


TERRORISM FOCUS

Volume V ■ Issue 34 ■ September 24, 2008

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AL-QAEDA PLANNING STRIKE ON UGANDA IN RETALIATION FOR SOMALIA PEACEKEEPING EFFORTS?

Kenyan intelligence reports that fugitive terrorist Fazul Abdullah Muhammad may be planning an attack on Kampala in retaliation for the Ugandan military's ongoing participation in African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeeping efforts in Somalia. Ugandan authorities have been notified and remain on high alert (*The Standard* [Nairobi], September 16).

A native of the Comoros Islands, Fazul Abdullah is wanted in connection with a long series of terrorist acts, including the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, the 2002 truck bombings of the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa, and a failed missile attack on an Israeli airliner the same year. In August the terrorist suspect evaded a Kenyan police dragnet in the coastal town of Malindi where he was reported to be seeking treatment for a kidney ailment, though police captured two of his aides and seized documents and a laptop computer (*New Vision* [Kampala], September 16; *The Standard*, September 16).

In a sign of the growing distance between the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and the more militant al-Shabaab fighters, the ICU issued a detailed statement on September 14 calling on al-Shabaab to abandon their threat to destroy any aircraft using the Mogadishu airport. A Ugandan military plane defied the threat from al-Shabaab, landing amidst a mortar

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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.

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barrage on September 19. The airport has been unused since (Somaliweyn, September 22). Al-Shabaab states the airport is being used to bring in Ugandan and Burundian “occupiers” (*New Vision*, September 15).

While acknowledging the problems posed to the resistance by AMISOM and Ethiopian military use of the airport, the ICU also noted the benefits to the Somali people through keeping the facility open, including movement in and out of the country, pilgrimage to the holy cities of Saudi Arabia, importation of needed foreign goods and the use of aircraft to send wounded civilians for emergency treatment abroad (*al-Qaadasiya.com*, September 14). The appeal has had no response from al-Shabaab so far.

Ugandan bases have been the frequent target of al-Shabaab hit-and-run mortar attacks and their convoys have been attacked by grenades, IEDs and small-arms fire. Two Ugandan soldiers were killed in a September 15 ambush on an AMISOM convoy on the Airport Road, near a Ugandan base. The attackers fired small arms from rooftops along the road. An AMISOM spokesman reported “AMISOM troops once again acted professionally and restrained themselves from firing into buildings that are known to be inhabited by the civilian population” (*New Vision*, September 15).

On September 22, Somali insurgents launched simultaneous attacks on the two main AMISOM bases in Mogadishu. Though AMISOM reported no casualties, 40 people were killed when shells fell on the city’s Bakara market (BBC, September 22). The previous evening an attack on the Ugandan base was repulsed, though Ugandan mortars were reported to have taken the lives of 18 civilians (Somaliweyn Media Center, September 22).

In an interview with Iranian TV, a spokesman for the Hawiye clan (the largest clan in Mogadishu) accused Ugandan troops of responsibility for the deaths of a large number of civilians. Ahmed Dirie demanded that Uganda withdraw and stop supporting the Transitional Federal Government (Press TV, September 20).

1,600 newly trained Ugandan troops are expected to relieve the current force in Somalia sometime in October. Although the UN specifies a six-month rotation schedule for peacekeepers, the Ugandan force in Mogadishu

has not been relieved since their arrival in March 2007. A Ugandan People’s Defence Force spokesman said Uganda has been unable to rotate forces due to ongoing insecurity in Somalia and logistical difficulties (UGPulse.com, September 14).

CONTROVERSIAL SECURITY CHIEF OF IRAQ’S KURDISH ENCLAVE DISCUSSES WAR ON TERRORISM

Masrur Barzani, the 39-year-old chief of Asayish, the leading security and intelligence service of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), gave a rare interview earlier this month (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, September 13). As the oldest son of KRG President Masud Barzani and cousin of KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, the American-educated Masrur is centrally placed in the KRG’s hierarchy and is often touted as a possible successor to his father as president. Masrur insists his appointment was based solely on merit.

Masrur described the continuing efforts to unify Kurdistan’s various intelligence agencies under a single legal framework. The main intelligence agency of Masud Barzani’s Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is the Parastin (“Protection”), while Jamal al-Talabani’s Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) operates the Dazgay Zanyari (“The Information Apparatus”). Both parties also maintain a number of smaller intelligence agencies.

After achieving de facto sovereignty in 1991, Kurdish authorities created Asayish in 1993 as a means of unifying the separate intelligence services under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior. In practice the PUK and KDP ran separate Asayish organizations out of Sulaimaniyah and Irbil, respectively. This situation continued until 2004 when efforts began once again to unify operations, undoubtedly in response to the increased threat of terrorist attacks in the north following the American invasion of Iraq.

Responding to suggestions that Asayish receives training from the CIA and Israel’s Mossad, Masrur stated: “Frankly, if you want the whole truth from me, this news is totally untrue.” Masrur cites al-Qaeda, the Kurdish Ansar al-Islam, and the mixed Kurdish-Arab Ansar al-Sunnah as the main terrorist threats in northern Iraq. According to Masrur, Kurdish intelligence has operated against terrorist formations in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Mosul “in coordination with Baghdad, not on our own initiative.” They have also

acted against spies from “neighboring countries.” In the past, this has usually referred to Turkey, Syria, and Iran, each of which host Kurdish minority populations.

On the dispute between the KRG and Baghdad over the status of the town of Khanaqin (see *Terrorism Focus*, September 16), Masrur stated: “The Iraqi Army’s entry was not for the purpose of combating terrorism, for Khanaqin is very secure. The army entered for political reasons... Khanaqin is the most secure area in the Diyala Governorate. Saddam Hussein’s regime tried for many years to seize these areas by force but failed. Now, attempts are being made to take these areas from us by other means.”

Kamal Sayid Qadir, an ethnic Kurdish law professor with Austrian citizenship, has emerged as Masrur Barzani’s personal nemesis. In October 2005, Qadir was arrested in Kurdistan and sentenced to 30 years in prison for “disgracing the Kurdish leadership... inappropriate articles... and cursing the Barzani tribe.” In a retrial a month later the sentence was reduced to 18 months. Following foreign appeals on his behalf, Qadir was pardoned and released a week later, but continued his attacks on the Barzanis (Uruknet.info, August 17). In December 2006, Qadir filed a lawsuit in Austria charging Masrur Barzani and four other members of the KRG and Kurdish intelligence services with kidnapping and torture (eKurd.net, December 28, 2006). Last February, Masrur and five of his bodyguards were arrested in Austria after Qadir was beaten and shot in the streets of Vienna (aljeeran.net, February 20; *Kurdistan Post*, February 20; *Kurdish Aspect*, February 26).

Though some human rights groups have portrayed Qadir as a righteous victim of a regime determined to suppress legitimate criticism, Qadir has frequently strayed from critiques of KRG corruption to make personal attacks on KRG leaders. In a culture highly sensitive to personal insult, Qadir has accused members of the Barzani clan of frequenting Russian prostitutes, referred to one clan member as a “homosexual” and publicly described Masrur Barzani as a “pimp.” His efforts to expose the Barzanis as KGB agents have also failed to win him any friends in the KRG (antiwar.com, August 31, 2005; *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2007). In a 2006 interview, Qadir acknowledged that some of his language was inappropriate, adding: “I want to mention that the gentlemen of the Asayish in Irbil said they did not want to prohibit me from writing, but that the thing they do not want me to do is to use words that I have used in some articles” (RFE/RL, March 7, 2006).

Masrur was not questioned directly about the Qadir case in the interview, but in denying reports of security service responsibility for the murders of a number of journalists, he noted “There are writers and journalists who can tell the difference between freedom of expression and assaults on others. There are some who cannot tell the difference and think that whatever they write falls under the heading of freedom of the press even if it slanders others.”

Jihadis Publish Online Recruitment Manual

To become a full fledged jihadi, volunteers must go through gradual ideological reform and build a sense of security and vigilance needed for clandestine activities. To further their preparation, one al-Qaeda-affiliated jihadi internet forum uploaded a new manual entitled “The Art of Recruitment,” offering tutorials in techniques for approaching and recruiting suitable people to join the global Salafi-Jihadi movement (al-ekhlaas.net, September 7).

A jihadi forum participant using the nickname Abu Amr al-Qaedi uploaded the 51-page recruitment manual. The work contains a logical means of recruiting candidates for jihad, using three phases of “solitary preaching” and cultivation. The recruiters are instructed to cover every phase before moving to the next step. The successful completion of all three phases should lead to the formation of an active jihadi cell. In preparing the manual, al-Qaedi says he took into consideration the differences between people living in Muslim countries not occupied by crusaders, such as Jordan, Libya, Egypt, Algeria and others. “The purpose of the booklet is to transform the candidate into a devout and distinguished jihadi who understands the fundamentals of jihad, consequently becoming one of the ‘victorious cult.’” Al-Qaedi defines “solitary preaching” as a personal, direct contact between the candidate and the recruiter. Direct contact presents a good opportunity to comprehensively mold the candidate into a pious member of the Salafi-Jihadi movement and closely observe the recruitment progress. The recruiter can easily clarify any frustrations the candidate might have about joining jihad, refute discrepancies and, above all, preserve the confidentiality of the operation from the notice of security forces.

Before getting into the recruitment phases, al-Qaeda explains the candidate selection criteria as follows:

- The non-religious: Deemed most preferable because the recruiter chooses and imbues the candidate with Salafi-Jihadi ideology without any objections since the candidate isn't committed to any theory.
- The newly committed religious youth: These include Islamic converts to Salafism from other Islamic denominations.
- Those who are easy to convince because they already consider other ideologies defunct and willingly adhere to Salafi-Jihadism.

College students and school pupils are also suitable candidates the recruiter can take his time cultivating before approaching. The manual instructs recruiters to avoid prattlers, disloyal types, hostile ideologues, misers and anti-social personalities. The solitary preaching aims to tune the candidate into Salafi-Jihadi dogma, says al-Qaeda, who proceeds to lay out the three phases in the process:

1) The first phase concentrates on the selectee's characteristics. The candidate must be chivalrous, generous, honest, and committed to Islamic religious practices, such as praying five times a day (on time), fasting, and performing other Islamic rituals. In addition, the candidate must not be biased towards any other political group or ideology. Rather, he or she should be a socially stable and accepted figure capable of leading others.

2) To ingratiate the recruiter with the candidate, the recruiter performs daily and weekly errands with the candidate over a three week period, such as frequenting the mosques together, inviting the candidate to lunch and presenting gifts. In this phase the recruiter starts talking about Islamic affairs, focusing on any anti-Salafi-Jihadi ideas the candidate might have; "It's very important to understand the candidate's social relations and interests at this phase. You must know where and with whom he spends his 24 hours daily," says al-Qaeda.

3) The third phase, entitled "awakening the faith," requires from one to two weeks. In this phase, the recruiter highlights the virtues of good deeds, emphasizes the importance of on-time prayers, and devises a plan to purify the candidate of bad habits by performing mandatory and voluntary prayers. Further, the candidate should be exposed to the notion of heaven and hell. In this phase, the selectee's mindset should be opened to the promise of heavenly virgins; otherwise the candidate should be tacitly threatened with the fate of punishment in hell. The recruiter also instills certain Salafi-Jihadi principles by encouraging the candidate to read books on jihadi virtues, such as the late Abdullah Azzam's *Ithaf al-Ibad bifadail al-Jihad* (Conferring the Worshippers with the Virtues of Jihad). The highly influential Palestinian-born Azzam was a Sunni Islamic scholar and theologian in Afghanistan during the period of the Soviet invasion, becoming a central figure in the recruitment of mujahideen and preaching of defensive jihad.

Al-Qaeda also suggests other books by renowned Salafi-Jihadi shaykhs such as Khaled al-Rashid, Abdul Muhsin al-Ahmad, Hazim Shoman and Mohammad Hassan. Candidates should also listen to sermons of prominent shaykhs such as Abdul Hameed Kishk and, most importantly, statements released by Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. In a later stage, al-Qaeda suggests exposing the candidate to videos of terror attacks perpetrated mainly by jihadis in Iraq and Afghanistan. Jihadi versions of the 9/11 attacks and other documentaries released by jihadi sources or news stations are also suitable.

Al-Qaeda enumerates a step-by-step plan for ideologically influencing the candidate:

The candidate would listen to sermons, for instance, by the famous Kuwaiti Salafi-Jihadi cleric Hamid al-Ali, followed by a religious discussion of the sermon's content. Next, the candidate would be asked to read one of al-Ali's books. Lastly, he would listen to al-Ali's eulogy of [Abu Musab] al-Zarqawi for the latter is a Salafi-Jihadi hero who would encourage the candidate to follow his footsteps.

The recruitment phases of “The Art of Recruitment” are very practical and logical, with a brainwashing-style sequence. The manual is based on the book *Daawat al-Moqawama al-Islamia al-Alamia* (The Mission of Global Islamic Resistance, December 2004) by the renowned Syrian Salafi-Jihadi theorist Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir Sethmariam Nasar (better known as Abu Musab al-Suri – see *Terrorism Monitor*, August 11, 2005; September 21, 2006; January 18, 2007; February 1, 2007). Jihadis regard the “Art of Recruitment” as a supplementary manual to al-Suri’s book.

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Turkey Planning to Eliminate Kurdish PKK Insurgents in the Coming Year

Turkey’s leading politicians and security officials gathered at the Prime Minister’s residence on September 11 to discuss approaches for Turkey’s ongoing struggle against the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan – PKK). Despite a long summer of small-scale attacks on Turkish security forces in predominantly Kurdish southeastern Turkey and a series of deadly urban bombings carried out by the PKK or their allies, there is a belief at the highest levels of Turkey’s decision-makers that the PKK has been substantially weakened by military strikes against its infrastructure in northern Iraq and may be ready for a death blow to be delivered by Turkish forces in the coming year.

The meeting was chaired by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and was attended by new chief-of-staff of the Turkish Armed Forces (Turk Silahlı Kuvvetleri – TSK) General Ilker Basbug, Land Forces commander General Isik Kosaner, Gendarmerie commander General Atila Isik, National Police Chief Oguz Kagan Koksall, National Intelligence Organization (Milli Istihbarat Teskilati – MIT) undersecretary Emre Taner, and the government’s most important cabinet ministers (*Hurriyet*, September 11; *Today’s Zaman*, September 12).

While the security summit discussed various military options, including further large-scale incursions across the border with Iraq to attack PKK bases there, participants also looked at various economic, social, and legal options to suppress militant separatist activity within Turkey’s Kurdish population.

Intelligence reports prepared for the meeting by the General Staff, the Gendarmerie Command, and the MIT interpreted the recent rash of urban bombings as a sign of the PKK’s diminished ability to mount more conventional guerrilla operations in southeastern Turkey. According to a statement released after the security summit, “the duration of this fight against the separatist terrorist organization [a government euphemism for the PKK], which is close to the breaking point, is growing shorter” (*Today’s Zaman*, September 13).

Statistics provided in documentation prepared for the meeting showed the intensification of Ankara’s war with the PKK. 87 Turkish soldiers were killed in combat with the PKK in 2006, 114 in 2007 and 178 in the first six months alone of 2008. These losses, however, are still far smaller than figures from the 1990s, as are the total number of armed encounters with PKK fighters. Turkish figures for PKK losses revealed 250 militants killed so far this year during cross-border operations into northern Iraq, with another 514 killed inside Turkey. An additional 222 PKK fighters either surrendered or were captured by Turkish security forces from January to August this year (*Today’s Zaman*, September 13; *Turkish Daily News*, September 17).

Regional development projects such as the \$12 billion Southeastern Anatolia Project (Guneydogu Anadolu Projesi - GAP) were an important part of the discussions as a means of addressing the chronic unemployment problem of southeastern Turkey, which helps feed a steady stream of recruits to the PKK bases. Covering nine provinces that currently see high levels of PKK activity, GAP is intended to raise living standards and resolve issues of economic disparity with the rest of Turkey. The construction of dams, irrigation schemes, new airports, power plants and other infrastructure is now underway in the much delayed project, first planned in the 1970s. Besides its regional goals, the massive development scheme is also expected to aid Turkey’s integration into the European Union (gap.gov.tr).

Efforts are currently underway to identify places where PKK militants might prepare winter shelters as bases for terrorist attacks inside Turkey's urban areas. Only two days after the summit, the TSK General Staff declared the provinces of Sirnak, Siirt, Batman, Van and Hakkari to be Temporary Security Zones for the next three months. The designation gives Turkish security forces extraordinary powers to prevent the establishment of PKK bases and supply routes through the mountainous and often lightly populated regions of the five provinces.

When Turkey's parliament resumes sessions on October 1, the government is expected to ask for approval for a one-year extension to the current mandate allowing cross-border strikes into northern Iraq, which expires on October 17. With the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP) controlling 341 of the assembly's 550 seats, the resolution is expected to pass easily. The AKP is reported to be disappointed in the failure of Iraq's central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of northern Iraq to take action against PKK personnel in the area. Turkey's opposition Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi - MHP) has suggested it will vote in favor of the motion but accuses the AKP of being ineffective in dealing with PKK terrorism due to its desire to win ethnic Kurdish support away from the Kurdish Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi - DTP) in upcoming regional elections (*Hurriyet*, September 12; NTV, September 16).

The improved regime of intelligence cooperation with the United States will continue to play a major role in Turkey's offensive against the PKK. On the same day as the summit in Ankara, the U.S. State Department coordinator for counter-terrorism, Dell Dailey, declared Turkey and the United States "have intelligence sharing comparable to no other cooperation among other world states" (*Hurriyet*, September 11). Admiral Michael G. Mullen, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, was in Turkey only days after the security summit for talks with President Abdullah Gul and General Basbug. Admiral Mullen pledged continued U.S. backing for Turkish operations, noting: "The operations that the U.S. supported were very effective last year" (*Today's Zaman*, September 16).

In the days prior to the security summit in Ankara, General Basbug made a visit to Diyarbakir, the chief city in the ethnic Kurdish southeast. Surprisingly, his focus was on

the economic rather than security aspects of the campaign to end separatist violence in the region. In a meeting with the region's major employers and NGOs, Basbug solicited ideas for offering young people in the area alternatives to militancy while stating that he would be keeping a close eye on the progress of the GAP initiative (Bianet.org, September 5; *Vatan*, September 13). The General stressed the need for vocational education for young men in the region as well as greater educational opportunities for women and children. Displaying a personal touch previously unknown in the usually reserved General Staff, Basbug then made a visit to the nearby city of Van, where he crossed security barriers to meet and converse with local people who had come out for the occasion. Widely cheered for the unexpected gesture, the General commented afterward, "This is the first time that I've witnessed our citizens' respect and love for our armed forces at this level. These are decent citizens. That's it. I will not forget this experience for the rest of my life" (*Today's Zaman*, September 6).

Several days after the security summit, General Basbug held a "communication meeting" with the editors and Ankara correspondents of a number of Turkish newspapers, though the representatives of several other newspapers were pointedly excluded. Indicating what seemed to be a new willingness on the part of the General Staff to open a media front in the war against the PKK, Basbug promised weekly press briefings and round-the-clock access to a TSK spokesman. The new chief-of-staff expressed his desire that the TSK should not be dragged into political debates, an apparent shift from the General Staff's previous willingness to insert itself into all manner of internal political matters. Basbug also warned against the publication of secret military documents, after several notable instances of such documents appearing in the pages of pro-government newspapers. Efforts to persuade senior military staff to leak information would no longer be tolerated (Turkish Daily News, September 17). On the PKK front, General Basbug suggested that the organization was unable to draw more recruits today than it did in 1990, but the PKK was now drawing heavily on Syria, Iran and European countries for new ethnic-Kurdish recruits. According to Basbug, one-third of the PKK is now Syrian in origin (Bianet.org, September 16; *Turkish Daily News*, September 17).

In the meantime the TSK continues to harass the PKK's own cross-border operations. Officials of Iraqi President Jalal al-Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

party announced on September 14 that Turkish artillery had shelled fourteen border villages in northern Iraq the same day (PUKmedia, September 14). General Basbug warned a week earlier that the Turkish military was ready to launch strikes in any kind of weather after the success of last February's cross-border winter operations; "The message has been taken from Operation Gunes" (*Today's Zaman*, September 6). General Basbug also made it clear the TSK will not allow this perceived opportunity to eliminate the PKK to slip away through a narrow focus on military options: "The PKK is heading towards a breaking point. What is important is how we will make use of it... The organization has been in this situation before, but we made mistakes" (AFP, September 17).

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Hamas Arrests Pro-al-Qaeda Leader of Jaysh al-Umma in Gaza

In a deserted area of southern Gaza, the recently formed Jaysh al-Ummah (The Army of the Nation - JAU) organized its first public training session on September 1. The local Reuters video crew was given access to record the training of this little-known armed group. The resulting video showed about 25 masked gunmen engaged in mock battle. Abu Hafis al-Maqdisi, the masked leader of the JAU, also appeared, saying that his group is not part of al-Qaeda while indicating that "there is an ideological bond between our brothers in al-Qaeda and ourselves. We share the same course, the course of our Prophet Muhammad." Abu Hafis spoke while surrounded by his men, with the name al-Qaeda written in Arabic on the wall behind them. Other graffiti on the wall read; "We are coming, Jews!" The JAU leader also criticized the Hamas movement which controls the Gaza Strip; "We believe that Hamas applies neither Sharia law nor any other Islamic rule or order." In what seemed an echo to Osama Bin Laden's words, Abu Hafis added: "We say that the world will not live in peace as long as the blood of Muslims continues to be shed" (Reuters, September 2).

Two days after this unprecedented move, Hamas authorities called Abu Hafis in for questioning and kept

him in custody. One of his assistants said that the arrest is related to the public training session (*al-Hayat*, September 5).

The JAU issued a statement calling on the "wise people" of Hamas to release their leader and threatened to launch major attacks against the leaders and establishments of Hamas if they refused (Infovlad.net, September 6, Palestine News Network, September 11). Soon afterwards a masked spokesman of the JAU held a press conference in Khan Younis in Southern Gaza, where he condemned the arrest of his leader but denied that his group had actually meant to threaten Hamas; "We will not let the Israelis and the infidels enjoy a clash between the Salafi-Jihadis and Hamas" (*Addustour*, September 13).

The first public appearance of the JAU was in January 2008. In a press conference in Khan Younis, a spokesman of the group threatened to kill President George Bush, who was about to begin a visit to the Middle East. A JAU statement read out in the conference said that JAU men who were willing to be martyrs would be waiting for Bush. The spokesman described the United States as the "head of infidelity. It is running a war against everything that is Islamic, starting from Afghanistan through Chechnya and Palestine." He indicated that the state visit was solely for the interests of Israel. He also strictly opposed the dispatch of any international forces to the Palestinian territories, saying his group would prevent any force from entering Gaza and would consider that force as an invading one (*Donia al-Watan* [Gaza], January 9).

Despite denying they are part of al-Qaeda, the JAU express their identity as a Salafi-Jihadi group. Their doctrine, as published in their web-site, shows clearly that they are not merely an anti-Israeli Palestinian organization by declaring they are against "the Western Crusade project around the world" (al-amanh.net). The presence of pro-al-Qaeda groups in Gaza has been a matter of controversy in the Palestinian territories before and after Hamas took over Gaza, driving out its rival, Fatah (See *Terrorism Monitor*, April 17).

The activities of Salafi-Jihadi groups have become more prominent in Gaza following the Hamas takeover. Although Hamas does not support the strategy and most of the tactics of al-Qaeda and its affiliates, it does not

strictly condemn the actions of al-Qaeda either. There are certainly differences between Hamas and pro-al-Qaeda groups, but Hamas's main challenges remain the rival Palestinian Fatah Party and the Israeli state. Until now, al-Qaeda or its affiliates have not disputed Hamas's control over Gaza. The recent public criticism of Hamas by Abu Hafs has changed this situation. As a result, Hamas did not hesitate to arrest him but did not publicize their action (Hamas has not made any public comment about the JAU training or the arrest of Abu Hafs).

On its way to controlling Gaza, Hamas crushed its rivals in the Fatah-dominated security forces. Only last month Hamas forces cracked down on Fatah's last stronghold in Gaza; however, suppressing an Islamist group is different. The popular base of the Muslim Brotherhood-rooted Hamas movement might not support such an action. After all, the JAU has launched dozens of attacks against Israel (according to its website), giving it some status as a Palestinian resistance group.

The JAU has found itself in confrontation with Hamas. Such a confrontation does not comply with its stated doctrine, which urges coordination with the other Islamist groups to avoid conflict over ideological differences. Inviting the media to the training session and emerging as a pro-al-Qaeda group might have been an effort to get the attention and perhaps accreditation from the larger and more powerful al-Qaeda group and might bring very badly needed funds and some public support as well.

After a year in power, Hamas agreed to a ceasefire deal with Israel last June. The JAU criticized the agreement, saying that Israel's aim was to drive the Palestinian factions to fight each other. This is another example of the difficulty that Hamas is facing with the Salafi-Jihadi groups because of their different strategies and agendas. Through their more radical stance, Gaza's Salafi-Jihadis are trying to gain greater support from Hamas's traditional base (see *Terrorism Monitor*, April 17). The recent public appearance of the JAU and the continuing existence of groups like Jaysh al-Islam (Army of Islam) and Suyuf al-Haq (The Swords of Righteousness) clearly indicate that Palestinian Salafi-Jihadi organizations with global agendas are increasingly active in Gaza. So far, the JAU is believed to have been active in Gaza under an unwritten agreement with Hamas, which has controlled the area

since June 2007. The detention of Abu Hafs al-Maqdisi showed that such an agreement, if it exists, might have become invalid.

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Al-Qaeda's Golden Opportunity to Deal a Devastating Blow to the United States

By Michael Scheuer

When Osama bin Laden declared war on the United States in al-Qaeda's name in the late summer of 1996, he outlined ambitious worldwide Islamist goals, but noted that al-Qaeda could not accomplish them on its own. He said that al-Qaeda could, at best, serve as the vanguard which would attack the United States, assist Muslim insurgencies around the world and generally try to incite Muslims to join the jihad against the United States, Israel, and the police states that govern much of the Arab and Muslim world. At the time, Bin Laden was very clear in saying that the ummah's ultimate fate was in the hands of all Muslims and not solely in al-Qaeda's. [1] Those in the West who have seen al-Qaeda at any stage of its existence as a hierarchical organization, bent on controlling the jihad it was trying to incite, have either not read bin Laden's words or have sought to cram this national security threat into the kind of nation-state problem with which they are comfortable.

Good News Abounds for al-Qaeda

Muslims should rejoice over the fact that they have the United States as their priority enemy, al-Qaeda strategy analyst Abu Ubayd al-Qurashi wrote in 2002: "The mujahedeen enjoy an edge," he argued, "because the U.S. leadership is facing enormous strategic, political, and economic challenges in various directions, whereas the mujahedeen are focusing their entire efforts on America and have nothing else to worry about" (Al-Ansar.net, September 22, 2002). What was true then is even truer now. By any reasonable standard of evaluation, al-Qaeda's self-appointed role as the inciter of jihad

has contributed to a world that is much more afflicted with jihadism today than it was in 1996. Moreover, most locations experiencing rising jihadist activities are states that Washington views as important to U.S. national-security interests. The current problem is so widespread – including locales where there was, at most, limited jihad-related activity in 1996 – that the failure of major U.S. and Western leaders and media to see the reality, let alone the ardent belief of some that the threat is receding, is inexplicable.

- In Afghanistan the Sunni Islamist movement is stronger and more coherent than at any time since the late 1980s, when the Red Army was still occupying the country. While the Taliban is the dominant insurgent group there, many of the so-called “old mujahedeen” – like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Jalaluddin Haqqani – have rejoined the fight against the U.S.-led coalition. In addition, the Taliban has reemerged from its 2001 defeat and eviction from power as a much-improved military organization, flush with manpower and external funding. It is armed as well with an increasingly effective information-warfare capability (*Telegraph*, September 17; crisisgroup.org, July 24).
- The Islamist insurgency in southern Thailand has intensified to a point unprecedented in the Thai state’s modern history. Some of the Thai Islamists have openly affiliated with al-Qaeda and the insurgency as a whole has achieved enough political legitimacy to be currently engaged in direct negotiations with the Thai government – something Bangkok not long ago said was unacceptable (*Antara*, September 20). [2]
- The pace of the Sunni Islamist insurgency in Iraq has slowed as the Sunnis stand down to ensure the withdrawal of the first 8,000-man tranche of U.S. troops proceeds unhindered. At the same time, the Sunnis are organizing, absorbing new funds and arms from Iraq’s Sunni neighbors, and training for the coming civil war with Iraq’s Shia rulers, a war whose arrival may be accelerated by the Shia-dominated government’s retributive policy toward the Sunnis who sided with U.S. forces.
- In India, the years since al-Qaeda declared jihad have seen an extraordinary growth in Islamist attacks on Hindu targets, both in terms of casualties and the level of economic destruction and disruption. Perhaps more dangerous for New Delhi, these years have seen the “indigenization” of Islamist violence to the point that most attacks are now being conducted by Indian Muslims, not Pakistanis or Bangladeshi sent to India to stage terrorist operations (Reuters, July 27).
- The Islamist insurgency in Mindanao is poised to re-intensify as peace talks between the Moro Islamist organizations and the Manila government have broken down – some pundits say irretrievably – and Philippine forces and their U.S. advisers campaign more aggressively on the island (al-Jazeera, September 18; islamonline.net, July 26).
- The North Caucasus has experienced a reorganization and redirection of the Islamist insurgency there. The leaders of the formerly Chechnya-centric Islamist insurgency are trying to meld an assortment of North Caucasus groups into a united front that will carry the fight against the Russians to all the region’s states. The Islamist chiefs have imposed tighter discipline on their fighters, effectively limiting the number of innocent Muslim civilians killed in attacks and thereby encouraging a gradual increase in public support for the insurgents. Their targets are now overwhelmingly Russian officials, soldiers, and security personnel and local government and military-security personnel allied with the Russians (*Independent*, July 30).
- The bleed-through of Islamist fighters westward from Iraq is creating a growing and increasingly violent Sunni Islamist movement in northern Lebanon. The Israelis have repeatedly claimed that al-Qaeda has built a presence in Lebanon’s Palestinian refugee camps, gained a toehold in Gaza, and exerted influence among Muslims in Israel proper. Additionally, Hamas’s control of Gaza is no small achievement for the wider Sunni Islamist movement (*Independent*, August 15; *Haaretz*, July 20).

- Islamists in Somalia have regrouped and rearmed since the December 2006, U.S.-backed Ethiopian invasion of the country and are now again contesting with the Ethiopians for control of Mogadishu. The ongoing war and increasing hunger in the country is, according to a Horn of Africa expert affiliated with the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, creating “a population radically angry at us [the United States] and [a] very fertile ground for al-Qaeda” (globalinfo.org, September 22).
- In Pakistan, where Islamabad confronted no domestic Islamist insurgency in 1996, several such insurgencies are now raging. Pakistani military and security forces are now fighting the forces of the Pakistani Taliban and the separate forces of the Pashtun tribes who began attacking after ex-President Pervez Musharraf sent Pakistan’s army into the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) to try to root out al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban.
- In North Africa, al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamist insurgents are increasingly active in Algeria, Mauritania, and Mali, with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) recently announcing its intention to expand the group’s operations into Europe (*The Times*, July 20).

In addition to these militarily active regions, the rise of Islamist militancy clearly must be inferred on the basis of the media’s regular reporting of repeated and increasingly harsh police crackdowns on Islamists in Morocco, Yemen, Kenya, Turkey, Bangladesh, Jordan, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, China, Nigeria, Uzbekistan, and several states in Western Europe.

Al-Qaeda’s Unexpected Opportunity

Beyond this geographic expansion of jihad, al-Qaeda’s own achievements have been substantial. Bin Laden has long described a three-fold strategy for driving the United States out of the Muslim world: (1) contribute to the forces creating domestic political disunity in America; (2) act and encourage other Islamists to act in a way that spreads U.S. military and intelligence forces to the point where they lack reserves and flexibility; and (3) bleed America to

bankruptcy. Obviously, al-Qaeda has been successful on the first two points and today bin Laden is staring into the face of an entirely serendipitous opportunity to contribute to economic disaster in the United States.

Having been responsible for much of the economic bleeding America has done in Iraq and Afghanistan, al-Qaeda now has a chance to significantly advance its bleed-to-bankruptcy strategy. While al-Qaeda had no hand in creating the ongoing, self-inflicted unraveling of the U.S. financial system, al-Qaeda could accelerate that unraveling with a 9/11-like or larger attack in the continental United States. The U.S. political class has often scoffed at or ridiculed bin Laden’s goal of driving America to bankruptcy, assuming that al-Qaeda irrationally assumed it could bring down the U.S. economy through its actions alone. This analysis is inaccurate. Just as bin Laden saw al-Qaeda as the inspirer of jihad and not the jihad itself, he saw that his group’s attacks on the U.S. economy could not cause bankruptcy, but might do so if they worsened other U.S. economic problems. Thus the main economic damage done by the 9/11 attacks resulted from the Iraq and Afghan wars, not from the raids on Manhattan and Washington.

Today, bin Laden and al-Qaeda have a chance to deal the United States an enormous economic blow if they can stage a near-term attack in America. Such an attack would serve as a devastating force-multiplier and perhaps push the current economic disaster into the category of a financial catastrophe. Whether al-Qaeda is positioned to stage such an attack is an open question. What is unquestionable, however, is its intention to do so; the U.S. intelligence community’s conclusion that al-Qaeda poses a “clear and present danger” to the continental United States rests on the fact that U.S. borders remain almost entirely open and the weapons of mass destruction arsenal of the former Soviet states and other sources of nuclear-bomb-making material have yet to be fully secured.

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Notes:

1. Osama bin Laden, "Declaration of War on the United States," Al-Islah, September 2, 1996.
2. "Mujahedin Shura Council [Pattani Darussalam]," Khattab Publications for Media Releases, August 26.