

# TERRORISM FOCUS

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### HEKMATYAR TELLS PAKISTANI TALIBAN TO STAY OUT OF AFGHANISTAN

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a veteran Afghan rebel and leader of the Hezb-i-Islami Party, has issued a statement asking members of the Pakistani Taliban to refrain from crossing the border to join the jihad in Afghanistan. The statement was issued by fax on June 24 (Afghan Islamic Press, June 25).

While thanking the Pakistani mujahideen for their “compassion and kindness” and willingness to join Afghan efforts to expel the occupying Coalition, Hekmatyar suggests that cross-border insurgent activity is used as an excuse for continuing the foreign occupation of Afghanistan. According to Hekmatyar, the Pakistani Taliban could be far more useful to the Afghans by pursuing jihad within Pakistan and attacking Coalition supply-lines that carry military and logistical equipment through Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province to the Khyber Pass. “The entire nation of Afghanistan is ready to take part in the holy war against the U.S. occupiers, just the way they fought the Russians. If we have problems, it is only logistical problems.”

After emphasizing that it is only Afghans rather than the Pakistani Taliban or al-Qaeda who are resisting the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, Hekmatyar compares the current occupation with that of the Soviets in the 1980s, suggesting: “The way the arrogant and ruthless Americans treat Afghans is far more violent and ruthless than that of the communists and Russian troops in Afghanistan... The Russian troops were invited by their puppet government, but the Americans first occupied Kabul, and then made a government in Bonn and brought it to Kabul!” Hekmatyar also

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accuses the Americans of selling “trucks full of weapons and military equipment” in a way the Russians never did. He also complains that the degree of financial corruption and embezzlement in the upper echelons of the “U.S. puppet government” far surpasses anything committed by the communists of the 1980s.

Hekmatyar’s statement comes as the warlord is denying persistent rumors of secret negotiations with the government of President Hamid Karzai.

#### AL-QAEDA’S ABU YAHYA AL-LIBI CALLS FOR CONTINUED JIHAD IN SOMALIA

Abu Yahya al-Libi, a Libyan-born senior al-Qaeda commander now based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, has issued a statement calling on Somalia’s Islamist insurgents to ignore a truce recently negotiated between their leaders and Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in favor of continuing their jihad (al-Sahab Media Production Organization, June 23).

In a 20 minute video entitled “Somalia – No Peace Without Islam,” Abu Yahya calls on Somali jihadis to reject the terms of the June 10 agreement signed by the TFG and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS), an umbrella group of former Islamic Courts Union Islamists and other anti-government Somali militants: “The mujahideen are not concerned with such agreements or with their provisions - indeed they consider them not worth the paper on which they were written” (for the full agreement, see Shabelle Media Network, June 10; see also *Terrorism Focus*, June 24).

Abu Yahya describes the agreement as the result of conspiracy and intrigue, “which the enemies of Muslims have mastered to enable them to prolong their domination on this earth. These agreements are aimed to absorb the indignation of the oppressed and wronged Muslim peoples. They are employed as a means to uproot jihad and the mujahideen in all hot areas, including beloved Somalia, by portraying the mujahideen, through the huge media networks of the enemies, as an obstacle in the way of achieving peace, stability, and reconciliation...” Abu Yahya suggests that Somalia’s jihadis find the inflexible firmness in the face of unbelievers recommended by the Quran rather than look for “common ground... a unified principle or a front of struggle that provides an umbrella for you... Say with clarity and frankness: We will continue to fight our enemies from among the despicable Abyssinians [Ethiopia’s occupation army] and their apostate collaborators... until we remove all traces

and wipe out any mention of them in our country.” The Libyan militant tells Somalis that civil war is not always something to be avoided at all costs, reminding them that the Prophet Muhammad battled the unbelievers within his own Quraysh tribe.

Displaying his own unyielding approach to jihad, Abu Yahya insists that even the withdrawal of the Ethiopian army and its replacement by African Union or UN peacekeepers “will not change the situation at all” and will merely be “an attempt to replace an occupation with another occupation... a move from the state of a blatant occupation to that of a legitimate occupation.” Somalia’s mujahideen must be prepared to face any force that sets foot on Somali land, regardless of its affiliation or proclaimed intentions.

This is not the first statement from Abu Yahya directed at the Somali insurgents; it appears to be part of an effort to re-establish an al-Qaeda relationship with Somali Islamists that seems to have deteriorated over the last decade, contrary to assertions to the contrary from Ethiopian, TFG and U.S. sources. The effort may be working—last month Shaykh Mukhtar Abu al-Zubayr, the leader of the militant Somali al-Shabaab organization (which has rejected the TFG-ARS agreement outright), sent “greetings to Shaykh Abu Yahya al-Libi, who revived the al-Usra [family] Army, and whose words have had a stronger impact than 1,000 jihadist soldiers in your brothers’ battle against the global Crusade.”

#### **An al-Qaeda Threat in the United Arab Emirates?**

Jihadi internet forums have picked up on recent British and American warnings about possible al-Qaeda terror attacks in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). One forum post, entitled “Is al-Qaeda overlooking the United Arab Emirates,” dismissed the suggestion that al-Qaeda is overlooking the UAE because al-Qaeda leaders use the country to transit to other destinations and as a resting place, describing it as a fable (hanein.info, June 20). The posting came in response to other posts speculating on an approaching end to what was described as a furtive understanding between al-Qaeda and the UAE (muslim.net, June 18). The exchange of posts followed a UK Foreign Office warning to travelers based on intelligence collected by MI6. The British Embassy in the UAE cautioned: “Attacks could be indiscriminate and could happen at any time, including in places frequented by expatriates and

foreign travelers such as residential compounds, military, oil, transport and aviation interests” (AFP, June 16). Similar warnings were later repeated by U.S. authorities (*Financial Times*, June 16; *Guardian*, June 16; MSNBC, June 17).

Prompted by the UK-U.S. warning, posts such as one entitled “Is the Honeymoon between Bin Laden and UAE Shaykhs over?” discussed reasons behind the possible change in al-Qaeda’s stand toward the UAE. Forum contributor “Uqqu” stressed that what has kept al-Qaeda from targeting the UAE is an understanding whereby al-Qaeda turns a blind eye on the UAE shaykhs’ un-Islamic practices (having “turned the country into a whorehouse”), in return for the UAE allocating funds for al-Qaeda’s use. The post also claims that the UAE broke this agreement by extraditing 30 Egyptian Islamists to Egypt and arresting UAE citizens the government claims were involved in a plot to hijack a plane and fly it into Dubai’s Burj al-Arab, the world’s tallest hotel. According to this forum participant, fatwas have also been issued by pro-al-Qaeda shaykhs prohibiting any dealings with the ruling al-Nahyan (Abu Dhabi) and al-Maktoum (Dubai) families.

Other Islamists rejected the idea that al-Qaeda had a secret understanding with the UAE and gave other reasons for al-Qaeda not attacking the UAE (hanein.info, June 20). A forum participant from Iraq, nicknamed “Istikhbarat dolat al-Islam,” argued that al-Qaeda members do not carry passports with al-Qaeda insignia on them, meaning al-Qaeda members secretly enter UAE without the consent of the authorities. According to this post, another reason al-Qaeda has not struck the UAE is the lack of support among the small population of the Emirates for al-Qaeda because UAE Islamist groups are either weak or ideologically in contrast with the Salafi-Jihadi doctrine followed by al-Qaeda. UAE Salafi groups are adherents of the theoretical rather than militant aspects of Salafism, making it very difficult for al-Qaeda to recruit locals to perpetrate terror attacks.

Al-Islam cites a number of reasons for al-Qaeda’s reevaluation of its relationship with the UAE, including the continuing extradition of foreign Islamists either in transit or living in the UAE. He also claims the UAE is harming Arab economies by allowing the smuggling of “Arab gold” and other wealth through its territories to the West. He also mentions the alleged existence of fatwas declaring the rulers of the UAE to be apostates who should be killed for violating the *shari’a* (Islamic law) and supporting non-Muslims against Muslims.

Commenting on al-Islam’s posting, another forum participant from Iraq accused the UAE of harming Iraqis by helping Americans to open military bases in the UAE and allowing a pro-Shiite satellite T.V. station, al-Faeeha, to broadcast from the UAE. Therefore, according to the Salafi principal of *al-wala’ wa al-bara’* (Loyalty [to Islam] and Disavowal [to its Enemies]), the UAE’s rulers should be overthrown. A further participant, nicknamed Said al-Fawaris, posted a warning to the UAE’s rulers entitled “Return to Islam and you will be safe,” criticizing the UAE’s democratic lifestyle and free market policies, which are deemed un-Islamic from a Salafi-Jihadist perspective (muslm.net, June 7).

The small population and size of the UAE together with the latest techniques implemented by its security forces—with significant help from friendly Western countries—has, so far, proven very effective in tracking down terrorists passing through the county. Al-Qaeda’s only chance to attack the UAE would be through penetrating the Western interests in the country, such as foreign embassies and businesses, or through attempts to penetrate the local security services.

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### **Jalaluddin Haqqani Challenges Mullah Omar’s Leadership of the Taliban**

Since the reemergence of the insurgency in 2002, Afghanistan has witnessed a largely united insurgent front under the banner of the Taliban. To date there have been few records of disputes and differences within the Taliban. The unity of different groups of insurgents under the Taliban banner and the obedience of the rank and file of the group to the orders of Mullah Omar as their only Amir has been a key to the success and revival of the Islamist resistance. But seven years after the fall of the Taliban, disputes about the direction of the movement have begun to emerge within Mullah Omar’s mujahideen.

Small clashes inside the insurgency have been followed by deep divides within the Taliban. A recent letter from Jalaluddin Haqqani has asked for a change in the leadership of the Taliban. Haqqani is a respected veteran commander of the anti-Soviet insurgency of the 1980s and is now a powerful authority within the current insurgency, well known for his dedication to jihad and

the suicide attacks carried out under his orders in many parts of Afghanistan. Unlike many elements of the Taliban leadership, Haqqani was little influenced by the religious and political thought of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The open letter to Taliban fighters and other Afghan insurgents is written in the Pashto language under the logo and title of the “Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan.” Haqqani’s message describes Mullah Omar as an illiterate person and claims that his erroneous decisions might cause the collapse of the Taliban (*Payman Daily* [Kabul], June 14). As stated in Haqqani’s letter, it is time for the neo-Taliban to change the head of the Taliban leadership council. Haqqani claims to have consulted many Taliban commanders who were in agreement that this is the right time to bring about changes in the leadership (a full facsimile of the letter is published at [www.kabulpress.org/my/spip.php?article1816](http://www.kabulpress.org/my/spip.php?article1816)).

Haqqani suggests that the passage of time has led to the understanding that errors by the Taliban leadership have caused the loss of many prominent commanders, including Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Osmani, Mullah Dadullah, Mullah Abdul Manan and Mullah Saifullah Mansoor. The veteran jihadi commander believes that the Taliban’s *shura* (consultative council) in Quetta has made a deal with intelligence agencies to kill those insurgent commanders who are opposed to working with Mullah Omar’s representatives. Singled out for criticism is Mullah Omar’s cooperation and coordination with his relatives, such as Mullah Azizullah Eshaq Zai, Mullah Abdul Shakoor and Mullah Jan Muhammad Baloch, whom Haqqani accuses of issuing orders that have caused losses to Taliban forces. Haqqani claims that those loyal leading commanders of the Taliban who learn of the *shura*’s deals with intelligence agencies and no longer want to work with them have either been killed by Taliban figures or murdered by foreign forces allied with the Taliban leadership.

In other parts of his letter, Jalaluddin Haqqani informs the Taliban that the leadership of the organization is not hereditary and that one family should not lead the Taliban forever. Instead, he suggests that the Taliban leadership should be given to a person who is literate and knowledgeable about political issues. He should also have the ability to bring positive changes for the political development, unity and international relations of the Taliban. The Taliban needs to have productive diplomacy around the world and Haqqani points out that not all countries and governments are foes of the Taliban.

Criticizing past decisions of Mullah Omar, Haqqani stresses that the leadership system of the Taliban with its poor decisions and egotism has led to the infamy of the organization and threatened it with collapse.

Although the authenticity of this letter has not been confirmed, many local observers believe that the rift within the Taliban is both real and serious. To date, neither Mullah Omar nor Haqqani have made any public statements regarding the letter’s publication. The media sources which published the letter, *Payman Daily* and Kabul Press, are both critical of the Karzai government. Kabul Press has a history of receiving and publishing documents of this type and its editor was jailed for a time last year by the National Security Directorate for his criticism of their activities.

Jalaluddin Haqqani has a strong influence in eastern Afghanistan and the North Waziristan tribal agency of Pakistan, which puts him in a far stronger position than any other leader of the Taliban except Mullah Omar. His “Haqqani Network” has proved highly effective in striking government and Coalition targets, leading him to be regarded in some quarters as already a greater threat than Mullah Omar. A confrontation between Mullah Omar and Jalaluddin Haqqani over the leadership of the neo-Taliban, however, may provide the opportunity for a Coalition/Kabul government success against the insurgents, who continue to control at least 40 percent of Afghanistan.

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### **Turkey and Iraqi Kurds Agree to Disagree on PKK’s Terrorist Status**

In an interview with Italian newspaper *Il Tempo*, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani stated that “the PKK [Kurdistan Workers’ Party] is not a terrorist organization.” Barzani also added that “if the PKK rejects Turkey’s commitment to hold talks with it, the PKK can be then considered as terrorist” (*Il Tempo*, June 21).

Peyamner, the official media organ of Barzani’s political party (the Kurdistan Democratic Party—KDP), did not

report on his statements, although the other main Iraqi Kurdish political party (the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—PUK) did post a story containing the interview (PUKMedia, June 22). Naturally, Turkish media immediately picked up on Barzani's statement (*Hurriyet*, June 23; *Today's Zaman*, June 24; *Milliyet*, June 24).

This was not the first time that KRG President Barzani refused to characterize the PKK as a terrorist group. As recently as October 2007, Turkish newspapers reported on an interview Barzani gave to CNN in which he made almost identical statements, emphasizing that he did not see the PKK as a terrorist organization, but “if in order to solve the [Kurdish] problem Turkey proposed a peaceful path and the PKK rejected this, then I would agree that the PKK is a terrorist organization. At the moment, however, this is not the case” (*Radikal*, October 22, 2007).

Universally agreed upon definitions of “terrorist” remain elusive. Officials from Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs told Jamestown that in their view, a non-state actor challenging a state's monopoly on the use of force is a terrorist organization (Author's interview, May 21). The label of “terrorist group” also remains important for Ankara's attempts to deny any legitimacy to the PKK and its stated goals of Kurdish autonomy and minority rights. Turkish officials use the terrorist label to rule out the possibility of any negotiations or discourse between Ankara and the PKK, since governments cannot be expected to negotiate with terrorists. Barzani's view that the PKK should not be viewed as a terrorist organization because of its willingness to peacefully negotiate a solution with Ankara thus appears lost on Turkish officials, given their refusal to recognize much less negotiate with terrorists. Turkey's willingness to meet with officials of groups such as Hamas and the Kosovo Liberation Army appears to contradict its stance on the PKK, however, or at least force Ankara to engage in a number of rhetorical gyrations to justify the apparent double standard.

For Iraqi Kurds, labeling the PKK a terrorist organization would be akin to Arab governments designating Hizbullah, Hamas or the PLO as terrorists. In the same way that Arab states such as Jordan harbor little affinity for Hizbullah, Hamas or the various groups that make up the PLO, the Kurdistan Regional Government tends to view the PKK negatively. Popular sympathy for the PKK's “national liberation struggle,” however, discourages Iraqi Kurdish leaders from using the terrorist label or taking military action against the PKK. If the PKK were to begin challenging Iraqi Kurdish political parties for control of Iraqi Kurdistan, as it did briefly in the early 1990s, one

could expect harsher rhetoric from the KRG and even a return to the fighting that occurred between Iraqi Kurds and the PKK in the 1990s.

The parallel for such a scenario might be King Hussein's September 1970 military campaign against Palestinian groups in Jordan, when these groups progressed from raids on Israel to threatening to overthrow the Jordanian government. Even after the events of “Black September,” however, Jordan's leaders would not label Palestinian groups terrorists. The Jordanian government did nonetheless manage, after 1970, to prevent Palestinian guerrillas from using Jordanian territory to launch attacks against Israel, which in turn put an end to punishing Israeli counterattacks on Jordanian territory. Should Iraqi Kurds wish to see an end to Turkish incursions into KRG territory, they will have to either contain the PKK better or mediate an end to the conflict between the PKK and Ankara.

For its part, the PKK has tried to shed its terrorist image and designation. The PKK claims to engage in a legitimate right of “armed struggle.” PKK leaders also insist that their goals do not involve carving a separate Kurdish state from eastern Turkey and that they are open to a negotiated peace to achieve “Kurdish rights and democracy.” Although the PKK targeted many civilians in the 1980s and 1990s, mostly “village guards” and their families—armed by Ankara to fight the PKK—as well as Turkish civil servants, PKK officials claim to have eschewed such a policy in recent years (Author's interview, Qandil, April 2004). In contrast to groups such as Hamas, which glorify suicide bombings against civilian targets, the PKK today denies targeting civilians (BBC News, October 27, 2007). In January 2008 PKK military commander Bahoz Erdal (a.k.a. Fehman Hussein) unequivocally stated: “We are not fighting without cause, but are defending our national values, and we show sensitivity—especially when it comes to civilians. We have never harmed civilians intentionally, and we will not do so in the future” (elaph.com, January 31). The PKK thus claims that its attacks are limited to the armed forces of the Turkish state and national infrastructure such as power plants.

Their denials notwithstanding, possible PKK front groups have claimed responsibility for a number of recent bombings and civilian deaths in Turkey. Commander Erdal, for instance, recently warned tourists to avoid Turkey: “Turkey is not safe for tourists, and we advise them to stay away from it. Extremist Kurdish organizations like the Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK) have targeted tourists in the past, and continue to threaten them in

Turkey [today]. We cannot predict what will happen in the future...” (elaph.com, January 31). A very logical PKK strategy would include harming Turkey’s tourism industry and the income it generates. Other bombings such as the January 3 bomb blast in Diyarbakir—in which five people, including three children, were killed—lacked any claim of responsibility, but Ankara blamed the PKK. In any case, the PKK remains on not only Turkey’s list of terrorist organizations, but that of the United States and the European Union as well.

Officials in Ankara feel that Iraqi Kurds have not done nearly enough against the PKK and Barzani’s refusal to categorize the organization as “terrorist” only strengthens this view. His recent statements clearly do not endear Barzani to the Turkish establishment and public. At the same time, Turkish and Iraqi Kurdish relations have and will continue to weather such statements. Although Ankara tends to judge its friends and enemies according to their stance on issues like the PKK, Armenian genocide resolutions, and the Cyprus dispute, Turkey nonetheless maintains working relationships with many states in spite of disagreements over these questions. One exception to this tendency occurred in 1998, when Turkey moved thousands of troops to the Syrian border and threatened war if Syria continued to allow PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan sanctuary in Damascus and Lebanon. In this case, however, it was clear that Ocalan resided in Damascus with permission and assistance from Syria’s top leadership, which enjoys tight control of the entire country. Syria promptly expelled Ocalan, and Syrian-Turkish relations have steadily improved since then.

In the case of mountainous Iraqi Kurdistan, as long as Barzani’s KRG refrains from providing obvious assistance or sanctuary to the PKK, Iraqi Kurds and Ankara can continue to do business. While Iraqi Kurdish military action to expel the PKK from its mountain bases would do wonders for relations with Turkey, the hope of smoother ties with Ankara appears insufficient to convince KRG leaders to make such a risky and unpopular policy choice. Hence the current status quo of tense but otherwise profitable and acceptable relations between Ankara and the KRG seems likely to continue.

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## **Trying the Suspect or the Government? The Media’s Approach to the Trial of al-Qaeda’s Canadian Operative**

By Michael Scheuer

In the aftermath of al-Qaeda’s 9/11 raids on New York City and Washington D.C., the Western media thundered damnation at the governments of the United States and its allies for having failed to take seriously the growth in post-Cold War national security threats from transnational Islamist groups. The media mercilessly attacked the “group-think” of Western governments for their continued focus on threats from nation-states—Russia, China, Iraq, Iran, etc.—and their on-again, off-again concern with the threat from al-Qaeda and its Islamist allies. The media’s bottom-line was accurate: The fall of the Berlin Wall had not been recognized by Western governments as the end of reliable peace under the umbrella of Mutually Assured Destruction and that the 9/11 attacks made it plain that the relatively peaceful, largely predictable Cold War-era was over for good.

The media’s post-9/11 argument was an essential wake-up call to those wielding power in the West, but it appears, in retrospect, to have been ineffective. Washington and many of its allies continue to focus on nation-state threats—witness the war in Iraq and the apparently nearing war with Iran—while addressing the transnational Islamist threat symbolized by al-Qaeda half-heartedly as if they had time to end the threat at their leisure. The current situation in Afghanistan is proving the fallacy—and perhaps the fatal arrogance—of this time-is-on-our-side attitude and it seems unlikely that the Western governments see the coming disaster in South Asia. Tragically, much of the Western media have dropped the message of a world utterly changed since the fall of the Berlin Wall and resumed the insular, anti-government attitude that characterized them during the Cold War, when they often described the actions of Western governments as more dangerous than Soviet actions and intentions.

A terrorism trial that opened in Canada on June 23 is providing an excellent example of the media’s unfortunate reversion—one which is also occurring in the American, British, Australian, and other Western media—from heralding the grossly underestimated transnational Islamist threat to its traditional attack-dog role vis-à-vis government actions and policies. The trial in Ottawa involves the prosecution of Momin Khawaja, a 29-year-old

Canadian citizen of Pakistani descent, for his alleged role with al-Qaeda-related terrorists who plotted to detonate bombs made of aluminum powder and ammonium-nitrate fertilizer at pubs, shopping malls, and facilities for the distribution of gas and electricity in and around London (Canadian Press, June 24; Canada.com, June 26). The plot was discovered by British security services; they dismantled it on March 30, 2004 in a counter-terrorism operation named “Crevice.” The subsequent trial in London resulted in five individuals—all of Pakistani descent—being found guilty on April 30, 2007 and jailed for life (*National Post*, June 24).

Momin Khawaja, a professional software developer, is accused of designing and building devices capable of using radio frequencies to remotely detonate the bombs the British group planned to use. After six months of surveillance by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Khawaja was arrested in late March 2004 at his parents’ home near Ottawa. The police seized 50kg of ammonium nitrate, three assault rifles, cartridges, knives, electronic circuitry, computer chips, parts for the detonators, and \$10,300 in cash. Khawaja was indicted on seven terrorism-related charges, and has pled innocent to each (*Globe and Mail*, June 23; Canadian Press, June 24; *Toronto Star*, June 25).

The information presented by the federal prosecutor underscores the seriousness of Khawaja’s work, and the ardent role he apparently played in the plot:

- The detonators built by Khawaja, according to the RCMP, would have worked and could be operated reliably at a range of up to 300 yards in an open environment. Khawaja embedded signal jammers and encryption codes in the devices to prevent premature detonation (*Globe and Mail*, June 23).
- Khawaja traveled to Pakistan in July 2003 and received training on AK-47s, RPGs and a light machine gun at a camp in that country. While there, he provided about 1,000 British pounds and an unknown amount of Canadian dollars to an associate of Shaykh Abu Munthir, an al-Qaeda leader in Pakistan’s tribal region (*Globe and Mail*, June 23; CBC, June 30).
- Intercepted e-mails from Khawaja showed he was in contact with “a wide circle of Islamic extremists in the United Kingdom and Pakistan” (Reuters, June 24).

- Khawaja traveled to the UK in 2003 and 2004 to update the plotters on his progress with the detonators; to provide them with cash and to allow the group to use a home in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, owned by his family (Canada.com, June 25).
- Khawaja was inspired by the words of Osama bin Laden and the deeds of al-Qaeda. He spoke of the “virtue of jihad” and at one point wrote that “Osama bin Laden was the most beloved person in the world” (*National Post*, June 24).

Beyond these specifics, Khawaja’s trial is notable for several reasons:

- The Canadian government’s most important witness is a former al-Qaeda member named Mohammad Junaid Babar, who is the first former al-Qaeda informer to testify openly in court. Babar was involved in the UK-based plot with Khawaja and was active with al-Qaeda in South Asia. He has been convicted of terrorism charges in the United States and is cooperating with the FBI. Babar also cooperated with British authorities in their successful trial and conviction of the London plotters (*National Post*, June 24).
- Khawaja was employed as a computer contractor in Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). He used a DFAIT computer to send e-mails to his associates in London; he used DFAIT credentials to travel to the UK; and he was considering the use of the department’s courier system to move the detonators to Britain (*National Post*, June 24). To date, open-sources have not said if Khawaja was passing classified Canadian data to his Islamist colleagues in Britain or to al-Qaeda.
- Canadian security authorities were unaware of Khawaja’s activities until they were informed by their British counterparts (Canada.com, June 24).

While the Canadian media published these details, they have done so in a matter-of-fact manner and then quickly moved on to focus on the fact that Khawaja’s trial is “the first test case” of Canada’s 2001 Anti-Terrorism Act, which has been the target of several constitutional challenges. After only a week, for example, the trial is being described as having highlighted “a number of cumbersome Canadian criminal-justice procedures, [such

as] protracted pretrial debates ... [and] haggling over document disclosure.” Canada’s security services and court system have also been compared unfavorably with the FBI and the structure of the U.S. court system. Since 2004, moreover, the Canadian government’s prosecutors have abided by a gag-order requested by Khawaja’s lawyer and issued by the court. They kept pre-trial silence about Khawaja-related evidence to ensure a fair trial, but they are now being criticized for their prolonged silence because “society should have the right to know the blow-by-blow of such allegations much sooner” (*Globe and Mail*, June 23). The media have repeatedly highlighted the argument of Khawaja’s lawyer that Babar is testifying against his client to win a shorter sentence in the United States and that the case is largely composed of hearsay material. “The evidence is prejudicial and unfair,” the attorney said after the first day of the trial. “Ninety-five percent of Babar’s evidence against Mr. Khawaja is hearsay” (Canadian Press, June 24).

The media has augmented its criticism of the government’s legal modus operandi by using an inexplicably popular social-science theory that holds, in part, that the best way to defeat Islamist extremism is to understand the radicalization procedures through which young Muslims become violent and then to adjust existing legal systems to prevent this. Marc Sageman, an American social scientist who champions the commonsense-less approach to understanding the Islamist threat called the “leaderless jihad,” advances this argument as follows:

The gag orders imposed on the media and authorities by the judiciary in [Britain, Canada and other Commonwealth] countries prevent the authorities from informing the Muslim community about the scope of the terrorist threat because the evidence against the subjects cannot be disclosed until the trials are over... The gag orders have contributed to broad public and especially Muslim skepticism about [terrorism cases]. The idea that the public can suspend judgment about such dramatic arrests as arrests and wait for three or four years to discover the evidence runs against human nature. The public fills in the gaps and this can potentially turn against the authorities (*Globe and Mail*, June 23).

This argument seems to boil down to saying: “Damn the defendant’s rights to a fair trial, let’s amend centuries of proven and reliable legal procedures in order to test a trendy social science theory.” Realistically, no social science theory is needed to understand what radicalizes

Muslims. Radicalization does not occur because young Muslims are alienated from society; have time on their hands because they are unemployed; are immaturely searching for fame and glory; or because of any other such glib psychological factors. Radicalization occurs, quite simply, because U.S. and Western foreign policies and their impact in the Muslim world are nearly universally assessed by Muslims as an attack on Islam and its followers. Thus, change policies and radicalization slows; change legal systems and chaos reigns in Western courts and radicalization continues without pause. An American historian once wrote of the great Protestant divine Cotton Mather: “When Mather comes in the door, truth flies out the window.” And so it might be said in paraphrase: “When the social scientists take charge of counter-terrorism, hope of victory flies out the window.”

In sum, much of the Canadian and Western media seem to be reverting to their pre-9/11 role as first and foremost critics of their governments. This is, of course, an essential and invaluable part of the media’s role in democratic societies, but it is not the whole of the media’s responsibility. By stepping away from the commendable, fire-bell-in-the-night role they played after 9/11 by describing how Western leaders had vastly underestimated the Islamist threat, the media have done their readers and countries a disservice. By resuming a tight focus on condemning, for example, the Canadian government’s prolonged silence about evidence against Khawaja; the UK government’s quest for a longer period in which terrorist suspects can be held; and the U.S. government’s admittedly bumbling, often disingenuous efforts to deal with the serious issue of what to do with prisoners of war who probably can never be released, the media is doing part of their job. They are, however, also causing readers to resume navel-gazing and become more focused on over-wrought, often-uneducated analyses of government misdeeds rather than on the growing threat in the West from educated Islamists, some of whom—like Momin Khawaja—have penetrated sensitive departments of Western governments, are detected only because of sheer good luck and are associated with or inspired by al-Qaeda.

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