced with conspiracy theories.

Al-Qa`ida's most recent discussion of Libya came from the head of AQIM's Council of Notables, Abu Ubayda Yusuf al-Anabi.[8] In a recorded interview on topics ranging from the death of al-Qa`ida leader Usama bin Ladin to the organization's relationship with African states, al-Anabi briefly discussed the Libyan revolution.

Al-Anabi's calculated positions and professional tone stood in stark contrast to Droukdel's obsessive tirade. Unlike Droukdel's suspicions of Western plots, al-Anabi discounted fears that the Americans will seek to establish military bases in North Africa. Instead, he merely warned Libyans that "there are indications that illustrate the despicable fleecing the Crusaders are undertaking in exchange for their air support."

Like Abu Yahya and Droukdel, al-Anabi was unable to conceptualize a vision of a future Libya. Although his arguments were more coherent than those of the other two leaders, he could not move beyond explaining the uprisings in ambiguous Islamic terms, such as "it is well known that these revolutions are a form of commanding the good and forbidding the evil." Although a Qur'anic phrase familiar to all Arabs, it provides no framework for Libyans to adopt. While Libyans are debating the type of political system to establish after Qadhafi's removal from power, al-Qa`ida is recycling general Islamic concepts that are irrelevant to the current political situation in the Arab world.

The revolutions rocking the region have clearly put al-Qa`ida on the defensive, forcing both Droukdel and al-Anabi to scurry to keep the jihadist movement relevant. Al-Anabi claimed that AQIM's struggle against Arab regimes paved the way for the current uprisings, saying it had "a role in shattering the barrier of fear in the hearts of the people and toppling fear of these Pharaohs [Arab leaders]." He contended that their exploits empowered Arabs to rise up against rulers who have been in power for more than three decades. Conspicuously absent, however, is a discussion of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, a jihadist organization that spearheaded a violent campaign against Qadhafi during the late 1990s. With this omission, Droukdel and al-Anabi again illustrate al-Qa`ida's penchant for general discussions at the expense of specific details.

"The revolutions rocking the region have clearly put al-Qa`ida on the defensive."

These messages exemplify al-Qa`ida's difficulty in responding to the Arab revolutions, while also revealing nuances in its messaging. Above all, they demonstrate the group's inability to formulate a clear vision for a post-Qadhafi Libya. All four writers failed to answer the aspirations of a people by offering a viable alternative to the current regime. All they could muster were vague calls to embrace Islam without articulating what this would entail.

At the same time, however, these statements reveal a striking lack of uniformity in al-Qa`ida's message, illustrating that the group is far from monolithic. While Droukdel glossed over Qadhafi's transgressions and al-Misrati mentioned him only in passing, Abu Yahya harped on the beleaguered Libyan leader. Whereas al-Misrati offered Libyans a series of recommendations in a structured framework, Abu Yahya sought to inspire his audience by drawing on Islamic scripture. Despite such differences, it is unlikely that the

5 For AQIM, see Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Les Neuf Vies d'al-Qaida* (Paris: Fayard, 2009), pp. 184-188, 214-218; "The Local and Global Jihad of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghrib," *Middle East Journal* 63:2 (2009): pp. 213-226. Camille Tawil's articles in *al-Hayat* and at The Jamestown Foundation must be consulted as well. For a detailed discussion of its ideology, see Hanna Rogan, "Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb: Ideological Dissent in the Algerian Jihad," paper presented at The Annual International Studies Association Convention (ISA) in New York, February 2009. Mathieu Guidère has some interesting ideas (some of which, such as the organization's deep penetration of Europe and success in attracting North African jihadist organizations into its fold, are suspect), but his lack of footnotes makes it impossible to follow his trail of evidence. Mathieu Guidère, *al-Qaïda à la Conquête du Maghreb* (Monaco: Rocher, 2007).

6 For Droukdel, see Camille Tawil, "A Jihadist in the Sand: The Rise of AbdelMalek Droukdel, al-Qaeda's Amir in Algeria," *Militant Leadership Monitor* 1:2 (2010): pp. 8-11.

7 Abu Mu`sab `Abd al-Wadud, "Aid to the Noble Descendants of Umar al-Mukhtar," March 18, 2011, available on various jihadist web forums.

8 "A Special Interview with Abu Ubayda Yusuf al-Anabi," July 8, 2011, available on various jihadist web forums.

organization has an agreed upon division of labor in terms of topics. The four statements overlap in content and lack a coherent overarching narrative beyond the nebulous call to adopt Islam.

AQIM: Al-Qa`ida's Weakest Link

AQIM has often been accused of being the weakest link in al-Qa`ida's chain of affiliates. It kidnaps Westerners for ransom rather than kill them as its siblings have done elsewhere. It has suffered countless defections and is plagued by internal strife that reveals itself in the Algerian media.[9] Nuances in Droukdel's message and al-Anabi's interview illustrate the organization's divisions and its inability to structure a cohesive narrative in tune with its audience.

AQIM's messages are disparate and lack focus. In the past, most of AQIM's venom has been directed at proximate European powers, such as France and Spain, that occupied Islamic lands in previous centuries. They have been singled out for the threat they pose to Islam and their continuing control of Arab territories.[10] Yet in Droukdel's letter, the United States was the central player, with its European allies relegated to secondary, nameless roles. He altered AQIM's traditional narrative despite the fact that it is France that has led the offensive against Qadhafi while the United States has adopted a subordinate role. Although al-Anabi struck a similar tone in accusing the United States of operating secret bases in Algeria, he nevertheless reverted to AQIM's customary propaganda by calling the Algerian regime "the sons of France" while citing its role in annulling elections in 1992 in which Islamists were poised to take power. Droukdel's focus on the United States to the detriment of France is puzzling in light of Bin Ladin's recent critique of French policy in Afghanistan.[11]

Confused messaging is a running theme in AQIM's statements. Although Droukdel's address was to the Libyan people, he also found it necessary to speak to his home audience in Algeria, where the organization is based, and Morocco, where it seeks to extend its influence. For this reason, he lashed out at the Algerian and Moroccan governments, accusing them of helping Qadhafi mobilize presumably African mercenaries to fight the rebels.[12]

"The differences in these two statements demonstrate AQIM's shortcomings and incongruent messaging. AQIM cannot stay on point and offer a harmonious narrative. Instead, its conflicting messages confuse its audience."

AQIM's lack of clarity extends to its terminology as well, illustrating how the organization is out of touch with the common Libyan. Droukdel sent greetings to the "free proud Libyan tribes" despite the fact that the rebels have downplayed tribalism and erected signs reading "One Tribe" throughout areas under their control.[13] Furthermore, Droukdel did not even use the same language as the Libyan resistance. The opposition to Qadhafi call themselves rebels (*thuwar*), an expression nowhere found in Droukdel's letter. Instead, he used the moniker "fighters for the faith" (*mujahidun*), a religious term. Al-Anabi, in contrast, used the term *thuwar* throughout his interview, again illustrating the nuanced differences within AQIM.

Above all, these two messages reveal the splits within AQIM's ranks. When other al-Qa`ida affiliates pledged allegiance to the organization, it was their leaders who did so.[14] Thus, when Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi's Tawhid and Jihad faction joined the group as al-Qa`ida in Iraq, it was he who delivered the oath to Bin Ladin.[15] When the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) became AQIM, its *amir* Droukdel offered fealty to Bin Ladin.[16] Yet when AQIM renewed its allegiance to the new al-Qa`ida chief, Ayman al-Zawahiri, it was not Droukdel who did so; rather, it was al-Anabi, who is junior to Droukdel in AQIM's leadership hierarchy. The Algerian media has noted the friction between the two in the past by highlighting al-Anabi's attempts to usurp Droukdel's prerogatives.[17] His latest power grab illustrates the divisions within an organization long adrift.

The differences in these two statements demonstrate AQIM's shortcomings and incongruent messaging. AQIM cannot stay on point and offer a harmonious narrative. Instead, its conflicting messages confuse its audience. With internal dissent undermining its leadership and diverting the group's energies from plotting spectacular attacks, it is easy to understand why AQIM is unable to strike fear in its adversaries and reach the lofty status of other al-Qa`ida affiliates in jihadist circles.

9 For defections, see Salima Tlemçani, "Le Chef du GSPC pour la Capitale Arrêté," *El Watan* [Algiers], November 20, 2007.

10 For criticism of France, see Abu Mus`ab `Abd al-Wadud, "France...The Mother of Malice," June 28, 2009, available on various jihadist web forums. For a critique of Spain, see Abu Mus`ab `Abd al-Wadud, "A Message to Our People in the Islamic Maghreb," undated, available on various jihadist web forums.

11 Usama bin Ladin, "From Usama bin Mumammad bin Ladin to the French People," January 21, 2011, available on various jihadist web forums.

12 For the United Nations Security Council Resolution noting Qadhafi's use of mercenaries, visit http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org.

13 For Libyan tribalism, see Moncef Ouannes, *Militaires, Élites et Modernisation dans la Libye Contemporain* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), pp. 287-331. For an anthropological account, see John Davis, *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988).

14 This oath of allegiance to the leader, known as *bay`a*, has its origins in the selection of the successor to the Prophet Muhammad. For its use in Islam, see Ella Landau-Tasseron, "The Religious Foundations of Political Allegiance: A Study of Bay'a in Pre-Modern Islam," Hudson Institute, May 2010. For its use by modern secular Arab leaders, see Mohamed Tozy, *Monarchie Et Islam Politique Au Maroc* (Paris: Presses De Science Po, 1999), pp. 79ff.

15 Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, "The Bay'a to the al-Qa'ida Organization Under the Leadership of Sheikh Usama bin Ladin," October 17, 2004, available on various jihadist web forums.

16 Abu Mus`ab `Abd al-Wadud, "Announcement and Glad Tidings on the Joining and the Pledge of Allegiance of the Salafist Group For Preaching and Combat to the Sheikh Abu Abdallah Usama bin Ladin," September 13, 2006, available on various jihadist web forums.

17 Isma'il F., "Abu Yusuf al-Anabi is Taking Over the Position of Emir of the Salafist Group," *al-Nahar al-Jadid* [Algiers], March 8, 2010.

Al-Qa`ida's Nationalist Dilemma

Al-Qa`ida's primary messaging problem with Libya is the country's history. From the lack of a common historical past to the absence of strong religious institutions and important scholars, Libya does not have the traditions that bind the citizens of other Arab states. A purely European creation, fashioned from lumping together three provinces in the wake of World War II, it has neither a shared Islamic history nor a traditional territorial integrity.[18] In the last 3,000 years, its three regions were rarely governed by the same rulers. In broaching the question of Libya, al-Qa`ida is forced to use the secular nationalist narratives of its Arab adversaries, which place a greater emphasis on the independent nation-state rather than a pre-modern Islamic polity.

"While Libyans are debating the type of political system to establish after Qadhafi's removal from power, al-Qa`ida is recycling general Islamic concepts that are irrelevant to the current political situation in the Arab world."

Since its earliest days, Libya has been a divided nation, with the regions of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica generally ruled by different dynasties.[19] While Greek colonists occupied Eastern Libya around 630 BCE, the Phoenicians settled in the West in the fifth century BCE.[20] The Romans unified the country for five centuries before the arrival of the Vandals in 455. The subsequent Islamic era rarely brought unity to Libya's disparate provinces. Although the Arabs conquered the whole country in 642, the Byzantines periodically occupied some of the coastal regions until the end of the century.[21] For the next 100 years, the entire country remained under the control of the Umayya and Abbasid dynasties, until the slow collapse of the latter led to a renewed partition of Libya's provinces by their avaricious rival governors. The Fatimids briefly ruled the entire country in the 10-11th centuries before their empire collapsed, leaving Libya again to its traditional divisions. It was not until the Ottomans conquered the country in 1551 that the coastal regions of modern Libya were again brought under one banner, paving the way for the establishment of a later independent state.

Other modern states birthed by Western powers that lack a common history, such as Lebanon, face similar problems. Yet jihadists can dispense with this dilemma by subsuming Lebanon under a single historical region such as *al-Sham,* which includes Syria, Israel and Jordan. Yet because Libya's three regions were historically divided between competing dynasties, it cannot lay claim to being part of a larger province. In fact, Islamic scholars often viewed Cyrenaica as part of Egypt and Tripolitania as a section of Africa (*Ifriqiya*) or North Africa (*Maghrib*).[22] The expansive Sirte desert, which straddles the center of the Libyan state, divided these regions by preventing rulers from unifying the country, with invading armies unable to traverse it.[23] One scholar wrote, "the Great Syrte is unquestionably one of the most pronounced natural and human frontiers that exist in the world."[24] It provides such a good barrier that the rebels bent on overthrowing Qadhafi today found themselves stalemated with his forces in the desert's sands.

It is not only geography that deprives Libya of an Islamic past. Until the Karamanli dynasty took power in Tripoli in 1711, no independent Islamic polity ruled from Libya.[25] The country equally lacks a strong religious history. The merits of important Islamic regions such as Palestine and Syria were extolled in texts called *fad'ail* or virtue literature.[26] Yet Libya has no such traditions. Unlike neighboring Tunisia and its Zaytuna, it has no important historical Islamic monuments or religious seminaries. In contrast to Egypt with its historically rich capital of Cairo, Libya does not have significant Islamic cities. Unlike remote regions such as Yemen, it cannot boast of any major historical Islamic scholars.[27]

18 For a discussion of the country's history, see John Wright, *A History of Libya* (London: Hurst & Company, 2010).

19 For a concise discussion of Libya's historical divisions, see "Libiya Ba'ad Qadhafi," Markaz Yaqin al-'Ilami, April 28, 2011.

20 For Libya's classical history, see Joyce Reynolds ed., *Libyan Studies – Selected Papers of the Late R.G. Goodchild* (London: P. Elek, 1976). For more concise accounts, see the entries Cyrene, Oea, Pentapolis and Tripolitania in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

21 For an account of its medieval history, see C. Edmund Bosworth, "Libya in Islamic History," *Journal of Libyan Studies* 1:2 (2000): pp. 6-16.

22 For Cyrenaica, see Abu'l-Mahasin Jamal al-Din Yusuf b. Taghribirdi, *Nujum al-Zahra fi Misr wa al-Qahira* (Cairo: Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, undated), vol. 1, p. 37. For Tripolitania, see the scholars cited in Mahammed Hadj-Sadok, *Description du Maghreb et de l'Europe au III-IX siècle* (Algiers: Carbonel, 1949), pp. 92, nt. 64. For a Western discussion of the Islamic sources, see Jean Maspero and Gaston Wiet, "Matériaux pour Servir à la Géographie de l'Égpyte," Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, vol. 36, 1919, pp. 38, 163. For a modern scholarly account, see the comments of Ross Dunn: "The province of Tripolitania, today part of Libya, marked geographically the eastern extremity of the island Maghrib. From here the coastline ran southeastward for more than 400 miles...Here was the well-populated region of Cyrenaica...If Tripolitania was historically and culturally the end of the Maghrib, Cyrenaica was the beginning of the Middle East." See Ross Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), p. 38.

23 The Sirte desert "is commonly considered the eastern boundary of the Maghrib, from which Cyrenaica is thus at least theoretically excluded." See Wright, p. 116.

24 Jean Despois, *La Colonisation Italienne en Libye* (Paris: Larose, 1935), p. 45.

25 This excludes the short-lived quasi-independent states the Banu Khazrun and Banu 'Ammar established in Tripoli during the 11th and 14th centuries respectively, which did not extend far beyond the city. See Michael Brett, "The City-State in Mediaeval Ifriqiya: The Case of Tripoli," *Cahiers de Tunisie* 34:135-6 (1986): pp. 69-94.

26 Ali ibn Muhammad al-Raba'i, *Kitab Fada'il al-Sham wa Dimashq* (Damascus: Matba'at al-Tarraqi, 1950). For Palestine, see Mujir al-Din Abu'l-Yumm Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad al-Hanbali, *al-Uns al-Jalil fi Tarikh al-Quds wa al-Khalil* (Hebron: Dandis, 1999). For a discussion of Yemen, see Barak Barfi, "Yemen on the Brink? The Resurgence of al Qaeda in Yemen," New America Foundation, January 26, 2010. For jihadist praise of the country, see Abu Mus`ab al-Suri, 'The Responsibility of the People of Yemen to Muslims' Holy Sites and Their Wealth," undated.

27 Among the important scholars to have resided in Yemen are Muhammad bin Idris al-Shafi'i, the eponymous founder of one of Sunnism's four law schools and Abd al-Razzaq bin Hammam al-Sana'ani, an important hadith scholar. The city of Zabid was a key Sunni center of learning for centuries. For a brief discussion of leading

For these reasons, the traditional historical and religious narratives from which al-Qa`ida typically draws are absent in Libya. Instead, it is compelled to adopt the secular Libyan historical account, which largely begins with the Italian invasion of 1911 and the dawn of the colonial era. This explains why three of the four authors discussed above cite `Umar al-Mukhtar, a Libyan who led the resistance to Italian encroachment. With no local Muslim hero to extol from the utopian Islamic past, they are forced to highlight the one contemporary Libyan with whom all his compatriots can identify.

Libya's secular rulers have faced the same dilemma. After the Americans evacuated Wheeler Air Force Base—named for a U.S. soldier—Qadhafi renamed the base Uqba bin Nafi. Yet Uqba was no Libyan. Rather, he spearheaded the early Arab conquests in North Africa.[28] It is not only local Islamic heroes Libya lacks. When Qadhafi sought to offer a pan-Islamic entity to unify North Africans, he cited the Fatimid dynasty that ruled the region for more than 200 years.[29] No Sunni ruler would dare extol the Shi'i Fatimids who often persecuted the Sunnis and suppressed their creed. Yet with no Arab or Libyan dynasty to evoke, Qadhafi was compelled to invoke the Fatimids. Theirs was the last Arab empire to include all of the modern Libyan state. The fragmentation and disunity that characterized pre-modern Libya led a leading scholar of the country to confidently state, "medieval Libya was in fact no such thing."[30]

Even more problematic for al-Qa`ida than the lack of a unifying Islamic history is the dilemma of the Libyan state. It is the only country that was born out of the United Nations, an organization jihadists have railed against.[31] While other Western creations, such as Lebanon and Syria, can be explained as a European division of *al-Sham*, and the Jewish state of Israel as the usurpation of Muslim Palestine, there is no Islamic alternative to the secular Libyan state. Its lack of an Islamic past necessitates accepting the service provided by its Western midwives. As a result, al-Qa`ida is compelled to acquiesce to the narrative created by its chief adversaries—Arab tyrants and Western crusading nations.

Conclusion

In his seminal work on political Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Olivier Roy concluded that these movements were doomed to fail because they "will not invent a new society."[32] Today, jihadists have fallen into the same pit. Although they claim to reject Western categorizations and refuse to compromise with their values, they are doing just that in the case of Libya. In Libya, al-Qa`ida is forced to accept "the framework of existing states" created by the West.[33] It cannot present a historical Islamic narrative because none exists. If al-Qa`ida cannot convince Libyans to see the revolution through the jihadist prism rather than a secular one, then it will fail to draw people to its narrative, leading them to question the relevance of the militant organization.

Barak Barfi is a Research Fellow with the New America Foundation, where he specializes in Arab and Islamic affairs. He has spent the last five months in Libya.

Yemeni scholars, see Wilferd Madelung, "Der Islam im Jemen," in Werner Daum ed., *Jemen 3000 Jahre Kunst und Kultur des glücklichen Arabien* (Frankfurt: Pinguin, 1987), pp. 172-176.

28 V. Christides, "Ukba b. Nafi," *Encyclopedia of Islam* 2.

29 "In Overture to Iran, Qaddafi Declares North Africa Shi'ite and Calls for Establishment of New Fatimid State," Middle East Media Research Institute, April 6, 2007.

30 Michael Brett, "Libya: Some Aspects of the Medieval Period, First-Ninth Century H/Seventh-Fifteenth Century AD," *Libyan Studies* 20 (1989): p. 210.

31 For al-Zawahiri's critique, see "Bin Ladin is Fine and Attacks in Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt to Come Soon," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, April 4, 2008. For AQAP, see the interview of its leader Nasir al-Wihayshi with Abd Illah Haydar Sha'a, available at www.abdulela.maktoob-blog.com.

32 Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, NJ: Harvard University Press, 1994).

33 Ibid., p. 194.

Germany Increasingly a Center for Terrorism in Europe

By Sajjan M. Gohel

TERRORISM IS ON the rise in Germany. The phenomenon is not new, although it has taken on various forms over the decades. During the Weimar Republic, terrorism was routinely practiced as elected officials were beaten and murdered. The political climate eventually led to the rise of the Nazis. In the 1960s, the Red Army Faction (RAF) appeared on the scene. Several generations devoted themselves to targeting what they saw as Western imperialism. Today, the threat of terrorism in Germany comes from Islamic radicals, which is viewed as the country's primary national security concern.

In 2005, German authorities began recording the number of potential "Islamic militants" inside the country.[1] In January 2005, there were 105 individuals posing a potential national security threat. By January 2007, that figure had dropped to 65. By January 2011, however, it had risen sharply to 130. Of these, 59 are German natives, whereas in 2009 only 27 were German natives. Seventeen of the 130 are imprisoned in Germany, while 43 are currently abroad suspected of supporting armed jihad. Of the 43 abroad, six are imprisoned in foreign countries. Approximately 96 of the 130 are citizens within the European Union.[2] The majority of the radicals are centered in Berlin, Hamburg, and North Rhine-Westphalia. Five would-be extremists leave Germany on average

1 Potential Islamic militants are known individuals whose activities have aroused suspicions and concerns by the authorities in Germany, posing a direct threat to national security and public safety because of their support for terrorism. As a result, they are being monitored by German law enforcement agencies, although this is not always possible when some of them travel abroad.

2 In January 2006, the number of potential "Islamic militants" was 98. In January 2008, it was 78. In January 2009, it was 84. In January 2010, the figure was 127. All of these figures are derived from: "Presentation by State Bureau of Investigations, Section IV - Counterterrorism Branch," PfP Consortium Counter-Terrorism Working Group (CTWG), Reichenau an der Rax, Austria, April 14, 2011.

each month to go to one of the militant training camps in Pakistan.[3]

Another feature is the growth of converts[4] to Islam who have become radicalized. In 2007, the percentage of radicals in Germany who were converts to Islam was 8.2%. By the end of 2010 that figure had increased to 17.7%.[5] Of the 130, five of the individuals are women—all German nationals living in Berlin. Three of the women are converts, and German authorities believe that they have all traveled to the Pakistani tribal areas with their husbands.[6]

This article identifies the various German militants who have joined the Islamic Jihad Union, al-Qa`ida central, as well as those who undertook jihad as "lone wolf" terrorists. Based on the following case studies, Islamist extremism in Germany could be growing and proliferating at a faster rate than in other European countries, giving Germany the unfortunate distinction of being one of the main centers for terrorist activity on the European continent.

The Islamic Jihad Union

One al-Qa`ida affiliate linked to a number of Germans is the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) based in Pakistan's tribal areas. The IJU splintered from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in March 2002. It settled in North Waziristan Agency and made Mir Ali its headquarters.[7]

In September 2007, German authorities detained three IJU operatives, including two German converts, disrupting the group's plans to attack targets in Germany—including the Ramstein Airbase where the primary targets would be U.S. diplomats, soldiers and civilians. A fourth suspect was arrested soon after in Turkey. The operatives, known as the Sauerland cell, had acquired approximately 700 kilograms of hydrogen peroxide and an explosives precursor, which they secretly stockpiled in a garage in southern Germany. Had the plot succeeded, it would have been the biggest attack in Europe, more powerful than the bombs used in the Madrid and London train attacks in 2004 and 2005 respectively.[8]

The four members of the Sauerland cell admitted to belonging to a "terrorist organization," plotting murder and conspiring for an explosives attack. On March 4, 2010, a Düsseldorf court jailed the members of the cell. Sentencing the extremists to between five and 12 years, Judge Ottmar Breidling said that they planned to stage a "monstrous bloodbath."[9] The four included converts Fritz Gelowicz and Daniel Schneider, who each received 12-year jail terms. Adem Yilmaz, a Turkish citizen, received 11 years, while Atilla Selek, a German of Turkish origin, was sentenced to five years.[10]

The leader of the group was Gelowicz, who was born in Munich and converted to Islam when he was 16-years-old.[11] Although he became a devout Muslim, he appeared to lead the life of a normal teenager. His views changed, however, when he started visiting an Islamic center in the southern city of Neu-Ulm. During the trial, Gelowicz admitted to being a member of the IJU and said that in 2006 he traveled to one of the group's training camps in the tribal areas of Pakistan where he received training in weapons and explosives. He also met Schneider at the camp, who later became one of the other operatives in the Sauerland cell.[12]

The trial confirmed for the first time the existence of an IJU cell on German soil. In addition, the cases of Gelowicz and Schneider, in particular, shocked the country, raising questions how seemingly "normal" Germans could become radicalized by Islamic militant preaching and attend terrorist training camps.

The IJU claims to have several German members, and the group has been targeting Germany for some time now, both through propaganda and also with operations. The IJU was involved in the recruitment and training of Cuneyt Ciftci, Germany's first suicide bomber. Ciftci, born in Bavaria to a family of Turkish immigrants, was married and had two children. Yet he drove a pick-up truck laden with explosives into a U.S. guard post in Afghanistan on March 3, 2008, resulting in the deaths of two U.S. soldiers. In the aftermath, a disturbing video clip of Ciftci appeared, showing him smiling and brandishing a pistol.[13]

In an IJU production from October 2008, entitled "A Call from Hindukush," the German convert Eric Breininger[14] (also known as Abdulgaffar al-Almani) stated that Germany's policies toward Muslims, including its military engagement in Afghanistan, are "increasing the risk of attacks on German soil." He also encouraged the German people to "approach their own government if they want to be spared from the attacks of Muslims in Germany."[15]

The number of Germans involved with the IJU is clearly alarming. Fortunately, the IJU has suffered a number of setbacks in the last few years.[16] Nevertheless, it is premature to say that the group's infrastructure has been completely dismantled in Pakistan. The IJU is still functional, and the thread that connects it to Germany remains intact.[17]

3 Marcel Rosenbach and Holger Stark, "Homegrown Terror Takes on New Dimensions," *Der Spiegel*, May 9, 2011.

4 Converts are those individuals who switch from one religion, such as Christianity, to another religion, such as Islam.

5 "Presentation by State Bureau of Investigations, Section IV - Counterterrorism Branch." The percentage of converts in 2008 was 10%, while in 2009 it was 12.6%.

6 Ibid.

7 Guido Steinberg, "The Evolving Threat from Jihadist Terrorism in Turkey," Real Instituto Elcano, February 16, 2009.

8 "Profile of Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)," U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, 2011; Tristana Moore, "Germany Convicts Men Who Plotted Second 9/11," *Time Magazine*, March 4, 2010.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid. Gelowicz was 27-years-old upon his arrest.

12 Ibid.

13 Roger Boyes, "Bavarian Cueneyt Ciftci is Germany's First Suicide Bomber," *The Times*, March 18, 2008.

14 Breininger was killed in a firefight in Pakistan on April 30, 2010. For details, see "German Islamic Terrorist Reported Dead in Pakistan," *Deutsche Welle*, May 3, 2010.

15 Anne Stenersen, "A Unified Strategy Towards Germany?" Jihadica.com, February 2, 2009.

16 Cerwyn Moore, "The Rise and Fall of the Islamic Jihad Union: What Next for Uzbek Terror Networks?" *Terrorism Monitor* 8:14 (2010).

17 Personal interview, official from the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, November 5, 2010.

Al-Qa`ida Central

For al-Qa`ida's central leadership, Germany has always served as a useful staging ground and launch pad for international operations. The original starting point was the northern city of Hamburg, where the plot for the 9/11 terrorist attacks was hatched. The Hamburg cell consisted of several people, but most notably the three suicide pilots Muhammad `Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah. On January 8, 2007, a German court sentenced Moroccan Mounir el-Motassadeq, a friend of the 9/11 pilots, to 15 years in prison for being an accessory in the murders of 246 people aboard the commercial planes used in the 9/11 attacks. El-Motassadeq came to Germany in 1993 to study engineering and fell in with a radical Islamic group in Hamburg that included two of the hijackers, Muhammad `Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi. He had wired money to al-Shehhi, and he admitted to attending a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan sponsored by Usama bin Ladin.[18] El-Motassadeq was involved in the running of the al-Quds mosque in Hamburg, which prosecutors say was the focal point of the group's activities.[19] The mosque, which is in Hamburg's St. Georg district, has been under surveillance since the 2001 attacks. In August 2010, German police finally shut down the mosque because they believed it was again being used as a meeting point for extremists.[20]

Al-Qa`ida's connections to Germany extend beyond the Hamburg cell. On February 5, 2009, a French court found German national Christian Ganczarski guilty of playing a central role in the deadly 2002 Djerba attack in Tunisia when a gas-laden truck smashed into a synagogue, killing 21 people. Ganczarski was sentenced to 18 years.[21] The Djerba attack, which was claimed by al-Qa`ida, targeted the historic Ghriba synagogue on the Tunisian island of Djerba, a magnet for tourists.[22] As part of the attack, suicide bomber Nizar Naouar drove into the building in an explosives-laden fuel tanker. In total, 14 German tourists, five Tunisians and two French nationals were killed and many more people were injured.[23] Among evidence put forward by the prosecution were images of Ganczarski and Usama bin Ladin at training camps in Afghanistan. He was known as "Ibrahim the German." A video dating from January 2001 showed him sitting in the first row among hundreds of armed fighters in an al-Qa`ida camp, watching a speech by Bin Ladin. Behind him sat the 9/11 pilot Muhammad `Atta.[24]

In July 2010, another German citizen from Hamburg was detained for his ties to al-Qa`ida. Ahmed Sidiqi, a German citizen of Afghan origin, was apprehended in Kabul and transferred to U.S. custody. He worked for a cleaning company at the Hamburg International Airport, attended the al-Quds mosque, and had direct ties to Mounir el-Motassadeq.[25] Sidiqi was the source of much of the information on a potential "Mumbai-style" terrorist plot in Europe.[26] Shortly after, U.S. drone strikes killed several militants with German citizenship in the tribal areas of Pakistan in September and October 2010. These militants were possibly tied to the proposed Mumbai-style terrorist plot for Europe.[27]

On May 9, 2011, a Frankfurt court sentenced Rami Makenesi, a German man of Syrian origin, to four years and nine months in prison after he admitted on the opening day of his trial that he was a member of al-Qa`ida and trained at one of its paramilitary camps in Pakistan. In exchange, he was given a reduced sentence. Makanesi left Germany for Pakistan in 2009 to undergo training at a camp in North Waziristan. Prosecutors stated that he had planned to return to Germany to raise funds for al-Qa`ida and participate in terrorist operations.[28] Makenesi was tasked to raise 20,000 euros (approximately $29,000) every six months and was supposed to act as a contact in Germany.[29] He was arrested in Pakistan in June 2010 and returned to Germany two months later. During his trial, Makanesi cooperated with authorities, outlining planned terrorist attacks that allowed for increased security measures.[30]

Al-Qa`ida has also utilized German nationals in its propaganda material. Bekkay Harrach, a German national, rose within al-Qa`ida to become part of its propaganda production unit, al-Sahab. Harrach appeared in a 2009 video entitled "Rescue Package for Germany." His words largely echoed those of Eric Breininger. Harrach warned that if Germany continued its military engagement in Afghanistan, it would not "get away with it for free," and therefore the German people should "stand up and be reasonable" in the upcoming September 2009 parliamentary elections.[31] It was the first time al-Sahab tailored a message specifically to Germans—including by an actual German national—which strengthened al-Qa`ida's image as a truly global organization.[32]

18 Mark Landler, "9/11 Associate is Sentenced in Germany to 15 Years," *New York Times*, January 9, 2007. There was a deep sense of trust between el-Motassadeq and the 9/11 plotters. In 1996, el-Motassadeq was a signatory to `Atta's will. El-Motassadeq, however, only first came under suspicion in November 2001, when German authorities discovered that he had power of attorney over a bank account held by al-Shehhi that was used to fund flight lessons in the United States and provide the expenses for American visa applications for the 9/11 plotters. Money in an account set up by `Atta in Florida was traced back to Hamburg.

19 "Profile: Mounir al-Motassadek," BBC, December 4, 2006.

20 The cultural association that runs the mosque has also been banned. See "Germany Shuts 9/11 Plotters' Mosque in Hamburg," BBC, August 9, 2010.

21 "French Allege Detained German Is Top Al Qaeda Leader," *Deutsche Welle*, June 12, 2003; Britta Sandberg and Holger Stark, "Verdict Expected in Djerba Bombing Case," *Der Spiegel*, February 5, 2009.

22 Ganczarski is of Polish descent. Born in Gliwice, southern Poland, to strict Catholic parents in 1966, he later moved to Germany with his parents and became a naturalized citizen. He and his wife are converts to Islam. Trained as a locksmith, he eventually became known as a computer expert in extremist circles.

23 "Paris Court Finds German Guilty of Tunisian Attack," *Der Spiegel*, February 6, 2009.

24 Ibid.; "French Allege Detained German Is Top Al Qaeda Leader."

25 Sidiqi drove el-Motassadeq's father to visit Mounir in prison and even vacationed with el-Motassadeq's family. See "Hamburg Islamist Speaks of Threat of Attacks in Germany," *Der Spiegel*, September 6, 2010.

26 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "Europe Warned of Mumbai-style Terror Attacks," CNN, September 29, 2010.

27 Tom A. Peter, "Al Qaeda Plot in Europe Possibly Revealed by German Terror Suspect," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 29, 2010.

28 "Germany Sentences Al-Qaida Member to Prison," Voice of America, May 9, 2011.

29 "Al Qaeda Dealt Battlefield, Court Setbacks with 2 Dead, 1 Guilty Plea," CNN, May 5, 2011.

30 "Germany Sentences Al-Qaida Member to Prison."

31 Stenersen.

32 Harrach, however, appears to have been killed at

Lone Wolves

In addition to the threat from al-Qa`ida and more organized terrorist groups, the spread of "lone wolf" terrorism is also a major concern for Germany's security apparatus. "Lone wolves" are more motivated to act spontaneously and sporadically. Although they may not necessarily be successful as they lack the hands-on skill of more established terrorist operatives, they also do not leave a trail to other cells or terrorist groups abroad, making it harder for authorities to track them and disrupt their activities.

On July 31, 2006, Jihad Hamad and Youssef el-Hajdib, both Lebanese nationals, placed two suitcases filled with propane gas and crude detonators on regional trains in Cologne. The bombs were supposed to explode near Hamm and Koblenz. Although the triggers went off, the canisters failed to detonate. German authorities said the bombs could have caused up to 75 casualties.[33] The attacks were originally planned for the 2006 FIFA Soccer World Cup held several weeks earlier, but the suspects reportedly abandoned the plan when they realized that the bombs would not be ready in time.[34] Hamad fled to Lebanon where German investigators tracked him down in conjunction with their Lebanese counterparts. El-Hajdib was arrested in Germany.[35] On December 18, 2007, a court in Beirut sentenced Hamad to 12 years in prison. On December 9, 2008, el-Hajdib was sentenced to life in prison by a Düsseldorf court.[36]

Another case of "lone wolf" terrorism in Germany occurred on March 2, 2011, when Arid Uka traveled to Frankfurt airport armed with a pistol and two knives. Uka spotted two U.S. airmen emerging from a baggage claim area and followed them to an exit where a U.S. Air Force bus was waiting. Uka watched as 16 U.S. military service members gradually arrived, then asked one of them for a cigarette and where the soldiers were heading. After the airman confirmed that they were on their way to Afghanistan, Uka turned around, reached into his backpack and loaded a magazine into his pistol.[37] Uka waited until almost all the airmen had boarded the bus, then shot dead a senior airman as he returned from a luggage trolley. Boarding the bus, Uka then fatally shot an airman in the driver's seat while repeatedly shouting "God is great" in Arabic. He seriously wounded two other men standing in the bus aisle. Uka is believed to have fired nine times before his gun jammed. He then fled from the bus into a terminal where he was tackled and detained by German authorities.[38]

Uka, an ethnic Albanian from Kosovo, was a devout Muslim. Although born in Kosovska Mitrovica, his family had been living in Germany for 40 years. On the surface, Uka was a German success story for an immigrant family. In 2005, he and some classmates won a government prize for a school project on how to prevent violence in society and posed proudly with Gerhard Schröder, the chancellor of Germany at the time.[39] He worked part time in the mail room at Frankfurt airport.[40]

According to German prosecutors, the internet may have played a major role in Uka's radicalization. His Facebook page illustrated a side of him that even his family apparently did not know. He posted a link to a jihadist battle hymn, "I can no longer stand this life of humiliation among you. My weapon is ready at all times."[41] According to German authorities, Uka confessed to targeting U.S. military members, claimed he acted alone and did not belong to a terrorist network or cell. In addition, the U.S. Embassy in Kosovo's capital of Pristina referred to "the act of a single individual."[42]

Conclusion

The German government is increasingly concerned about the number of its nationals becoming terrorists. To date, no transnational terrorist attack, linked to al-Qa`ida or an affiliate, has been carried out on German soil. This is due above all to the vigilance of the German security services, who in many cases have intervened early and prevented terrorist groups from carrying out their plans. A number of German nationals have, however, continued to be victims of terrorist attacks in other countries. It must be assumed that unidentified terrorist networks or cells exist in Germany that are integrated into functioning cross-border structures and, to a large degree, can plan attacks independently based on their capabilities and the means available. Germany also faces the possible growing threat of "lone wolf" Islamist extremists, lured by al-Qa`ida's violent ideology yet having no connection to organized terrorist cells. These individuals hope to contribute to the "jihad" with smaller-scale, retaliatory efforts—similar to the action taken by Arid Uka in March 2011.

These cases demonstrate that jihadist activity in Germany is becoming more lethal. In the past, German territory was used by Islamist militants strictly to plan terrorist operations abroad. Today, however, terrorists are increasingly viewing Germany as a target in its own right.

Dr. Sajjan Gohel is International Security Director at the Asia-Pacific Foundation, an independent intelligence and security think-tank. He received his Ph.D. in International History from the London School of Economics & Political Science (LSE). His doctoral thesis, entitled, "The Evolution of Egyptian Radical Ideological Thought from Hasan al-Banna to Ayman al-Zawahiri," is in the process of being published. Dr. Gohel's primary research interests include: the security challenges in South Asia, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa and the connection with the West; radical ideological thought both present and historical; and the role that New Media plays in transnational terrorism.

some point between May 2010 and January 2011. His fellow militants announced his death, but a clear date was not provided. See "Al-Qaeda Fighter Bekkay Harrach 'Killed in Afghanistan,'" BBC, January 20, 2011.

33 "Cologne Suitcase Bombers Get Long Sentences," *Der Spiegel*, December 18, 2007.

34 Personal interview, official from the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, November 5, 2010.

35 "Kofferbomber handelten im Dienst des Islam," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 19, 2007.

36 "German Court Sentences Man to Life for Attempted Bombing," *Der Spiegel*, September 12, 2008.

37 Jack Ewing, "Man Charged in Germany in Killing of U.S. Airmen," *New York Times*, July 7, 2011.

38 Ibid.

39 Souad Mekhennet, "Frankfurt Attack Mystifies Suspect's Family," *New York Times*, March 8, 2011.

40 Helen Pidd, "Frankfurt Airport Shooting May Have Islamist Link, say Police," *Guardian*, March 3, 2011.

41 Mekhennet.

42 "Airport Shooter Said to Admit Targeting U.S. GIs," CBS News, March 3, 2011.

Islamic Activism in Europe: The Role of Converts

By Emmanuel Karagiannis

ISLAM IS THE fastest growing religion in Europe. Although much of the spread has been driven by immigration and higher birth rates among Muslims living in Europe, conversion of native Europeans also figures in this growth. A convert is defined as one who has changed membership from one religious group (for example, Christianity) to another religious group (for example, Islam). One can only speculate about the exact number of Muslim converts in Europe since most European population surveys do not include a question on religion. In total, there are likely 200,000-320,000 converts in Europe, making up less than two percent of Europe's Muslim population.[1]

Generally speaking, most European converts tend to follow liberal interpretations of Islam. Since they grew up in modern and secular societies, converts naturally adjust Islam to fit their own needs. Moreover, the social environment in which converts live compels them to behave in a certain way to maintain an "acceptable" professional and social image. Suspicion and often discrimination against European Muslims means that many converts maintain a low profile to avoid harassment and exclusion.

While European converts to Islam represent only a tiny percentage of Europe's Muslim population, members of that group have been increasingly vocal and active about Islamic issues. More importantly, European converts have participated in most terrorist plots and actual attacks that have taken place on European soil since 9/11. The shoe bomb plot in 2001, the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005 respectively, the transatlantic aircraft plot in 2006, the 2007 bomb plot in Germany, and the 2010 Moscow metro bombings all shared one common feature: European converts to Islam were involved at various levels and stages.

In total, at least 40 converts had a confirmed role in the plotting and/or execution of terrorist attacks in European countries in the last 20 years. Although in absolute numbers jihadist converts are a small group, they represent a significant subgroup of Europe's terrorists. Their significance also stems from the fact that in many European societies converts tend to be less physically visible than Muslims of immigrant origin. Indeed, jihadist converts have taken advantage of the Schengen Treaty and U.S. visa-waiver programs to travel without much scrutiny. European governments must carefully choose strategies and policies for dealing with converts, if they are to avoid a threat to European security.

This article first analyzes the factors leading some Europeans to embrace Islam before examining the phenomenon of activism among converts, focusing on certain individuals and organizations. Islamic activism does not necessarily lead to radicalization, but it can reveal political trends within the community of converts. Therefore, it is important to understand the social world of European converts and how it is organized.

Factors Leading Europeans to Conversion

Conversions of native Europeans to Islam took place in West European countries from the 1960s onward and were the result of two important developments: post-war Muslim immigration and the rise of protest and counterculture movements in the 1960s. The first generation of Muslim immigrants remained rather isolated from the rest of society; the second and third generations of Europe's Muslims, however, have increasingly married outside their religious group. Although circumstances differ from country to country, many non-Muslim partners typically convert to Islam to receive approval from their in-laws. Additionally, individuals involved in Hippie and other counterculture movements embraced Sufism as a spiritual alternative.[2] The fact that Sufism is a mystical and spiritual movement within the Muslim faith, in search of communication with God through ascetic practices, was appealing to those who rejected Christianity for being too "materialistic."

Following the collapse of communism in the late 1980s, there is currently another wave of conversions. In the post-Cold War era, Islam is often viewed as a religion of rebels. Interestingly, many former Marxists have been involved in a renewed quest for identity, which partly shows itself in an interest in Islam.[3] A growing number of former Marxists have converted to Islam, including prominent French philosopher Roger Garaudy.

In addition, individuals have embraced Islam for more personal reasons. It is common for many new Muslims to mention an event that changed their lives forever and eventually led to their conversion. For example, and strictly anecdotally, a young Dutch man thought that it was a love disappointment[4]; an English woman believed that it was the death of her brother from drug abuse that convinced her to "search for the

1 In France, estimates suggest approximately 50,000 to 100,000 converts out of a population of three to four million Muslims. For details, see *Mapping the Global Muslim Population* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2009). In 2006, there were 850,000 Muslims in the Netherlands, including 12,000 converts. For details, see "More than 850 Thousand Muslims in the Netherlands," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, October 27, 2007. In Germany, the estimated number of converts ranges from 12,000 to 100,000, with the total Muslim population set at around three million. For details, see Johannes Kandel, "Organisierter Islam in Deutschland und gesellschaftliche Integration," *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, September 2004. In Great Britain, there were about 63,000 native converts out of a population of 1.6 million Muslims in the early 2000s. For details, see the 2001 Census completed by the Office for National Statistics. Their numbers, however, must have increased because the Muslim population as a whole reached 2.4 million in 2009. For details, see Richard Kerbaj, "Muslim Population Rising 10 Times Faster Than Rest of Society," *The Times*, January 30, 2009. Spain has an estimated 800,000 Muslims, roughly 20,000 of whom are converts. For details, see Geoff Pingree and Lisa Abend, "In Spain, Dismay at Muslim Converts Holding Sway," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 7, 2006.

2 Kate Zebiri, *British Muslim Converts: Choosing Alternative Lives* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), p. 249.

3 Anne Sofie Roald, *New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts* (Boston: Brill, 2004), p. 344.

4 Personal interview, "Mark," a Dutch male convert, Amsterdam, Netherlands, December 2008.

truth"[5]; an English man mentioned "troubles with the law."[6]

Converts are keen to demonstrate to their circles their allegiance to the (proper) Muslim way of life. Therefore, they often quit habits such as drinking alcohol and eating pork. Many converts have mentioned difficult times they had with parents and siblings when they announced to them their decision to embrace Islam. As a Greek-Canadian female explained, "her parents believed at first that she betrayed her culture."[7] Female converts have faced strong criticism for their decision to wear a *hijab* which, from the Western point of view, has largely symbolized oppression. In the words of a Dutch woman, "people felt sorry for me and almost treated me as a victim. To them, I was a woman who had been coerced by her husband into giving up her rights."[8]

According to a 2007 New York Police Department report entitled *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, "converts have played a prominent role in the majority of terrorist case studies and tend to be the most zealous members of groups. Their need to prove their religious convictions to their companions often makes them the most aggressive."[9] Indeed, there have been a few cases of European converts, like the French brothers Jerome and David Courtailler, whose conversion zeal led them to "prove" their commitment to the new faith by joining jihadist groups.

Islamic Activism and Converts

The phenomenon of Islamic activism first appeared in Europe in the late 1980s, when the Salman Rushdie affair erupted in the United Kingdom. Thousands of Muslims protested against the British author and burned copies of his book, *The Satanic Verses*. Quintan Wiktorowicz has defined Islamic activism as "the mobilization of contention to support Muslim causes."[10] In recent years, there has been a growing number of converts who have taken a public stance on Islam-related issues. They often feel more confident than Muslims of immigrant origin to criticize government policies and defend Islamic agendas. Non-Muslims are usually suspicious of converts because they "abandoned the religion of their forefathers."[11] On the contrary, many Muslim activists view these converts as mediators between authorities and the Muslim community.

One of the most famous Islamic activists in the United Kingdom is Yvonne Ridley, a journalist of leftist background who converted to Islam after being freed from Taliban captivity in October 2001. In 2004, Ridley entered British politics as a candidate European MP for the Respect coalition party. The party had been established by former Labour MP George Galloway together with the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain, and prominent members of the Muslim Association of Britain and the Muslim Council of Britain. According to its manifesto, the party condemns "Islamophobia and the demonization of Muslim communities."[12] Ridley herself has turned into a vocal and controversial figure, referring to Shamil Basayev as a rebel leader who "led an admirable fight to bring independence to Chechnya"[13] and defending Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi for his 2005 Amman bombings in Jordan.[14] Her inflammatory rhetoric about Israel and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has made her a popular figure within Europe's Islamist circles.

"Although many would stereotypically associate jihadist terrorists as Arabs or South Asians, European converts have actually participated in most terrorist plots and actual attacks that have taken place on European soil since 9/11."

Pierre Vogel represents another interesting case of a convert who turned into an Islamic activist. He was born in Germany and converted to Islam at the age of 23 while he was a professional boxer. After studying for two years in Mecca, Vogel returned to Germany and started preaching Salafism.[15] Vogel has used the internet to reach out to young German Muslims.[16] In December 2009, Swiss authorities barred him from attending a demonstration against the minaret ban in Bern. Due to his anti-integration messages, the 32-year-old self-appointed imam has also been monitored by German authorities who worry about radicalism among the country's large Muslim community.[17]

The Dutchman Abdul-Jabbar van de Ven is another leading Islamic convert. He converted to Islam at the age of 14. He studied in Amman and Medina before returning to the Netherlands. He has preached Salafism in the notorious al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven. Like Pierre Vogel, Van de Ven has used the internet extensively to propagate his Islamist messages. He has also been known for his controversial statements regarding the assassination of Theo van Gogh.[18] Van de Ven was under investigation for his relationship

5 Personal interview, "Sarah," an English female convert, London, January 2009.

6 Personal interview, "John," an English male convert, London, January 2009.

7 Personal interview, "Maria," a Greek-Canadian female convert, Athens, Greece, December 2009.

8 Personal interview, "Edith," a Dutch female convert, Amsterdam, Netherlands, December 2008.

9 Mitchell Silber and Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York: New York Police Department, 2007), p. 29.

10 Quintan Wiktorowicz ed., *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 2.

11 Personal interview, imam, London, January 2009.

12 "Civil Liberties," Respect Party, 2010.

13 Yvonne Ridley, "The Passing of a Chechen," YvonneRidley.org, July 10, 2006.

14 Her exact words were, "What Queen Noor failed to explain on her CNN broadcast was that the three [targeted] hotels, Hyatt, Days Inn and Radisson, are all US-owned and are seen as dens of iniquity by Jordan's reserved Muslim community." She also proceeded to call some of those killed in the blasts "collaborators" with "America." For details, see Yvonne Ridley, "Something Rather Repugnant," Tajdeed, November 23, 2005, available at www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1529185/posts.

15 Ehrhardt Von Christoph, "Ick Bin Ein Muslim Jeworden," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 6, 2007.

16 Andrea Brandt and Maximilian Popp, "Will Efforts to Train Homegrown Muslim Leaders Fail?" *Der Spiegel*, September 16, 2010.

17 Ibid.

18 During a television interview in November 2004, Van de Ven mentioned that he "felt a certain joy" when Dutch film director Theo van Gogh was murdered by Mohammed Bouyeri, a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim.

with Jason Walters, a radical Dutch-American convert, who turned into a terrorist.[19]

For years, Europe's Islamist groups have recruited converts and promoted them to senior positions. In particular, Hizb al-Tahrir has recruited an increased number of converts who tend to be middle class and highly educated. The Canadian Jamal Harwood is a well-known convert in the British branch of Hizb al-Tahrir. Al-Muhajiroun, an offshoot of Hizb al-Tahrir in the United Kingdom that was supposedly dissolved in 2004, also recruited a number of converts; indeed, some of them like Simon (or Suleiman) Keeler, the former spokesman, managed to climb the organizational pyramid.

Despite this, and as a result of their small numbers, there are only a limited number of Islamic groups and organizations in Europe run and controlled by converts. The most important such organizations are the following.

The Islamic Party of Britain

The Sunni-oriented Islamic Party of Britain (IPB) was established at the time of the Rushdie affair in September 1989. The party was dissolved in 2003 because it never managed to gain much support from Muslims in constituencies where the party stood. In the November 1990 by-election, for example, held in the constituency of Bradford North, an area with a large Muslim population, the IPB won only 2.2% of the votes. In reality, the huge majority of British Muslims, who are of South Asian origin, could not identify with a party run mostly by white converts. The party was founded and led by David Musa Pidcock, who is English, and Sahib Mustaqim Bleher, who is German. Another reason for its limited electoral appeal was probably its Islamist ideology. The party argued that "Islam is the solution to the world's problems. No other religion, way of life or culture can possibly succeed, because only truth can satisfy the soul of humankind, and only the guidance, laws, and concepts taught to us by God are capable of achieving just balance."[20] In other words, the IPB believed in the superiority of Islam and advocated the imposition of Shari`a, which automatically limited its appeal among non-religious and secular British Muslims.

The Association for British Muslims

The Association for British Muslims (AOBM) was established in 1974 and claims to represent the interests of British converts. The AOBM has promoted a "British Islam," arguing that British traditions are "compatible with Islam."[21] The AOBM has portrayed itself as a rather apolitical organization that advocates integration and avoids controversial issues. It has focused on public activities such as conferences, public lectures, community and charitable services. Some of its members were involved in the humanitarian missions for the Bosnian Muslims in the early to mid-1990s. For instance, Neil (Ibrahim) Golightly, a 34-year-old convert from Glasgow, was killed while trying to bring food and supplies to besieged Sarajevo in August 1995. The AOBM has celebrated him as a *shahid* (martyr) who fell for a just cause. The group remains active today.

The Finish Islamic Party (Suomen islamilainen puolue)

The Finish Islamic Party was established in 2007 by Finnish converts Abdullah Tammi and Abdullah Rintala. Its membership is unknown but estimated to be only a few hundred people. The party, which has limited influence among Finland's 40,000-50,000 Muslims (most of whom have Tatar origin), supports a ban on alcohol sales and gender segregation for Muslims. It has also favored Finland's withdrawal from the European Union. The FIS has increasingly taken a stand in many pan-Islamic issues (such as the war in Iraq and the Prophet Muhammad cartoon controversy). Due to Tammi's past as a KGB agent, the FIS has followed a pro-Russian line.[22] For example, the party has been highly critical of Estonia for its "apartheid policies" under which the "educational system discriminates against Russian-speakers."[23]

Islamic Board of Spain (Junta Islámica de España)

The Islamic Board of Spain (IBS) has been one of the most active and vocal Islamic organizations in Europe. Although the IBS is open to all Muslims, its leadership consists mainly of Spanish converts. IBS has promoted a moderate and more "Westernized" Islam, with the encouragement of the Zapatero government. Moreover, the organization has denounced terrorism by jihadist groups. In March 2005, the IBS grabbed international media attention when it issued a *fatwa* against Usama bin Ladin, which stated that

> as long as Usama bin Ladin and his organization defend the legality of terrorism and try to base it on the Sacred Qur'an and the Sunna, they are committing the crime of *istihlal* (i.e. distortion of the Islamic law) and they have become ipso facto apostates (*kafir murtadd*), who should not be considered Muslim nor be treated as such.[24]

Yet the IBS has sparked some controversy in regard to the "al-Andalus issue." From 711 to 1492, a great part of the Iberian Peninsula was controlled by Muslim kingdoms. For many centuries, the Andalusian city of Cordoba in southern Spain was one of the most important centers of Islamic culture. After the fall of Grenada in 1491, most of the Muslims left for North Africa. The Great Mosque of Cordoba, the symbol of Muslim Spain for centuries, was converted to a Roman Catholic Church. Since then, Muslims have not been allowed to pray in the building. For several years, Juma Islamica has petitioned unsuccessfully both the local church authorities and the Vatican to open the building to Muslims.

The repatriation of *Moriscos* is another issue raised by the IBS. Following the *Reconquista* of Andalusia, the remaining Muslim population converted under the threat of exile to Christianity and came to be known as *Moriscos*. One hundred years later, however, the Spanish throne

19 "Politici walgen van doodsverwensing; Donner: Weinig kans op strafzaak imam Van de Ven," *De Telegraaf*, November 25, 2004.

20 "Our Policies," Islamic Party of Britain, undated, available at www.islamicparty.com/policies/policies.pdf.

21 Personal interview, two members of AOBM, London, November 2010.

22 Panu Hietaneva, "Leader of Finnish Islamic Party Says he was a Soviet Spy," *Helsingin Sanomat*, November 4, 2008.

23 "Suomen Islamilaisen Puolueen Kannanotto Viron Rasismia Ja Fasismia Vastaan," Finish Islamic Party, March 3, 2009.

24 Mansur Escudero Bedate, "La Comisión Islámica de España emite una fatua condenando el terrorismo y al grupo Al Qaida," La Comisión Islámica de España, March 11, 2005.

expelled them to North Africa. In 2006, Junta Islamica endorsed a proposal made by the Andalusian branch of United Left (a Spanish left-wing party) to enable descendants of the expelled Muslim population to gain Spanish citizenship.

The persecution of Muslims by the Christian medieval armies and the loss of Spain have been often mentioned by Islamist groups as proof of Western intolerance. Therefore, several Islamist groups, including al-Qa`ida, have openly called for the reconquest of al-Andalus. At the beginning, the issue was taken lightly. Following the Madrid bombings in March 2004, however, the IBS' interest in al-Andalus has only reinforced suspicion among the conservative segments of society that Spanish converts have a secret agenda to "re-Islamize" Spain.

The Association of Muslims in Greece (Enosi Mousoulmanon Elladas)

The Association of Muslims in Greece (AMG) was established in 2003 to "defend the Muslims' rights in several fields."[25] Although the current president, Naim el-Ghandour, is a naturalized Greek citizen of Egyptian origin, the AMG is run mostly by Greek converts. Greece's Muslim population is estimated at around 250,000-300,000 people,[26] excluding the indigenous, largely Turkish-speaking Muslim community of northeastern Greece and the large Albanian immigrant community whose members are either secular or Christian. Despite constituting only a small percentage of the Muslim community in Greece, the AMG's converts have been vocal on Muslim issues. At the beginning, the AMG focused on symbolic topics such as the construction of a mosque and a Muslim cemetery in Athens, where the majority of the Muslim population currently resides. Following the wars in Lebanon and Gaza in 2006 and 2008 respectively, however, the AMG has increasingly taken part in protests and sit-ins against the United States and Israel.

Conclusion

Despite being negatively presented in the media and elsewhere, Islam has won thousands of new followers in many European countries. Although many would stereotypically associate jihadist terrorists as Arabs or South Asians, European converts have actually participated in most terrorist plots and actual attacks that have taken place on European soil since 9/11.

While at least 40 European converts have turned into jihadist terrorists, a much larger number of them have been mobilized around Islamic issues. Being familiar with the political culture and system of government of their own countries, many converts have been involved in Islamic activism, defending Muslim rights and in some cases propagating Islamist messages. Having diverse agendas, organizations which are run by converts cannot be treated as a monolithic world. The IPB and the FIS have been outright Islamist groups, whereas AOBM, IBS, and AMG have mostly focused on social, religious and cultural issues.

The converts working for these organizations come from different backgrounds and certainly follow different interpretations of Islam. What they have in common is a deep sense of personal commitment to the "defense" of Islam from external criticism. They act as cultural intermediaries because they belong both to their native society and to the *umma*. Therefore, they seek to promote a less Arab-looking and more Europeanized Islam that dares to confront its "enemies." These converts largely perceive themselves as an Islamic vanguard that practices "jihad by tongue": educating non-Muslims about Islam, and to strive with one's tongue to "support good and fight wrong." In practice, this is done through speeches, debates and other public activities.

Emmanuel Karagiannis is an Assistant Professor at the University of Macedonia's Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies in Thessaloniki, Greece and an Investigator at the University of Maryland's START Center.

25 Naim el-Ghandour, "Mosque and Cemetary: Too Much to Ask?" Greeks Rethink, February 13, 2009.

26 "International Religious Freedom Report 2006," U.S. State Department, 2006.

The Rise of Salafists in Tunisia After the Fall of Ben Ali

By Aaron Y. Zelin

IN THE AFTERMATH of the "Arab Spring," many analysts proclaimed that it was the death knell of al-Qa`ida and its ideology, while others warned that it would open space for al-Qa`ida to exploit and even potentially take over a government similar to the 1979 Iranian Revolution. These two narratives miss the point. Indeed, jihadist ideology has been marginalized and has opened space for other schools of thought to counterbalance it. Yet, at the same time, in societies such as Tunisia where religion has been suppressed at the hands of a dictatorial government, it has created new opportunities for individuals to organize at the local level, including non-violent political Salafists who sympathize with intellectual aspects of jihadist ideology.

One such Salafist group is known as Ansar al-Shari`a in Tunisia (AST), and its media outlet al-Qayrawan Media Foundation (QMF). It is not clear whether AST was organized prior to the fall of former Tunisian President Ben Ali's regime, but if it existed beforehand it would have been highly covert due to the repressive environment under the previous government. Regardless, since April 2011 the group's activities are increasingly public, holding rallies and even creating Facebook pages. AST has garnered the attention of online jihadists at Ansar al-Mujahidin and al-Jahad al-`Alami, two of the most popular Arabic-language jihadist forums.

This article chronicles the rise of AST, showing how the group is a product of the new openness in Tunisian society as well as the liberation of the "public square" in the Arab world as a whole. This new commons has featured a rise in Salafist movements, creating challenges for Western states that want to establish diplomatic relations with new actors in transitioning Arab societies.

To navigate the maze of new actors, it is crucial for Western governments to go beyond understanding the old Islamist parties linked to the Muslim Brotherhood (as well as the secular and

liberal trends), but also the growing prominence and broader trend of Salafist movements in Tunisia and the Arab world.

The Public Rise of AST

On April 27, 2011, a blog titled the al-Qayrawan Media Foundation was created.[1] Two days later, the same organization established a Facebook page.[2] Additionally, it created a supplementary Facebook page under the name Ansar al-Shari`a in Tunisia on May 15, which coincided with the announcement of a conference being convened in Tunis on May 21.[3] A day later, on May 16, QMF's conference announcement appeared on the Ansar al-Mujahidin Arabic Forum (AMAF), a top-tier al-Qa`ida forum, and a second-tier forum, al-Haqiqiyyah al-Ichbariyyah. Following the conference, on May 25 the AMAF released a series of photos from the conference, which were later posted in June on both QMF's and AST's Facebook pages.[4] The pictures were more popular than the conference announcement and appear also at al-Jahad al-`Alami, al-Majahden, al-Haqiqiyyah al-Ichbariyyah, and al-Jahafal forums. Based on pictures from multiple events and rallies, there are approximately a few hundred supporters that publicly follow the group.

"It is premature to determine AST's future, but it is a fascinating example of how groups in societies that did not have the opportunity to organize have used their newfound freedoms to propagate their cause."

Even though it is difficult to assess connections that AST has with the online jihadist community, it does show that some of the members of the forums may be connected with the movement and have an interest in giving it a wider audience in the online jihadist world. Although the group has refrained from calls to violence, it has reposted content from Hani al-Siba'i and Ayman al-Zawahiri (who they describe as the *amir*) on its Facebook page.

Since the launch of the blog and Facebook page, AST has released 29 statements, essays, and audio messages. Ten have specifically come from AST, while others have been authored by a variety of individuals: al-Khatib al-Idrisi al-Bukhari, Munir al-Tunisi, Abu Ayyad al-Tunisi, Abu al-Wafa' al-Tunisi, 'Abd Allah al-Hijazi, and Abu Ayyub al-Tunisi. Additionally, in many AST communiqués, they highlight key historical events in Tunisia's Islamic history and link it back to the current state of affairs. For one, QMF is an allusion to the famous Tunisian city Qayrawan, which is considered by some to be the fourth holiest Islamic city and holds the Mosque of Uqba, a place for elite scholastics in the first few Islamic centuries.[5] Also, QMF's first official release states that it is the descendant of Yusef bin Tashfin (1061-1106 CE), the king of the Almoravid Berber kingdom, who conquered Morocco, founded Marrakesh, and reunited the Muslim Taifa kingdoms in al-Andalus, holding off the Christian *reconquista*.[6] It is not surprising that Tashfin is noted since he is a great figure in North African jihadist lore. He also gets a fair amount of mentions in al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb's literature as well.[7]

AST's Most Recent Activities

The biggest issue that AST has taken up in recent months has dealt with the arrest of its members, as well as Tunisian prisoners held in Iraq. In late June, the Tunisian transitional government started cracking down on Islamists and jihadists.[8] Some of the members of AST were thrown into jail, but later released.[9] In mid-August, AST also rallied against what they describe as unjust and aggressive arrests of youth from the city of Manzil Bourguiba in northern Tunisia. They condemned the unfair treatment they have been subjected to in military court.[10] The history of Islamic extremism shows that jail time can have a radicalizing effect on individuals. As a result, if members of AST are subjected to torture in the future, one may see an organization that has favored peaceful protests and non-violent actions alter its tactics and take a more aggressive approach.

"The history of Islamic extremism shows that jail time can have a radicalizing effect on individuals. As a result, if members of AST are subjected to torture in the future, one may see an organization that has favored peaceful protests and non-violent actions alter its tactics and take a more aggressive approach."

1 This website can be accessed at www.al-qayrawan.blogspot.com.

2 As of August 23, 2011, the page has 3,862 individuals who "like" it.

3 As of August 23, 2011, the page has 8,249 individuals who "like" it. The conference announcement can be accessed at www.al-qayrawan.blogspot.com/2011/05/18-1432.html.

4 To see the images, visit the following URL: www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=39918.

5 The mosque is named after the Muslim General Uqba ibn Nafi who founded the city of Qayrawan in 670 CE. He served at the pleasure of the Umayya dynasty and played an important role in the Islamic conquests of North Africa.

6 This statement can be accessed at www.al-qayrawan.blogspot.com/2011/04/httpwww.html.

7 For more on this phenomenon see Geoff D. Porter, "AQIM's Objectives in North Africa," *CTC Sentinel* 4:2 (2011); Lianne Kennedy Boudali, "Leveraging History in AQIM Communications," *CTC Sentinel* 2:4 (2009).

8 Andrew Hammond and Tarek Amara, "Tunisia Islamists Arrested After Clashes in Capital," Reuters, June 28, 2011.

9 For a video of AST members after being released from prison, visit www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=107666999329321&oid=211220622244900.

10 For more information on the rally, visit www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=247787781921517.

Toward the end of July, AST also started a campaign to try and free Tunisian prisoners in Iraq who they believe have been unfairly arrested. It warns against a repeat of the lack of justice in a trial that sentenced Tunisian Yosri ben Fakher Trigui to death in 2006. It also pleas for Tunisian officials in Iraq to help resolve the situation, although it believes that the most significant obstacle is the unwillingness of the transitional government to take action.[11] On August 23, AST conducted a peaceful sit-in in front of the Iraqi embassy in Tunis to demand the release of Tunisian prisoners.[12]

Another sign of the group's potential growth is their announcement on July 24 that they were going to soon publish the first issue of a new magazine titled *Echo of the Helpers* (*Sada al-Ansar*). Once the magazine is released, more can be learned about the group. They may release the first issue during 'Id al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan to celebrate the holiday and to show the progress the organization has made in just a few months, as well as to project the tone of the group going forward.

Conclusion

Based on the content AST has released in the form of statements, essays, and videos, the group does not seem interested in global or local jihad. Rather, most of the issues the group is agitated about deal with local problems, and they have expressed their views through peaceful protests. For example, AST is very concerned with the so-called secularists in Tunisia who they see attempting to drive religion out of the state. Although at times the United States, France, and Israel are mentioned, it is not in the context of waging jihadist war against them. Instead, they are concerned about the United States and France meddling in their society. As for Israel, they do not want to establish official diplomatic relations with a perceived enemy. Therefore, the rise of AST coincides with the spread of Salafism in the region and is similar to the more pronounced public show of it in Egyptian and Jordanian societies.

It is premature to determine AST's future, but it is a fascinating example of how groups in societies that did not have the opportunity to organize have used their newfound freedoms to propagate their cause. It also raises important questions for the West when engaging with transitioning Arab societies. Not only will the West have to better understand and come to terms with the older Islamist parties that are usually linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, but also new Salafist groups that are smaller yet whose influence could potentially grow with greater room for the dissemination of their program.

Aaron Y. Zelin is a research associate in the Department of Politics at Brandeis University and maintains a blog at Jihadology.net.

11 They first posted a warning about this on July 25, 2011, which can be accessed at www.facebook.com/Molta9a.Ansar.Alchari3a/posts/259863817372580. Three days later, they posted another Facebook post about the issue, which can be accessed at www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=238078959559066&set=a.211666092200353.60781.211220622244900&type=1&ref=nf. They also released videos from the rally that can be accessed on AST's Facebook page.

12 For the statement announcing the sit-in, visit www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=249928875040741. They identify the following individuals who are imprisoned: "Tariq al-Hirzi al-`Auni, Yasri al-Tariqi, Muhammad al-Madini, Muhammad al-Hammami, `Abd al-Rahman al-Bazduri, and others that only God knows about."

Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

July 1, 2011 (UNITED STATES): Leon Panetta, the former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, was sworn in as secretary of defense. – *Voice of America, July 1*

July 1, 2011 (GERMANY): German Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich warned that the terrorist threat to Germany has not decreased, and the number of radicals continues to grow. – *AP, July 1*

July 3, 2011 (IRAQ): Gunmen killed five policemen in a drive-by shooting near Rutba, Anbar Province. – *Voice of America, July 3*

July 3, 2011 (PAKISTAN): Approximately two dozen Taliban fighters attacked a police checkpoint in Shangla District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, killing three policemen. – *AFP, July 2*

July 4, 2011 (PAKISTAN): Pakistan's military launched an offensive against Taliban fighters in Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *Wall Street Journal, July 4*

July 5, 2011 (MAURITANIA): Suspected militants from al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb attacked a military base in Bassiknou, Mauritania. The militants fled toward neighboring Mali after the attack. – *AP, July 6*

July 6, 2011 (GLOBAL): U.S. officials warned that al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula may attempt to surgically implant an explosive device in an air traveler, with the aim of blowing up an airplane. – *Wall Street Journal, July 7*

July 6, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters attacked multiple Afghan border police checkpoints in Nuristan Province, killing an estimated 23 police officers. Three women and two children were also killed. – *New York Times, July 7*

July 6, 2011 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani troops and Taliban fighters clashed in Miranshah, located in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. According to Agence France-Presse, "witnesses

said Wednesday's clashes broke out after Pakistani troops started to blow up a private hospital used by the Taliban and other militants, one day after a nearby bomb attack killed three troops and wounded another 15." – *AFP, July 6*

July 7, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): Canada formally ended its combat mission in Afghanistan. According to the Associated Press, "Canada is the sixth largest troop-contributing nation, behind the U.S. and European countries. While 2,850 Canadian combat troops are going home, 950 others have started streaming into the country to help train Afghan security forces." – *AP, July 7*

July 7, 2011 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb reportedly swore allegiance to new al-Qa`ida chief Ayman al-Zawahiri. – *Middle East Media Research Institute, July 7*

July 9, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told reporters that the United States is "within reach" of defeating al-Qa`ida. According to Panetta, "Now is the moment, following what happened with bin Laden, to put maximum pressure on them [al-Qa`ida's leaders], because I do believe that if we continue this effort that we can really cripple al-Qaeda as a threat to this country…I'm convinced that we're within reach of strategically defeating al-Qaeda." – *Washington Post, July 9*

July 11, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. drone killed 12 alleged militants in Gorvak village of North Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AP, July 11*

July 11, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed seven people at a political rally in Battagram District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. – *AP, July 11*

July 11, 2011 (PHILIPPINES): Two U.S. citizens and one Filipino were kidnapped in Zamboanga City. Authorities blame the Abu Sayyaf Group, and they believe that the hostages were brought to Basilan Province. – *GMANews.tv, July 13*

July 12, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): Ahmed Wali Karzai, a prominent Afghan politician and the half-brother of President Hamid Karzai, was assassinated at his home in Kandahar city. The assassin was apparently one of Wali Karzai's security guards. According to an Afghan police chief, "As he [the assassin] entered Wali's room, Wali came out of his bathroom. Mohammad [the assailant] fired twice at Wali without any conversation passing between the two. Wali received one bullet in the chest and second in the head." The killer was then shot dead by other security guards. – *Pajhwok Afghan News, July 12*

July 12, 2011 (RUSSIA): A suicide bomber attacked a police checkpoint in Ingushetia, located in the North Caucasus. The bomber was the only casualty. – *RIA Novosti, July 12*

July 13, 2011 (TURKEY): Turkish authorities foiled a plot to attack the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, arresting 15 suspected al-Qa`ida-linked terrorists. – *ABC News, July 13*

July 13, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed five French soldiers guarding a meeting between Afghan tribal elders and NATO officers in Kapisa Province. As reported in the *New York Times*, "the French soldiers, local leaders and tribal elders had gathered to discuss potential road projects, new dams, bridges and other development projects that are important elements of the military's attempts to build goodwill among Afghans and restore the country's shattered infrastructure." – *New York Times, July 13*

July 13, 2011 (INDIA): Three blasts ripped through Mumbai, killing more than 20 people. Authorities suspect that the Indian Mujahidin is responsible. – *NDTV, July 13; Time Magazine, July 13*

July 14, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber targeted the funeral services for Ahmed Wali Karzai at a Kandahar mosque, killing four people. – *National Journal, July 14*

July 14, 2011 (YEMEN): U.S. drones and fighter jets reportedly attacked militants belonging to al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula in Abyan Province. At least eight fighters were killed as they slept in a police station which they had overrun. – *New York Times, July 14*

July 16, 2011 (ALGERIA): A suicide bomber killed a police officer and a city hall employee at a public security headquarters in Boumerdes region. Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb later claimed responsibility. – *AP, July 16; Reuters, July 20*

July 18, 2011 (PAKISTAN): According to Pakistani officials, Taliban insurgents released a video showing them executing 16 Pakistani men, most of whom appear to be police officers. – *New York Times, July 18*

July 19, 2011 (YEMEN): Senior al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula militant Ayad al-Shabwani was killed near Zinjibar, according to Yemen's Defense Ministry. – *AP, July 21*

July 20, 2011 (GERMANY): German authorities arrested "Omid H.," identified as a 21-year-old Afghan national, on suspicion of recruiting or fundraising for al-Qa`ida and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. – *Reuters, July 21*

July 20, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters killed at least three Afghan policemen during a two-hour firefight in Kandahar city. – *Vancouver Sun, July 20*

July 20, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber on a bicycle killed four people in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif. – *New York Times, July 20*

July 21, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): The British Ministry of Defense announced that two Britons, a male and a female, were arrested in Afghanistan in a joint operation between Afghan forces and British soldiers. They are suspected of involvement in terrorism. – *BBC, July 21*

July 22, 2011 (UNITED STATES): Mohammed Zazi, the father of New York subway bomb plotter Najibullah Zazi, was convicted of lying to authorities. He faces up to 20 years in federal prison on each of the two charges. – *Christian Science Monitor, July 22*

July 22, 2011 (NORWAY): A car bomb exploded outside government buildings in downtown Oslo, killing eight people. Shortly after, a gunman shot to death 69 people at a youth camp on Utoeya island. The man responsible for both incidents was identified as Anders Behring Breivik, a right-wing Norwegian extremist. – *BBC, July 24; AP, July 29*

July 24, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked an army checkpoint in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing one Pakistani soldier. – *AP, July 24*

July 24, 2011 (PAKISTAN): A local tribal militia clashed with Taliban fighters in Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The tribal militia was supported by Pakistani forces. Approximately 27 militants and four tribesmen were killed in the fighting. – *AFP, July 25*

July 24, 2011 (YEMEN): A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden truck at an army camp in Aden, killing nine Yemeni soldiers. Yemeni officials claimed that the bomber was a Saudi member of al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula. – *AFP, July 24; UPI, July 26*

July 26, 2011 (GLOBAL): The leader of al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula, Nasir al-Wihayshi, swore allegiance to new al-Qa`ida chief Ayman al-Zawahiri. "I and your loyal fighters announce our loyalty to you [al-Zawahiri] and on fighting the enemies of God," he said. "We are doing fine and making progress both at the domestic and foreign levels and in line with the plan you have drawn for us." Al-Wihayshi also said, "The crusader American foe has stood impotent before the situation in Yemen." – *AP, July 26; Bloomberg, July 26*

July 26, 2011 (UNITED STATES): Matthew Olsen, President Barack Obama's nominee to head the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, said that attacking the U.S. homeland remains a "significant goal" for al-Qa`ida. "That threat is not so much from the senior (al Qaeda) leadership in Pakistan with one unified goal, it is now diffused in various regional locations under various leaders and with various goals," he explained. – *Reuters, July 26*

July 26, 2011 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. State Department issued a global travel warning telling Americans to take precautions about terrorist threats. As reported in the Associated Press, "It said al-Qaida and other groups are planning terror attacks against U.S. interests in Europe, Asia, Africa and Middle East. The department said attacks may be in the form of suicide operations, assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings and bombings. Americans should consider the potential for attacks on transportation systems and tourist infrastructure, it said. It noted such attacks in Moscow, London, Madrid, Glasgow and New York in recent years. The department also warned Americans to avoid demonstrations in Arab countries because they can turn violent." – *AP, July 28*

July 26, 2011 (ALGERIA): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives to avoid arrest in the eastern Algerian town of Bouhamza. There were no other casualties. – *AFP, July 27*

July 27, 2011 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida chief Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new video message, praising Syrian protesters seeking to overthrow the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. Criticizing al-Assad for being the "leader of the criminal gang" and the "descendent of the traitors," al-Zawahiri also tried to frame the uprising as an Islamic battle against U.S. and Israeli interests. "Tell America and Obama…we are waging a battle of freedom and liberation, freedom from corrupt tyrants and the liberation of the religion of the Muslims," he said. Al-Zawahiri argued that the United States wants to replace al-Assad with "a new ruler who follows America, protects Israel's interests and grants the (Muslim) nation a few freedoms." – *AP, July 28*

July 27, 2011 (UNITED STATES): Police arrested Naser Jason Abdo, an AWOL U.S. Army soldier, for allegedly plotting to attack fellow soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas. Authorities found an article from *Inspire* magazine in his possession. – *USA Today, July 29*

July 27, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed the mayor of Kandahar city, Ghulam Haidar Hamidi. The bomber apparently concealed the explosives in his turban. – *Reuters, July 27*

July 28, 2011 (UNITED STATES): The recently retired head of the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, Michael Leiter, told reporters that al-Qa`ida would like to attack the United States using "simple forms of chemical or biological weapons." He also warned that "smaller scale terrorist attacks are with us for at least the foreseeable future." – *AP, July 28*

July 28, 2011 (IRAN): According to the Associated Press, "The Obama administration accused Iran on Thursday of entering into a 'secret deal' with an al-Qaida offshoot that provides money and recruits for attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Treasury Department designated six members of the unit as terrorists subject to U.S. sanctions…Treasury said a branch headed by Ezedin Abdel Aziz Khalil was operating in Iran with the Tehran government's blessing, funneling funds collected from across the Arab world to al-Qaida's senior leaders in Pakistan. Khalil, the department said, has operated within Iran's borders for six years." – *AP, July 28*

July 28, 2011 (JORDAN): A Jordanian military court convicted Palestinian-born Isam Mohammed Taher al-Barqawi to five years in prison. Al-Barqawi was the mentor of Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, the slain leader of al-Qa`ida in Iraq. He was found guilty of "plotting terrorism," as well as recruiting individuals in Jordan to fight with the Taliban in Afghanistan. – *AP, July 28*

CTC Sentinel Staff

Editor-in-Chief
Erich Marquardt
Senior Editor, CTC

Editorial Board
COL Michael J. Meese, Ph.D.
Department Head
Department of Social Sciences (West Point)

COL Cindy R. Jebb, Ph.D.
Deputy Department Head
Department of Social Sciences (West Point)

LTC Liam Collins
Executive Director, CTC

CONTACT
Combating Terrorism Center
U.S. Military Academy
607 Cullum Road, Lincoln Hall
West Point, NY 10996
Phone: (845) 667-6383
Email: sentinel@usma.edu
Web: www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/

* For Press Inquiries: (845) 667-6383

SUPPORT
The Combating Terrorism Center would like to express its gratitude to its financial supporters, for without their support and shared vision of the Center products like the CTC Sentinel could not be produced. If you are interested in learning more about how to support the Combating Terrorism Center, please visit http://www.ctc.usma.edu or call Kristin Sorenson at West Point's Association of Graduates at 845-446-1561.

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.

July 28, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters launched a complex assault on Tirin Kot, the capital of Uruzgan Province. Using suicide vests, assault rifles and a car bomb, Taliban militants killed at least 19 Afghans. The assault may have involved as many as seven suicide bombers. – *Wall Street Journal, July 29; New York Times, July 28*

July 28, 2011 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine soldiers engaged in a five-hour battle with Abu Sayyaf Group fighters on Jolo Island in Sulu Province. Seven Philippine soldiers were killed. – *AFP, July 28*

July 29, 2011 (PAKISTAN): The Pakistani Taliban said that they have custody of two Swiss tourists who were kidnapped earlier in the month while traveling through Baluchistan Province. In exchange for their release, the Taliban demanded that the United States free Aafia Siddiqui, a female Pakistani scientist convicted of trying to kill Americans. – *AP, July 29*

July 30, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghanistan's intelligence agency said that an Afghan army officer has been arrested on accusations of being a member of the Taliban and intending to organize suicide and terrorist attacks in Kabul. – *AFP, July 30*

July 31, 2011 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle outside the police headquarters in Lashkar Gah, Helmand Province, killing approximately 12 Afghan police officers and a child. – *Los Angeles Times, July 31*