

TERRORISM FOCUS

Volume V ■ Issue 35 ■ October 1, 2008

IN THIS ISSUE:

* BRIEFS.....	1
* Al-Qaeda Outlines Its Strategy Seven Years After 9/11.....	2
* Target and Attackers Still a Mystery in Islamabad’s Marriott Bombing.....	4
* Village Guards on the Frontline of Turkey’s War on Terrorism.....	6
* Shaykh Qaradawi Alarms Egypt with Warning of Shiite Imperialism.....	8



AL-QAEDA IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB CALLS FOR JIHAD IN MAURITANIA

Eleven soldiers and one civilian were abducted by AQIM after a September 15 ambush in the Tourin area of Tiris Zemmour province, near the iron-ore mining town of Zouerate. The missing men were found decapitated and mutilated in a desert area on September 20 (AFP, September 21).

The 12 men are believed to have been killed by Algerian elements of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (*Al-Akhbar* [Nouakchott], September 21). The militants seized two military vehicles, weapons and a large quantity of ammunition. Despite being over 500 miles from the closest border at the time of the attack, the militants managed to evade patrols and aerial surveillance in making their escape (AFP, September 17).

Mauritania’s president, Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, was deposed by a military coup on August 6. He and Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmad Waghf remain under house arrest. The coup leader was General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who claims Abdallahi was negotiating with Islamist militants, going so far as to offer them positions in the government in return for an end to political violence.

A Mauritanian newspaper said sources within the military reported that U.S. intelligence informed the Mauritanian command that vehicles carrying armed militants were in Tiris Zemmour province. To the displeasure of

For comments or questions about our publications, please send an email to pubs@jamestown.org, or contact us at:

1111 16th St., NW, Suite #320
 Washington, DC 20036
 T: (202) 483-8888
 F: (202) 483-8337
<http://www.jamestown.org>

The Terrorism Focus is a fortnightly complement to Jamestown’s Terrorism Monitor, providing detailed and timely analysis of developments for policymakers and analysts, informing them of the latest trends in the War on Terror.

Unauthorized reproduction or redistribution of this or any Jamestown publication is strictly prohibited by law.

Copyright ©2008



the Americans, the Mauritanian military failed to take the information seriously (*Al-Akhbar*, September 16).

AQIM claimed responsibility for the attack in a September 23 internet message (al-Fajr Media Center, September 23). The statement said the attackers were under the command of Shaykh Abd al-Hamid Abu Zayd. The operation was designed to “avenge the oppressed prisoners in the Mauritanian prisons” and urged members of the military to “repent” and abandon “this hireling army of the Jews and the Christians.” Mauritania is one of only three Arab nations to have diplomatic relations with the state of Israel.

In a video entitled “A Message to our Ummah in the Islamic Maghreb,” AQIM leader Abu Musab Abdul Wadud (a.k.a. Abdelmalik Droukdel) called for jihad against Mauritania’s government, claiming that Mauritania “has become a nest of foreign intelligence, at its head the [Israeli] Mossad... Does [Mauritania] think that the Al-Qaeda Organization in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb will accept this situation and leave Israel in peace inside its embassy, throwing off its venom and plotting and fomenting coups and inciting the military against the sons of the nation, the best of its youths?” (*Al-Fajr Media Center*, September 21).

The imprisoned leader of al-Qaeda in Mauritania, Khadim Ould Saman, issued a statement in August opposing the coup: “The coup that established the new regime is undoubtedly authored by the infidel West... It is then our duty to launch a holy war against it” (*Taqadoumy [Nouakchott]*, August 30). The militant leader is facing charges in connection with the massacre of four French civilians last year.

Mauritania’s Communications Minister tried to downplay the threat while calling for international assistance: “What’s happening are pretty major incidents that are, however, taking place in the far north and as you know very well what happens in Siberia doesn’t necessary bother people in Moscow. That said, I would very much like the international community to assume its role of solidarity with us because this danger doesn’t only affect Mauritania. It’s a danger to the whole world” (*Radio France Internationale*, September 23). Morocco responded quickly by sending a team of military engineers and

technical experts from the Gendarmerie to help identify weaknesses in Mauritania’s border security (*Assabah [Casablanca]*, September 23).

The deteriorating security situation in Mauritania will inevitably have a negative effect on efforts to restore a civilian, elected government. The current military regime is expected to use the attack to seek the restoration of U.S. military aid, suspended after the August coup.

Al-Qaeda Outlines Its Strategy Seven Years After 9/11

On the seventh anniversary of 9/11, jihadi internet forum members posted a variety of messages recalling and celebrating al-Qaeda’s terrorist attacks in the United States, or, as the jihadis refer to it, “the victorious invasion of Manhattan.” One frequent poster and well-known member of the jihadi forums posted a protracted analysis of the situation as it exists at the moment entitled “Al-Qaeda’s Strategy on September 11, 2008, and the Onset of its Great Scheme” (*alhesbahweb.net*, September 12).

The posting was written by a Salafi-Jihadi using the nickname “Asad al-Jihad2.” Famous among jihadi forum chatters for his active role in the Salafi-Jihadi global movement, al-Jihad2 is believed to be the Egyptian Muhammad Khalil al-Hakaima, media coordinator for al-Qaeda (*iiacome.blogspot.com*, September 12; see also *Terrorism Focus*, October 10, 2006; October 24, 2006). Al-Hakaima was a member of Egypt’s Gama’a al-Islamiya (Islamic Group - GI) before breaking ranks with the group and joining al-Qaeda (see *Terrorism Monitor*, October 10, 2006). Another forum member, claiming to be a reporter for the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), posted the article on behalf of al-Jihad2. Beginning with a review of the battles in Afghanistan’s Tora Bora region, the post claims al-Qaeda succeeded in scattering the U.S. army all over the world, hence disrupting its plans to reshape the Middle East. The U.S. onslaught on the Middle East drove Muslims to rise up and join al-Qaeda, says al-Jihad2, adding, “We are tired of analysts who claim al-Qaeda will be terminated soon. Don’t they have a sensible man to admit that al-Qaeda won in every field of confrontation?”

Several times the post also ridicules a July 28 Rand Corporation report entitled “How Terrorist Groups End: Implications for Countering al-Qa’ida.” The report suggested the United States abandon its heavy reliance on military force in its counterterrorism strategy to pursue an approach emphasizing policing and intelligence gathering.

Ineffective Western Tactics in the War on al-Qaeda

Previous jihadi movements were defeated and dismantled by Western counterterrorism tactics because they failed to win public support and failed to train jihadis for ideological, political and military confrontations with the infidels. Al-Qaeda succeeded in confronting not just local security forces, but rather the entire global security machine. The most important aspect of al-Qaeda’s operations, claims al-Jihad2, is the continuous build-up and development of its resources while perpetrating terror attacks. Continued Western attacks on al-Qaeda have only strengthened its resolve and support from Muslims. The author recalls an encounter he had while raising funds for al-Qaeda operations: “What makes people donate large sums of money to al-Qaeda after all the restrictions imposed on it by the international counter-terrorism apparatus? What motivates a little girl to give me one dollar when she knew I was raising funds for al-Qaeda?” The girl’s own answer to this question: “I want them to kill the Americans (the Jews) because they fight the Muslims.”

The Major Battle Fronts of al-Qaeda

In the seven years since the terror attacks in the United States, al-Qaeda has mounted a series of successful attacks on many fronts. Osama bin Laden, who has baffled the world’s smartest military and security analysts, is still planning more devastating blows, according to al-Jihad2.

- Palestine: The world’s attention turned to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when Osama bin Laden, in his first statement after the 9/11 attacks, vowed to disrupt America’s peace if the Jews did not pull out of Palestine. Israel remains at the core of international Islamic issues and provides a revolutionary motivation for Palestinians to join al-Qaeda’s war on crusaders and Jews under American command. Is al-

Qaeda winning in Palestine? If al-Jihad2’s measure of success is the spread of Salafi-Jihadi groups such as the Jaysh al-Islam (Islamic Army) in Palestinian areas, Israel’s establishment of an additional security agency to confront global jihad movements would seem to corroborate al-Jihad2’s claim of Salafi-Jihadi success (*Al-Ghad* [Jordan], September 25). Al-Jihad2 concludes his point on Palestine by suggesting al-Qaeda attacks are pending in the heart of Jerusalem.

- The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI): Evidence for the success of al-Qaeda in Iraq is the re-establishment in Iraq of the caliphate that was abolished by Turkey’s Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1924. In the first five years of the ISI’s 20-year plan to develop a caliphate in the whole region, al-Qaeda asserted its superiority over all enemies of Islam in Iraq, resulting in many Iraqi resistance leaders pledging allegiance to ISI.
- Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula: The Arab peninsula is an exceptional domain for al-Qaeda operations because it can engage all enemies of Islam present in the oil-rich region. The rough terrain and the non-luxurious life of many people in the peninsula are important factors in motivating them to join al-Qaeda. The movement considers Yemen an area of strategic research. All the terror acts committed by al-Qaeda in Yemen are only a prelude to its future plans for Yemen as outlined in the book *The Responsibility of the People of Yemen towards the Holy Places of Muslims and their Wealth* by Salafi-Jihadi ideologist Abu Musad al-Suri. Other States in the peninsula provide vast financial sources for al-Qaeda.
- Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan: Al-Qaeda’s plan for Afghanistan is to gradually take over Kabul by cutting off its supply lines, followed by the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate. The mujahideen are waging war on multiple fronts in Afghanistan against NATO and apostate forces. The Taliban and al-Qaeda presently control large districts in Afghanistan due to the influx of volunteers and Salafi-Jihadi shaykhs. “How does al-Qaeda’s situation in Afghanistan during the Tora Bora battles compare to today? I leave the answer to the incompetent RAND institution” says al-Jihad2.

- Al-Qaeda in Pakistan: Pakistan's Taliban made outstanding progress this year by controlling the tribal areas and undermining America's strongest ally in the region, former President Pervez Musharaff. Al-Jihad2 believes Pakistan will never stabilize unless it is ruled by an Islamic government supportive of al-Qaeda and the Taliban because the Pakistani public dislikes the United States and its allies. Al-Qaeda expects improved relations with Pakistani authorities now that military command has been separated from the presidency.
- Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: The establishment of Salafist groups in the Maghreb region has presented an "insurmountable barrier to Crusader France and the European nations behind it." Though the "Algerian system is fading," direct French intervention is expected to prop it up. Nevertheless, the Maghreb region offers numerous advantages for conducting jihad, including vast open areas with unprotected borders, an abundance of mountain fortresses, long beaches with maritime access and a ready supply of weapons from central and western Africa.
- Al-Qaeda in the African Horn: Since the end of the Cold War and the establishment of an American presence in fourteen African states formerly part of France's neo-colonial sphere of influence, al-Qaeda has planned to repulse U.S. influence in Africa. "The African Horn, the country of the two migrations [Somalia] and the southern belt of defense of Prophet Muhammad's Peninsula, is considered one of the main battlefields against the crusaders" said al-Jihad2 quoting Shaykh Mukhtar Abu al-Zubair, Emir of the Mujahideen Youth in Somalia (al-Shabaab). The post focuses on the early presence of al-Qaeda in Somalia. In 1993, claims al-Jihad2, Osama Bin Laden dispatched Abu Talha al-Sudani, a senior al-Qaeda leader, to train Somali mujahideen youth who, in turn, summoned other senior leaders such as Shaykh Abu Hafs al-Masri, Shaykh Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, Shaykh Yusuf al-Iri and Shaykh Abdul Aziz al-Muqrin for consultation and the planning of future al-Qaeda battles with Western and U.S. forces in the African Horn. Abu Talha al-Sudani was officially appointed by Osama Bin Laden to oversee operations in Eastern Africa but was later killed in a fierce battle with Ethiopian forces in 2007.

These are the battlefronts where al-Qaeda has been victorious and reinforced its presence and strength, according to al-Jihad2, who adds that al-Qaeda receives many letters and delegations from Muslims all over the world petitioning to join the movement. Concerning its future plans, al-Jihad2 proclaims al-Qaeda will concentrate on assassinating tyrant and infidel leaders in an attempt to liquidate all forms of the U.S. military, security, diplomatic and economic presence in the region.

Some jihadi forum members hailed al-Jihad2's posting, considering it indicative of an upcoming large-scale terror attack by al-Qaeda. Other forum participants believe the posting's analysis contains many hidden messages written in code.

"Al-wala' wa al-bara'" (Loyalty [to Islam] and Disavowal [to its Enemies]) is still the central theme of al-Qaeda's adherents. Following this concept, al-Qaeda's list of infidels and enemies to be eliminated is growing, requiring more jihadis to replace the ones who perished in the global counterterrorism campaign. The release of this post on al-Qaeda's strategy, coinciding with the release of another interview with an anonymous al-Qaeda soldier promising major terror attacks in the near future, leaves the impression that al-Qaeda is increasing its propaganda efforts to lure more Islamists to replace the fallen.

Abdul Hameed Bakier is an intelligence expert on counterterrorism, crisis management and terrorist-hostage negotiations. He is based in Jordan.

Target and Attackers Still a Mystery in Islamabad's Marriott Bombing

The September 20 terrorist attack on Islamabad's American-owned Marriott hotel shook the whole country. Shocking scenes of flames engulfing the 290-room hotel were televised live. Mostly used by foreign dignitaries and local elites, the luxury hotel continued to blaze for around 12 hours, taking the lives of 60 people and injuring more than 280. Among the dead were two U.S. nationals and the ambassador of the Czech Republic. A number of other foreign nationals were among those critically injured, including Germans, Britons, Saudis, Danes, Swedes and

Libyans. The terrorists struck hours after new president Asif Ali Zardari issued a stern warning to terrorists in his inaugural speech to parliament (Daily Times [Islamabad], September 20; *The News* [Islamabad], September 20). The president quickly reacted to the deadly attack in a televised address, declaring that Pakistan will not be deterred by “cowardly acts of terrorism” and pledging his government’s commitment to eliminating “the cancer of terrorism” from the country (Pakistan Television [PTV], September 20). The attack was the biggest terrorist bombing in Pakistan since it joined hands with the U.S. in the ongoing War on Terrorism, leading some Pakistani officials and analysts to term the incident “Pakistan’s 9/11” (Aaj TV, September 20).

As usual, fingers were first pointed towards al-Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban, led by militant commander Baitullah Mahsud (It is worth noting, however, that western media sources reported that Mahsud died from natural causes on October 1, 2008). The Prime Minister’s advisor on Internal Affairs, Rahman Malik, claimed that all roads from the bombing led to Waziristan, part of Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the home base for Mahsud and his followers. Malik said there were strong reasons to suspect the involvement of al-Qaeda and Mahsud’s banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) – a claim he made on the basis of similar investigations or confessions made by earlier would-be suicide bombers or their handlers. Malik also said that the deadly bombing had similarities with a June 2 blast outside the Danish embassy in Islamabad for which al-Qaeda took responsibility (*The News*, September 22).

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, however, put the blame on an unlikely alliance of foreign militants, including Chechens, Afghans and Uzbeks he alleges are hiding along the border with Afghanistan (*Daily Times*, September 22). Some initial media reports pointed out that the attack could be the joint work of al-Qaeda and banned militant organizations like Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) and Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ) (*The News*, September 26). At a time when media and officials were making their wild guesses, responsibility for the attack was taken by a new militant outfit calling itself the Fidayeen-e-Islam (Partisans of Islam). Pakistan’s intelligence agencies are so far clueless about this organization. It is suspected that the Fidayeen-e-Islam could be only a cover for some other organization.

The militant outfit considered most likely to be involved in this deadly attack is Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islam, led by al-Qaeda ally Qari Saifullah Akhtar, who was previously detained in connection with the assassination of Benazir Bhutto (*Dawn* [Karachi], February 27, September 24; *Daily Times* [Islamabad] September 24). Nevertheless, the day after claiming responsibility, the Fidayeen-e-Islam (FI) threatened to target every person aiding the United States Army in Pakistan. In a message sent to an al-Arabiya TV reporter in Islamabad, the FI rejected the Pentagon’s claim that only two U.S. Marines had been killed in the Marriott blast. The FBI was quoted as saying a large number of U.S. Marines, FBI officials and European diplomats were staying at the hotel the day of the bombing (*Daily Times*, September 25). The detachment of 30 Marines was part of a security team brought to Islamabad in connection with the visit of U.S. Chief-of-Staff Admiral Michael Mullen. Speculation about the presence of the Marines is rampant in Islamabad after a number of people, including parliamentarians, witnessed the servicemen bringing a truckload of steel boxes into the hotel without passing them through the security scanners in the hours before the bombing (*The News*, September 21; *Saudi Gazette*, September 28).

There were also conflicting reports about what was the real target of the attack—the nearby parliament building where President Asif Zardari made a speech in the presence of all the important personages of the state only a few hours before the attack, or the Marriott building where the American Marines were staying that night. Rahman Malik said that a last-minute change of venue for a dinner party that evening saved the country’s top leadership from the suicide blast. According to Malik, the real targets of the suicide bomber were the president, prime minister and other leaders who were to attend a dinner party originally scheduled to be held at the Marriott hotel. Because of security concerns the event was moved to the Prime Minister’s house (*Dawn*, September 25). However, the management of the Marriott hotel has denied that the top Pakistani leaders were due to have dinner at the hotel, saying there was no reservation from the government that night (AFP, September 23).

The new civilian government has been facing great challenges, with the rising tide of militancy being at the top of the list. The Marriott bombing has generated a new debate in Pakistan surrounding the question: Whose war is this? In his speech to the UN General Assembly, President Zardari clearly said the War on Terror is Pakistan’s own

war, and that the Marriott bombing is Pakistan's national 9/11 (*Daily Statesman*, [Peshawar], September 26). This perception, however, is far from having universal acceptance in Pakistan. The right-wing religious parties quickly blamed the nation's leadership for playing into the hands of the Americans and fighting someone else's war on its soil, warning that the suicide bombings will continue until Pakistan disengages itself from the "U.S. War on Terror" (*The News*, September 24).

Mukhtar A. Khan is a Pashtun journalist based in Washington, D.C., covering the issues of Taliban and al-Qaeda in Pakistan-Afghanistan border regions.

Village Guards on the Frontline of Turkey's War on Terrorism

The Village Guard system is one of the key aspects of Turkish security policies in the nation's ethnic-Kurdish southeast. In response to the growing power of the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan - PKK), the state has resorted to increasingly complex and aggressive counterterrorism strategies. In order to attract local people to its side in 1985, the state launched a new initiative to buy off the local Kurdish tribes. The carrot that the state offered was the Gecici Koy Koruculuğu (GKK) system, i.e., the temporary village guard system. This policy was meant to discourage the tribes from lending their support to the PKK by employing them as a local security force. Members of tribes were put on the state's payroll as village guards and received salaries and health insurance benefits from the state, though these, like their equipment, met a lower standard than that implemented for the military or state police.

As a frontline unit exposed to regular contact with PKK militants, a number of village guards have lost their lives in fighting with the Kurdish separatist movement in the last two months. On August 2, five Village Guards were killed in Sirak province (*Anadolu Ajansi*, August 2); on August 26, five GKK members were killed in Bitlis province (*Anadolu Ajansi*, August 27; *Today's Zaman*, August 27); on August 29, one Village Guard was killed by a mine hit by a military convoy in Hakkari province (*Vatan*, August 29). A land mine planted by the PKK in Semdinli (Hakkari

province) killed three Village Guards during a major security operation near the Iraqi border on September 7 (*Hurriyet*, September 7).

Introducing a Local Security Force to the Southeast Provinces

The Village Guards are essentially a reactivation of earlier local defense forces created in 1924 to repel raids by local bandits in the lawless period that followed the Turkish War of Independence. These in turn had their roots in the Kurdish Hamidiye regiments formed by the Ottomans during World War One, initially to defend against Armenian guerrilla attacks. In the campaign against the PKK, the village guards' intimate knowledge of local terrain, ability to speak local Kurdish dialects and familiarity with local groups and individuals have proven invaluable to the Gendarmerie and Armed Forces.

In the countryside of the Kurdish region, the temporary village guard system has become the main source of income since 1985. The GKK system was initiated to protect rural villages against terror attacks. Article 74 in the Koy Kanunu (Village Law) regulates the GKK system: "The GKK shall be formed if there is an increasing threat to villagers' life and properties. If such a threat looms, based on the local governor's suggestion and Ministry of Interior's approval, the necessary number of GKK shall be appointed."^[1] Temporary Village Guards work under the supervision of regional Gendarmerie commanders.

The GKK system was introduced to 22 provinces in 1985. To supplement this program, a "voluntary village guard" system was added in 13 more provinces in 1993. The difference between the two programs is that, while the temporary village guards receive monthly salary and health benefits, the voluntary village guards do not receive a salary but are entitled to health compensation and benefits. As of 2005, it was estimated that a total of 58,511 Temporary Village Guards and 12,279 Voluntary Village Guards were employed by the state (cnnturk.com, September 27, 2005).

To undermine the state's efforts, the PKK gave up its Marxist-based opposition to the tribal system and instead sought ways to cooperate with them. The PKK's new strategy aimed to obtain the tribes' support if possible. If

they failed in this goal, they sought to convince them not to cooperate with the state. For instance, Zubeyr Aydar and Leyla Zana, two former Kurdish parliamentarians, asked Sedat Bucak, the leader of the Bucak tribe, to allow PKK activities in Siverek and Hilvan, where his tribe resides. [2] Because Sedat Bucak rejected this request, the PKK asked the Bucak tribe to pay a “tax,” which triggered a long and bloody fight between the tribe and the PKK. [3] The state, on the other hand, armed the Bucak and other tribes, which eventually stood with the state. In an interview, Korkut Eken, a former general and advisor to the General Directorate of Turkish National Police, told a reporter, “We [the state] had given 4 to 5 thousands arms to tribes. In the fight against the PKK, the invaluable help provided by the Jirki, Bucak, Babatlar and Kamil Aga tribes is unforgettable.”[4]

In this violent armed struggle between the PKK and the central government and its Kurdish supporters, scholar Martin van Bruinessen makes an interesting observation - many leading families had some members in government service while others were active in the PKK; “The apparent split of tribes or their leading families into pro and anti-government factions is not always the reflection of a serious conflict dividing the family, however. In some cases it appears to be the consequence of a deliberate decision not to put all one’s eggs into one basket – a time-honored strategy of elite families everywhere.”[5]

Economic Impact

This competition between the PKK and the state changed the economic structure by shifting the major economic activities in the largely rural southeast from livestock husbandry and farming to the village guard system. Because accurate figures or studies on the economic impact of the GKK system are not available, estimating its economic significance is difficult. The economic attractiveness of this job, however, was reflected during a recent recruitment drive - 9,000 people, including high-school graduate women, applied for 350 vacancies in voluntary village guard positions in Hakkari province (*Bugun*, May 19, 2007).

In order to be employed as a village guard, there are few requirements other than age restrictions and the usual background checks. Tribal affiliation is one of the most

important elements during the background checks for two reasons. First, because tribes exert political influence on the local branches of the ruling parties and maintain good relations with the state bureaucracy, they can throw their weight behind their members during the recruitment process. Second, because background checks are the key determinant in hiring decisions, by nature, those without connection to the PKK terror organization are potential candidates for the job. At this point, once again, tribal connections play a crucial role in that they are generally divided into two categories: those who support the PKK, and those who support the state. Because of this division, the tribes that allied with the state have been the major beneficiaries of the village guard system.

Through this policy, the state was able to win over the cooperation of the tribes. The state, thus, has managed to undermine the PKK’s recruitment basis as well as establishing local alliances against the PKK. The support of the state, on the other hand, strengthened the role of tribes in the Kurdish society throughout the 1990s. Most village guards are fiercely loyal to the Turkish state and firmly oppose any kind of Kurdish autonomy. Others, however, have complained of coercion in their recruitment (Reuters, November 14, 2007).

Given their often precarious position as stalwarts of state authority in a region known for militant separatism, there are often fears in the military about the long-term loyalty of the village guards, which may account for their substandard government-issued weapons. General Osman Pamukoglu, who directed military operations in Hakkari province in 1993-95, described problems in the use of village guards he regarded as undisciplined and poorly educated:

They were scared that PKK militants were going to take revenge on them one day. As the authority of the PKK strengthened in the region, they went further away from the authority of the state. Either because of fear or belief, some of them were covertly supporting the PKK with their state-issued guns and salary. That was not enough; they were participating in the operations of the PKK against the state.[6]

Human Rights Concerns

The negative side of the system is that the GKK has long been criticized by human rights organizations for deepening mistrust and ethnic divisions in an already troubled region. Many village guards have been accused of abusing their authority to seize the property of villagers who have been forcibly evacuated from their villages. The lack of title deeds or other documentation regarding property ownership in the region has exacerbated this situation.

The European Commission, in a recent report on Turkey's progress towards EU accession, has described the village guard system as one of the major outstanding obstacles to villagers being able to return home safely. UN officials such as the UN Special Rapporteur for Internally Displaced Persons have raised concerns: "What I see is that at least Village Guards are perceived as an obstacle, and even perceptions are important when it comes to return. I think it will be important for the government to take these fears seriously and to take the steps necessary to remove the obstacle" (BBC News, August 4, 2006). Many village guards oppose Turkey's efforts to join the EU, feeling that such efforts might compromise their current status.

The new compensation law, which aims to compensate material losses caused by the intense terror fights in the region, has inspired some displaced Kurdish villagers to slowly begin returning to their villages to reestablish their lives, but many of these returnees are still resentful of those fellow Kurds who choose to work for state security forces.

Emrullah Uslu is a Turkish terrorism expert and currently a PhD candidate at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Utah.

Notes:

1. Village Law, (Koy Kanunu), Kanun no. 442, March 18, 1924; Revision, March 26, 1985, Article 74.

2. Ankara State Security Court ruling on the Democratic Labor Party, Ankara, December 8, 1994 pp.112-113.

3. Kutlu Savas, *Basbakanlık Teftis Kurulu Başkanlığı Susurluk Raporu* (Prime Minister's Office, Susurluk Incident Investigation Report), Ankara, August 13, 1997.

4. Saygi Ozturk, *Devletin Derinliklerinde*, Umit Yayıncılık, Ankara, 2002.

5. Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurds, States and Tribes," Paper presented at the conference "Tribes and Powers in the Middle East", London, SOAS, Birkbeck College and Iraqi Cultural Forum, January 23-24, 1999.

<http://www.let.uu.nl/~Martin.vanBruinessen/personal/publications/Kurds,%20states,%20tribes.htm>.

6. Osman Pamukoglu, *Unutulanlar Dışında Yeni Birsey Yok: Hakkari ve Kuzey Irak Dağlarında Askerler*, Istanbul, 2003.

Shaykh Qaradawi Alarms Egypt with Warning of Shiite Imperialism

In remarks very similar to recent statements from Egyptian al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, a popular Doha-based Egyptian Islamic scholar has accused Iran of being behind a new wave of Shia "imperialism" that threatens the existence of Sunni Islam in Egypt and other Muslim countries. 82-year-old Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi is a media-savvy religious scholar based in Qatar. Al-Qaradawi is the president of The International Union for Muslim Scholars (IUMS) and the head of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR). He hosts a religious program entitled "Sharia and Life" on Qatar-based al-Jazeera TV.

In a September 9 interview, al-Qaradawi attacked what he perceived as an Iranian-backed attempt to displace Sunni Islam with Shi'ism: "I don't accept that any Arab or foreign country should attack Iran, but I don't accept that Iran should attack any Arab country, especially seeing as some Iranians have imperial dreams, which is wrong and dangerous... What is happening is organized, an invasion... It is not a religious invasion but a political one.

Iran is trying to impose itself on those around it and we refuse to follow a new form of neo-colonialism, be it Iranian or any other” (*Al-Masri al-Yom*, September 9). Describing the Shia as “heretics” (mubtadioun), the shaykh alleged that well-funded missionary cadres are “invading Egypt,” as well as Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Nigeria, Malaysia and Indonesia (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, September 25 – October 5). Iran responded by suggesting the cleric had come under “pressure from extremists” (*Gulf Times* [Doha], September 17). The remarks came at a time when tensions between Sunnis and Shias have grown due to the civil conflict in Iraq, Iran’s continuing nuclear program and the suggestion by some Western analysts that Iran is promoting the creation of a “Shiite Crescent” across the Arab Middle East.

The shaykh’s views on Shia “imperialism” have encountered widespread opposition in the Arab and Islamic world. A Kuwaiti commentator suggested al-Qaradawi was trying to mobilize the Sunnis in a war against the Shia and asked, “Would anything happen to Egypt if 100,000 Egyptians became Shi’is? And vice versa, would anything happen to Iran if the same number of Iranians became Sunni? Nothing would happen as long as brotherly relations prevail among different sects” (*al-Watan* [Kuwait], September 24). Shia Muslims form a majority in Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan and Bahrain. They form sizable minorities in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Reaction was particularly negative in Lebanon, where al-Qaradawi claimed Hizbullah was trying to leverage popularity won in its 2006 victory over Israel to convert Sunnis to Shi’ism. Shaykh Fathi Yakan, head of the Islamic Action Front (Jabhat al-Amal al-Islami – an umbrella group of Lebanese Sunni Islamists allied with the Shiite Hizbullah), condemned the remarks of the “dear cleric”: “The most serious blow we received this week was a sectarian one dealt to us by a dear cleric, a blow which could have been deadly. We hoped that he would not have raised this issue. We hoped that the revered cleric would have referred in his talk to the increasing number of Jews coming to the Land of Al-Kinana [Egypt]” (*al-Manar TV*, September 24). Though not referring to al-Qaradawi specifically, Shaykh Na’im Qasim, deputy secretary general of the Lebanese Hizbullah, saw an American hand behind efforts to create a sectarian divide in Islam: “This sedition has recently been bearing the U.S. signature because America wants to ignite the

area under the slogan of the Sunni-Shi’i sedition with the aim of infiltrating it, especially since it found that the strength of the unity between Sunnis and Shi’is cannot be confronted” (*al-Manar TV*, September 24). Hizbullah chief Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah suggested the Egyptian shaykh should speak out against Christian missionary activity in the Islamic world instead of identifying Shiites as the problem. Fadlallah also accused al-Qaradawi of the committing the sin of fitna (creating discord between Muslims) in an interview with Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Rai Al-Amm* (AP, September 24).

Leading members of the influential International Union of Muslim Scholars, headed by al-Qaradawi, have been highly critical of the shaykh’s allegations, describing them as divisive and embarrassing. With Shia members of the group threatening mass resignation, a meeting has been set for November to discuss the problem (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, September 25 – October 5).

Many of al-Qaradawi’s remarks were directed at Egypt, which has a negligible Shiite population, placed at less than one per cent: “When I left Egypt 47 years ago, it had not a single Shiite and now there are many... who took them to Shiism? Egypt is the cradle of Sunnism and the country of Al-Azhar.” Cairo’s al-Azhar University, the Islamic world’s leading school of Islamic studies, recognizes Shi’ism as a legitimate form of Islam and carries courses in Shiite studies. Al-Qaradawi has often found himself at odds with the institution and its leader, Muhammad Sayyid al-Tantawi. Ironically, al-Azhar mosque (which later grew into the university) was founded as a Shiite institution during the period of Shiite Fatimid rule in Egypt (969-1171 A.D.).

Al-Qaradawi’s remarks reinforce an apparent fear amongst Egypt’s leadership that they are subject to a Shiite infiltration designed to depose the regime. Islamic scholars have been asked to educate security forces in Shia ideology and strategy, while the Minister of Religious Endowments recently warned, “We won’t allow the existence of a Shiite tide in Egyptian mosques” (AFP, September 23). In a controversial interview in 2006, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak attacked Shias as disloyal; “Most of the Shias are loyal to Iran and not to the countries they are living in” (*al-Arabiya TV*, April 8, 2006).

A leading Egyptian jurist and Islamic scholar, Tariq al-Bishri, proclaimed “This fascism in the name of the Sunni majority against Shiites is the most dangerous thing for the Islamic nation because it pits Muslims against each other instead of against the invaders of their lands” (al-Dustur [Cairo], September 20). Prominent Saudi lawyer Amin Tahir Bediwi announced he will bring a lawsuit against al-Qaradawi in Qatar (*The Peninsula* [Qatar], September 29). A second lawsuit has been launched by Shi’a activists in Qatar, demanding al-Qaradawi be stripped of his Qatari citizenship and deported to Egypt (Al-Ahram Weekly, September 25 – October 5).

Al-Qaradawi has used his internet site this month to accuse Shiites of the forbidden practice of bid’a (innovation in religion): “They slap faces, strike chests until they bleed in commemoration of the death of Imam Al-Hussein (the Prophet Muhammad’s grandson)... They also do things when they visit the graves of the Prophet’s offspring like invoking their help instead of Allah’s” (Islam Online, September 25). The shaykh also used his website to line up a series of Shiite scholars who announced they were “satisfied” with the shaykh’s “clarification” that Shiites are indeed Muslims (Islam Online, September 20). Nevertheless, al-Qaradawi has continued his attacks on Iran and Shi’ism, telling an Arab daily that Iranian money is behind the spread of Shi’ism; “Money definitely plays a role but I cannot say that every person who backs Iran has been paid by them and I cannot accuse everyone of this. There are people who were paid and continue to be paid and there is shuttling between them and Iran. This is known.” (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, September 25). In a second interview with *al-Masri al-Yom*, al-Qaradawi declared, “I do not care and I am not shaken by this stir. I made this statement to answer to the dictates of my conscience and religion and responsibility... I am trying to preempt the threat before it gets worse. If we let Shiites penetrate Sunni societies, the outcome won’t be praiseworthy. The presence of Shiites in Iraq and Lebanon is the best evidence of instability” (*Al-Masri al-Yom*, September 23).

Dr. Andrew McGregor is the director of Aberfoyle International Security in Toronto, Canada.