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Abdul Rashid Dostum

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1111 16th St. NW, Suite #320

Washington, DC • 20036

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Dostum: Afghanistan's Embattled Warlord

By Brian Glyn Williams

While the resurgence of the Taliban is the focus of interest in the Pashtun south of Afghanistan, the year started with a different story in the north that many are depicting as one of the greatest challenges to the Karzai government. Namely the surreal confrontation between General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the larger-than-life Uzbek *jang salar* (warlord)—who was once described as “one of the best equipped and armed warlords ever”—and one of his former aides [1].

In a move that many critics of the situation in Afghanistan saw as epitomizing the Karzai government's cravenness in dealing with brutal warlords, the Afghan government backed away from arresting Dostum after he beat up and kidnapped a former election manager and spokesman in Kabul on February 3 (*IHT*, February 4). As his house was besieged by Ministry of the Interior police, Dostum appeared on the roof, defiantly waving his fist.

While many critics of President Karzai's policy of appeasing warlords called for making an example of Dostum, Karzai limited his response to removing Dostum from his largely symbolic post of “Commander in Chief” of the Afghan Army. Karzai's decision not to prosecute Dostum for his brazen assault in the Afghan capital was depicted as “timid and hesitant” (*Asia Times*, April 9; RFE/RL, February 3). Glib calls for “removing” warlords like Dostum, however, display a lack of understanding of the complex issues involved in Karzai's delicate balancing act in a country faced with a mounting Taliban insurgency.

The Missing Historical Context

Dostum's power base lies in the northern provinces of Jowzjan, his home district, as well as Saripul, Balkh, Faryab, Baghlan and Kunduz. These provinces make up an Uzbek-dominated steppe and hill region known as Afghan Turkistan since it was conquered by the Pashtun-Afghans in the 19th century. Independent Turkistan was subdued only after the Afghans made an alliance with the Uzbek ruler of Faryab, who sent his horsemen to fight alongside the Afghans against fellow Uzbeks [2].

While a later Afghan ruler, Amir Abdur Rahman, broke the spine of the Uzbeks' final resistance in 1881 by blowing their elders and khans out of cannons, subsequent leaders were not as strong as the "Iron Amir" [3]. Instead of using force, they were forced to resort to the traditional Afghan ruling policy of "divide and rule" to dominate the Uzbek khans. Whenever a local khan grew too strong, the Afghan *wali* (governor) undermined him by promoting his rivals [4].

In the 1980s, as the resistance of the mujahideen increased, the Pashtun Communist leader Najibullah took the unprecedented step of arming ethnic Uzbeks to fight the Islamic rebels. The guns empowered an Uzbek commander from the backward province of Jowzjan: Abdul Rashid Dostum. Dostum proved to be skilled in rallying Uzbek and Turkmen mujahideen to both the government's cause and his own. By the late 1980s his army of pro-Communist government horsemen had pacified the north.

By 1992 President Najibullah had come to see the writing on the wall as the Soviet Union collapsed and his funds dried up. He began to send out feelers to Pashtun elements in the mujahideen and started to remove non-Pashtun commanders in the north. In 1992 Dostum betrayed Najibullah and joined the moderate Tajik leader Massoud in toppling the Afghan Communist government.

Despite assisting Massoud and the mujahideen in capturing Kabul, Dostum—more of an ethno-opportunist than a Communist—was pointedly excluded from the new government on the grounds that he was a "Communist." The Uzbeks claimed it was because the dominant Pashtuns and Tajiks defined him as a *ghulam* (a medieval Persian term used to describe Turkic slave warriors).

In frustration Dostum returned to the north and helped create the Jumbesh-i-Milli Islami (Islamic National Party), which eventually became the dominant Turkic party of the five provinces he controlled. But Dostum's autonomous realm was not recognized by the mujahideen government. When Massoud attacked his northern realm, Dostum responded by besieging Kabul in January 1994.

Hundreds of civilians died in this short-lived attack which, however, paled in comparison to the number of civilians killed by Hekmatyar, Massoud and the Hazara leader Mazari, who fought for the capital from 1992 to 1996. Nonetheless, Dostum's troops earned a well deserved reputation for raping and pillaging and Dostum had a difficult time enforcing his rule over his wild troops, colloquially known as *gilimjans* (carpet thieves).

For the most part Dostum remained confined to the north and had no aspirations to rule Kabul like the other warlords. From 1992 to 1997 he ran a secular mini-state based in Mazar-i-Sharif and the surrounding provinces. According to one account, "Dostum was also benign. Women enjoyed freedom to go to school, go out without the burqa and to wear high-heeled shoes, in sharp contrast to their oppression by the Taliban elsewhere in the country." Mazar-i-Sharif's university, the last in Afghanistan, had 1,800 female students (*Observer*, October 21, 2001).

As Mullah Omar's Taliban forces overran the rest of the country after 1994, Dostum led his Uzbek and Turkmen forces in defending this last pocket of secularism. Dostum seemed to be invincible until he was betrayed in May 1997. Once again the Pashtuns had relied upon the policy of divide and rule to overcome Uzbek resistance. On this occasion, Dostum's Uzbek commander in Faryab, Abdul Malik, went over to the Taliban with his forces in the middle of a battle. At this moment the leader of the Pashtun community of Balkh and Mazar-i-Sharif, Juma Khan Hamdard, attacked from the east and destroyed Dostum's forces.

As always, the disunited Uzbeks were their own worst enemy. Juma Khan Hamdard's troops subsequently welcomed their Pashtun Taliban brothers into Mazar-i-Sharif and strict sharia law was enforced. A furious Dostum was forced to flee to Turkey, where he remained in exile until April 2001.

Dostum the “Tank Crusher”

Dostum’s old ally and rival, the hard-pressed Massoud, clearly valued Dostum as a leader and tried to convince him to return to Afghanistan to fight the Taliban. But his reputation was severely damaged in 2000 with the publication of Ahmed Rashid’s book *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. In this best-seller, which became an unofficial manual for U.S. troops in Afghanistan, Rashid relates a second-hand story of Dostum using a tank to impose discipline on one of his own troops caught plundering. Using language that resentful Uzbeks claim is tainted by Turcophobia, Rashid defined Dostum in colorful terms as a neo-Genghis Khan:

He wielded power ruthlessly. The first time I arrived at the fort to meet Dostum, there were bloodstains and pieces of flesh in the muddy courtyard. I innocently asked the guards if a goat had been slaughtered. They told me that an hour earlier, Dostum had punished a soldier for stealing. The man had been tied to the tracks of a Russian-made tank, which then drove around the courtyard crushing his body into mincemeat, as the garrison and Dostum watched [5].

With those words the legend of Dostum the “tank crusher” was born. As the story was told and retold it took on a life of its own. Subsequent writers, many of whom had the oblique aim of criticizing U.S. policy in Afghanistan, competed to embellish the episode, often pluralizing the number and type of victims (*Time*, October 11, 2004; *The Times* [London], September 29, 2004; *Washington Post*, February 23, 2002). The story would eventually shape Coalition governments’ policies and lead to calls for Dostum’s arrest.

But even as Rashid’s *Taliban* began to cast Dostum and his “pillaging” people in a negative light, Dostum decided to return to Afghanistan to make one last stand against the Taliban.

An Embattled Warlord: Dostum in Post-Taliban Afghanistan

For five months Dostum led a desperate horse-mounted guerrilla war against the Taliban in the barren Hindu Kush Mountains of central Afghanistan. When he heard about the 9/11 attacks he promptly offered his services to the U.S. Central Command. While his small band of less than 2,000 *cheriks* (horse-mounted raiders) was

considerably smaller than other factions of the Northern Alliance, it was Dostum’s group that actually went on the offensive. In November 2001, Dostum and U.S. Special Forces broke out of the Hindu Kush Mountains and destroyed the Taliban army of the north. Within days Dostum was greeted across the north as a liberator.

But at the Bonn Conference of 2001, organized to create a government for post-Taliban Afghanistan, Dostum was sidelined, much as he had been after overthrowing the Communist government in 1992. Dostum responded by running for president in 2004, garnering 10 percent of the vote, roughly the proportion of the Uzbek-Turkmen population of Afghanistan.

Dostum then resurrected his Jumbesh Party, which became an outlet for expressing the grievances of the Uzbeks and their Turkmen *kuchuk kardeshler* (little brothers). At this time Dostum criticized Karzai—a Pashtun—for such policies as reaching out to the Taliban and arming Pashtun militias. Dostum also hid weapons for future use against the resurgent Taliban and a neighboring Tajik warlord named Ustad Atta.

It was at this time that Karzai returned to the tried and true policy of divide and rule to weaken Dostum. Malik, the commander who had betrayed Dostum in 1997, was encouraged to return to the north, where he created a political party to compete with Dostum’s Jumbesh (RFE/RL, April 21, 2006).

Karzai also placed a governor in Faryab who called for Dostum’s arrest for war crimes—Dostum’s troops were accused of killing as many as 200 Taliban prisoners in 2001, a number inflated in some accounts to as many as 3,000. Dostum, however, checkmated Karzai when his Jumbesh followers rioted and drove the unpopular governor out of Faryab in 2004.

The Karzai government responded to these failures by trying to woo the Turkmen—many of whom resent being the Uzbeks’ “little brothers”—away from Dostum. To add a quintessential Afghan twist to the whole affair, it was at this time that a Turkmen Jumbesh spokesman began to criticize the Karzai government for its campaign against Dostum. That spokesman was none other than Muhammad Akbar Bai, the aide who was beaten by Dostum in February.

Dostum versus Akbar Bai

In the 2004 presidential election, Bai, a Turkmen, was

plucked from obscurity by Dostum and made manager and spokesman for his campaign. Bai was chosen by Dostum largely for his knowledge of the United States and the English language, as Dostum belatedly realized that he needed to counter his image as a “tank crusher.” Bai learned his English while serving a jail sentence in the United States from 1989 to 2003 for drug dealing and tax evasion (IWPR, February 6, 2007).

The two fell out during the parliamentary election of 2005. In January 2007, Bai turned on his patron and publicly claimed that Dostum was hiding weapons and “misused his power in northern provinces and destroyed Uzbek and ethnic Turkmen” (Pahjwok News Agency, January 8, 2007). Dissidents across the north rallied to Bai. Then, in what was seen as a deliberate provocation, Bai established a rival party known as the Turkic Islamic Council in Sheberghan, Dostum’s home town. In response, the local Jumbesh youth wing ransacked the party’s headquarters, claiming Bai was working for the Karzai government as a “new Malik” to divide Turkmen and Uzbeks as the 19th century Afghan amirs and the Taliban had done.

As the quarrel weakened Dostum, who was facing a financial crisis as well, Karzai felt the moment was right to move against him. Karzai appointed Juma Khan Hamdard, the Pashtun commander who had attacked Dostum alongside the Taliban in 1997, as governor of Dostum’s home province of Jowzjan. When the Jumbesh Youth rallied to protest Hamdard’s appointment, his security forces gunned down and killed over a dozen of them in Sherberghan.

Hamdard also seems to have been tipped off about the location of Dostum’s weapon caches by Bai, recovering the largest stash of explosives in post-Taliban Afghanistan (Asia Times Online, May 30, 2007). Reeling from these setbacks and unable to defend his followers even in Sheberghan, Dostum had to find a way to maintain his *nam* (a Dari word meaning name or reputation) and prevent defections.

It was in this context that Dostum and his followers attacked Akbar Bai in a calculated display of power, sending a message to the Uzbeks and Turkmen of the north that he was still in charge. Bai’s bold challenge to his authority was finally answered and the Turkmen leader was forced to turn to Karzai, a Pashtun, for protection. In one bold stroke Dostum reunified his power base and intimidated his challengers.

For his part, Karzai, a master of Afghan provincial politics, knew that he could not move forcefully against Dostum despite the widespread calls for his arrest. Dostum still had the key support of other Northern Alliance warlords, not to mention the support of his own Turkic *qawm* (tribe) and the well organized Jumbesh Party. As the Taliban make inroads in the strategic northern provinces, having a bulwark like Dostum—who still builds schools for women and supports secularism—serves Karzai’s purposes, so long as he is not too strong.

So while Karzai would like to remove Dostum, who is perceived as a warlord relic, he realizes that this would destabilize the north, where Dostum is defined by many as a liberating hero. And the north is one of the few areas in Afghanistan that has seen comparative security and progress. For this reason, while the story of Dostum’s assault on Akbar Bai is already being embellished and will certainly contribute to his tank-crusher *nam* in the West, among the Turkic people of the north his authority remains largely unchallenged, at least for the time being (ABC.net, February 5).

Dr. Brian Glyn Williams is assistant professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth.

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Sino-Pakistani Defense Relations and the War on Terrorism

By Tariq Mahmud Ashraf

Concurrent with Pakistan’s often tumultuous military relationship with the United States is a growing and

highly amicable economic and military relationship with China that poses vital questions regarding Pakistan's future approach to the War on Terrorism. While suspicion of American motives runs high in Pakistan, China has made major inroads in the South Asian country, including a free-trade deal, assistance in power development, the implementation of a five-year trade and development plan and a strategic partnership meant to address deficiencies in Pakistan's military technology and increase cooperation against Islamist terrorist cells (Xinhua, April 3; Associated Press of Pakistan [APP], April 17).

Discussions on defense and security issues were an important part of this week's state visit to China by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf (APP, April 14). Pakistan and China are involved in major co-production projects involving the manufacture of JF-17 Thunder fighter aircraft—similar to American F-16s, which Pakistan continues to purchase from the United States—and F22P naval frigates. The latter project involves the construction of four frigates, three in China and the last in the Karachi shipyards. The project involves important technology transfers—unavailable from the United States—that will allow Pakistan to build major warships on its own (*Dawn* [Karachi], April 5; *China Daily*, April 5).

Changes Brought by the War on Terrorism

Beijing has major stakes in the war against terrorism. It has clearly enunciated that Pakistan is as central to its national security interests as Israel is to Washington. In strategic terms, the infusion of a U.S. military presence into Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan has seriously upset China's security calculus on which its Western strategy is predicated (see *China Brief*, February 28, 2002). China also worries about the possible expansion of a U.S. military presence closer to China's doorstep [1].

While U.S.-Pakistani defense ties date back to 1954, Pakistan and China have had strategic ties since the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict, in which the United States rushed to support India. These relations crystallized after Pakistan's disillusionment with the United States for its lack of support during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. Since then, Pakistan's relationship with the United States has seen several ups and downs while its ties with China have been steady, consistent and expanding. China has been Pakistan's largest defense supplier with Beijing viewing Pakistan as a useful counterweight to

Indian power and influence in the region [2].

Two major consequences of the U.S.-led War on Terrorism have been the positioning of sizeable U.S. military forces in proximity to China's southwestern frontier and the involvement of Pakistan, China's time-tested South Asian ally. These developments served to not only checkmate the spread of Chinese influence and precipitate a rollback of Chinese efforts at strategic expansion in the region but also tilted the regional balance of power decisively in Washington's favor virtually overnight [3].

Near airbases that were used by the U.S. Air Force until 2004-2005, China is now the major force behind the construction of a major civil/naval port at Gwadar, along the coast of Balochistan province. China's navy will have full use of the port once finished and a rail line, a fiber-optic line and a petroleum pipeline will run from Gwadar to the Karakoram highway that connects to China (APP, April 12).

These developments are taking place in an environment that sees China's relations with the United States as somewhat unstable, but relatively positive at the moment. Both countries want success in the war against terrorism but have different policies and interests in some areas, such as the war in Iraq and China's call for Taiwan reunification.

In the wake of the global wave of horror that swept the world after 9/11, both China and Pakistan expressed their support for the United States differently and with varying motives and reasons. While China needed time to formulate its policy afresh, Pakistan probably had no way out but to acquiesce and join the U.S. bandwagon, though this has not been without benefit to Islamabad. There is no denying the fact that the presence of U.S. forces on Pakistani soil contributed to the de-escalation of the 2002 Indo-Pak military stand-off and generated strategic dividends for Pakistan.

New Government, New Policy

While the War on Terrorism continues unabated, recent internal developments in Pakistan have raised fresh questions regarding Pakistan's continuing support for this war. With the pro-Musharraf forces having been routed, the new democratically elected government is bound to have a fresh look at its foreign policy, especially in the context of its relations with both the United States and China.

Interestingly, Pakistan's unstinting support of the War of Terrorism does not seem to have impinged negatively on its relationship with China. In fact, Pakistan and China have been cooperating in parallel on their own counter-terrorism efforts. In this context, the moves of the Pakistani government in recent years to clamp down on Uighur settlements and on religious schools used as training grounds for militant Islamists are relevant, as is the Red Mosque incident (*Daily Times* [Lahore], June 26, 2006). When tensions over Islamic extremism developed between China and Pakistan after Islamic vigilantes kidnapped several Chinese citizens, Musharraf responded quickly and very strongly (People's Daily Online, October 12, 2004; *Pakistan Times*, October 14, 2004). Many believe that his decision to use military force against the extremists at the Red Mosque in Islamabad stemmed largely from the incident with the Chinese citizens, which had greatly embarrassed his regime. In his visit to China, President Musharraf declared that Pakistan would extend its full support to China in its battle against "East Turkistan" (Uighur) terrorists (*Pakistan Times*, April 9).

Pakistan has in the past been very helpful to China in controlling the separatist Uighur movement in Xinjiang. Not only did the Pakistan military kill Hasan Mahsum—the leader of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)—in October 2003, but in August 2004, Pakistani and Chinese armies conducted a joint anti-terrorism exercise in the province (*China Daily*, December 24, 2003). The conduct of this military exercise clearly indicated the Pakistani government's acceptance of China's desire to stamp out separatism in Xinjiang—even though the Uighurs are generally fellow Muslims—and its apparent agreement with China's declarations that the separatists are Islamist terrorists in league with al-Qaeda.

Directions for the China/Pakistan Security Relationship

A visualization of the future brings three vital questions to the fore: Would Pakistan's new government move away from its support for the War on Terror and tilt toward China? Could the Pakistani armed forces expect to get the desired military weapons and equipment from China that they can obtain from the United States? What role will the Pakistan Army's leadership and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) play during this policy review?

- Firstly, even though the newly elected government has been described by most as "secular" and

"liberal," it is going to find it difficult to distance itself from Islam because of the underlying strength of religious feeling among the masses and the widespread anti-American sentiment that prevails. On the other hand, its economic woes and security predicaments preclude it from distancing itself from the sole super-power. As such, the new government will likely adopt a middle-of-the-road path designed to keep both the Americans and the masses appeased. Walking this tightrope is not going to be easy, however, and will require skillful manipulation. On the external front, Pakistan trusts China much more than it does the United States, as Islamabad perceives Washington to have left it in the lurch once too often while China has been steadfast in its commitments. Once again, however, the imperative of staying in the U.S. camp will play a major role in the formulation of foreign policy but this will be done with the tacit approval of the Chinese, whom no Pakistani government can afford to alienate even in the slightest.

- Secondly, notwithstanding the enormous economic strides that China is making, its military weapons technology is nowhere near what the United States and the West are able to field. Since a budget-constrained Pakistan is limited in what it can afford to purchase, the best option for it would be to procure limited amounts of quality equipment from the United States and the West with the quantity factor being made up by purchasing cheaper, although less modern, Chinese weaponry in greater numbers. As with the foreign policy option discussed earlier, Pakistan's defense procurement is also expected to be two-pronged without either the United States or China being relegated in importance.
- Thirdly, much is being said about the role of the Pakistani military in the future foreign and defense policies of Pakistan, with some analysts conjecturing that the Pakistan Army is likely to be split into pro-United States and pro-China camps. This possibility appears farfetched because of a multitude of reasons: Firstly, since Pakistani-U.S. military ties date back several decades, most of the senior leadership have all been trained in the United States and have a soft spot for the West; secondly, a very limited number of Pakistani military personnel have been trained in China and most of these are

still at the middle leadership level; thirdly, with the election of the new government, it can be expected that legislation would be put in place to obviate the chances of the military assuming power again in Pakistan; and fourthly, the fact that most soldiers, airmen and sailors realize that even the best weapons that China can provide do not technologically compare with what can be obtained from the United States and the West.

While there is no doubt that Pakistan's relations with both China and the United States are at critical junctures and any change in either is bound to impact the other, an objective analysis of the prevailing situation and the realities on the ground leads one to the following conclusions:

- Pakistan's new democratically elected government will continue to support the United States in the War on Terror. It will simultaneously strive to ensure that the Uighur separatists from Xinjiang are neither afforded any help nor safe havens on Pakistani soil.
- Pakistan will adopt a middle-of-the-road foreign policy aimed at accommodating the needs and requirements of both China and the United States. Under the present circumstances, Pakistan cannot afford to distance itself from either.
- Since financial constraints dictate that Pakistan resort to a suitable quality-quantity mix in its military weapons, it will continue to rely on the United States for quality while depending on China for quantity.
- With the foundations of democratic order having been laid in Pakistan, one could surmise that the role of the military in affairs of state would gradually reduce. As regards the ISI, since it is a military-operated institution, one might expect its role on the international scene to be reduced correspondingly with an increased element of civilian control over its activities.

Tariq Mahmud Ashraf is a retired Air Commodore from the Pakistan Air Force. A freelance analyst on South Asian defense and nuclearization issues, he has authored one book and published over 70 papers and articles in journals of repute.

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Capabilities and Restraints in Turkey's Counter-Terrorism Policy

By Gareth Jenkins

Turkey has long faced a broad range of domestic terrorist threats, ranging from left-wing and Kurdish radicals to violent indigenous Islamist groups and Turkish militants affiliated with or sympathetic to transnational organizations such as al-Qaeda. The country's geographical location, often porous borders and thriving black market in stolen identity documents have also combined to make it one of the major transit countries for foreign militants.

Turkey's intelligence and law enforcement services have become adept at the surveillance and penetration of indigenous organizations identified as posing a threat to national security. However, domestic counter-terrorism efforts continue to be hampered by a limited legislative and technical infrastructure, inter-service suspicions and a tendency to focus on proven rather than potential threats. Similar suspicions and shortcomings also often impede international cooperation against transnational organizations and are exacerbated by the very introspective nature of Turkey's counter-terrorism strategies and legislation.

Perceived Terrorist Threats

Article One of Turkey's "Law No. 3713 on the Struggle against Terrorism" defines terrorism solely in terms of

the threat it poses to the Turkish state (adalet.gov.tr). Although Ankara frequently complains about other countries tolerating the activities of support groups affiliated with organizations that target Turkey, such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), there is no provision under Turkish law for action against organizations that are not perceived as posing a threat to Turkish domestic security.

The only published list of proscribed terrorist organizations is one on the website of the Turkish National Police (TNP) listing 12 "leading terrorist groups active in Turkey"; of these, four are leftist, three Kurdish and five Islamist. Although the list includes al-Qaeda, it is described as the "Al Qaeda Terrorist Organization in Turkey" (egm.gov.tr).

Institutional Infrastructure

The main intelligence-gathering body in Turkey is the National Intelligence Organization (Milli Istihbarat Teskilati, or MIT), which is affiliated with the Prime Minister's office and gathers intelligence against all perceived threats to national security.

Under Turkish law, responsibility for law enforcement is divided between the TNP, which comes under the Interior Ministry and is responsible for urban areas, and the Gendarmerie, which is responsible for rural areas. In theory, the Gendarmerie is answerable to the Interior Ministry in peacetime and only comes under military command in time of war. In practice, the Gendarmerie is institutionally more closely affiliated with the Turkish General Staff (TGS) and is always commanded by a serving four-star general on secondment from the Turkish Land Forces.

Along with MIT, both the TNP and the Gendarmerie also gather intelligence against terrorist groups. The intelligence arm of the Gendarmerie is called "Gendarmerie Intelligence and Struggle Against Terrorism" (Jandarma Istihbarat ve Terorle Mucadele, or JITEM). The TNP has a counter-terrorism department, consisting of three branches: One each for "leftist terrorism"; "separatist terrorism," such as the PKK; and "rightist terrorism," which in practice means violent Islamist groups.

In addition, the three branches of the armed forces—i.e. the Turkish Land Forces, Air Force and Navy—each have their own intelligence arms. However, in practice, their counter-terrorism efforts are concentrated mainly against the PKK.

Institutional Rivalries and Capabilities

There is no single body which coordinates counter-terrorism activities in Turkey. Unlike many other countries where the domestic intelligence agency is an integral part of national security planning, MIT is not even permanently represented on Turkey's National Security Council (NSC), which meets once every two months to discuss security issues. In addition to institutional rivalry and turf wars, the coordination of the various intelligence organizations in Turkey is also overshadowed by ideological suspicions and sometimes outright hostility.

The staunchly secularist Turkish military tends to distrust the TNP, which it suspects is riddled with political appointees and Islamist sympathizers, particularly since the election of the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002. Until the early 1990s, the TGS had been more prepared to trust MIT, which was traditionally headed by a retired soldier. However, the two institutions have grown more distant since the appointment of the first civilian head of MIT in 1992. Many in the police strongly resent what they regard as the disdainful arrogance with which they are often viewed by the military and complain that the military even taps police telephones.

Occasionally, the underlying tensions spill over into the public arena. In 2006, the police in Ankara leaked documents to the press apparently implicating a group of young military officers in a plot to destabilize the AKP government by staging a series of bombings. More recently, many in the TGS suspect that AKP sympathizers in the police have been trying to discredit the military by trying to implicate it in what appears to have been an attempt by a small group of ultranationalists to foment a coup (see *Terrorism Focus*, January 29).

It is unclear what practical impact such tensions have had on Turkey's counter-terrorism efforts, although it is unlikely to have been beneficial and the distrust is such that members of each institution routinely accuse the other of withholding information.

Nevertheless, individually, the Turkish intelligence services have often proved highly successful at penetrating and neutralizing an identified threat. However, the degree of success has varied according to the nature of the organization and the extent to which it has been perceived as an imminent threat to Turkish national security.

For example, urban leftist terrorist groups have always been regarded as a priority in Turkey. Primarily based in the cities with a hierarchical command structure, they have proved relatively easy targets both for surveillance and for the recruitment of potential informers. As a result, all are now heavily penetrated and the vast majority of their planned attacks are thwarted before they can be realized.

In contrast, during the early 1990s the Kurdish-Islamist organization known as the Turkish Hezbollah was allowed to operate with impunity in southeastern Turkey because it was initially involved in its own war with the PKK. It was only when the security forces feared that it might begin to target the Turkish state that they moved against it. Similarly, throughout the 1990s, the Turkish intelligence services were aware that thousands of radical Turkish Islamists were traveling abroad to fight in the international jihad. However, as none of them was involved in violence inside Turkey, they were largely ignored. It was only in November 2003, after Turkish militants trained in Afghanistan by al-Qaeda returned to Turkey and staged four suicide bombings in Istanbul, that the Turkish intelligence services began to target Turks who had traveled abroad to fight for Islamist causes or were in contact with foreign military organizations. Yet even today, the focus is on whether or not they are likely to stage attacks inside Turkey. Little attempt has been made, for example, to detain Turkish Islamists planning to cross the border to fight in the insurgency in Iraq.

Tracking Terrorists Inside Turkey

Turkey has relatively few CCTV cameras. In 2005, the police in Istanbul launched what is known as Mobile Electronic Systems Integration (MOBESE), a network of constantly monitored surveillance cameras situated at strategic locations around the city. However, by year-end 2007, the network still comprised only 1,350 cameras and plans to introduce similar systems in other cities—including a 1,000-camera system in Ankara—had been delayed by a shortage of funds (Turkiye Radyo Televizyon, January 22).

Each of Turkey's intelligence organizations is believed to have its own files. Under a system known as Genel Bilgi Toplama (General Information Gathering, or GBT), law enforcement officers have access to a computer database of basic information from TNP and Gendarmerie files, such as the identities of wanted criminals and suspected terrorists. A more detailed database, known as TEM-

NET and including photographs, finger-prints and even statements by terrorist suspects taken in for questioning and then released, began to be introduced in late 2007 (Polis Haber, July 30, 2007).

However, the reliability of much of the intelligence gathered during interrogations of suspected terrorist suspects in Turkey is questionable. Although it still occurs, the once routine physical mistreatment and torture of terrorist suspects during interrogation is now much less common. But it is still not unusual for the resulting statement to owe more to suggestions put forward by the interrogating officer than to the suspect's own words.

International Cooperation against Terrorism

Almost all of the terrorist organizations active in Turkey have attacked foreign targets in the country. Since 2004, the PKK has repeatedly targeted the Turkish tourism industry, killing and injuring foreign tourists. Leftist groups have attacked Western companies and government representatives as well as the Turkish state. In the last five years, there have been more than a dozen plots by Turkish Islamists to stage attacks in Turkey, the majority of which have been prevented. All have been intended to strike not Turkey itself, but what are regarded as foreign interests in the country, whether institutions, businesses and personnel associated with the United States and the UK or Turkey's tiny Jewish community. In addition, foreign Islamists frequently transit Turkey to engage in violence elsewhere. As a result, there would appear to be considerable scope for international cooperation and intelligence-sharing. In practice, this has often proved problematic.

As happens in similar situations in other countries, one of the reasons for this difficulty is simply nationalist pride. In the Turkish case, a reluctance to share sensitive information with foreigners is reinforced by a perception that Europeans and Americans in particular are guilty of double standards; particularly given the apparent unwillingness of some European governments to clamp down on the activities of organizations such as the PKK and leftist Revolutionary People's Liberation Party – Front (DHKP-C) and Washington's refusal—which was only relaxed in November 2007—to allow Turkey to take military action against the PKK's main bases in northern Iraq.

Until Turkey is convinced that the West is genuinely committed to eradicating organizations such as the

PKK, it is probably unrealistic to expect either greater willingness to cooperate and share intelligence or the presentation of legislative amendments which would make it easier for the Turkish authorities to take action against militants not actively involved in terrorist activities inside Turkey.

Gareth Jenkins is a writer and journalist resident in Istanbul, where he has been based for the last 20 years.

Al-Qaeda's Palestinian Inroads

By Fadhil Ali

When al-Qaeda invited journalists and the people at large to direct questions by internet to al-Qaeda's second-in-command, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, one of the most frequent questions was: "Why does al-Qaeda not launch operations in Palestine?" Al-Zawahiri responded with an audio message published on al-Sahab, the media wing of al-Qaeda, threatening Israel and Jewish interests. He endorsed "every operation against Jewish interests" and promised to "strive as much as we can to deal blows to the Jews inside Israel and outside it, with Allah's help and guidance." Al-Zawahiri also advised "the people of Palestine to perform jihad, jihad and jihad." He added, "I expect the jihadi influence to spread after the Americans' exit from Iraq and to move toward Jerusalem" (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, April 4).

The Palestinian issue has been a big challenge for the propaganda of al-Qaeda. Most Muslims around the world look at Israel as a hostile occupier and sympathize with the Palestinians. At any level of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Muslims obviously consider Israel as their enemy, yet al-Qaeda activity within Israel has been strikingly non-existent.

Al-Qaeda Front in Gaza?

In early March Israel ended a week-long offensive in Gaza in an attempt to stop Palestinian militants from firing rockets against the nearby Israeli cities of Ashkelon and Sderot. The Israeli assault killed more than 120 people, including many civilians. Three Israelis were also killed (*al-Jazeera*, March 13; AP, March 24). During the weeks following the operation, al-Qaeda released two audiotapes by bin Laden, one of which addressed the situation in Gaza and the Palestinians (*al-Jazeera*, March 20). Al-Zawahiri also appeared in an audiotape, which

arrived shortly after bin Laden's March 20 release:

Today there is no room for he who says that we should only fight the Jews in Palestine. Let us strike their interests everywhere, just like they gathered against us from everywhere... Let [the Americans] know that they will get blood for every dollar they spend in the killing of the Muslims, and for every bullet they fire at us, a volcano will turn back on them... They cannot expect to support Israel, then live in peace while the Jews are killing our fugitive and besieged people (*al-Sahab*, March 24).

Bin Laden called for the use of "iron and fire to end the siege of Gaza" and accused what he called the "Zionist-Crusader alliance" of implementing the siege on Gaza, which came on the heels of the U.S.-hosted November 2007 Annapolis Conference, intended to revive the peace process in the Middle East. "This killing siege has started after the support of the Arabs of Annapolis to America and the Zionist entity (Israel); by that support they are partners in committing this horrible crime." Bin Laden identified jihad as the only way to support the Palestinian people, but urged Muslims to join "the mujahideen brothers in Iraq" to support the Palestinians rather than going to Palestine to fight:

Iraq is the perfect base to set up the jihad to liberate Palestine... Palestine and its people have been suffering from too much bitterness for almost a century now at the hands of the Christians and the Jews. And both parties didn't take Palestine from us by negotiations and dialogue, but with arms and fire, and this is the only way to take it back (*Al-Jazeera*, March 20).

After Hamas took over Gaza and drove out rival Fatah fighters and security services, the Palestinian president and leader of Fatah, Mahmoud Abbas, accused Hamas of protecting al-Qaeda and allowing it to gain a foothold in Gaza (*Haaretz*, July 10, 2007). Abbas renewed his accusations this year, alleging that al-Qaeda militants had infiltrated the Gaza strip and were receiving assistance from Hamas to establish a base of operations there. He also declared that an alliance had formed between al-Qaeda and Hamas (*al-Hayat*, February 25). Hamas denied the accusations, but interestingly it seems that Hamas used the specter of al-Qaeda in Gaza during their talks with Egypt right before taking over Gaza. Khalid Meshaal, the head of the political bureau of Hamas, told the Egyptians that if Hamas lost its battle

with Fatah over Gaza, “al-Qaeda will be your neighbor.” The delegation told the Egyptians clearly that only Hamas was capable of securing the borders and curbing the cells of al-Qaeda. In retrospect it appears Meshaal wanted to neutralize Egypt before his approaching battle with Fatah in Gaza (Masrawy, June 18, 2007).

New Extremist Groups Emerge in Gaza

The propaganda of jihad has been spreading for years among the youth in Gaza, with stores making big profits selling the recordings of bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the late leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq—killed by a U.S. air strike in June 2006. The Gaza strip borders with Israel and Egypt and is approximately 25 miles long and 6 miles wide. It is populated by only about 1.3 million Palestinians, most of whom live in poverty and suffer from both unemployment and neglect—an ideal environment for extreme ideologies to spread. Gaza has been a stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood-rooted Hamas since its formation in the late 1980s.

After the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Gaza became a land of political confusion and lawlessness. The conflict between Hamas and Fatah elements was escalating and under these circumstances the name of al-Qaeda appeared in Gaza. On May 8, 2006, a group called al-Jaysh al-Quds al-Islami (The Islamic Army of Jerusalem) announced its formation: “With Allah’s help the Islamic Army of al-Quds (Jerusalem), which follows the organization of al-Qaeda in the land of Ribat (i.e., Palestine), has been formed, basing [itself] on the words of Shaykh Osama bin Laden, Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri and Shaykh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.” The group added that it would target every enemy of Islam: “We will explode with our bodies all of their locations and shake the land under their feet” (*Al-Watan*, May 24, 2006).

Later in 2006 another allegedly Palestinian group released a videotape. Calling itself Qaedat al-Jihad Wilayat Palestine (The Base of Jihad – Palestine region), the group started the tape with an excerpt from bin Laden’s well known speech that followed the 9/11 attacks: “To America, I say to it and its people: I swear by God, who has elevated the skies without pillars, neither America nor the people who live in it will dream of security before we live in Palestine” (al-Jazeera, October 7, 2001). The video also included al-Zarqawi saying: “We fight in Iraq with our eyes on Jerusalem which cannot be regained without the sword” (al-Asr, November 2, 2006).

A Gaza group called Suyuf al-Haq (The Swords of Righteousness) proclaimed its existence with attacks on Internet cafes, music stores and women not wearing Islamic dress. Churches and Christian book shops were also targeted. The group did not introduce itself as part of al-Qaeda but seemed to have similar Salafist beliefs. Khalid Abu Hilal, spokesman of the Palestinian Ministry of the Interior, said that he did not believe there was a link between the Palestinian extremists and the international organization of al-Qaeda, but a security source said that some al-Qaeda-affiliated extremists might have succeeded in entering Gaza through the border with Egypt the previous year (al-Naba, June 6, 2006).

On March 12, 2007, BBC reporter Alan Johnston—the only Western journalist based in Gaza—was kidnapped. A group called Jaysh al-Islam (Army of Islam) claimed responsibility and released a video of Johnston. The group demanded the release of Abu Kutada, who is believed to be al-Qaeda’s spiritual leader in Europe and is currently jailed in Britain. After Hamas took power in Gaza, Johnston was turned over to Hamas forces (BBC, October 25, 2007).

The Jaysh al-Islam, which is believed to be headed by Mumtaz Daghmarsh, was also linked to the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Schalit. In an operation launched on June 25, 2006, Jaysh al-Islam joined with two other groups: the Izz al-Din al-Kassam brigades—the military wing of Hamas—and the Salah al-Din brigades, who are closer to Fatah. Three Israeli soldiers were killed in the operation and corporal Schalit captured. The statement of the Army of Islam garnered a lot of attention; it was their first appearance and the operation indicated the organization’s ability to coordinate with other active armed groups or with extremist elements within them, creating new strategic possibilities in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (al-Arabia, July 7, 2006).

Conclusion

As al-Qaeda endures continuing difficulties in Iraq due to the success of the Awakening (*al-Sahwat*) movement in Iraq, it has become crucial for the supreme leaders of al-Qaeda to revive their appeals for support, with the miserable conditions and ongoing conflict in Gaza providing a propaganda opportunity. Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri indicated that the way to Jerusalem passes through Iraq, so despite the new messages, the main front for al-Qaeda is clearly still Iraq. At the same time, Palestine has been and always will be an essential part

of the ideology of al-Qaeda and the situation in Gaza has presented an opportunity for al-Qaeda to examine opening a presence in the Palestinian territories. Muslim extremist groups in Gaza like the Army of Islam might not have a direct link to the international organization of al-Qaeda but it seems that Mumtaz Daghmash and his followers have succeeded in operating outside the control of Fatah and Hamas. The Army of Islam will likely try to launch other operations in the region.

The existence of al-Qaeda in Gaza was used by Fatah and Hamas as part of their internecine conflict, both trying to gain political benefits by raising the issue. There is a danger in the Palestinian leaders using al-Qaeda as a propaganda prop while ignoring the reality of the issue and its possible consequences.

Fadhil Ali is a freelance journalist based in Iraq who specializes in Iraqi insurgent groups.