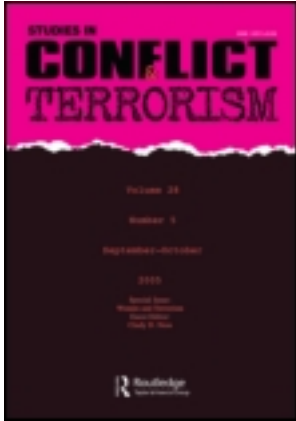


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Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure and its Evolution

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Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure and its Evolution

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The inner organizational structure of Al Qaeda within the expanded framework of the “Global Jihad movement” has been a subject of much debate between scholars. As will be elaborated later, the “Global Jihad movement” is composed of several elements that possess radical Islamic ideology and conduct operational activity in different regions in the world under the banner of Jihad. The dominant factor within the “Global Jihad movement” is by no doubt Al Qaeda. The purpose of this article is to focus solely on Al Qaeda and present the formal internal structure of the organization. The article argues that Al Qaeda is first and foremost, an infrastructural organization with a formal echelon, hierarchy, sub-departmental division, and duties distribution reflecting characteristics of a guerilla and terrorist organization. The article portrays the formal layout of Al Qaeda, composed of the main command apparatus, and names the different personalities who fill the more important positions within Al Qaeda's hierarchy from its days of inception until today.

There has been much debate about the “Al Qaeda organization's” structure or lack of, an aspect that affects how governments perceive the threat and respond to it.¹ This is especially so after the organization suffered losses to its physical structure, including training camps and leadership, and was hence forced to relocate from a relatively stable environment in Afghanistan to a rather fluid existence in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)

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Due to the rapid change in the dynamics and characteristics of terrorism-related issues, especially when referring to Global Jihad entities, this article should be regarded accurate as of 5 September 2010.

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of Pakistan. In its new location “The Al Qaeda organization” is constantly fraught with the requirements to avoid law enforcement action as well as to regenerate and reequip its losses. This has given strength to much of the debate that Al Qaeda has declined as an organization and hence its operational efficiency has reduced and that the organization is no longer capable of carrying out spectacular attacks. This had led to the argument that the terrorist threat has now moved to the other entities of the “Global Jihad movement”—local Islamic groups, lone individuals, or small cells that, although inspired by Al Qaeda, nevertheless evolve and work independently.

This article, however, argues that Al Qaeda, first and foremost, exists as a formal organization with a solid structure even if it is not based in a fixed or identifiable territory. It is this infrastructure that has provided Al Qaeda with the ability to survive the difficulties it is facing since the declaration of the Global War on Terrorism that followed the September 11, 2001 attacks. “The Al Qaeda organization’s” ability to regroup and “replenish” the loss of its physical infrastructure and its leadership is what is allowing it to survive and maintain the resilience of the ideology that the group continues to recreate and disseminate. Although in recent years, Al Qaeda has adopted more ideological and inspirational characteristics, it still exists as a group, and possesses, first and foremost, operational characteristics of a guerilla and terrorist organization. Therefore, it would be too early and foolhardy to write off “The Al Qaeda organization” as both the dominant factor of the “Global Jihad movement,” as well as the main terrorist threat in the international arena, as has been the trend among a number of scholars and analysts.²

Organization, First and Foremost

To study terrorism, its creation as well as its decline, it is important to understand that like an organization, terrorism is based on a model that integrates the individual, the group, and society. Terrorists cannot be considered in isolation from social and political contexts as well as the context of a grouping or order that they thrive in.³

Terrorism can be considered to be a rational political choice. As terrorist groups have an inherent consistent set of values, beliefs, and images of the external environment, they can be considered to be rational political actors. And as such, a rational group with a consistent set of values, a set of goals and ideals, and a set of means to those goals can be considered a collective coherent set, or an organization.⁴

Further, terrorist organizations are very similar to other organizations. This is because:

1. Terrorist groups have a defined structure and have processes to make collective decisions.
2. Functionally differentiated roles exist for members of the organization.
3. There are recognized leaders in positions of formal authority.
4. The organization has collective goals, which are pursued as a unit, with collective responsibility claimed for its actions.⁵

Leadership and its Role

Leadership is crucial to any organization. For the organization to be efficient, leaders have crucial roles that eliminate inefficiency in the structure of a terrorist organization and its activities. It has been established that leaders play a crucial role when it comes to dissemination of ideology and the goals of a terrorist group. That role can be carried out even if a group does not have a clear structure and is mainly a networked entity. However, the leader of a terrorist organization also plays an important role in the planning and overseeing of operations of the group. And it is this role of leadership that says those

terrorist organizations that aim at efficiency and large-scale “spectacular” attacks require a coherent command and control structure.

When it comes to carrying out operations, the leader of a terrorist organization has the following role. He, first, monitors and audits the middlemen involved in the operations. Second, he provides incentive-based compensation to the middlemen. Third, the leader engages in punishment strategies when he has evidence of shirking by members.⁶ With these roles, the leader ensures communication, auditing, fulfillment, and punishment with regard to the organization's operations.

While the leader's role and presence cause vulnerabilities for the terrorist organization, it also enables the organization to have a communicative structure, which is significant for attaining efficiency in operation.

Moreover, the leadership of an organization is important, as it is responsible for taking necessary measures in keeping the organization together and functional. A terrorist organization offers its members the fulfillment of basic human needs: the opportunity for action, the need to belong, the desire for social status, and the acquisition of material rewards. To keep the group healthy and to fulfill those needs, the organization's leadership is crucial. Thus, the leadership plays an indispensable role when it comes to maintaining organizational integrity, which is necessary to both attain organizational goals as well as offer fulfillment to its members. Organizational integrity is thus often viewed above and beyond the group's ideology or goals. While organizational goals are mutable and dependent on external dynamics and counterterrorism efforts, integrity and structure are vital for the group to exist and operate.⁷ Failure to maintain organizational integrity will create dissension in the organization and lead it into decline.⁸

Hierarchy or Networks?

Contemporary terrorism discourse deals mainly with two types of terrorist group structures—a command-cadre (hierarchical) structure and a network structure. The hierarchical or command-cadre structure is like a terrorist army, where the leadership provides to the middlemen and the members both material as well as non-material (ideological) incentives.⁹ A network, on the other hand, is composed of a set of actors (or nodes) connected by ties. Networks are self-organized and self-enrolling.

The network organization, from the perspective of terrorists, is advantageous with regard to a network's resistance to disruption. As the Internet facilitates the creation of these networks, this form of organization allows people to form cells without necessarily meeting in person. And as communication between nodes in planning actual operations is minimal, this form of “leaderless terrorism” is harder for law enforcement personnel to dismantle.

However, a “leaderless terrorism” or a network-based organization remains mostly unsuited for carrying out complex tasks that require communication, cooperation,¹⁰ and mostly significant professional trainings. Network organizations will be incapable of carrying out complex attacks such as the 11 September attack on New York and Washington, DC.¹¹

The command-cadre structure, on the other hand, enables groups to carry out big, complex strikes that require coordination and centralized professional trainings. “This structure is characterized by clear lines of authority, functional specialization, and centralized decision making. There are separate departments for particular tasks, and training takes place for operatives and managers at all levels.”¹² In a command-cadre structure, complex tasks are broken down into specific jobs and hence efficiency is achieved. Command-cadre structures definitely offer terrorist groups opportunities to plan and execute complex attacks

efficiently.¹³ However, it is significant to note that these organizational structures are usually found in terrorist groups operating in weak or failed states. Thus as the War on Terror progresses, previously active groups will move to regions of failed governance to operate in a command-cadre structure.¹⁴

For terrorist groups, there exists a tradeoff between efficiency and resilience. While efficiency requires communication and connectedness, it also makes the group more vulnerable to counterterrorism efforts.¹⁵ For a group like “The Al Qaeda organization,” the ability to carry out large-scale, efficient attacks remains important. Therefore, a command-cadre structure (or a hierarchical) structure continues to be an organizing principle for the organization.

Decline of Terrorist Organizations and Organization Structure

The systems theory of organization can be used to represent terrorism as a system. As per the theory, it is explained that terrorist organizations receive exogenous as well as constituent support. Exogenous support constitutes support from sources other than its constituent base. These inputs form the group’s identity and the conversion of this input into output is represented by the acts of political violence and terrorism the group conducts. The conversion of input into output gives the throughput of a terrorist organization, and the throughput will enhance the group’s identity. A successful operation will increase the group’s cohesion and the legitimacy of the organization. This in turn will increase the exogenous support and as well as constituent support (as legitimacy of the group will go up in the eyes of constituent members). And of course, cyclically, this increase will improve and influence the group’s throughput process.¹⁶

Such a structure and feedback cycle is possible when a group functions as a hierarchical organization where exogenous support, constituent members, and the leadership occupy certain roles and functions. Every efficient action (or attack) carried out by such a group, will strengthen its base and consequently strengthen further attacks.

When counterterrorism strategies dismantle an organization or its actions they attack the weaknesses in this system structure. These weaknesses often constitute points of communication between exogenous support, constituent members, leadership, and group input. The ultimate target of counterterrorism strategies is this infrastructure.

Organizations such as Al Qaeda realize the importance of this command-cadre, hierarchical structure, and the feedback loop of efficiency it creates. Although the structure is what makes the organization susceptible to dismantling by law enforcement officials, the structure and the feedback loop give the terrorist group efficiency and growth.¹⁷

A terrorist organization does provide its members “primitive” societal needs. If the capability to fulfill those needs is receding, the organization either changes its focus or ceases to exist. However, organizations such as Al Qaeda, in the event of a decline, will revert back to their hierarchical structure, as it is within that structure that a feedback loop of efficiency can be applied, and constituents and exogenous support can be convinced of the organization’s legitimacy.

Therefore, despite decline, there would always be a tendency for the group to recreate and preserve the organizational integrity over everything else. As will be discussed later, during the last nine years the “Al Qaeda organization” has lost four “chiefs of staff,” four chiefs of the special (external) forces unit, and at least half a dozen of senior regional field commanders (“Generals”). It was however, still able to regroup and mobilize suitable replacements from within. Subsequently, it has been able to continue its activity and maintain its status as the biggest terrorist threat to Western forces in the current *Jihad* arenas (Afghanistan and Iraq) and the international arena as a whole.

Historical Development: Global Jihad Movement and the Al Qaeda Organization

Nowadays, the main terrorist threat to the United States and its allies stems from the “Global Jihad movement.” The movement is based on the ideology of “*Salafiya-Jihadia*,” a misinterpretation of the holy book of the Muslims—the Qur’an and the sayings of the prophet Mohammed—the Hadith. The “*Salafiya-Jihadia*” ideology evolved in the second half of the twentieth century. It is an extremist offshoot of the *Salafi* ideology that was developed in the Muslim world during the first half of the twentieth century. The *Salafi* ideology calls for a total return to the lifestyle of the early days of Islam.¹⁸ It calls for the implementation of *Sharia* (Islamic religious law) across the Muslim world as a prelude for its implementation all over the globe. *Salafi* ideology is perceived as the only way to overcome the superiority of the West, which has shaped Middle East politics for the last two centuries. The “*Salafiya*” ideology was laid out in Egypt toward the end of the 1920s with the establishment of the “Muslim Brotherhood.”¹⁹ The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood ideology on the “Global Jihad movement” remains prevalent even today. In its early development, the different *Salafi* movements kept a low profile and used preaching, propaganda (“*Dawa* and *Tabligh*”), and social activity as their modus operandi, publicly opposing any use of violence. *Salafi* ideology seeks to gain the support of the people before the imposition of *Sharia*, or “Muslim tradition and law,” over the land. *Salafi* groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, were heavily persecuted by the secular regimes throughout the Muslim world. However, these groups were able to survive and spread throughout the Middle East and beyond. Salafism survived in Muslim states as well as through the large Muslim Diaspora across Europe, North America, and Australia.²⁰

As an extremist offshoot of the “*Salafiya*” ideology, “*Salafiya-Jihadia*” calls for the use of extensive activism to implement the *Salafi* ideology over Muslim and non-Muslim Land. This activism includes the use of violence and total Holy War (*Jihad*) against those not holding their religious–political beliefs. Their enemies include Christians, Jews, Hindus, and all Muslims who are not *Salafies*.²¹ The “*Salafiya-Jihadia*” first emerged in Egypt during the 1960s, and was led by the Egyptian educationist Sai’d Al-Qutb. The ideology soon spread and gained variable support worldwide.

The Blowback

The “Global Jihad movement” as the operational entity of the “*Salafiya-Jihadia*” ideology emerged in Afghanistan during the uncertain decade of the 1980s. As a result of a violent internal conflict over power between local communists and Islamists (*Mujahidin*—holy warriors), Afghanistan has been experiencing instability since the mid-1970s. The internal dispute became a regional war following the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 to assist the communist faction. This created a surge of romanticism within the greater Muslim world that perceived it as a religious war between the modern crusaders, the Soviets, and the Muslims. Muslim volunteers from all over the world, on their own initiative, went to Afghanistan in order to take part in the evolving “Holy War.” Receiving the volunteers upon arrival and assigning them to different Afghan *Mujahidin* groups became the responsibility of non-Afghan Islamic religious leaders that were in Afghanistan.

Dr. Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian religious cleric, originally from a small Palestinian village named “Silat Al Hartia” in the Jenin area,²² was one of the first Arabs to organize the Muslim volunteers. Azzam was considered the spiritual mentor and ideologist of the “Global Jihad movement” and established the “Maktab Al-Khadamat (MaK)” (the service bureau) in 1984.²³ Located in the Pakistan–Afghan border city of Peshawar, MaK dealt

with the growing stream of Muslim volunteers coming to participate in the war against the Soviets. The MaK accommodated the new arrivals in several guest houses in Peshawar, and following a couple of days of formal paper work the MaK allocated and distributed them across different Afghan fighting groups.²⁴ They then received basic training and were sent to the Afghan front to fight the Red Army.²⁵

Among those volunteers arriving at Peshawar was Osama bin Laden,²⁶ who arrived from Saudi Arabia. Even though bin Laden came to Afghanistan as a wealthy man, he wanted to take part in the war as a soldier and a local commander in the field.²⁷ In the beginning, Azzam and bin Laden cooperated, and much of the MaK activity was financed by Osama bin Laden. However, as the war with the Soviets reached its concluding stages a dispute between bin Laden and Azzam over MaK resources and strategic direction²⁸ surfaced. As a consequence, bin Laden broke away from MaK and formed the “Al Qaeda organization” in Peshawar, Pakistan on 11 August 1988.²⁹ Although Azzam ideologically conceived “Al Qaeda al Sulbah” (The Solid Base),³⁰ Osama bin Laden emerged as its undisputed founder and remains its leader to date.

As bin Laden had been in the frontline and held financial support, the bulk of MaK members preferred to join him. Nevertheless, Abdullah Azzam was still considered a threat to some members in the circles around bin Laden. In November 1989, Azzam was assassinated and bin Laden was able to take complete control over MaK and merge it into Al Qaeda.³¹

“Global Jihad” Trajectory

At the end of the Afghan war, the global security landscape was dominated by four different trends.

Internal Jihad (Jihad from Within)

The success in Afghanistan excited the minds and the hearts of millions in the Muslim world. Supported and led by veterans that came back to their homelands from Afghanistan, numerous radical organizations and entities were established throughout the Muslim world. These organizations carried out waves of terrorist attacks in their homelands in order to topple the local secular regimes and establish an Islamic caliphate instead. Enthusiastic from the victory in Afghanistan, they believed victory in their homeland was only a matter of time and commitment, which they strongly possessed. All nations with Muslim populations in the Middle East, Central Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, and Southeast Asia have experienced this trend at some level. More serious challenges to the local secular regimes were posed by the terrorist activities of the *Mujahidin* elements in Egypt, Algeria, Pakistan, and to a slightly lesser extent Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Tunisia, Libya, as well as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, the Mindanao region of the Philippines, and many more.³²

Searching for New “Jihad Arenas”

According to “*Salafiya-Jihadia*” a “*Jihad arena*” is a region in the world where Muslims fight non-Muslims. Furthermore, it is the obligation of every Muslim in the world to take part in the fighting.³³ Following the end of the Afghan war, new “*Jihad arenas*” were designated in different parts of the world, with the common denominator being Muslims who fought non Muslims. “Global Jihad” fighters found their way to fight alongside their local Muslim “brothers” in Tajikistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, Mindanao (Philippines),

Sulawesi, and Mullukus islands (Indonesia), Somalia, as well as the traditional arena of Afghanistan.³⁴

Infrastructure Build-Up

This was the main activity of the newly established "Al Qaeda organization" and Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden wanted to provide the necessary logistical backup in order to support the fighters in the different Muslim states of the "internal *Jihad*" and those fighting alongside their Muslim brothers in "*Jihad* arenas." Bin Laden wanted to provide the basis³⁵ for the operational activity of both the internal *Jihad* elements and those in the different "*Jihad* arenas." In 1991, bin Laden returned to his Saudi homeland with the glory and reputation of having fought in the Afghan war. Later that year, the strongman behind the Islamist Sudanese regime of Hassan al-Turabi invited him³⁶ to come with his Al Qaeda followers to Sudan. In Sudan, bin Laden was able to implement his vision of the "base" and establish a vast complex of training camps for newly recruited *Jihad* fighters.

These new recruits received early and advanced training in bin Laden camps in Sudan and then went on to fight in their homelands or in "*Jihad* arenas."³⁷ By the end of 1995, following the assassination attempt of Egyptian president Husni Mubarak in Adis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, severe international pressure³⁸ was put on the Sudanese regime to expel bin Laden and his forces. As a consequence, Bin Laden was expelled from Sudan in May 1996. He returned to Afghanistan where he allied himself with the victorious "Taliban," which had violently taken complete control over the country in 1996. In Afghanistan, the "Al Qaeda organization" established a much larger complex of numerous training camps for *Mujahidin* throughout the country.³⁹ Numerous "*Jihad* fighters" from different locations and entities have gone through different types of trainings by the Al Qaeda organization trainers in the camps in Afghanistan.

External Jihad

In the early years that followed the war in Afghanistan, the "Al Qaeda organization" was fully occupied with assisting the "internal *Jihad*" and the fighting in "*Jihad* arenas." Al Qaeda decided to completely abandon external *Jihad* at this stage. Only a small group of 40 to 50 members of Afghan veterans, who had been crystallized in the "Ittihad Al Islami Al Afghani" (Abd Al Rasool Sayaf Group) main training camp in Sadah, with no connection to the "Al Qaeda organization," decided to move their activities into the international arena and conduct external *Jihad* against the West on Western soil.⁴⁰ By late 1995, the activity of this group was halted by the CIA and the FBI. Its dominant leaders (Ramzi Yossef, Wali Amin Shah, and Abd Al Karim Murad) were arrested and the other members of the group were put on the "Most Wanted" list with a 5 million dollar reward posted for their arrest.⁴¹ The group's senior fugitive Khalid Sheikh Mohamed (KSM) tried to interest bin Laden⁴² with external *Jihad* in early 1996 and even suggested a terrorist attack scenario that resembled the 9/11 attacks, but these ideas were rejected by bin Laden and external *Jihad* planning was put on hold.

The shift from internal to external *Jihad* occurred toward the end of 1997 and in early 1998. At that point, it was believed that bin Laden acknowledged that the "internal *Jihad*" had failed. This was because after almost a decade of intensive terrorist activity in many different Islamic nations (with the external logistical support, mostly from bin Laden and the "Al Qaeda organization"), the regimes in these nations managed to survive in spite of experiencing instability at some stages. According to bin Laden's belief, this survival of

these regimes was the result of Western support. Therefore, it seems that bin Laden decided at this stage to stop the support for “internal *Jihad*” and focus the vast majority of his efforts on “external *Jihad*.” Bin Laden believed that “external *Jihad*” would make the West, primarily the United States, withdraw its influence, specifically its military forces, from the Middle East, and as a result allow Islamic elements to take over the secular regimes with ease. In February 1998, bin Laden announced the establishment of the “Islamic front for the fighting against the Jews and the crusaders” serving as a cover name for operations outside Afghan borders of the “Al Qaeda organization.” In this statement, “external *Jihad*” was called against Western targets, but mostly American targets as the highest priority targets for such attacks.⁴³ Six months later, the first external attack of Al Qaeda was carried out at the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, causing 225 fatalities and approximately 5,000 casualties, most of them being locals.⁴⁴ In October 2000, Al Qaeda carried out a second attempt to hit the U.S. Navy,⁴⁵ and successfully struck the U.S.S. *Cole* in the Gulf of Aden, nearly sinking the ship and killing 17 U.S. Marines.⁴⁶

On 11 September 2001, the “Al Qaeda organization” executed the most devastating attack so far, targeting American symbols of power in New York and Washington, DC. In response to the attack, a U.S.-led coalition force intervened in Afghanistan on 7 October 2001, and quickly gained control over the territory. As a consequence, the profile of the activity of “Global Jihad” terrorism in the international arena has changed significantly.

Current Status

Even though this article focuses on the inner structure of the Al Qaeda organization, a short introduction of the expanded “Global Jihad movement” is necessary. Already defined as the operational arm of the “*Salafiya-Jihadia*” ideology, the expanded “Global Jihad movement” today consists of the following components.

“The Al Qaeda Organization” (Core Al Qaeda)

As will be elaborated later in this article, the “Al Qaeda organization” still operates under an organized structure, which includes worldwide infrastructures and echelons. With a clearly defined leadership, membership, and a support base, core Al Qaeda (also known as “Al Qaeda classic” or “Al Qaeda Senior Leadership”) led by Osama bin Laden still exists in the FATA.⁴⁷ As a resilient group, Al Qaeda has adapted to the demography and topography of FATA—spread over a 1,520-mile long border and comprising of seven agencies and six frontier provinces.⁴⁸

The Logistical Networks

The “Global Jihad” movement, spearheaded by the “Al Qaeda organization,” uses a vast logistical network in order to support its worldwide activity. These networks are responsible for the recruitment of new activists and the safe transfer of them to training camps and into “*Jihad* arenas.”⁴⁹ These networks are mostly involved in logistical activity (such as the transferring *jihadi* volunteers to Iraq). However, in rare cases, these elements with the approval of the “Al Qaeda organization” leadership have initiated operational activity and carried out their own terrorist attacks. The most famous example of an attack initiated and executed by such a network was the Casablanca attack (May 2003) against Western targets.⁵⁰

Al Qaeda–Associated Local Organizations

Al Qaeda–associated groups refers to local organizations that were supported by bin Laden during the 1990s. Al Qaeda mainly provided training to these organizations, thereby supporting their struggle to bring down the local regimes in their own countries (“internal *Jihad*”). Due to difficulties that the “Al Qaeda organization” faced following the American led coalition invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, some of these organizations extended their targeting policy to include Western targets within the vicinity of their own operations.⁵¹ In the earlier cases this “expansion” was the consequence of the personal veteran relations developed between local groups’ leaders and the “Al Qaeda” seniors during the Afghan war.⁵² Among those organizations one may find the Jama’ah Islamiyah of Southeast Asia (JI), the Abu Sayaf Group (ASG) of the Philippines,⁵³ Harakat Al-Jihad Al-Alami (HUJA),⁵⁴ and the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU),⁵⁵ an Uzbek group that split from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).⁵⁶ Those groups have carried out attacks and plots against international targets, within the vicinity of their own operations, on behalf of the “Al Qaeda organization” and in accordance with its directive. These attacks and plots include the “Al Qaeda organization” directives to JI operation in Bali in October 2002 and the plot to blow up a truck full of explosives by ASG in the U.S. embassy in Manila in 2002. Some operatives, with or without the knowledge of the leaders of “Lashkar-e-Toiba,” served as operational support and logistical aid for other Al Qaeda plots. These include the “shoe bomber” British national Richard Reid, who attempted to crash American Airlines flight 63 from Paris to Miami⁵⁷ in December 2001, and the French national Willie Brigitte, whose plan to attack Australia’s only nuclear power plant was foiled in 2003.⁵⁸

In recent years “Al Qaeda’s” connections and collaborations with “local organizations” have become more formal. Since the U.S.-led offensive in Iraq in 2003, the world has witnessed the establishment of regional “Al Qaedas” initiated by the “Al Qaeda organization” leadership that are based on local groups. The Algerian group, Global Salafist group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) became Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM).⁵⁹ Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al Qaeda in Yemen (AQIY) were established,⁶⁰ and eventually merged. In Iraq, “Tawhid Wal Jihad” changed its name to Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and formed the Islamic state of Iraq (ISI), an umbrella organization for different *jihadi* groups.⁶¹ Al Qaeda in the Land of Kinanah was formed in Egypt and Palestine.⁶² Another formal merger took place between Al Qaeda and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) senior leaders that are located on the Afghanistan–Pakistan border.⁶³

The “Al Qaeda organization’s” targeting policy has influenced its associating groups. These groups have diverted some of their operational efforts from solely targeting domestic targets to the inclusion of international targets as well. Since these mergers have been constructed, the new “Al Qaeda” groups attacked Western targets within their vicinity of operations, probably in accordance with Al Qaeda directives. Within this framework AQIY has attacked Korean tourists, Western embassies, U.S. missions and compounds, as well as oil facilities.⁶⁴ The AQIM attacked UN facilities, kidnapped Western tourists of different origins, and threatened to attack Western targets.⁶⁵ On 1 February 2008, AQIM attacked the Israeli embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania.⁶⁶

The creation of sort of the “Al Qaeda movement,” composed of the different new established “Al Qaedas,” is a major development that should be discussed and analyzed extensively in other publications and platforms.

At any rate the authors expect more regional groups such as the Somali “Shabab Al Mujahidin” to “cross the Rubicon” and join hands with the “Al Qaeda organization” and include international targets, located in the vicinity of their operation in the horn of Africa, within their targeting policy.

Iraqi Off Shoots

After the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Iraq was marked as the central “*Jihad* arena.” A large numbers of Islamic activists made their way to the nation in order to take part in the struggle against the U.S. military. These terrorists, headed by the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, tended to adopt an agenda of their own, one that was unauthorized and even contradictory to the “Al Qaeda organization” interests and directions.⁶⁷ The attacks against the Shi’ite population of Iraq, as well as the attacks conducted by al-Zarqawi outside of the country,⁶⁸ were carried out against Al Qaeda interests, and were contradictory to specific directions al-Zarqawi received from the “Al Qaeda organization” leadership.⁶⁹ The elimination of al-Zarqawi in June 2006 by U.S forces, and the nomination of Yusuf Khalid al-Badri alias Abu Ayyub al-Masri alias Abu Hamza al-Muhajir as his successor,⁷⁰ strengthened the cooperation between the “Al Qaeda organization” leadership in the Afghanistan–Pakistan border zone and Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). AQI may not have completely abandoned its own agenda, but al-Zarqawi’s successor, Abu Ayyub, was a former member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), an Egyptian group that had merged with Al Qaeda in 2001. EIJ is led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, who is the current second in command of Al Qaeda. In a rare statement by Abu Ayyub that described the role AQI had in the foiled attempt to strike a London night-life district and Glasgow international airport in July 2007, AQI’s targeting policy in the international arena was referred to and announced: “. . . indeed we have already carried out many operations outside Iraq—one of which that should be particularly mentioned is the most recent operation in Britain, when part [of the mission] was carried out at the airport, and rest was a failure, due to a mistake committed by one of our brothers a few days before the operation, when he called to break the news that the operation was about to take place.”⁷¹ The present authors believe that this role played by AQI with this operation was part of an overall “Al Qaeda organization” plan to attack facilities in the United Kingdom, apparently led and initiated by Al Qaeda central. Another current example of the exact operational cooperation between the “Al Qaeda organization” and AQI in the international arena was exposed in the foiled attempt to conduct a terrorist attack during the World Cup games in South Africa. AQI activist Abdullah Azzam Salih Misfar has initiated early plans to conduct a terrorist attack in South Africa aiming at Dutch and Danish teams and supporters, but these plans had not progressed past a wish list phase. “I wrote the idea and sent it to Abu Hamza (Abu Ayyub Al Masri),” and the planning was said to have gone to Al Qaeda deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri for approval.⁷²

By late April 2010 Abu Ayyub Al Masri, the head of AQI, was killed along with Abu Omar Al Baghdadi, the overall leader of the ISI (Islamic State of Iraq). By early May AQI named Nasser Liden Abu Suleiman as the successor of Abu Ayyub.⁷³

“Local Initiatives” of Al Qaeda–Inspired Elements

These like-minded individuals carry out on their own initiative and capabilities terror attacks in the name of “Global Jihad.” They take advantage of the current simplicity of undertaking terror tactics in order to achieve maximum damage and publicity. They often do not possess strong ideological or religious motivation.⁷⁴ Instead, they are driven by their own socioeconomic situation and their personal frustrations against their home country. Those individuals that are unable to adjust to the new environment in Western societies convert their hatred into terrorist activity under the name of “Global Jihad.” These elements can be found mostly within radical elements of the Muslim communities across Europe,

although there have been some converts to Islam that have been known to participate in such acts. This phenomenon surfaced during the investigation of the assassination of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh.⁷⁵ Although most “local initiative” terrorists are not that effective, they remain a source of concern and remain a threat. Their activity is characterized by unsophisticated acts of violence such as stabbing, using Molotov cocktails, arson (as in the case of Muslim riots in France), and solitary assassinations. But in some cases, due to the ease of conducting terrorist activity by using raw materials—such as fertilizers, which are available publicly, and instructions on assembling explosives found on the Internet, large-scale “spectacular” attacks are possible. An example of this is the attack on the Madrid train system in March 2004.⁷⁶ The investigations into the attacks found no proof of external involvement of Al Qaeda or any other extremist element. The Egyptian authorities claim that the Sinai Peninsula attacks against Western hotels and local tourist attractions in October 2004, July 2005, and April 2006 were part of a local initiative that is considered homegrown. According to the formal Egyptian declaration, these attacks were carried out by radical elements from within the local Sinai Bedouin community without any external connections, similar to the attacks in Madrid. They were motivated by a feeling of deprivation and poor socioeconomic status; a feeling resonated across some Muslim communities in Europe.⁷⁷

Recent exposure of homegrown terrorist cells in the United States has reemphasized the threat that these groups pose to the West. These cells are composed of U.S. citizens that suffered from poor socioeconomic conditions and subsequently converted to Islam. They chose to follow the *Salafi-jihadist* interpretation of Islam, which has led them to support and conduct terrorist operations and plots on behalf of “Global Jihad.”⁷⁸

Locally initiated homegrown cells only possess ideological affiliation to Al Qaeda and operate on their own resources and initiatives, while associated groups have strong and traditional operational ties with the Al Qaeda leadership. Associated groups communicate with Al Qaeda leadership, and get advice and directions and look to receive approval for their proposals of operations. Thus, it seems that Al Qaeda controls most of the operational activity of “Global Jihad” in the international arena and seeks to integrate it with its political and operational policy. As Al Qaeda possesses full control over its own operational infrastructure it also has control over the activity of its partners, and its logistical affiliates. It has also gained further control over the Iraqi branch, after the elimination of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Al Qaeda has little to do with the activity of local elements that operate on their own initiative and capabilities. While these elements flourish on the Internet, where they maintain many addresses and publish their claims of responsibility as well as plan future acts.

Within the “Global Jihad” movement, Al Qaeda is by far its most prominent element. In less than two decades, Al Qaeda and its founder Osama bin Laden have been able to position themselves as the pillars of radical Islam and as the operational center for the entire radical Islam spectrum. Since the end of the Afghan war, Al Qaeda has served as a magnet for all Islamic radicals around the world and as the sole reference and inspiration for operational activity. In the eyes of the mass media and the public, Al Qaeda seems to be the only default for all Islamist radicalism and Islamist terrorist activity throughout the globe.⁷⁹

The Structure of Al Qaeda

The inner structure of the “Al Qaeda” organization, since its inception, has been debated by academic scholars and professionals researching “Global Jihad.” A central question is the

extent to which Al Qaeda is limited to a functional role as an umbrella organization that has loose ties between its internal branches, and as an inspirational source for other Islamist entities around the globe. It seems that although there is a prominent operational activity of affiliated loose entities, as shown in the previous chapter, the role of Al Qaeda as the center for all the operational activities of “Global Jihad” elements is still dominant. Bin Laden’s organization is deeply involved in the operational activity of four out of the five most radical Islamic elements that are involved in terror attacks in the name of “Global Jihad.” As a result, the majority of the most devastating attacks in recent years internationally can be directly attributed back to the Al Qaeda organization.

Since its establishment, Al Qaeda has evolved into a strict and clear-cut hierarchical structure organization. It is the authors’ firm belief that this formal infrastructure is the main factor which enabled Al Qaeda to adapt and overcome the setbacks it suffered from the Global War on Terrorism led by the United States that erupted following 9/11 and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001. Since then Al Qaeda continued its activity in providing operational and logistical support around the globe.

To determine how Al Qaeda’s operations will change over time it is necessary to understand the internal structure and hierarchy of the organization since its establishment. This would be of particular interest to security and intelligence agencies that are concerned with operational countermeasures to dismantle Al Qaeda’s organizational structure worldwide.

Al Qaeda’s internal structure and hierarchy was first exposed following the capture of several documents in Afghanistan.⁸⁰ It is not clear when, where, and by whom these documents, published in the Harmony Database at West Point, were written. However, the cooperation between Al Qaeda and the Taliban, which has been referred to in the text, dates these documents to a period after the return of Al Qaeda to Afghanistan from Sudan in 1996. These documents can be considered to be a sort of Al Qaeda codex or protocol. The foundations for the hierarchy and organizational structure were laid down much earlier throughout a series of discussions by the senior leadership of Al Qaeda. An Egyptian journalist, Ahmad Mussa, published a series of seized documents from Afghanistan in the Egyptian newspaper *Nahadt Al Misr*.⁸¹ These documents described the early infrastructure of Al Qaeda that evolved into a fully fledged organizational structure. The information in the Harmony database at West Point and the documents published by Ahmad Mussa were supported and in some cases verified by the testimony of former Al Qaeda activist Jamal Al Fadl.⁸²

Based on these documents the organizational structure and hierarchy of Al Qaeda is presented in Figure 1.

The Amir

The *Amir*, or overall leader, holds direct responsibility over all Al Qaeda’s activities. The *Amir* resembles both internal and external operations—inside Afghanistan or outside its borders. The leader possesses religious, operational, and logistical authority over Al Qaeda’s activities. The leader is involved with operational, strategic, and tactical planning as well as logistical and organizational planning. The leader approves the annual work plan, the annual budget, and is in charge of changing them according to new developments. He is also responsible for the handling of the internal functioning of the organization and is very much involved with nominations, promotions, and manning of all senior positions in the organization.⁸³

The founder and undisputed *Amir* of Al Qaeda throughout the years has been Osama bin Laden (OBL). In recent years, there have been increasing indications of a decrease in bin

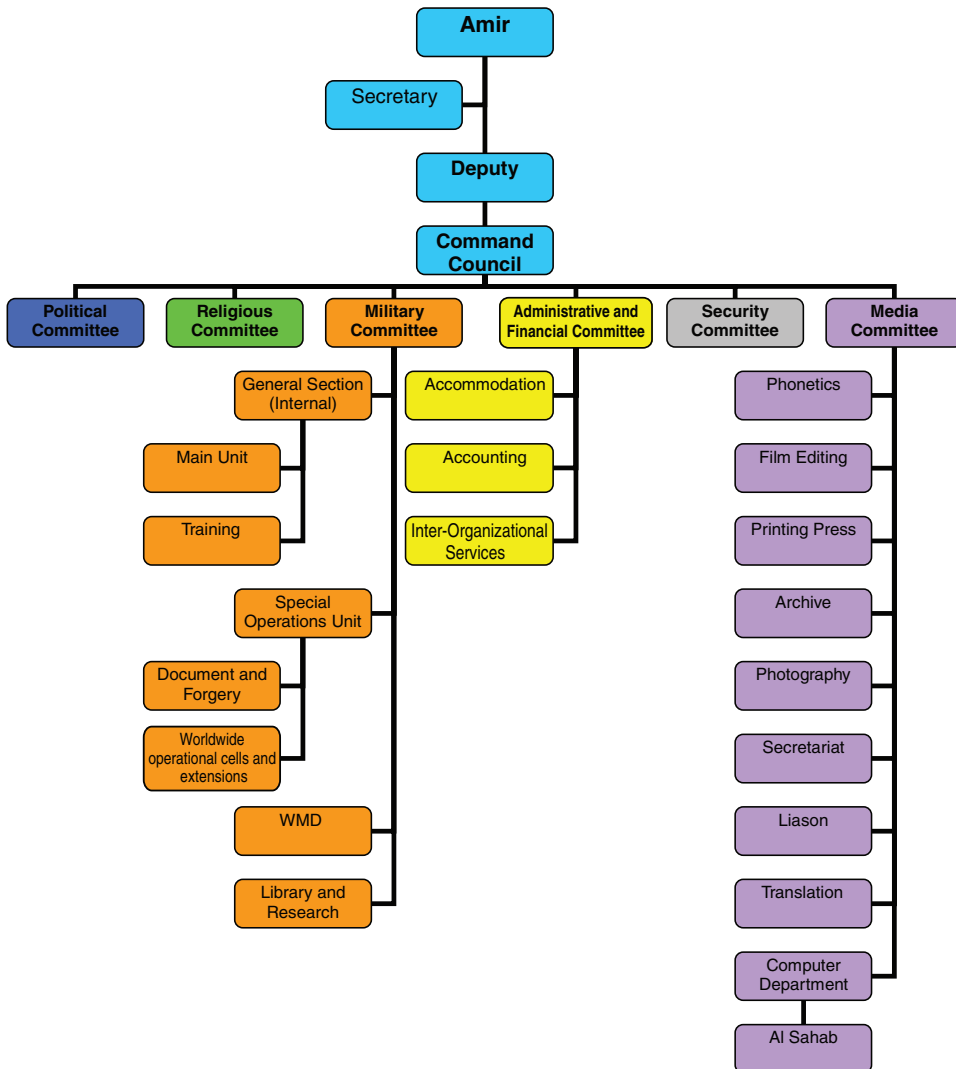


Figure 1. Organizational structure and hierarchy of Al Qaeda.

Laden's dominance and his position within the organization.⁸⁴ As a consequence, it seems that his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri⁸⁵ has gained more authority within the organization. Nevertheless, bin Laden still remains the overall *Amir*.⁸⁶

The Deputy

The deputy's characteristics should resemble those of the leader, or be close to them. His duties depend on what the leader entrusts to him.⁸⁷ Since the formation of the "world Islamic front for combat against the Jews and the crusaders," a formal unification of several organizations dominated by Al Qaeda and to a lesser extent by the "Egyptian Islamic Jihad,"⁸⁸ Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri served as the deputy of Al Qaeda. Al-Zawahiri has gained more authority, especially after the official fusion between Al Qaeda and the EIJ and the

establishment of “Qaedat Al Jihad” in June 2001. During 2008, Mustafa Abu Yazid aka Sheikh Sai’d assumed responsibility for several utilities and tasks that were before under the authority of al-Zawahiri, and was appointed as the overall in charge of Afghanistan.⁸⁹ This might suggest that Yazid may be the current de facto deputy of Al Qaeda or some sort of “chief executive” of the organization. In May 2010, Yazid was killed by an American Drone strike.

The Secretary

The secretary is appointed by the *Amir* and is responsible for carrying out secretarial duties such as organizing the leader’s appointments, external relations, and his work schedule. The secretary accompanies the leader wherever he goes.⁹⁰ It is not clear whether this position is occupied nowadays and by whom. It seems that in the past Nassir Al Wahishi aka Abu Basir Al Yamani⁹¹ was Al Qaeda’s secretary⁹² and was succeeded by Wadih El Hage⁹³ until his arrest in 1998.

The Command Council

The Command Council (“Majlis Al Shura”) is the highest decision-making body of Al Qaeda. Nominated by the *Amir*, the duties of its members are to plan and supervise all aspects of the organization’s activity. The Command Council consults the leader throughout the process of decision making. The Command Council is considered the highest authority in the organization, excluding the leader and his deputy. The council consists of 7–10 members and is chosen every second year by the leader and is assembled twice a month. The Command Council authorizes the organization’s regulations and policy, the preparations of the working plan, the annual budget, and elects the members of the organization’s different committees.⁹⁴

The Command Council fills a very important role within the decision-making process of Al Qaeda, as well as in its day-to-day running. Only the most senior members of the organization can be part of it. The Council was usually composed of committee leaders and only a few select subunit leaders. The following members had served as members of the Command Council at one stage or another:

Osama bin Laden serves as the head of the Command Council.

Ayman al-Zawahiri serves as a member of the Command Council.

Subhi Abd Al Aziz Abu Sita aka Mohamed Atef aka Abu Hafis was the former head of the military committee. He was from Egypt and was killed during the bombardment of Kandahar by U.S forces on November 2001.⁹⁵

Madani al Tayyib aka Abu Fadhel Al Makky was the head of the finance committee of the organization. He is related by marriage to Osama bin Laden. When Al Qaeda was headquartered in Sudan in the first half of the 1990s, he was involved with Al Qaeda’s efforts in obtaining nuclear capabilities.⁹⁶ Currently, he is probably in Saudi custody.⁹⁷

Saif Al Adil was the former head of the security committee of Al Qaeda. He replaced Atef as the head of the military committee after the latter’s death.⁹⁸ He departed to Iran in 2003, probably because of his criticism of Osama bin Laden’s decisions regarding external operations.⁹⁹ Al Adil was arrested by the Iranians and has been under some kind of restraint or supervision by the Iranian forces.¹⁰⁰ Early indications, yet to be

verified, suggest Al Adil was released in early 2010 by the Iranians and went back to Waziristan.¹⁰¹

Suleiman Abu Gheith was the former Al Qaeda spokesman.¹⁰² He departed to Iran in 2003 and was arrested by the Iranian authorities. Abu Gheith is still under some form of Iranian supervision.

Abdullah Ahmad Abdullah aka Abu Mohamed Al Masri¹⁰³ was a senior operational activist that supervised the attacks in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998. He departed to Iran among other senior members of the organization in 2003 and was arrested by the Iranian authorities. Abu Mohamed Al Masri is still under Iranian custody.

Mamdouh Mahmud Salim aka Abu Hajer Al Iraqi¹⁰⁴ was one of the most senior figures of Al Qaeda during its early days. He is considered one of the prominent founding fathers of the organization. Salim was arrested in Germany after the 1998 bombings in the horn of Africa and is currently imprisoned in the United States.

Nashwan Abdulrazaq Abdulbaqi aka Abd Al Hadi Al Iraqi was the former head of the general section (internal unit) of the military committee of Al Qaeda.¹⁰⁵ He was responsible for the military activity of the organization in the Afghanistan–Pakistan border zone.¹⁰⁶ Abd Al Hadi Al Iraqi was arrested in Turkey in 2006 and is in American custody.¹⁰⁷

Mustafa Al Uzayti aka Abu Farraj Al Libi was probably the former head of the military committee, after Saif Al Adil's departure to Iran in 2003.¹⁰⁸ He was arrested in FATA by coalition forces in May 2005 and has been in U.S. custody since then.

Mustafa Abu Al Yazid aka Sheikh Sai'd Al Masri is a senior Al Qaeda activist and the head of the Administrative and Financial Committee.¹⁰⁹ Yazid gained greater authority and probably hold some of Al Qaeda deputy leader's responsibilities. Mustafa Abu Al Yazid was killed on April 2010 by an American drone attack.

Khalid Sheikh Mohamed was the former head of the "Al Qaeda special operations" unit that was responsible for "external operations." KSM was the mastermind of the 11 September attacks,¹¹⁰ and was arrested in West Ridge, Rawalpindi, Pakistan on 28 February 2003. He has been under American custody since then.

Khalid Al Shanqiti aka Abu Hafis Al Mauritani, a senior Al Qaeda theologian, was the former head of the religious committee. He departed to Iran in 2003 with a group of Al Qaeda senior activists. Al Shanqiti was arrested by the Iranians authorities. He is still under Iranian custody.¹¹¹

Khaled Habib was the former head of the general section (internal) of the military committee of Al Qaeda.¹¹² Appointed in the summer of 2005, Habib probably succeeded Abu Faraj Al Libi as the head of the overall military committee after Abu Faraj arrest in May 2005.¹¹³ Habib was killed in a U.S. missile attack in FATA in October 2008.¹¹⁴

Hamza Rabia, the former head of Al Qaeda's special operation unit, was responsible for "external operations." Rabia succeeded Khalid Sheikh Mohamed after KSM arrest in February 2003.¹¹⁵ Rabia was killed by a U.S. drone strike in FATA in December 2005.¹¹⁶

Abd Al Aziz al-Masri¹¹⁷ is probably Ali Sayyid Muhamed Mustafa Al Bakri, an Al Qaeda explosives and chemical expert.

Abu al Khair al Masri aka Abdallah Muhammed Rajab Abd al-Rahman was the former leader of the political committee.¹¹⁸ He departed to Iran and is currently under Iranian custody.

Abu Khalil Al Madani is one of the least known members of the command council. In July 2008, Al Sahab foundation, Al Qaeda's media wing, aired a videocassette "Commander Abu Al Hasan Jihad and Martyrdom" commemorating Abu Hassan who conducted

a suicide attack in Afghanistan. Abu Khalil Al Madani was among those who spoke about Abu Hassan and was titled in the video as a member of the command council.¹¹⁹ He remains at large.

Doctor Fadhel Al Masry was the most senior Egyptian Al Qaeda activist and belonged to the early formation of Al Qaeda. In recent years he criticized Al Qaeda's methods, policy, and most of all Ayman al-Zawahiri. Doctor Fadhel is currently under Egyptian custody.

Qaricept¹²⁰ Qari Al Saeed Al Jazairy was a member of the command council. His exact role is not known. Later on he returned home to Algeria and assumed a leadership role in GSPC, the forerunner of AQIM.¹²¹

The Military Committee

The Military Committee is the body responsible for the different aspects of the operational and military activity of the organization. This task includes the mental and physical preparation of *Mujahidin* for combat and their military training. In addition, the military committee holds responsibility for the development of combat skills, military technical skills, and developing programs and procedures for the creation of a disciplined army based on its readings of the Qur'an.¹²² The leaders of the Military Committee, also known as "Al Qaeda's chief of staff" were:

- 1991–1996: Ali Amin Al Rashidi aka Abu Ubeida Bانشiri was one of the founding fathers of Al Qaeda. Bانشiri Drowned in a ferry accident in Lake Victoria, Uganda, in 1996.¹²³
- 1996–2001: Mohamed Atef was killed during a U.S attack in Kandahar.¹²⁴
- 2001–2003: Saif Al Adil replaced Mohamed Atef after his death.¹²⁵ He fled to Iran probably because of disagreements with bin Laden over the organization's targeting policy.¹²⁶ Al Adil was arrested and is currently under some kind of Iranian custody. Early indications, yet to be verified, suggest Al Adil was released in early 2010 by the Iranians and went back to Waziristan.¹²⁷
- 2003–2005: Abu Faraj Al Libi probably replaced Saif Al Adil after Adil went to Iran. Abu Faraj was arrested by Pakistani forces in May 2005¹²⁸ and has been in custody since.
- 2006–2008: Khaled Habib probably replaced Abu Faraj Al Libi.¹²⁹ Habib was killed in late 2008 during a U.S. strike.

The military committee is composed of four different sections:

1. **The General section**—This unit is responsible for all the different aspects of the ongoing guerilla war that is being fought internally (i.e., inside Afghanistan and the Afghanistan–Pakistan border zone).¹³⁰ Until the coalition offensive in Afghanistan that followed the 11 September attacks, all the activities of this unit were focused against the Afghan "Northern alliance" troops. Since the beginning of the coalition offensive, the unit is concentrated on fighting the coalition forces and the Pakistani army that is operating in the Afghanistan–Pakistan border zone. The general section is composed of two different subunits:

The Main Unit—This unit is responsible for the fighting itself and is subdivided according to the different geographic sections that make up the battle zone.¹³¹ Each regional section is commanded by a senior Al Qaeda operative who is responsible for all the different military activities within his jurisdiction. Among

these regional leaders were senior Al Qaeda figures such as Abu Layth Al Libi¹³² who held responsibility for the regions of Khost, Paktia, and Paktika. He was killed in the spring of 2008.¹³³ Another regional commander, Abu Abdullah Al Muhajer¹³⁴ aka Muhsin Musa Matwali Atwa aka Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Muhajir was involved in planning the attacks against the U.S. embassies in East Africa in 1998.¹³⁵ Abu Ubeida Al Masri¹³⁶ was in charge of Konar province¹³⁷ until early 2006. Al Qaeda guerilla-type operations in Afghanistan have been always conducted in collaboration with and under the overall leadership of the Taliban.¹³⁸

The Training Unit—Alongside the main unit operates a smaller unit that is responsible for the training of the fighters.¹³⁹ It seems that this unit also operates in accordance with the geographic division of the battle zone. The leader of the training subcommittee was probably Abu Mohamed Al Masri until his departure to Iran in 2003.

There is incomplete information regarding Al Qaeda figures that held the position of the head of the general section. It seems that Abd El Hadi Al Iraqi held this position until 2005.¹⁴⁰ Abd Al Hadi Al Iraqi was replaced by Khaled Habib.¹⁴¹ It is possible that during the fall of 2001 this position was held by Saif Al Adil.¹⁴² The last leader of the main unit (internal) of the military committee was the Libyan Abdullah Sai'd,¹⁴³ who was killed in late 2009 by an American drone attack.¹⁴⁴

2. **The Special Operations Unit**—This is a special and discrete apparatus that is responsible for the “external” (out of Afghanistan and the Afghanistan–Pakistan border zone) operations. The unit holds responsibility for the initiation of external operations and all the different aspects (operational and logistical) of supporting them. The unit is responsible for the allocation of the needed special equipment and training as well as the spotting of Al Qaeda members specially qualified for these kinds of operations.¹⁴⁵ It seems that this unit is operating through different regional extensions spread around the world.¹⁴⁶ Al Qaeda's external operations are considered special operations. Under this rubric of special operations, Al Qaeda dispatched operatives to establish sleeping cells (extensions) in target countries since late 1993. For example, Mohamed Odeh was sent to Kenya under cover as a businessman engaged in the fishing industry.¹⁴⁷ These extensions are probably subordinated to the major central command, which operates mostly from Pakistani major cities.¹⁴⁸

All the known Al-Qaeda attacks in the international arena were planned and carried out by the special operations unit through its worldwide extensions. Among those attacks are:

- The 11 September 2001 attacks in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania.
- The truck bomb attack at the Jewish synagogue of Djerba (Tunisia) in April 2002.¹⁴⁹
- The attacks on two Jewish synagogues and the attacks on two British targets (Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation [HSBC] and the British consulate) a week later in Istanbul Turkey—November 2003.
- The car bomb attack on an Israeli-owned hotel and the attack on an Israeli commercial flight, using surface to air missiles in the Kenyan city of Mombassa in November 2002.
- The attack on a U.S. Marine base in Kuwait on 8 October 2002.¹⁵⁰

- The attack on the British transportation system in London on 7 July 2005.¹⁵¹
- The attack on the Marriott hotel in Islamabad on September 2008.¹⁵²
- The attack at the Danish Embassy in Pakistan on June 2008.¹⁵³

In addition, Al Qaeda's special operations unit planned numerous ambitious attempts to conduct "spectacular" attacks in the international arena. What follows is a list of some of the most significant planned attacks:

- An attempt to crash American Airlines flight 63 from Paris to Miami using explosives hidden in a suicide passenger's (Richard Reid) shoes (in December 2001).
- An attempt to conduct a second wave of 11 September 2001-like attacks on the west coast of the United States, the Far East, and London's Heathrow Airport (in the summer of 2002).
- An attempt to carry out a radiological attack (a "dirty bomb") in the United States using a member of Al Qaeda with U.S. citizenship, Jose Padilla (in early 2002).
- An attempt to carry out simultaneous truck bomb attacks at seven Western targets in Singapore, including the American and Israeli embassies and the Australian and British high commissions (in January 2002).
- "Al Qaeda's special operations unit" was also behind the attempt to blow up 7–8 American and British commercial jets flying over the Atlantic (in the summer of 2006).¹⁵⁴
- Plot to attack New York subway system using Afghan emigrant Najibullah Zazi in 2009.¹⁵⁵
- Plot to attack a New York City train system using an American-born Islam convert, Bryan Vinas, in 2009.¹⁵⁶
- Attempt to conduct a wave of attacks in northwest England during early 2010.¹⁵⁷
- A plot to execute attacks in Norway using peroxide explosives.¹⁵⁸

"Al Qaeda's" special operations unit was also involved with directing and financing attacks and attempts of attacks conducted by other organizations, such as:

- The first Bali attack (in October 2002).
- The attack on the Marriott hotel in Jakarta (in August 2003).
- The attack on the Australian embassy in Jakarta (in September 2004).

All the aforementioned attacks were carried out by the "Jama'a Islamia of Southeast Asia."¹⁵⁹

The casing of a nuclear facility in Australia (2003) conducted by "Lashkar-E-Toiba" (LeT) facilitator¹⁶⁰ was, according to the authors' assessment, part of an Al Qaeda special operations unit plot. According to the authors' assessment, the November 2008 attack in Mumbai could have been undertaken through cooperation between the LeT and the Al Qaeda special operations unit as well.

Bin Laden's decision to implement external operations was probably taken in late 1997–early 1998. It is possible that Ahmad Abdullah Ahmad aka Abu Mohamed Al Masri was the first head of this unit referring to his deep involvement in the first Al Qaeda "external operation" that was launched in East Africa in August 1998.¹⁶¹ At the end of 1998 or early 1999, Khaled Sheikh Mohamed (KSM) was appointed as chief of the external unit and received the "green light" to plan the attacks eventually launched on 11 September 2001.¹⁶² After KSM's arrest in February 2003, he was replaced by Hamza Rabi'a, who continued KSM's activity, which culminated in the London transportation system bombings on July 7, 2005. After Rabi'a was killed by U.S. forces in December 2005, Abu Ubeida Al Masri

became Al Qaeda chief of external operations.¹⁶³ In late 2007 Abu Ubeida Al Masri died of hepatitis. Recent indications suggest that Al Qaeda activist Abu Salah Al Somali succeeded Abu Ubeida Al Masri as the leader of the special operations unit. Although his identity is elusive, Abu Salah Al Somali, probably operating under the name of Abu Hafez, was killed in December 2009 by a U.S. drone attack in FATA.¹⁶⁴ Recent reports suggest Adnan Shukrijuma, a U.S. resident of Saudi origins and a long-time Al Qaeda activist, has succeeded Al Somali. According to these reports Shukrijuma, who is probably a licensed pilot,¹⁶⁵ is the current chief of the Al Qaeda special operations unit responsible for external operations.¹⁶⁶

The Documentations Unit—This is a small unit operating within the special operations unit and its members are fully occupied with the creation of forged documents for Al Qaeda activists.¹⁶⁷

The list of Al Qaeda activists that belonged at one time or another to the Special operations unit include:

- Abdul Rahim Muhammed Abdallah al Nashiri was in charge of the Al Qaeda special operations maritime unit,¹⁶⁸ as well as the head of the Arabian Peninsula extension. Nashiri was arrested in 2005 and is currently in U.S. custody.
- Rawfiq Muhammed Saleh Rasheed bin Attash aka Khallad Bin Attash¹⁶⁹ was a Senior Al Qaeda activist. A former bodyguard of bin Laden, he was head of administration in the external operations unit.¹⁷⁰ He was deeply involved in the U.S.S. *Cole* attack in October 2000. Attash was arrested in Pakistan and handed over to U.S. forces.
- Mohamed Naim Noor khan aka Abu Talha¹⁷¹ Al-Pakistani was a computer expert and probably responsible for communication between the units' headquarters and the internationally deployed extensions.¹⁷² Khan was arrested in 2004 and had been under custody since.
- Tariq Noor Mohamed aka Abu Talha Al Sudani, one of Al Qaeda's founding fathers was probably the head of the East Africa extension.¹⁷³ Abu Talha Al Sudani was killed in Somalia by American forces in 2008.
- Dhiran Barot aka Abu Issa al Hindi was the former head of Al Qaeda's special operations extension in the United Kingdom.¹⁷⁴ Barot, who planned operations both in the United States and United Kingdom, was a protégé of KSM. Barot was arrested in 2004 by the British, and has been under their custody since then.
- Ahmad Khalfan Ghaliani¹⁷⁵ was an Al Qaeda operational activist from Tanzania, who was operationally involved in the attack against the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998. Ghaliani was arrested in Pakistan in August 2004 and was handed over to the United States.
- Fahd Ali Msalem aka Usama Al Kini¹⁷⁶ was an Al Qaeda activist from Kenya who was operationally involved in the attack against the American embassy in Nairobi on August 1998. He was probably the recent head of the Pakistani extension of Al Qaeda's special operations unit. Al Kini was in charge for the Marriott hotel explosion in Islamabad¹⁷⁷ and was probably in charge of the attack against the Danish embassy in Islamabad as well. Msalem was killed by a U.S. drone strike in 2009.
- Sheikh Ahmad Salim Sweidan¹⁷⁸ was another Al Qaeda activist from Kenya who was operationally involved in the attack against the American embassy in Nairobi on August 1998. Sweidan was killed along with Fahd Ali Msalem.

- Rashid Rauf was probably the head of the British extension¹⁷⁹ and might have succeeded Barot. Following the Atlantic plot, Rauf escaped to Pakistan and rapidly obtained a prominent position within the external unit and was deeply involved with the unit's plots to target the NYC train and subway system as well as a plot to hit targets in northwest England.¹⁸⁰ His current whereabouts are still unknown.
 - Ali Abd al-Aziz Ali aka Ammar al-Baluchi,¹⁸¹ a family relative of KSM, was his right hand man. Al Baluchi was arrested in Pakistan in 2003 and has been in U.S. custody since then.
 - Mustafa Ahmed Hawsawi¹⁸² was a former member of the Al Qaeda media wing. He was the financial master of the 11 September attacks operating out of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on behalf of the planner KSM. Hawsawi was arrested and is currently under U.S. custody.
 - Sae'd Behaji¹⁸³ was another KSM assistant in the 11 September plot.¹⁸⁴ He is still at large.
 - Esam Radwan al-Din aka Hambali was the military chief of the Southeast Asian group Jamm'ah Islamiyah (JI). He operated from Karachi on behalf of KSM directives. Hambali was in charge for the joint AQ–JI Southeast Asia operations and the operational cooperation with the JI.¹⁸⁵ Hambali was arrested in 2003 and has been under U.S. custody since.
 - Amjad Farooki was a Pakistani member of the special operation unit. He was probably the coordinator between the Al Qaeda special operations unit and local Pakistani groups.¹⁸⁶ Farooki was killed by Pakistani forces.
 - Ramzi Binalshibh¹⁸⁷ was an Al Qaeda Yemenite activist that was recruited in Germany. He was part of the Hamburg cell where Al Qaeda recruited three of the four pilots in the 11 September attacks. He was the senior assistant to KSM in the operational preparations for the 11 September attacks. Binalshibh was arrested in 2002 and has been in U.S. custody since.
3. **The WMD Sub Unit**—This is also called the Nuclear Weapons Section, and the different tasks of this unit are not known. Nevertheless, it seems that this unit is responsible for all the different aspects of non-conventional warfare in the organization. Al Qaeda launched several projects in order to develop non-conventional capabilities.¹⁸⁸ The head of this unit is probably Abd al-Aziz al-Masri aka Ali Sayyid Muhamed Mustafa al-Bakri, an Al Qaeda explosives and chemical expert.
 4. **The Library and Research Section**—The duties and responsibilities of this section operating within the military wing of Al Qaeda are not known. There are no details available as to the members who were operating in this unit.

The Political Committee

The political committee is responsible for spreading political awareness among working individuals and the erstwhile Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, a reference to the Taliban regime. The committee liaised and interacted with *Jihad* movements in general, preparing qualified political cadre for political activity in the framework of the general activity of the organizations and in accordance with the *Sharia* law.¹⁸⁹ According to the present assessment Osama bin Laden¹⁹⁰ and subsequently Abdullah Rajeb aka Abu Khair al Masri might have been the successive chiefs of the political committee.

The Media Committee

The Media Committee, also known as the Information Committee, acts as a propaganda committee. It focuses its activity on spreading the *jihadi* ideology in the general Muslim population in cooperation with other affiliated groups that possess similar ideology in the Muslim world (including the Taliban movement). The committee contains a special computer department and several subunits, such as a unit in charge of the editing of movies, the secretariat, the printing press, foreign relations, the photography branch, the phonetics branch, the translation branch, and the archive branches.¹⁹¹ One of the most important affiliations of this unit is The Al-Sahab (meaning "The Cloud" in Arabic and sometimes written "Assahab") Foundation for Islamic Media Publication, the media production house of Al Qaeda, used for the dissemination of propaganda of the organization.¹⁹²

The first head of the media committee was Abu Mosab Reuter.¹⁹³ This committee had always been a very important committee and senior members of Al Qaeda's logistical and operational were members of the media committee at one point or another. For example, Al Qaeda's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, filled the position of the leader of the media committee with Khaled Sheikh Mohamed as his subordinate, serving as the head of the Al Sahab foundation.¹⁹⁴ Later on, KSM was selected to be the head of the media committee, for some time in parallel to his role as the chief of special operations (external).¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, one of the key facilitators of the 11 September attack, Mustafa Ahmad Hawasawi (the financial intermediate between the hijackers and Khaled Sheikh Mohamed), was an active member of the media committee under Khaled Sheikh Mohamed.¹⁹⁶ The importance of this committee continues to be high and it seems that senior members of the organization such as the American Adam Gadahn¹⁹⁷ and the German Bekkay Harasch belong to its ranks. The current leader of the information committee is the Moroccan Muhammad Abaytah alias Abd al-Rahman al-Maghrebi.¹⁹⁸ Abayath is the son in law of Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri.

The Administrative and Financial Committee

The Administrative and Financial Committee undertakes different administrative services for all the members of the organization and their families. The committee is responsible for creating the financial policy of the organization and its implementation.¹⁹⁹ Mustafa Abu al-Yazid aka Sheikh Sai'd Al Masri has been the head of this committee since the mid-1990s.²⁰⁰ A former bookkeeper from Alexandria, Sheikh Sai'd was a member of the Islamic Group of Egypt. He served as bin Laden's accountant in Sudan. There are unverified reports that his predecessor was Abu Fadhl Al Makki.²⁰¹ Within the last few years there have been numerous reports with regard to the position of Sheikh Sai'd suggesting that he has been promoted to "the overall in charge of Afghanistan."²⁰² Subsequently, the present authors believe that Sheikh Sai'd seems to have obtained several tasks and obligations of the deputy to the *Amir*. It is also believed that Sheikh Sai'd remains the head of the Administrative Committee in addition to his new responsibilities. The Administrative committee is subdivided into three different subunits:

Accommodation Unit—responsible for welcoming guests at the airports, providing accommodation in guesthouses, as well as religious studies for guests.²⁰³

Accounting Unit—is responsible for the transfer of funds.²⁰⁴

Inter-Organizational Services Unit—is responsible for providing the necessary services for the well being of the members of the organization and their families. These services include handling sick members, the organization's store, school, the organization's vehicle workshop, rented real estate, as well as the provision of water and electricity.²⁰⁵

The Security Committee

The security committee is responsible of providing personal security services to its senior leaders, preventing information leaks, and of conducting counterespionage activity to prevent infiltration to the ranks of the organization. The special security chamber is responsible for the supervision, classification, and collection of information regarding each person that wishes to join the organization.²⁰⁶ One of the former leaders of the security committee was Al Qaeda senior leader Saif Al Adil.²⁰⁷ A former Colonel in the Egyptian army, Saif al Adil was known for identifying and neutralizing spies. The security committee seems to be responsible to one of the most important tasks of Al Qaeda—recruiting new activists. It seems that alongside with the operational global apparatus (Al Qaeda's special operations extensions) operated another apparatus, the DAWA apparatus, which was responsible for preaching the *jihadi* ideology and probably recruiting new members. It seems that the whole activity of the DAWA apparatus was subordinated to the security committee of Al Qaeda in order to prevent penetration of Western intelligence agencies to the ranks of Al Qaeda.²⁰⁸

The Religious Committee

The religious (*Fatwa* or law) committee of Al Qaeda is responsible for the reviews of Islamic law and decides if particular courses of action conform to the law.²⁰⁹ It seems that the former leader of the religious committee was Khaled Al Shinkity aka Abu Hafis Al Mauritani who is now probably under some form of custody in Iran.²¹⁰ It seems that the current head of the *Fatwa* (religious) committee is Abu Yahya Al Libi.²¹¹ For further details regarding members of Al Qaeda that hold the more important positions within the organization throughout the years, see the Appendix.

Mobilization

The special ability of Al Qaeda to maintain its formal structure is its ability to provide flexibility within the strict hierarchical system, which allows for mobilization within its ranks. This has enabled the movement of members between different committees and units with short notice of time, which is necessary following the sudden arrests and eliminations that occur. The most interesting aspect of this framework is the mobility between the media committee and the special operations unit, which is responsible for the external operations.

While inner mobilization within the military committee (e.g., Abu Ubeida Al Masri who used to be a regional field commander in the Afghanistan–Pakistan border area before he became the head of the special operations unit) seems to be logical (operational positions), it seems unlikely that there would be personnel movement between noncombatant positions such as the media committee and the special operations unit. However, several senior Al Qaeda members, such as Mohammad Hawasawi and above all Khalid Sheikh Mohamed have moved from the media committee to the special operations unit. This shows that there is significant similarity in the qualifications needed for participation in such different committees. A common feature of the two committees is the need to understand Western mentality and behavior, a prerequisite for operating in these committees. This is of particular relevance as the vast majority of Al Qaeda operatives and members originate from the Middle East.²¹²

Hence, authorities should pay close and thorough attention and place high supervision on present senior members of the media committee, such as Adam Ghadin or Muhammad Abaytah alias Abd al-Rahman al-Maghrebi, who might become the external operational planners of the near future.

Al Qaeda Leadership in Iran

One of the consequences of the U.S.-led coalition offensive in Afghanistan was the creation of a small but very senior leadership group of Al Qaeda in Iran in order to establish a safe haven. Even though there is an ingrained rivalry between the predominant Shi'ites in Iran and Al Qaeda (which is mostly Sunni), it seems that the two entities have been able to overcome the "bad blood" and tactically cooperate on a basic level. Following strong U.S. pressure on the Iranian regime, these Al Qaeda figures have been put under some form of low-level Iranian custody that provides some level of supervision, but on the other hand allows those Al Qaeda figures a significant level of freedom for activity. Some of the most senior figures are now based in Iran including former heads of Al Qaeda committees and members of the Command Council (Majlis Al Shura). Since Al Qaeda lost many senior members from within its ranks in recent years, the release of the Al Qaeda leadership in the Iranian Diaspora has become a first-priority interest for bin Laden's organization.²¹³ Recent reports yet to be verified suggest a recent pact between Al Qaeda and Iran that includes the release of several of the detained Al Qaeda leaders, among them Saif Al Adil. At any rate, the Al Qaeda Iranian Diaspora probably includes:

Saif Al Adil—the former head of the Military and Security Committees in Al Qaeda and a member of the command council.²¹⁴

Abu Hafs Al Mauritani—the former head of the religious committee and a member of the Command Council.²¹⁵

Abu Al Kheir—probably the former head of the political committee and a member of the Command Council.²¹⁶

Abdullah Ahmad Abdullah—senior operational activist of Al Qaeda, may have served as the head of the special operations unit responsible for external activity in 1998.²¹⁷

Saad bin Laden—the son of Osama bin Laden.²¹⁸

Suleiman Abu Gheith—Al Qaeda spokesman and member of the Command Council.

Conclusions and Assessment

Al Qaeda suffered some major setbacks in recent years as a result of the Coalition's offensive in Afghanistan. Subsequently, Al Qaeda survived and revived in FATA. Nevertheless, it seems that the organization has been able to adapt and preserve most of its formal infrastructure and its most important committees continue to operate as the hierarchical, command-cadre structure suits the organization's goals more than a network-based structure. Moreover, according to the present assessment, it is the strict hierarchy and the clear-cut organizational structure of Al Qaeda that has kept the organization from collapsing. The nature of this structure provides it with the ability to quickly fill positions and rehabilitate its chain of command, hence sustaining its operational and logistical performance. Since the coalition's offensive in Afghanistan in October 2001, Al Qaeda has lost four "chiefs of staff" (heads of the Military Committee), four chiefs of the special (external) operations unit, and at least half a dozen of senior regional field commanders ("Generals"). However, it was still able to regroup and mobilize suitable replacements from within. Subsequently, it has been able to continue its activity and maintain its status as the biggest terrorist threat to Western forces in the current "Jihad arenas" (Afghanistan and Iraq) as well as the international arena as a whole.

Year	1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010															
Committee																
Military	Abu Ubeida	Mohamed Atef				Saif Al Adil		Abu Faraj Al Libi		Khaled Habib						
General Section (Internal)	Saif Al Adil?				Abd El Hadi Al Iraqi				Khaled Habib		Abdullah Sai'd					
Special Operation (External)	Abu Abdallah Al-Masri		Khaled Sheikh Mohammad				Hamza Rabi'a		Abu Ubeida Al Masri		Salah Al Somali					
Administration and finance	Abu Fadl Al Makki?		Sheikh Said Al Masri													
Security	Sayf Al Adil															
Media	Abu Mosab Reuters?		Khaled Sheikh Mohammad								Mohamed Abayath					
Religious					Khaled Al Shinkity Hafs Al Mauritany				Abu		Yahya Al Libi					

Appendix. Al Qaeda infrastructure and internal senior positioning 1995–2010.

Notes

1. For the Bruce Hoffman and Marc Sageman debate, see Bruce Hoffman, "The Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism," *Foreign affairs* (May–June 2009). Available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/63408/bruce-hoffman/the-myth-of-grass-roots-terrorism>

2. Refer to Marc Sageman's work, *Leaderless Jihad: The Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* and *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

3. Martha Crenshaw, "The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century," *Political Psychology* 21(2) (June 2000), pp. 405–420.

4. Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13(4) (July 1981), pp. 379–399.

5. Martha Crenshaw, "An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism," *Orbis* 29(3) (Fall 1985), p. 466.

6. Jacob N. Shapiro, "Terrorist Organizations' Vulnerabilities and Inefficiencies," in Jean K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas, *Terrorism Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 59.

7. Crenshaw, "An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism," p. 468.

8. C. H. Levine, "Organizational Decline and Cutback Management," *Public Administration Review* 38(4) (1978), pp. 316–325.

9. Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), p. 167.

10. Jessica Stern and Amit Modi, "Organizational Dynamics of Survival," in Thomas Biersteker and Sue Eckert, *Countering Financing of Terrorism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 27–28.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. C. Jones, W. Hesterly, and S. Borgatti, "A General Theory of Network Governance," *The Academy of Management Review* 22(4) (October 1997), p. 923.

14. J. Fearon and D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97(1) (February 2003), pp. 75–90.

15. M. Crenshaw, P. Wilkinson, J. Alterman, and T. Schaffer, "How Terrorism Ends," *Special Report* 48 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 25 May 1999), p. 3.

16. Todd H. DeGhetto, "Precipitating the Decline of Terrorist Groups: A System's Analysis," *Unpublished Master's thesis*. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California (1994).

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Salaf* in Arabic literally means ancestors and refers to the friends of prophet Mohamed that choose to follow him on his famous *Hijra* (voyage of emigration) from Mecca to Medina, which is considered to be the establishment of Islam. According to Muslim tradition Mohamed and his friends (the "salafs") established an ideal and pure community, which should be the ultimate goal of every society.

19. Yaakov Shimoney and Evyatar Levin, *The Political Lexicon of the 20th Century* (Jerusalem: Bet Ha'hoza' a Ha'yerushalmi, 1971), pp. 18–19.

20. *Ibid.*

21. According to the current assessment the supporters of the *Salafi* ideology over the Muslim world does not exceed 5 percent. The *Salafi-jihadists* are about 5 percent of the total *Salafi* adherents. If these percentages are transferred into numbers, about 50 million Muslims believe that *Sharia* law should be implemented worldwide, not only in Muslim lands, and up to one million Muslims are ready to use militant *Jihad* (total *Jihad*) to achieve this goal.

22. Thomas Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam' Imam of Jihad," in Gilles Kepel and Jean Pierre Milelli, eds., *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words* (Boston: Harvard university Press, 2008), p. 82.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 93–94.

24. Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (Or Yehuda: Zmora-Bitan, 2006), p. 117.

25. For example, see the Indonesian "ngurki ponduk" graduates (that later became the base for the Southeast Asia "Jama'a Islamiyah") that were allocated to Abd Al Rasul Sayaf's group and trained and fought over there. See Sidney Jones, "Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged but Still Dangerous," *International crisis group Asia Report No. 63* (26 August 2003), p. 3.

26. Osama bin Laden's father was a Yemeni citizen who migrated to Saudi Arabia during the early 1930s. In Saudi Arabia he was able to establish himself as a businessman and make close connections with local Saudi sheikhs from the royal family. Using his connections he became the owner of the largest construction company operating at the time in Saudi Arabia. The family kept Islamic tradition but held a pro-Western approach and provided family members with Western education at leading educational institutions. They also spent summer vacations in select resorts on the European continent. Osama bin Laden's father was killed in a plane accident in 1967, leaving a very large sum of money as inheritance. Each one of his over 50 children (from several women) received dozens of millions of U.S. dollars. See Lawrence (See note 24 above), pp. 76–96.

27. Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House Trade paperback, 2003), p. 101.

28. Azzam wanted to end *Jihad* in Afghanistan first but bin Laden, urged on by Egyptian hard-liners, decided to use the momentum of the *Jihad* following its success in Afghanistan.

29. Founding documents of Al Qaeda recovered from Bosnia, *ICPVTR Database* (Singapore, January 2008); Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2006), p. 219; Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know* (London: Free Press, a Division of Simon and Schuster, 2006), p. 80.

30. Abdallah Azzam, "Al-Qa'idah al-Sulbah," *Al-Jihad magazine (Afghanistan)* (no. 41 April 1988), pp. 46–49.

31. Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam' Imam of Jihad," p. 95.

32. The 9/11 Commission Report. Available at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/pdf/chap2.pdf>, p. 58.

33. For example, see Abu Hamza Al-Masri's reference to the Bosnian "Jihad arena" at Evan F. Kohlmann, "The Afghan-Bosnian Mujahideen Network in Europe." Available at <http://www.fhs.se/upload/Webbadmin/Organisation/CATS/Kohlmann.doc>

34. Following the war in Afghanistan, the *Mujahidin* groups began an internal struggle for supremacy over Afghanistan. Since the mid-1990s the violent struggle over Afghanistan was conducted by the Taliban against a coalition of the other forces forming the "Northern front." Global Jihad fighters allied with the Taliban considered Afghanistan a "Jihad arena" against the Northern

front. For an example see the Prepared Statement of John Walker Lindh to the Court, 4 October 2002, *United States District Court, Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria, VA*. Available at <http://news.findlaw.com/cnn/docs/terrorism/lindh100402statement.html>

35. Al Qaeda in Arabic literally means “the base.”

36. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, p. 124

37. The 9/11 Commission Report, p. 60.

38. The initiators of this pressure were the Arab states of the Middle East and North Africa (Egypt, Jordan, and Algeria) who suffered from bin Laden’s logistical support to their own local Muslim radicals.

39. The 9/11 Commission Report, p. 62.

40. The activity of this group in the international arena in the first half of the 1990s was professional. They were responsible for the deadliest attacks and the most ambitious plans of the period: the first attempt to collapse the World Trade Center in New York using a car bomb in the parking lot of the towers (26 February 1993, 6 killed and about 1,000 wounded); and the “Bojinka plot” an ambitious attempt to crash 11 American commercial jets into the Pacific Ocean in one day. *Ibid.*, pp. 146–150.

41. Among those leaders who became fugitives were Hambali, an Indonesian citizen that later on became the military chief of the “Jama’ a Islamiyah of Southeast Asia”; and more importantly, Khalid Sheikh Mohamed (KSM) who later on joined Al Qaeda (late 1998) and became the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks. See “Hambali,” *Rotten library Biographies*. Available at <http://www.rotten.com/library/bio/crime/terrorists/hambali/>

42. Despite the fact that they worked separately at this stage in completely different entities, they knew each other from Afghanistan (the “melting pot”). The 9/11 Commission Report, pp. 148–149.

43. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know*, pp. 195–197.

44. The 9/11 Commission Report, pp. 115–116.

45. A first attempt a year earlier failed as the dingy full of explosive sank on its way to hit the U.S.S. *Sullivan*.

46. The 9/11 Commission Report, pp. 181, 190–191.

47. Available at <http://www.fata.gov.pk/>

48. The agencies are: Bajaur, Kyhber, Kurram, Mohmand, Oraksai, and North and South Waziristan. The frontier provinces include: Peshawar, Kohat, Tank, Banuu, Lakii, and Dera Ismail Khan. FATA is 450 kilometers by 250 kilometers with an area of 27,220 square kilometers. It is cut off from the rest of the world, even from mainland Pakistan. While the rest of the world has progressed so much, FATA has been left behind with limited access to development assistance. Even compared to other parts of Pakistan or Afghanistan, FATA has not received or garnered the same attention.

49. The Islamic term “Jihad arenas” refers to arenas in which Muslims fight Non-Muslims. In recent years these networks mostly involved the transfer of activists into Iraq. See Philip Carter, “Al Qaeda and the Advent of Multinational Terrorism: Why “Material Support” Prosecutions are Key in the War on Terrorism” (12 March 2003). Available at http://writ.news.findlaw.com/student/20030312_carter.html and Anthony Barnett, Jason Burke, and Zoe Smith, “Terror Cells Regroup and Now Their Target is Europe,” *The Observer* (11 January 2004). Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/jan/11/alqaida.terrorism>

50. For the role of Mohamed Gerbouzi in the attack see Elaine Sciolino, “Morocco Connection is Emerging as Sleeper Threat in Terror War,” *The New York Times* (16 May 2004). Available at <http://www.hvk.org/articles/0504/73.html>

51. This has happened in some cases as a result of directions given by Al Qaeda and in other cases through their own initiative.

52. As a side note, the Afghan arena served as a “melting pot” for various *jihadists* from across the world. They received training and fought together, and subsequently maintained their relations following their returning to their home countries. There they established the so-called local groups to fight the “infidel” local regimes.

53. For example, see Nelly Sindayen, "Abu Sayyaf—Beyond the Kidnap Game," *Time Magazine Asia* (18 November 2002). Available at http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/1101021125/abu_sayyaf.html

54. The "Itihad Al Islami Al Afghani" camp Sadah led by the Afghan leader Abd AL Rasool Sayyaf served as the melting pot for The Baluchi Khalid sheikh Mohamad (KSM), the Indonesian Radwan Ismail Al Din (better known as Hambali), the Philippine Abd Al Razeq Janjelani, and the Pakistani Hafiz Al Saeed. As KSM became the chief of Al Qaeda special operations unit, Hambali became the military chief of the "Jamm'a Islamiyah" of Southeast Asia, Abd Al Razeq Janjelani founded and headed the Philippine group Abu Sayyaf (Sayyaf—in the honor of Abd AL Rasool Sayyaf), and Hafez Al Saeed established and headed the Pakistani group Lashkar-e-Toyba (LET). This allowed for the Al Qaeda special operations unit to operationally cooperate with JI, ASG, HUJA, and LET. See "Global Jihad Entities Cooperation—Where it All Began." Available at <http://www.cefit.com/?categoryId=41118&itemId=60829>

55. "Suicide Bombers Hit Embassies in Uzbekistan," ABC News, 31 July 2004. Available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200407/s1165972.htm>

56. Senior members in the newly established IJU were mostly influenced by Al Qaeda senior leader Abu Layth Al Libi. See Giudo Steinberg, "Uzbekistan/Turkey: The Islamic Jihad Union." Available at <http://www.wluml.org/english/newsfulltxt.shtml?cmd%5B157%5D=x-157-561617> and Ronald Sandee, "The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)," *NEFA Foundation*. Available at <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefaijuoct08.pdf>, p. 3.

57. "KSM's Transatlantic Shoe Bomb Plot," *NEFA Foundation*. Available at <http://nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/shoebombplot.pdf>

58. For example, Lashkar-e-Toyba's involvement in a plot to blow up a nuclear facility in Australia. See BBC News, 15 March 2007. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6454373.stm>

59. Available at <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/Kennedy-GSPC-041207.pdf>.

60. Jane Novak, "Arabian Peninsula al Qaeda Groups Merge," *The Long War Journal*, 26 January 2009. Available at http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/01/arabian_peninsula_al.php

61. "Al Qaida in Iraq (AQI)," Naval Post Graduate School. Available at <http://www.nps.edu/Library/Research/SubjectGuides/SpecialTopics/TerroristProfile/Current/AlQaidaIraq.html>

62. Arabinda Acharya and Thomas Quiggin, "Whatt is Al Qaeda Today?" *Global Grief*, 22 June 2009. Available at <http://globalbrief.ca/blog/2009/06/22/what-is-the-al-qaeda-network-today/>

63. Bill Roggio, "Libyan Islamic Fighting Groups Joins Al Qaeda," *The Long War Journal*, 3 November 2007. Available at <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/11/libyan-islamic-fight.php>

64. For the full list of AQIY engagement in attacking foreign targets see *NEFA Foundation*. Available at <http://www1.nefafoundation.org/documents-area-yemen.html>.

65. For the full detailed engagement of AQIM in attacking Western targets see *NEFA Foundation*. Available at <http://www.nefafoundation.org/documents-area-north-africa.html>

66. "AQIM Statement on Attack on the Israeli Embassy in Nouakchott," *NEFA Foundation*. Available at <http://www1.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefaaqim0208-2.pdf>

67. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was not a member of Al Qaeda until late 2004. He was a Jordanian prisoner released following the general amnesty proclaimed in Jordan after the death of King Hussein in 1999. He arrived in Afghanistan and tried to join Al Qaeda but was refused. With the help of Al Qaeda he moved to the Afghan city of Herat and established his own organization, Jund Al-Sham (the Soldiers of Sham); he recruited from the Levant region (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and Palestine). Following the U.S. coalition offensive in Afghanistan al-Zarqawi and his fighters left and moved to northern Iraq into the Kurdish region of under the sponsorship of the Kurdish radical Islamic organization, Ansar Al-Islam. Al-Zarqawi was the first to react to the U.S. invasion of Iraq with terrorist attacks executed by his fighters and gained success, and subsequently joined Al Qaeda. He was nominated by bin Laden as the "Amir" (leader) of Al Qaeda in Iraq in late 2004. "Profile: Abu Musab Al Zarqawi," BBC News, 10 November 2005. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3483089.stm. The differences between his policy and Al

Qaeda directives are revealed in “Harmony Papers Data Base,” Combat Terrorism Center at West Point. Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/CTC-AtiyahLetter.pdf>

68. The most known attack of “Iraqi elements” outside of Iraq was the simultaneous attack on hotels in the Jordanian capital (November 2005), resulting in the deaths of 70 innocent Muslim civilians, which brought antagonism and criticism to Al Qaeda and the global *Jihad* throughout the Arab and Muslim world and heavily undermined the legitimacy of Al Qaeda. See Scott Macleod, “Behind the Amman Hotels Attack,” *Time*, 10 November 2005. Available at <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1128209,00.html> and <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369839>

69. “Harmony Papers Data Base.”

70. Abu Ayub AL Masri Profile, *Global Security Archive*. Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_ayyub_al-masri.htm and ICPVTR Personality Profile on Abu Hamza al-Muhajir.

71. “Al Qaida Interview with Abu Hamza AL Muhajir in Iraq,” *NEFA Foundation*, 24 October 2008. Available at <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefaabuhamza1008.pdf>, p. 8.

72. Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/may/18/al-qaida-world-cup-plot-denied>

73. Available at http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2010/me_terror0420_05_17.asp

74. The “homegrown” individual’s knowledge of *Jihad* or *Salafism* is relatively low. The only analogy that comes to mind goes back to the 1970s and 1980s while most of the terrorist organizations—Japanese Red Army, the different Palestinian groups, the European Bader Meinhof, Red brigades, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), and the Irish Republican Army (IRA), as well as the Latin groups of south and central America (Carlos the jackal’s gang)—operating in the international arena possessed extreme leftist ideologies but the junior activists of these groups did not memorize all the works of Marx and Trotsky. See Dana Harman, “Radical Islam Finds Unlikely Heaven in Liberal Britain,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 5 August 2002. Available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0805/p01s03-wogi.html>

75. Van Gogh criticized the radical elements of Islam in his publications, following which he was brutally assassinated as he strolled the streets of Amsterdam by a member of a radical gang called the “Hofstad” group that met in Amsterdam Mosques and private homes of the group members. See Dr. Albert Benschop, “Chronicle of Political Murder Foretold—Jihad in the Netherlands.” Available at http://www.sociosite.org/jihad_nl_en.php

76. The Madrid attack was carried out by low-level criminal Muslim activists who came together in one of the main Madrid mosques. They were able to get explosives (standard) by dealing drugs and they learned how to set it as a charge through an Internet website. Available at <http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369921>

77. Available at <http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373485>

78. For example see “The L.A. Plot to Attack U.S. Military, Israeli Government, & Jewish Targets,” *NEFA Foundation*. Available at http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/LA_Plot.pdf, p. 3.

79. It should be noted that Palestinian groups or Shi’ite groups such as Hezbollah are not associated with the “Global Jihad movement.” Only groups that possess radical Sunni ideology and political affiliation with Al Qaeda can be considered part of the global *Jihad*.

80. “Harmony Papers Data Base.” Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000078-Trans.pdf> and <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000080-Trans.pdf>

81. Ahmad Mussa, “Exclusive of 10 Episodes of Written Al Qaeda Documents,” *Nahdat Misr in Arabic (Cairo)*, 11 September 2004, p. 3.

82. United States of America vs. Usama Bin Laden. Available at <http://www.elastic.org/~fche/mirrors/cryptome.org/usa-v-ubl-02.htm>

83. “Harmony Papers Data Base.” Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000080-Trans.pdf>

84. There were numerous unverified reports concerning the medical situation of OBL. These reports suggest bin Laden suffers from diabetes as well as severe kidney malfunction, which force him to go through dialysis treatment on a short-term basis. Bin Laden also disappeared almost completely from the media. During the last years he conducted several audio addresses but only one video performance compared to numerous appearances (video and audio) in the years before.

85. It seems that OBL was not very involved with the new policy of Al Qaeda, laid down in a letter sent by al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and that the influence of al Zawahiri is much larger with new nominations inside Al Qaeda. In addition, the vast majority of the public statements of Al Qaeda made in recent years were by al-Zawahiri. See "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTC-Zawahiri-Letter-10-05.pdf>

86. Ronald Sandee, "Al Qaida and Europe: The Case of the German Pakistani Aleem Nasir," *NEFA Foundation* (June 2009). Available at http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa_AleemNasirNetwork0609.pdf, p. 3.

87. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000080-Trans.pdf>

88. Egyptian Islamic Jihad is an Egyptian terrorist organization that operated in Egypt through the 1980s and 1990s and joined forces with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Its leader throughout its existence was Ayman al-Zawahiri.

89. Ronald Sandee, "Al Qaida and Europe," p. 4.

90. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000080-Trans.pdf>

91. Abu Basir Al Yamani is currently the head of the Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula organization (AQAP). See Abdul Hameed Bakier, "Al Qaeda leaders in the Arabian Peninsula Speak Out," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Focus* 6(3) (28 January 2009). Available at http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34420

92. Available at http://www.msnbc.com/modules/wtc/wtc_globaldragnet/sought_alqaida.htm and *Global Security Archive*. Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_basir_al-yemeni.htm and Jane Novak "Arabian Peninsula Al Qaeda Groups Merge," *The Long War Journal*. Available at http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/01/arabian_peninsula_al.php and <http://armiesofliberation.com/archives/2007/06/24/new-al-qaeda-leader-in-yemen/>

93. "Wadih Al Hage Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/wadih_el_hage.htm

94. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000080-Trans.pdf>

95. "Abu Hafs Al Masri Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/mohammed_atef.htm

96. United States of America vs. Usama Bin Laden. Available at <http://www.elastic.org/~fche/mirrors/criptome.org/usa-v-ubl-02.htm>

97. "Abu Fadhl Al Makki Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_fadhl_al-makkee.htm

98. *Al Sharqi al Awsat* in Arabic, London, 9 January 2003, p. 3.

99. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/AI%20AdI%20Letter_Translation.pdf

100. Available at <http://www.answers.com/topic/saif-al-adel>

101. Available at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LD30Df01.html

102. Even though there is no clear cut evidence of Abu Gheith's position within the command council, it seems that he had a significant view within Al Qaeda senior leaders internal dispute that was raised over the 11 September attacks. This reflects, according to the authors' assessments the important role of Abu Gheith within the command council. See *The 9/11 Commission Report*. Available at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/pdf/sec7.pdf>, p. 251.

103. "United States of America vs. Usama Bin Laden." Available at <http://cns.miiis.edu/pubs/reports/pdfs/binladen/indict.pdf>, p. 7.

104. Ibid., p. 7.

105. Bill Roggio, "Senior Al Qaeda operative Abd Al Hadi AL Iraqi Captured," *The Long War Journal*. Available at http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/04/senior_al_qaeda_oper.php

106. United States of America v. Abdul Zahir Aka Abdul Baki. Available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2006/d20060120zahir.pdf>

107. "Abd Al Hadi Al Iraqi Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abdul_hadi_al-iraqi.htm

108. "Amar Al Baluchi Biography." Available at <http://www.odni.gov/announcements/content/DetaineeBiographies.pdf>

109. "Shaikh Sai'd Al Masri Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/shaikh_saiid_al-masri.htm

110. "Verbatim Transcript of Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10024 (Khaled Sheikh Mohamed)." Available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript_ISN10024.pdf

111. Pepe Escobar, "Middle East-The Roving Eye Brave New (Middle Eastern) World Part 2: The Iranian Equation," *Asia Time On Line*, 22 September 2002. Available at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/DI20Ak02.html Abu Hafs Al Mauritania's position as a member of the command council of Al Qaeda is not clearly verified. Even though his position as head of an Al Qaeda committee and his liberty to express criticism over bin Laden's decision of the 11 September attacks suggests that his position was very senior within Al Qaeda leadership and that he was probably a member of the "Majlis Al Shura" (the command council). See *The 9/11 Commission Report*. Available at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/pdf/fullreport.pdf>, p. 251.

112. "U.S Attack Killed Al Qaeda Leader's Kin." *The China Daily*, 13 February 2006. Available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-02/13/content_519567.htm. According to the present assessment, referring to his senior position, it seems that he was also a member of Al Qaeda command council (Majlis al shura).

113. Khabib's role as head of the overall military committee can be seen in a unique publication of Al Sahab (the media wing of Al Qaeda) commemorating one of the organization's martyrs in Afghanistan—in which Habib was titled as the commander of military operations. See "Qaedat Al Jihad (Al Sahab): Commander Abu Al Hasan Jihad and Martyrdom." Available at <http://theunjustmedia.com:80/clips/afgha/July08/abu/abu3.htm>, part 3.

114. Sandee, "Core Al Qaeda in 2008," *NEFA Foundation*. Available at http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa_AQin2008.pdf, p. 3.

115. Sandee "Al Qaida and Europe," p. 4.

116. "Hamza Rabi'a Profile." Available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/hamza-rabia.htm> According to our assessment, referring to his senior position, it seems that he is also a member of Al Qaeda command council (Majlis al Shura).

117. "Abd Al Aziz Al Masri Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abd_al-aziz_al-masri.htm.

118. "Abu Khayr Al Masri Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_khayr.htm

119. "Al Jihad (Al Sahab)."

120. An expression that refers to someone that memorizes the Qor'an.

121. Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 189; in addition to the aforementioned figures of Al Qaeda's leadership the following activists were also members of the council at one point or another. Jamal Ahmed al-Fadl, an Al Qaeda former senior operative, mentioned in his testimony more names of activists that were members of the Command Council. The current position and whereabouts of these activists is not known. Those activists are Abu Faraj Al Yamani, Abu Ayoub Al Iraqi, Khalifa Al Muskat Al Omany, Saif Al Libi, and Abu Burhan Al Iraqi. See "United States vs. Usama Bin Laden," p. 205.

122. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000078-Trans.pdf>

123. "Abu Ubeida Al Bانشiri Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_ubaidah_al-bانشiri.htm

124. "Abu Hafis Al Masri Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/mohammed_atef.htm

125. Available at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3339840/> and *Al Sharqi al Awsat* in Arabic, London, 9 January 2003, p. 3.

126. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/Al%20Adl%20Letter_Translation.pdf

127. Available at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LD30Df01.html

128. "Summary of Evidence for Combatant Status Review Tribunal-Al Libi, Abu Faraj." Available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/ISN10017.pdf#1>. From these allegations, which refer to his involvement with Al Qaeda operations both internally and externally, one can conclude that he was at that time the military chief of Al Qaeda.

129. Khaled Habib was the chief of the General Section, responsible for Al Qaeda's internal (Afghanistan-Pakistan border zone) military activity. See "Khaled Khabib Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/khalid_habib.htm. There is one unconfirmed report that Habib was also involved with international operational activity. See Mark Mazzeti, "New Leadership is Seen on Rise within Al Qaeda," Afghanistan News Center. Available at <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2007/april/apr22007.html#4>. This report suggests that Habib might be holding the position of Al Qaeda overall chief of the military committee (responsible for both internal and external operations), a position that was not occupied since the arrest of Abu Faraj Al Libi. The mid-2008 Al Sahab publication Abu Hasan Jihad and martyrdom titled Khabib as head of military operations. "Qaedat Al Jihad (Al Sahab): Commander Abu Al Hasan Jihad and Martyrdom." Available at <http://theunjustmedia.com:80/clips/afgha/July08/abu/abu3.htm>

130. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000078-Trans.pdf>

131. Ibid.

132. Craig Whitlock and Munir Ladaa, "Al-Qaeda's New Leadership," *The Washington Post* (2006). Available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/specials/terror/laith.html#profile>

133. Claude Salhani, "Jihad Turning Point?" *Front Page Magazine*. Available at <http://www.frontpagemagazine.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=29823>

134. Jamie Glazov, "Symposium: Al-Qaeda's Central Leadership," *Front Page Magazine*, 20 June 2008. Available at <http://www.frontpagemagazine.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=31375>

135. "Dead U.S. Embassy Bomber Suspect Taken Off FBI Terror List," *Associated Press*, 20 October 2006,

136. Abu Ubeida Al Masri was a regional commander in the Afghan/Pakistan border zone. Since early 2006 he was probably the external operation chief, probably following the elimination of the former head of the unit, Hamza Rabia. See "Abu Obeida Al Masri Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_obaidah_al-masri.htm

137. The News (Internet Version), 1 November 2006, "Top Security Sources Reveal Al-Qaeda Links of Attacked Seminary," and AFP 13 December 2006, "Pakistan Court Drops British Airline Plot Terror Charge." Available at <http://www.iraqidinarinformation.com/printthread.php?t=1548>

138. "Mustafa Abu Al Yazid Interview on Al Jazeera June 22 2009," *NEFA Foundation*. Available at http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa_yazidqa0609.pdf, pp. 2-4.

139. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000078-Trans.pdf>

140. Detainee biography (Abd Al Hadi Al Iraqi). Available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2007/d20070427hvd.pdf>. It seems that bin Laden wanted to redeploy Al Iraqi to his homeland arena, probably to promote Al Qaeda central leadership interests in Iraq and vis à vis the semi autonomous Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

141. "Khaled Khabib Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/khalid_habib.htm and Sandee, "Core Al Qaeda in 2008." Available at http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa_AQin2008.pdf, p. 8.

142. The fact that Al Adel was nominated as the chief of the military committee immediately after the death of Mohamed Atef suggests he was a senior member within the military committee at that time, maybe as the head of the general section.

143. Available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16895017/The-Signs-of-Victory-Looming-Over-Afghanistan>

144. "Mustafa Abu al Yazid: Infiltrating the American Fortress," 31 December 2009, *NEFA Foundation*. Available at <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefaAbul-Yazid0110.pdf>

145. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000078-Trans.pdf>

146. The basic foundations for this kind of external operation were laid out very early in a preliminary paper that according to the present assessment was presented for discussions very close to the end of the Afghan war, concerning the future activity, policy, and tactics of Al Qaeda. In the years that followed, the authors saw many of the characteristics laid down in this paper manifest themselves in Al Qaeda's activity. One of these is the establishment of regional extensions. See Ahmad Mussa, "Cairo Papers Exclusive of 10 Episodes of Handwritten Al Qaeda Documents," *Nahadat Misr* in Arabic, 11 September 2004, pp. 1–2.

147. "United States vs. Usama Bin Laden," p. 1652.

148. In order to conduct and control the different aspects of international activity, the Al Qaeda's special operations unit needed means of control and accessibility such as airport accessibility, nearby travel agencies, stable communication lines, accessibility to international banking facilities, and the ability to use the Internet. Therefore, unlike other Al Qaeda bodies, which operated solely in Afghan territory or the Afghanistan/Pakistan border zone, the special operations unit, responsible for external operations, probably operated mostly from important Pakistani cities such as Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, and Gujarat.

149. Matthew Levitt, "KSM in Custody," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 5 March 2003. Available at <http://washingtoninstitute.org/print.php?CID=467&template=C06>

150. For the full list of the Al Qaeda's special operations unit attacks and plots during Khaled Sheikh Mohamed's dominance, see: "Verbatim Transcript of Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10024 (Khaled Sheikh Mohamed)." Available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript_ISN10024.pdf

151. The 7/7 attacks in London were conducted during the dominance of Hamza Rabia as the head of this unit. Al Qaeda's leadership publicly claimed responsibility for the attack. *Fox News*, 1 September 2005. Available at <http://www.diggersrealm.com/mt/archives/001189.html>

152. "Usama Al Kini Head of Al Qaeda in Pakistan Killed by US Military," *Times On Line*, 9 January 2009. Available at <http://npsglobal.org/eng/index.php/news/29-non-state-actors/370-usama-al-kini-head-of-al-qaeda-in-pakistan-killed-by-us-military.html>

153. "Geo News Exclusive Interview with Sheikh Saeed Al Qaeda Leader," *Geo Television Network*. Available at http://www.geo.tv/program_archive/SheikhSaeedInterview_e.asp

154. "U.S. Official Confirms Death from Natural Causes of Senior Al Qaeda Official Abu Ubaida al-Masri," 9 April 2008. Available at http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=102x3261113

155. Available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/23/AR2010042302807.html>

156. Available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/30/robertson.al.qaeda.full/index.html>

157. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/7738026/Arrest-of-Easter-bombers-led-to-international-al-Qaeda-network.html>

158. Available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2010/07/why-does-al-qaeda-have-a-problem-with-norway/59649/>

159. "Khalid Sheikh Mohammad Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/report/2007/khalid-sheikh-muhammad_transcript.htm

160. "Lashkar e toyba," *Australian National Security*. Available at http://www.ag.gov.au/agd/WWW/nationalsecurity.nsf/Page/What_Governments_are_doing_Listing_of_Terrorism_Organisations_Lashkar-e-Tayyiba

161. "East Africa Embassy Bombers Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/east_africa_Embassy_bombers.htm

162. *The 9/11 Commission Report*. Available at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/pdf/sec4.pdf>, pp. 149–150.

163. These reports suggest Abu Ubeida Al Masri was responsible for the air plot of the summer of 2006. Ubeida's former position within the organization was of a regional leader along the Afghan/Pakistan border of the general section (internal). "Abu Ubeida Al Masri Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_obaidah_al-masri.htm

164. It seems that Abu Salah Al Somali used the alias of Abu Hafiz that was referred to as the head of the special operation unit. See "CeifiT Special Report: "Is Al Qaeda on the Brink of Conducting New Wave of Attacks in the West." Available at http://www.upsite.co.il/uploaded/files/626_8230c8bf67553cd90811a026c3d14bbf.pdf and "CeifiT Terror Analysis: Senior Al Qaeda Figure Salah Al Somali Killed in Afghanistan." Available at <http://www.ceifit.com/?categoryId=25149&itemId=92319>

165. Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/adnan_el_shukrijumah.htm

166. Available at http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/08/07/1765874_p2/mother-denies-fbi-allegation-that.html

167. Interestingly, this unit was mostly composed of Al Qaeda African activists. "Detainee Biography of Amar Al Baluchi." Available at <http://www.dni.gov/announcements/content/DetaineeBiographies.pdf>

168. During his hearing Khaled Sheikh Mohamed (KSM) admitted he was the overall in charge of the Gibraltar Straits plot to attack British and American warships. This plot was attributed in different documents to "Al Qaeda chief of naval operation Abd Al Rahim Al Nashiri." Integrating both references one might conclude Nashiri was Al Qaeda naval wing chief subordinated to Al Qaeda special operation unit headed at that time by KSM. "Verbatim Transcript of Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10024 (Khaled Sheikh Mohamed)." Available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript.ISN10024.pdf> and Gary Jones "Osama's Navy," *Strategy Page*, 2 December 2004. Available at <http://www.strategypage.com/militaryforums/93-3789.aspx>

169. Attash involvement with Al Qaeda external operations reveals throughout his hearing at "Verbatim Transcript of Open Session Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10014—(Walid bin Attash)." Available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript.ISN10014.pdf>, pp. 4–6. Attash also attended the famous meeting in Kuala Lumpur that was the opening meeting of the 9/11 attacks. *The 9/11 Commission Report*. Available at <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, pp. 168, 209.

170. Personal communication with Ali Sufan, former FBI lead investigator of the U.S.S. *Cole* attack.

171. Katherine Pflieger Shrader, "Raised Terror Alert Based on Pakistani Computer Engineer's Data," *USA Today*, 3 August 2004. Available at http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2004-08-03-engineer-of-terror_x.htm

172. One may learn about Khan Involvement with the special operations unit headed at that time by KSM and later on Hamza Rabia through his involvement with KSM plot to target American financial institutions. See Ehsan Ahrari, "Al Qaeda and Cyber Terrorism," *Asia Times*, 18 August 2004. Available at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Front_Page/FH18Aa01.html

173. "Abu Talha Al Sudani Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_talha_al_sudani.htm

174. "Dhiran Barot Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/dhiren_barot.htm

175. "Ahmad Khalfan Ghailani Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/ahmed_khalfan_ghailani.htm

176. "Fahd Mohammed Ali Msalem Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/fahid_mohammed_ally_msalam.htm

177. Zahid Hussain, "Usama Al Kini Head of Al Qaeda in Pakistan Killed by U.S Military," *Times On Line*, 9 January 2009. Available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5479455.ece>

178. *Ibid.*

179. One may see Rauf's senior role in the 2006 transatlantic aircraft plot as the most prominent indicator for his involvement with Al Qaeda special external operation unit. See "Terror Plot: Internet Cafes Raided." *CNN international*, 13 August 2006. Available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/europe/08/12/terror.plot/index.html>

180. See <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/07/30/robertson.al.qaeda.full/index.html> and <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/7738026/Arrest-of-Easter-bombers-led-to-international-al-Qaeda-network.htm> and <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/23/AR2010042302807.html>

181. Ammar Al Baluchi's role within Al Qaeda special operation unit (and mostly during preparations for the 9/11 attack) as the nephew of the then chief of the unit Khaled Sheikh Mohamed is exposed throughout his hearing at "Verbatim Transcript of Open Session Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10018 (Ammar Al Baluchi)." Available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript_ISN10018.pdf

182. Mustafa Ahmad Hawasawi's role within Al Qaeda special operation unit (and mostly during preparations for the 9/11 attack) is exposed throughout his hearing at "Verbatim Transcript of Open Session Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10018 (Mustafa Ahmad Hawasawi)." Available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript_ISN10011.pdf

183. "Al Qaeda Cells Rounded Up," *Bin Laden Terror Network in Europe*, The Mackenzie Institute. Available at http://www.mackenzieinstitute.com/2002/2002_Bin_Ladens_Networks.html

184. Al Qaeda operatives who lived in the West were of special value as they knew Western mentality and lifestyle. Unlike them, KSM had to invest a lot of effort in training Al Qaeda members of Arab origin that participated in external operations on Western soil (such as the 15 Saudi hijackers of the 9/11 plots) with a Western mentality and lifestyle.

185. "Verbatim Transcript of Open Session Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10019 (Hambali)." Available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript_ISN10019.pdf, p. 7.

186. "Profile: Amjad Farooki," BBC News, 27 September 2004. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3692882.stm

187. "Ramzi Bin Al Shihb Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/ramzi_binalshihb.htm

188. Among those projects were the efforts of Al Qaeda senior activist Abu Khobab and an ambitious project aimed to produce Anthrax conducted by Ayman al-Zawahiri (Al Qaeda's second in command) and professionally headed by the Malaysian microbiologist Yazid Suffat. In addition, there were several unconfirmed reports of consistent Al Qaeda efforts to achieve some level of nuclear capability, mainly vis-à-vis the Pakistani Abd Al Khan network. See Deroy Murdock, "Terrorist Rogues Gallery," *NRO Weekend*, 27 September 2006. Available at <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=YTQ1YWE1OTVknTEyMGIwOGIwMmViYWEzYTFhYTIxZGU> and "Verbatim Transcript of Open Session Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10024(Khaled Sheikh Mohammed)." Available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript_ISN10024.pdf and "How Pakistan's Dr. X Sold Al Qaida Islamic Bomb," *World Net Daily*, 17 August 2005. Available at http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=45812

189. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000078-Trans.pdf>

190. Personal communication with Ali Sufan.

191. *Ibid.*

192. Evan F. Kohlmann, "Prominent Jihad Media Organizations in Central Asia," *NEFA Foundation*. Available at <http://www.nefajihadmedia.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefajihadmedia0309.pdf>

193. "United States of America vs. Osama Bin Laden." Available at <http://www.elastic.org/~fche/mirrors/criptome.org/usa-v-ubl-02.htm>, p. 211.

194. "Verbatim Transcript of Open Session Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10024 (Khaled Sheikh Mohammed)." Available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript_ISN10024.pdf, p. 17.
195. "Al Qaeda Media Committee Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/al-qaeda_media_committee.htm
196. "Ahmad Al Hawasawi Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/mustafa_ahmed_al-hawasawi.htm
197. "Adam Gadhan Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/adam_gadah.htm
198. *Der Spiegel*, 29 January 2006.
199. For the full responsibilities of the administrative and financial committee see the Arabic version of "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000078-Trans.pdf>, pp. 15–19.
200. "Sheikh Sai'd Al Masri Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/shaikh_saiid_al-masri.htm
201. "Abu fadhl al Maki Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_fadhl_al-makkee.htm
202. "Evan F. Kohlmann, "Dossier: Sheikh Mustafa Abu Al Yazid (A.K.A Sheikh Saeed) June 2008." *NEFA Foundation*. Available at <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefayazid0608.pdf>, p. 2.
203. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000078-Trans.pdf>, pp. 15–19.
204. *Ibid.*
205. *Ibid.*
206. "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/AFGP-2002-000078-Orig.pdf> (in Arabic), pp. 19–22.
207. "Saif al Adel Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/saif_al-adel.htm
208. Ahmad Mussa, "Cairo Papers Exclusive of 10 Episodes of Written Al Qaeda Documents, *Nahdat Misr* in Arabic, Cairo, 11 September 2004, p. 2.
209. "United States of America vs. Usama Bin Laden." Available at <http://cryptome.info/usa-v-ubl-02.htm>
210. Even though the formal definition of his position is a key theologian it seems he used to possess a much higher status, probably as a committee leader. Three detainees, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and two unidentified prisoners, said Abu Hafs opposed the strikes of 11 September and even wrote a letter to bin Laden, citing the Qoran, to this effect. In the present authors' view, this episode reflects Abu Hafs high status. See "Abu Hafs Al Mauritanian Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_hafs_the_mauritanian.htm
211. Yahya Al Libi has emerged as a public face for Al Qaeda, appearing in more than a dozen lengthy Internet videos since 2006. His claim to fame lies within his successful escape from a high-security U.S. military prison in Bagram, Afghanistan, in July 2005, along with three other Al Qaeda members. He styles himself as a theologian and has offered lengthy commentaries on a variety of political events and hence is probably the new head of the religious committee. See Craig Whitlock and Munir Ladaa, "Al Qaeda New Leadership-Abu Yahya Al Libi, Religious Scholar Nationality-Libyan," *The Washington Post* (2006). Available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/specials/terror/yahya.html#profile>
212. One of the most important issues Khaled Sheikh Mohamed had to confront during the preparations for the 11 September attacks was the total lack of understanding of Western mentality among the vast majority of the hijackers. In fact, KSM organized special trainings for them in order to introduce them to the very basics of Western mentality and way of life. See "Verbatim Transcript of Open Session Combatant Status Review Tribunal Hearing for ISN 10024(Khaled Sheikh Mohammed)." Available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/transcript_ISN10024.pdf and 9/11 and 9/11 *Commission Report*. Available at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/pdf/fullreport.pdf>, p. 236.

213. The dominant figure behind the attempt to release those activists was Al Qaeda deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri who enjoyed previous good contacts with the Iranian regime, which supported Egyptian Islamic Jihad's struggle in Egypt during the 1990s. Al Qaeda's desire to release those members became a key issue in the conflict between Al Qaeda's senior leadership from the Afghanistan/Pakistan border and the former Al Qaeda leader of Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi regarding the latter's targeting policy, which included the Shi'ite population of Iraq and hence raised antagonism toward Al Qaeda in Iran. See "Harmony Papers Data Base." Available at <http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTC-Zawahiri-Letter-10-05.pdf>, p. 9.

214. "Saif Al Adel Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/saif_al_adel.htm

215. "Abu Hafs Al Mauritani Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_hafs_the_mauritanian.htm

216. "Abu Khayr Al Masri Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/abu_khayr.htm

217. Pepe Escobar, "Middle East—The Roving Eye, Iran and al-Qaeda—Odd Bedfellows," *Asia Time On Line*, 17 October 2003. Available at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EJ17Ak02.html

218. "Saad Bin Laden Profile." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/profiles/saad_bin_laden.htm