



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

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## About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

## The Danger of Prison Radicalization in the West

By James Brandon



SINCE SAYYID QUTB wrote *Milestones Along the Road* in an Egyptian prison almost 50 years ago, prisons have become widely recognized as important incubators of jihadist thought.<sup>1</sup> In Muslim-majority countries, a number of prominent jihadists were radicalized, at least in part, in prison, including Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi. Islamist extremists in the Arab world have repeatedly used prisons to recruit new followers, reinforce the commitment of existing extremists and to network and exchange ideas with like-minded individuals.

There is increasing evidence that prisons in the West are now starting to play a similar role—particularly in the United Kingdom, which has seen more “homegrown” terrorist plots (and

consequently more terrorist convictions) than any other Western country. Extremists whose paths toward terrorism began in European or U.S. prisons include numerous high-profile terrorists. In the United Kingdom, they include Richard Reid, the 2001 “shoe-bomber,” and Muktar Ibrahim, the leader of the July 21, 2005 London bomb plot.<sup>2</sup> In France, Saïf Bourada, an Algerian originally convicted in 1998 for his involvement in the 1995 Paris metro bombings, was convicted again in 2008 for planning further terrorist attacks in France.<sup>3</sup>

2 Richard Reid converted to Islam while in prison in the mid-1990s. Upon his release, he began attending a Salafist mosque where he became increasingly interested in radical ideas and involved in extremist circles. Muktar Ibrahim adopted extreme Islamism while in prison for gang-related violence in the mid-1990s. Upon his release, he began attending Abu Hamza's Finsbury Park Mosque where he was further radicalized.

3 Saïf Bourada's re-arrest occurred in 2005 two years after he was released after serving half of his original 10-year sentence. See Pierre-Antoine Souchard, “Nine Convicted in

1 *Milestones Along the Road* is best described as Sayyid Qutb's manifesto for revolutionary Islamism. It is a major source of jihadist literature today.

Among those convicted with him were other former convicts who he had met in prison. In Spain, Mohamed Achraf (also known as Abderrahmane Tahiri), who was convicted in 2007 of being a member of a terrorist organization, recruited others while imprisoned for credit card fraud in Salamanca prison. Additionally, key leaders in the 2004 Madrid bombing network had themselves been radicalized in Moroccan prisons.<sup>4</sup> In the United States, where domestic radicalization has generally lagged behind Europe, there is now growing evidence of prison radicalization. In 2009, for instance, Kevin James, who founded the Jami'at al-Islam al-Sahih terrorist group while in a California prison, was convicted after admitting planning attacks on Jewish and Israeli targets in Los Angeles.<sup>5</sup>

While few of these individuals adopted extreme Islamist beliefs solely as the result of their time in prison, their prison experiences significantly accelerated their radicalization through isolating them from mainstream society while also exposing them to ideologies to which they ultimately proved highly vulnerable. It is important, therefore, to understand how radicalization in prison occurs. This article is largely based on accounts, letters and testimonies smuggled out of British prisons by suspected and convicted extremists, supported by official government reports and surveys.<sup>6</sup>

#### Proactive Recruitment

New convicts, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, typically arrive in prison feeling insecure, uncertain and afraid. In the United Kingdom, some imprisoned Islamists have adopted a proactive strategy to capitalize on this uncertainty by offering food, friendship and spiritual support to new arrivals in prison. For instance, one former prisoner in London's Belmarsh prison, the United Kingdom's main prison for convicted and suspected terrorists, has

written that the day he arrived in prison he was approached by some terrorist detainees:

some brothers approached me and said that they had been expecting me. At first I was a bit apprehensive as to whether I should trust them or not...But afterwards I felt comfortable. One of the brothers, *masha'Allah*, he packed some fruit and a chocolate in a bag and handed it to me before I went back to my cell.<sup>7</sup>

In the same prison, Omar Khyam, convicted of planning terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom, described how Rachid Ramda, a French Muslim who was imprisoned while fighting extradition to France (where he was later convicted of organizing the 1995 Paris metro bombings), proactively approached and befriended other inmates:

The first thing that struck me most about Rachid was the way he greeted me and the new Muslim arrivals, three hugs and a huge smile. He made me feel as if I had known him for years, such a warm personality and character, making everyone feel wanted and important, as if you are his best friend.<sup>8</sup>

Prison radicalization is more likely to begin through such personal relationships rather than through a ranting, wild-eyed extremist "brainwashing" an unwilling audience. As stated by a Muslim inmate in California's Folsom prison who is head of the jail's Islamic Studies Program, a rehabilitation program based on mainstream Sunni Islam: "The potential for radicalization must be understood on a one-to-one basis."<sup>9</sup> In many cases, however, prisons are highly reluctant to separate extremists from ordinary prisoners—even though all evidence from the Middle East suggests that this is an essential first step toward containing radicalization. In France, for instance, official secularism prevents

such religious-based segregation. British reluctance, meanwhile, stems from the United Kingdom's disastrous experience with interning Irish Republican Army (IRA) members in the 1970s (detained IRA men swiftly turned a number of prisons into centers of radicalization and propaganda).

Such humble beginnings can provide a potent platform for Islamists to exert increasing influence over other prisoners. Amar Makhoulif, an Algerian also known as "Abu Doha" who is wanted in the United States for plotting to bomb Los Angeles International

**"Prisons are places where disaffected, often violent individuals are concentrated to be punished by the state. Such individuals are naturally receptive to an ideology that glorifies anti-social and anti-state violence and that appears to offer clear, albeit intolerant, solutions to complex problems of identity and belonging."**

Airport (who presently lives in London having defeated attempts to extradite him), has also written of how Ramda offered him advice while detained in Belmarsh: "When I need courage or I feel sad and everything in my life seems as though it has been turned upside down, I think of Rachid and reflect upon his advice. Rachid is a symbol of love, a brother in time of need."<sup>10</sup> It is easy to see how such advice and moral support from extremists can easily turn into a deeper relationship—particularly when charismatic, articulate extremists come into contact with ordinary Muslim prisoners or new converts who have a limited knowledge of Islam and who are often poorly educated.

Paris Terror Trial," Associated Press, October 24, 2008.

4 "Joyas robadas en España financiaron asesinatos de Al Qaeda en Argelia," *El Pais*, July 19, 2009.

5 U.S. Department of Justice, press release, March 9, 2009.

6 Material on British prisons in this article comes from the author's recent report: James Brandon, *Unlocking Al-Qaida: Islamist Extremism in British Prisons* (London: Quilliam Foundation, 2009).

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Mark S. Hamm, *Terrorist Recruitment in American Correctional Institutions* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 2007).

10 Brandon.

### Quest for Leadership

Islamists, including convicted terrorists, frequently seek to become leaders of Muslims in prison—just as they do in wider society. In the United Kingdom, convicted terrorists such as Abu Hamza al-Masri<sup>11</sup> and Abdullah el-Faisal<sup>12</sup> both overtly sought to become representatives of Muslim prisoners. To accomplish this, they led demonstrations and hunger strikes against prison food or against perceived mistreatment by prison staff. El-Faisal later said that “if you’re a cleric you have to set an example for other Muslim prisoners to follow, you’re not supposed to crack up under pressure.”<sup>13</sup> Similar strategies have been followed in U.S. prisons, notably by the Jami’at al-Islam al-Sahih group, which organized “collective resistance” against prison authorities in Folsom prison.

In other instances, extremist influence is more subtle. In the United States, John Walker Lindh, the “American Taliban” captured in Afghanistan in 2001, impressed other prisoners by living an ostensibly pious and “humble” life in prison, having reportedly “made a study of proper Islamic etiquette.”<sup>14</sup> Exuding confidence, serenity and certainty often plays an important role in impressing other, less religiously observant Muslim prisoners. Extremists, however, also frequently benefit from aggressive macho prison cultures that typically respect violence and moral strength; this gives them an advantage over other Muslims, whether staff or other prisoners, who seek to preach more moderate, tolerant messages.

Where Islamists fail to become the leaders of other Muslim prisoners, either through defending their “rights” or through setting a moral example, there is another option: violence. Perhaps the most notable use of violence by extremist prisoners happened in Jordan where in the 1990s Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, the prominent jihadist ideologue, worked with his protégé, Abu

Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, to run a campaign of intimidation and violence within Suwaya prison. Their control over inmates and guards at the prison progressively enabled them to recruit petty criminals and transform them into jihadists.<sup>15</sup>

Similar violence also occurs in prisons in the West, although at a lower level and most often directed against white non-Muslim gangs and individuals. For instance, in the United Kingdom, a number of convicted terrorists held in Frankland prison during 2007-2008 led other Muslim convicts in a tit-for-tat battle against white gangs and individuals, leading to a number of serious attacks involving boiling oil being thrown over rival prisoners,

**“Imprisoned extremists are often highly motivated by charismatic individuals who regard radicalizing others as a religious duty and as a means to fight back against the West, in effect to continue their jihad from within prison.”**

stabbing and a riot during which Muslim inmates sought to damage and destroy prison facilities.<sup>16</sup> In other instances, more generic “Muslim” gangs based on a loose sense of ethno-religious solidarity (rather than specifically Islamist ones led by convicted terrorists) have been involved in serious violence—often in response to perceived mistreatment by prison staff.

In November 2009 in Belgium, for example, Muslim gangs in Andenne prison responded to perceived insults against Islam by rioting—while violence between Muslims and non-Muslims has also been reported in Italian prisons.<sup>17</sup>

In Australia, prison authorities even had to break-up and disperse a violent Islamist gang that had developed around a convicted murderer in the country’s highest security prison.<sup>18</sup> Such problems are arguably more severe in France, where an estimated 70% of prisoners are Muslim, and where a lack of Muslim chaplains in French prisons means that extremists are often not effectively challenged.<sup>19</sup> A confidential report by the French prison service warned in 2008 that more than 400 Islamist prisoners were displaying “worrying behavior,” which included enforcing prayers on other Muslims or displaying pictures of Usama bin Ladin in their cells.<sup>20</sup>

### Extremist Preaching

Once Islamists have established their authority over other Muslim prisoners, they begin to spread their ideology. This most frequently occurs through small-scale prayer circles that might involve a combination of traditional teaching (such as memorizing the Qur’an) and ideological radicalization. Extremists typically place a high priority on such preaching; they see it not only as a religious duty, but also as a way to spite non-Muslim prison authorities. Abu Hamza al-Masri, for example, has reportedly given sermons between his cell and others’ in the United Kingdom’s Belmarsh prison using the pipes that connect separate prison cells. Similarly, in 2007 Islamist radicals in Spain were later found to have sent letters between different prisons, including ones discussing martyrdom, Islamic theology and the importance of violent jihad.<sup>21</sup>

In some British prisons, jihadists report near-continuous discussions with other prisoners. Prominent jihadist ideologue Abu Qatada, for instance, has written that

we remained with the brothers in [Belmarsh] prison for three years and regretfully, I did not complete

tober 4, 2005.

18 Michael Perry, “Australia Breaks up Muslim Prison Gang,” Reuters, April 23, 2007.

19 Molly Moore, “In France, Prisons Filled With Muslims,” *Washington Post*, April 29, 2008.

20 “400 islamistes font du prosélytisme en prison,” *Le Figaro*, September 23, 2008.

21 Sebastian Rotella, “From Behind Bars, Waging a Verbal Jihad,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 24, 2007.

11 Abu Hamza al-Masri is an Egyptian Islamist activist known for his preaching against non-Muslims. He remains incarcerated in the United Kingdom.

12 Abdullah el-Faisal is a Jamaican Muslim preacher who was imprisoned in the United Kingdom in 2003 for urging his audience to violence. In 2007, he was deported back to Jamaica.

13 Brandon.

14 Tom Junod, “Innocent,” *Esquire*, July 1, 2006.

15 Nibras Kazimi, “A Virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi Upstages Maqdisi,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 2 (2005).

16 “Terrorists Moved to New Jail After Death Threats,” *Daily Telegraph*, March 20, 2008.

17 “Dégâts matériels limités à la prison d’Andenne,” *7-Sur-7*, November 18, 2009; Tracy Wilkinson, “In an Italian Prison, The Call to Islam,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oc-

very much [writing] in it, because the prison was communal with the [Muslim] brothers and discussions with them were deep.<sup>22</sup>

Babar Ahmed, detained in the United Kingdom while appealing extradition to the United States on charges of running pro-jihadist websites, has meanwhile described prison as a “university of Islamic knowledge” after mixing with convicted extremists such as Abu Qatada.<sup>23</sup> Radicalization is sometimes facilitated by mistakes from prison authorities. For example, Ahmed has written of reading Sayyid Qutb’s *Milestones* while in prison, a book that is manifestly unsuitable for terrorist suspects. In the United States, meanwhile, it has been alleged that books by Abu al-A’la Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb are commonly found in prison libraries, along with more violent Saudi translations of the Qur’an.<sup>24</sup> In 2007, the United States recognized this problem and took steps to address it through the controversial Standardized Chapel Library Project, although few other Western countries have so far followed suit.<sup>25</sup> Books promoting either jihadist or hard-line Salafist/Wahhabist ideologies clearly help to buttress any radical ideologies propagated in prison by extremist inmates.

#### Outlook

Prison radicalization does not mean that terrorist plots are being routinely hatched in prison (although this has occasionally happened). More often, however, it leads to inmates adopting Islamist ideologies that may ultimately lead to terrorism after their release. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution to prison radicalization. Prisons are places where disaffected, often violent individuals are concentrated to be punished by the state. Such individuals are naturally receptive to an ideology that glorifies anti-social and anti-state violence and that appears to offer clear,

albeit intolerant, solutions to complex problems of identity and belonging. In a Western context, extremist recruitment is also made easier because many Muslim prisoners (and, indeed, non-Muslims who convert) have little or no knowledge of Islam and can easily be persuaded that adopting rigid Islamist beliefs will help them turn away from

**“Extremist recruitment is also made easier because many Muslim prisoners have little or no knowledge of Islam and can easily be persuaded that adopting rigid Islamist beliefs will help them turn away from crime, drugs and alcohol to make a ‘new start.’”**

crime, drugs and alcohol to make a “new start.” In addition, imprisoned extremists are often highly motivated by charismatic individuals who regard radicalizing others as a religious duty and as a means to fight back against the West, in effect to continue their jihad from within prison. At the same time, however, this problem should be kept in perspective; many of those who adopt radical ideologies in prison, whether out of conviction or for more pragmatic reasons, often discard their extremist beliefs on their return to mainstream society.

There is little evidence that Western governments are taking the decisive steps needed to combat prison radicalization domestically—even though some attempts have been made by Western forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, while resource-poor countries in the Middle East and elsewhere have created sophisticated deradicalization programs, in order to first isolate and then “de-program” imprisoned extremists, such centers have no parallels in the West. Indeed,

in some cases attempted government interventions in the West have arguably made problems worse. In 2005, for example, the UK Prison Service created a special segregation unit in Britain’s Long Lartin prison in which it placed Abu Qatada, the jihadist ideologue, Khalid al-Fawwaz, Bin Ladin’s representative in the West in the mid-1990s, Adel Abdel Bary, a senior Egyptian Islamic Jihad member, and assorted Libyan and Algerian terrorist suspects. This policy, an attempt to isolate extremists from the mainstream prison population, instead created a probably unparalleled concentration of senior jihadists from different organizations. Abu Qatada, for one, seized the opportunity by seeking to construct a hybrid super-jihadist ideology, writing the book *Limatha Intasarna* (Why We Were Victorious) to analyze the successes and failures of various jihadist organizations. The book, which has the potential to reinvigorate jihadist movements worldwide, appears to have been smuggled out of prison and is now possibly being prepared for publication. Such are the complexities of prison radicalization: solving one problem often only creates a new one.

Such incidents also make it increasingly clear why Western governments, which presently either shy away from admitting the extent of prison radicalization or which hope to tackle it through minor interventions such as appointing more Muslim chaplains, instead need to develop comprehensive and durable programs for deradicalizing extremist inmates. As Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt and Libya have learned during the last 40 years, prison radicalization cannot be adequately dealt with through ordinary prison management techniques. A new, tailor-made approach is needed. Failure to take such steps not only risks allowing prisons to become hubs of radicalization, but also squanders the priceless opportunity to deradicalize leading extremists so that they can be used to deconstruct jihadist ideology.

*James Brandon is a senior research fellow at the Quilliam Foundation, a British counterextremism think-tank. His latest report, Unlocking Al-Qaeda: Islamist Extremism in British Prisons, was published by Quilliam in November 2009.*

22 Brandon.

23 Babar Ahmed, “Three Years in Captivity,” [www.cage-prisoners.com](http://www.cage-prisoners.com), August 17, 2007.

24 Steven Emerson, “Radicals in Our Prisons,” *New York Post*, May 24, 2009; Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, “Prison Jihad - How Radical Islamic Charities Exploit Their Access to the Prison System,” *Weekly Standard*, December 10, 2006.

25 Laurie Goodstein, “Critics Right and Left Protest Book Removals,” *New York Times*, September 21, 2007.

26 In Iraq, for example, General Douglas M. Stone created a deradicalization program based on the Saudi and Singaporean models. See “Detainee Chief Sees Koran as Key Ally,” *Financial Times*, July 16, 2007.

## LIFG Revisions Posing Critical Challenge to Al-Qa`ida

By Paul Cruickshank

IN SEPTEMBER 2009, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), a militant Libyan jihadist group whose leaders have deep personal ties to al-Qa`ida's top figures, published a 417-page revisions document. The treatise publicly repudiated al-Qa`ida's ideology, ended the LIFG's campaign to overthrow Libya's leader Mu`ammar Qadhafi from power, and offered a fundamental rethink of the group's own attitude toward violence. The document was the culmination of nearly three years of peace talks between the imprisoned leadership of the LIFG and the Libyan government.<sup>1</sup>

Some observers have dismissed the revisions as relatively insignificant.<sup>2</sup> This article, however, argues that the Libyan document is the most significant critique of al-Qa`ida that has yet emerged from jihadist circles, and adds considerable weight to a growing "jihadist revolt" that threatens the very sustainability of al-Qa`ida's global terrorist campaign.<sup>3</sup> The article identifies eight reasons why the LIFG revisions should have a positive impact

in weakening al-Qa`ida and like-minded groups.

### A Receptive Audience?

Some analysts have argued that the LIFG revisions will have little effect on the overall jihadist movement. Alison Pargeter, for example, has expressed doubt about the effectiveness of the revisions, arguing that "the new generation of militants seems to be characterized by their low education levels, nihilism and desperation" and are likely to either fail to take notice of the document or dismiss it as the work of long-defeated "older leaders" coerced into revising their ideology in prison.<sup>4</sup> The LIFG revisions will be limited in its impact on al-Qa`ida and al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), she argued, because the LIFG has kept its distance from these groups and long opposed their ideology of global jihad. Although the LIFG revisions add to a growing body of former militants criticizing al-Qa`ida, Pargeter believes that such revisions "are being undertaken by failed movements and older leaders who in the eyes of the young are no longer relevant to the cause."<sup>5</sup>

Yet although the Libyan revisions will doubtlessly be rejected by al-Qa`ida's most die-hard supporters, not all potential recruits are so hard-line that they are completely immune from the growing critique of al-Qa`ida coming from longstanding jihadist groups and historical leaders of the jihadist movement.<sup>6</sup> The LIFG revisions may not have been read by all militants, but they received large media coverage in the Middle East and have already been the subject of much debate on jihadist websites.<sup>7</sup> Although the revisions have been criticized by some on these forums, the fact that they are being debated at all is significant in itself. "Sure, some say that this message is coming from old-

timers who are not fighting any more," explained Noman Benotman, a former commander in the LIFG and a key intermediary in the Libyan peace talks. "Sure they use emotional blackmail and say we are dying for you and you say this? But what I'm trying to do is to start to make the young think."<sup>8</sup>

Benotman's point is important because potential candidates for al-Qa`ida suicide bombings are less likely to volunteer if they have doubts about the religious legitimacy of their actions and the likely rewards that await them. "Jihad has ethics and morals because it is for God," the revisions state. "That means it is forbidden to kill women, children, elderly people, priests, messengers, traders and the like."<sup>9</sup>

The Libyan revisions are all the more significant because they provide theological cover for mainstream Muslim voices to also criticize al-Qa`ida. That can only strengthen a global backlash against the terrorist network in Muslim communities worldwide. While an extremist fringe may survive in the short-term, or even relish their separateness and draw sustenance from the echo chamber provided by pro-al-Qa`ida websites on the internet, the experience of Algeria in the 1990s and Iraq in the 2000s, in which militant ranks shrunk after the general public turned against them, suggests extremists do not operate in a vacuum.<sup>10</sup>

While al-Qa`ida's leaders in the tribal areas of Pakistan are genuinely removed from societal influences, the same cannot be said of extremists living in the sprawling urbanized landscape of the Middle East and North Africa where satellite dishes are ubiquitous. While

1 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "New Jihad Code Threatens Al Qaeda," CNN, November 10, 2009. The peace talks were held between members of the security services and six members of the LIFG's *shura* council: `Abdullah Sadiq (the *amir*), Abu al-Mundhir al-Sa`idi (the religious guide), Abu Hazim (the deputy leader), Abu al-Zubayr (the military commander), `Abd al-Wahhab Qa`id (a founder of the group whose brother Abu Yahya al-Libi is a senior figure within al-Qa`ida), and Abdul Ghaffar (the group's first *amir*). The meetings were also attended by Noman Benotman (a former commander in the LIFG) and Ali al-Sallabi (a prominent Libyan Islamic thinker living in Qatar) who Saif Qadhafi asked to be intermediaries in the talks.

2 Alison Pargeter, a senior research associate at Cambridge University, wrote in the October 2009 *CTC Sentinel* that "despite predictions in some quarters that this ideological shift will have major repercussions in jihadist circles and beyond...they are unlikely to have much effect at all and may only spark relatively insignificant debate." See Alison Pargeter, "LIFG Revisions Unlikely to Reduce Jihadist Violence," *CTC Sentinel* 2:10 (2009).

3 Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "Unraveling: The Jihadist Revolt Against Bin Laden," *The New Republic*, June 11, 2008.

4 Pargeter.

5 Ibid.

6 Al-Qa`ida's barbaric violence in Iraq persuaded many of these groups to publicly criticize the organization. See Bergen and Cruickshank, "Unraveling: The Jihadist Revolt against Bin Laden." Several senior members of the LIFG in Abu Salim prison and former members living in the West told the author that al-Qa`ida's violent excesses in Iraq were a key factor in the decision to review their ideology.

7 Personal interview, Noman Benotman, November 2009.

8 Ibid.

9 "Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Accountability, and the Judgment of the People," LIFG recantations document, September 2009, p. 203.

10 Public support for Islamist insurgents in Algeria dried up after the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the most violent militant group, began targeting Algerian civilians in attacks. Not only did this help the government isolate the group, but it also greatly affected the GIA's recruitment efforts leading to its near total defeat. In Iraq, AQI's oppression of the local population provoked a backlash against it in the Sunni community that spread from Anbar Province to the whole country, greatly reducing the number of Iraqis joining AQI's ranks.

the Iraq war arguably contributed to a surge in hardcore extremism in recent years, it is no longer generating anything like the same degree of anger.<sup>11</sup>

#### A Credible Challenge to Al-Qa`ida

There are eight reasons to be optimistic about the impact of the LIFG revisions. The first is the fact that they are being made by a jihadist group of high prominence and historical importance. "Our group is a reference point for many Islamic groups; so its book will be of significance to many Islamic groups," Tarek Durman, a mid-level commander in the LIFG arrested in Jordan in 2000, told CNN.<sup>12</sup> The threat the LIFG posed to the Libyan state in the mid-1990s was much greater than has thus far been reported, a function of the LIFG training more than 1,000 fighters in Afghanistan that decade to fight in Libya.<sup>13</sup> "[The LIFG were] very aggressive, extremely dangerous and to be honest with you during the nineties it was like a civil war here in Libya, it was a hidden one, but in fact it was a civil war," Saif Qadhafi told CNN.<sup>14</sup> While the LIFG capabilities were significantly degraded inside Libya in the late 1990s, the LIFG until recently maintained an extensive international network.<sup>15</sup> At the time of 9/11, the LIFG's international network was even the envy of al-Qa`ida; the LIFG had repeatedly resisted al-Qa`ida's requests to take advantage of its network of country stations and distributive media capabilities.<sup>16</sup>

Second, the top leaders of the LIFG, despite being imprisoned in the international dragnet that followed 9/11, remain figures of continued consequence in the jihadist movement with the credibility to make their criticisms of al-Qa`ida effective.<sup>17</sup> Many LIFG leaders fought alongside al-Qa`ida fighters in the 1980s and 1990s in Afghanistan. In the early 1990s, LIFG leaders were closely aligned ideologically to al-Qa`ida's hard-line Egyptian faction in their desire to bring jihad back to Muslim lands.<sup>18</sup> In Taliban-run Afghanistan in the late 1990s, Abu al-Mundhir al-Sa`idi, the group's religious leader and one of the authors of the revisions, was in every respect an equal and a peer to Usama bin Ladin in jihadist circles. Indeed, Mullah Omar bestowed on al-Sa`idi the title "Shaykh al-Arab" (the leader of the Arabs).<sup>19</sup>

Third, despite the fact that the LIFG never joined al-Qa`ida nor shared its ideology of global jihad, the close personal ties between its leaders meant that al-Qa`ida still considered the LIFG's leaders brothers in arms. To his likely regret, Ayman al-Zawahiri in the years after 9/11 regularly praised al-Sa`idi in online statements. The most recent warm words came in an August 2009 video in what may have been an attempt by al-Zawahiri to head-off publication of the revisions, a statement that may now complicate his ability to respond to the revisions.<sup>20</sup> While al-Sa`idi and Benotman voiced private

disagreement with al-Qa`ida's decision to start attacking the United States at a meeting of jihadists in Kandahar in 2000, the revisions represent the first time the group's *shura* council has publicly broken with Bin Ladin's terrorist network.<sup>21</sup>

Fourth, the top leadership of the LIFG deliberately framed their critique of al-Qa`ida's ideology from a jihadist perspective, a move that will make its

**"The LIFG revisions represent arguably the most fundamental rethink ever by a jihadist group and are far more explicit in condemning violence than the revisions issued by al-Qa`ida's former Egyptian religious guide, Sayyid Imam al-Sharif."**

message resonate more with its target audience. "The starting point is that jihad is legitimate otherwise nobody will listen to you," said Benotman. "It was based on Islamic values and concepts and vocabularies and rules. That means it's very hard for the other party to argue with the pages."<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, while the LIFG revisions sharply repudiated al-Qa`ida's campaign of violence, it ruled that armed resistance to foreign occupation was "allowed in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine." The LIFG leaders also deliberately decided not to mention al-Qa`ida by name in the document, judging that this might be counterproductive with their target audience of radical-leaning young Muslims.<sup>23</sup>

Fifth, although the fact that the revisions were issued from prison has caused some to speculate that coercion was

11 Personal interviews, Muslim community leaders, former jihadists and counterterrorism officials, 2009.

12 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, CNN interview with Tarek Durman, Abu Salim prison, Tripoli, Libya, September 2009.

13 Personal interview, Noman Benotman, September 2008.

14 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "Militant Deal Opens Door to New Libya," CNN, November 27, 2009.

15 At its peak in the mid-1990s, the LIFG maintained 17 country stations around the world including four in Europe and one in Canada that served as its North American base, according to Noman Benotman, a former commander of the LIFG. Benotman said that when the LIFG entered peace talks in 2007 it still had a significant number of operatives at large in Libya, the Middle East and the West that would have been able to reactivate operations if ordered to do so by the group. Personal interview, Noman Benotman, December 2009.

16 Personal interview, Noman Benotman, September 2009.

17 Abu al-Mundhir al-Sa`idi, the group's religious leader, was arrested in Thailand in 2004. `Abdullah Sadiq, the group's leader, was arrested the same year in Hong Kong. After being held by the Central Intelligence Agency for an unclear amount of time, they were transferred to Libya. Personal interview, former member of the LIFG, August 2009.

18 A *fatwa* issued by Abu al-Mundhir al-Sa`idi in the early 1990s made clear the influence of hard-line Egyptian ideologue Sayyid Qutb on the group: "The current regime in Libya is an ignorant and unbelieving one. It is incumbent upon every Muslim in Libya to participate in toppling and fighting it with all they can, be it actual fighting or offering assistance to the fighters. Those who will not join in fulfilling this Godly obligation without an excuse other than illness, blindness, lameness or such like, is committing a capital sin and as such is a infidel."

19 Personal interview, former member of the LIFG, London, August 2008.

20 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "The Facts of Jihad and the Lies of Hypocrisy," al-Sahab, August 3, 2009.

21 Personal interviews, Noman Benotman, London, November 2007 and August 2009.

22 Personal interview, Noman Benotman, London, 2008; Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, CNN interview with Noman Benotman, London, 2009.

23 Personal interview, Noman Benotman, London, September 2009.

involved, current and former members of the group, including individuals living freely in the West, have insisted in interviews that the revisions are genuine.<sup>24</sup>

Sixth, the revisions have received backing from some of the Muslim world's most prominent religious scholars, several of whom have significant legitimacy in jihadist circles. They include the Saudi cleric Salman al-Awda, who endorsed them on his popular website in the late summer, and the Egyptian cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who endorsed the revisions and the Libyan government's initiative in a Friday sermon screened on Qatari television in October.<sup>25</sup> According to Durman, "these scholars will have impact because of their geographic diversity and their weight in the Islamic arena where their words are listened to."<sup>26</sup> The LIFG leaders deliberately sought such endorsements because they realized that it would provide cover from critics pointing out that the revisions were authored from prison.<sup>27</sup>

Seventh, the LIFG revisions represent arguably the most fundamental rethink ever by a jihadist group and are far more explicit in condemning violence than the revisions issued by al-Qa`ida's former Egyptian religious guide, Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, the spiritual leader of

Egyptian Islamic Jihad, from a Cairo prison two years ago. "It's an extremely radical change you know," Benotman told CNN. "You can't say it's just normal because violence it was like the heart of the group."<sup>28</sup> According to Durman, "We found no evidence in Qur'anic verses or the Prophet's sayings that our way was right—that it was right to carry arms and defy current laws."<sup>29</sup>

Eighth, several top leaders of the LIFG have agreed to continue to preach out against al-Qa`ida after they are released from prison. For example, al-Sa`idi, the group's religious guide, plans to establish a center dedicated to combating extremism after his release.<sup>30</sup> Once the leaders are freed from prison it will be more difficult for radicals to argue that they are being coerced into repudiating al-Qa`ida. Al-Qa`ida will not welcome preachers such as al-Sa`idi taking to the airwaves. Still only in his early 40s, al-Sa`idi will likely find ways to connect with younger generations. Durman explained, "We will play our part in developing our country and, *insh'Allah*, be a force for good and a force against evil."<sup>31</sup>

#### Impact

It is still too early to measure the impact of the Libyan revisions. Any true test will take account not just of whether they reduce attack rates, but what attack rates in the region would likely have been if the LIFG had not embarked on a peace process. The fact that its leadership started talks in January 2007 at the height of the Iraq insurgency was significant. "Just imagine what would have gone down in Libya if the LIFG group had recruited and organized youngsters in the wake of the Iraq war," said Benotman.<sup>32</sup> While much of the

group's leadership was in prison at the time, the anger caused by the Iraq war would have provided the group a great opportunity to launch a recruiting drive inside the country.<sup>33</sup>

The LIFG revisions may already be making an impact on terrorism in North Africa. Counterterrorism officials believe that AQIM has been weakened in recent months because of intensified operations by Algerian security services.<sup>34</sup> According to Benotman, however, the weakening of the group may also be linked to a high-profile initiative taken by the Algerian government to distribute hundreds of copies of the LIFG revisions to radical hotspots.<sup>35</sup>

The fact that scores of Libyans have volunteered to fight with AQIM in recent years means that it is in Algeria that the revisions may have their greatest impact. While tensions with their Algerian counterparts in the 1990s mean that the LIFG has few ties or influence over AQIM, the repudiation of AQIM tactics by a group enjoying significant prestige inside Libya will likely reduce the flow of Libyan recruits to its ranks. Moreover, Benotman claims to have dashed al-Zawahiri's hopes to recruit new Libyan militants and to have checked al-Qa`ida's momentum in the region.<sup>36</sup>

The revisions appear to have influenced jihadist prisoners in Morocco and Mauritania as well. After the Libyan document was circulated in Moroccan prisons, Mohamed Abdel Wahhab Rafiki (also known as Abu Hafs), the leader of a Moroccan Salafi-jihadi faction, endorsed the revisions and called on

24 For example, Hani al-Siba'i, a hard-line Egyptian militant living in London in July 2009, accused the revisions of being processed in "the kitchens of tyrants." The author, however, spoke to at least a dozen LIFG members in Abu Salim prison in Tripoli in September 2009 about the revisions. One told him that while the fact they were in prison obviously affected what they could say, their commitment to the revisions was entirely genuine. Two London-based individuals—Noman Benotman, a former commander in the LIFG who acted as intermediary in the peace talks, and Abdul Ghani al-Amari, a mid-level LIFG member—also insisted the revisions were genuine in interviews the same month.

25 Other prominent scholars who endorsed the revisions were Muhammad Hasan Ould Dado of Mauritania, Ahmed Raysouni of Morocco and a half dozen leading Libyan clerics. For more, see "Salman al-Oudah Statement on Revisions," IslamToday.com, August 2009; Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Friday Khutbah, al-Jazira Mubasher, Qatar, October 16, 2009.

26 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, CNN interview with Tarek Durman, Abu Salim prison, Tripoli, Libya, September 2009.

27 Personal Interview, Noman Benotman, London, August 2009.

28 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, CNN interview with Noman Benotman, London, 2009.

29 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, CNN interview with Tarek Durman, Abu Salim prison, Tripoli, Libya, September 2009.

30 According to Saif Qadhafi, Abu al-Mundhir al-Sa`idi said he wants to preach to young Muslims so that they can learn from his mistakes. See Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, CNN interview with Saif Qadhafi, Tripoli, Libya, September 2009.

31 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, CNN interview with Tarek Durman, Abu Salim prison, Tripoli, Libya, September 2009.

32 Personal interview, Noman Benotman, London, 2008.

33 The Iraq war had by 2007 contributed to a surge in radicalization inside Libya. Al-Qa`ida in Iraq's recruitment files, discovered by the U.S. military in a raid in Sinjar near the Syrian border, suggested that between August 2006 and August 2007 per capita Libyans made up the largest number of foreign-born suicide bombers in Iraq. For details, see Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, *Al-Qaida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008).

34 "Al Qaeda Africa Wing Less a Threat to Europe, US," Reuters, November 18, 2009.

35 Personal interview, Noman Benotman, December 2009.

36 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, CNN interview with Noman Benotman, London, 2009.

the Moroccan government to initiate a similar process.<sup>37</sup> In Mauritania, 23 imprisoned Islamist militants issued a statement in late November rejecting violence against the state.<sup>38</sup> The breakthroughs could further isolate al-Qa`ida in North Africa.

The LIFG peace process may also have had implications in the West. Despite early opposition to the talks, the approximately 30 LIFG members living in the United Kingdom threw their weight behind the *shura* council in July. Their number included several senior members of the group and 12 individuals once subject to UK government "control orders" because of their threat to national security. As a result of the Libyan peace process, all but one of the "control orders" were dropped.<sup>39</sup> The support for the peace process by UK-based leaders signals that al-Qa`ida has lost the battle to win the hearts and minds of LIFG members worldwide.<sup>40</sup>

37 "Jihadist Salafi Prisoners Value Reviews of Libyan Islamic Group," statement by Mohamed Abdel Wahhab Rafiki, September 30, 2009; Personal interview, Noman Benotman, December 2009. Not all Moroccan jihadist prisoners have endorsed the revisions. On October 20, 2009, the London-based Egyptian militant Hani al-Siba'i posted a statement claiming that another Moroccan prison faction opposed the revisions.

38 The Mauritanian prisoners appear to have been influenced by the Mauritanian cleric Muhammad Hasan Ould Dado, a key supporter of the LIFG revisions. See "Imprisoned Mauritanian Salafis Reject Anti-State Violence," Middle East Media Research Institute, November 26, 2009.

39 Control orders are a British administrative measure placing severe restrictions on the movement and communications of individuals judged to pose a potential threat to national security. Around a dozen individuals continue to be subject to them. Seven UK-based members of the LIFG had their control orders dropped after peace talks were initiated in Tripoli and four had orders dropped against them after the revisions were published. British security services distributed copies of the revisions to these latter individuals because of their lack of access to the internet. Personal interview, Libyan source, November 2009; Duncan Gardham, "Terrorism Suspects Released from House Arrests after Peace Deal," *Daily Telegraph*, November 13, 2009.

40 On November 3, 2007, al-Qa`ida released a videotape in which Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Laith al-Libi, a senior figure in the LIFG, announced that the LIFG had formally joined forces with al-Qa`ida, a clear play for the hearts and minds of the group's rank-and-file members.

Al-Qa`ida has thus far not officially commented on the LIFG revisions. According to Benotman, al-Zawahiri is maintaining a strategic silence because he does not want to draw more attention to the document since he fears the consequences.<sup>41</sup> For al-Qa`ida, the revisions are even more problematic because several of its top leaders operating out of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region are former members of the LIFG. For Abu Yahya al-Libi, currently al-Qa`ida's chief propagandist, the rebuke from the LIFG was personal because his brother, `Abd al-Wahhab Qa'id, is one of the authors. Mid-level LIFG commander Tarek Durman said that he expects Abu Yahya to "not react to this event," something which may weaken al-Qa`ida's ability to counter the LIFG's arguments.<sup>42</sup>

Benotman predicts that al-Qa`ida will be finished as a force in the Middle East and North Africa within the next half decade, in no small part because an increasingly critical mass of jihadists agrees with the initiative taken by the LIFG: "We are starting to see statements from the Islamic fighting groups themselves. They are supporting the idea. A couple years ago they were completely against that...Now I hope we will start to see a new era."<sup>43</sup> The Libyan revisions, said Benotman, will "challenge terrorists for a generation."<sup>44</sup>

*Paul Cruickshank is a Fellow at the NYU Center on Law & Security and the Producer of "The Jihadi Code," a recently aired CNN documentary on the Libyan revisions. During the last two years, Mr. Cruickshank and CNN Senior International Correspondent Nic Robertson gained exclusive access to the main players in the peace process and this past summer filmed interviews with leading figures of the LIFG inside Abu Salim prison in Tripoli.*

41 Personal interview, Noman Benotman, Washington, D.C., October 2009.

42 Personal interview, Tarek Durman, Abu Salim prison, Tripoli, Libya, September 2009.

43 Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, CNN interview with Noman Benotman, 2009.

44 Personal interview, Noman Benotman, December 2009.

## Assessing the Progress of Pakistan's South Waziristan Offensive

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

IN OCTOBER 2009, after approximately four months of preparations, Pakistan's armed forces launched a highly anticipated ground offensive against Taliban militants in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The objectives of the mission, called Rah-e-Nijat (Path to Deliverance), are to clear the area of terrorists and militants and stabilize the region.<sup>1</sup> The current offensive in South Waziristan marks the largest military operation to date in both FATA and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP).

Pakistan's government considers South Waziristan the primary source of recent terrorist violence targeting the state. It alleges that 80% of terrorist attacks in Pakistan have been organized by militants from Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a conglomeration of Pakistani Taliban groups headquartered in South Waziristan.<sup>2</sup> Government officials finally came to the conclusion that it was essential to destroy the TTP network, which is currently led by Hakimullah Mehsud.<sup>3</sup>

This article will offer an account of the offensive thus far, identify its successes and failures, and finally look at the government's strategy moving forward.

### The Offensive Begins

South Waziristan, spread over 2,419 square kilometers of vast and rugged terrain, has been under the effective control of Pakistani Taliban militants since 2003-2004. As a result, Pakistan's government does not have credible intelligence about the strength of local and foreign militants based in the area.

1 Amir Wasim, "Zardari Writes to NWFP Governor," *Dawn*, December 1, 2009.

2 Sajjad Shaukat, "Rationale Behind Waziristan Operation," *Pakistan Observer*, October 21, 2009; Khalid Qayum and Farhan Sharif, "Bombing Kills 19 in Peshawar as Pakistan Captures Taliban Bases," *Bloomberg*, November 19, 2009.

3 For a profile of Hakimullah Mehsud, see Mukhtar A. Khan, "A Profile of the TTP's New Leader: Hakimullah Mehsud," *CTC Sentinel* 2:10 (2009).

Pakistan Army chief, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, once described the tribal agency as an intelligence “black hole.”<sup>4</sup> At the start of the offensive, however, one government official estimated that approximately 1,500 foreign militants were hiding in South Waziristan, mixed in with an estimated total of 10,000 Taliban fighters.<sup>5</sup>

For weeks before the start of the ground offensive on October 17, the military softened the militants’ positions through airstrikes from fighter jets and helicopter gunships, in addition to long-

**“Overall, there is little evidence that heavy fighting occurred during the entire operation because it appears that most militants fled in the face of the government advance.”**

range artillery cannons. The airstrikes played a crucial role in destroying the militants’ resolve. Military officials later admitted that they had exhausted their target list as all known militant hideouts had been bombed.<sup>6</sup>

Early on October 17, regular troops from the Pakistan Army and paramilitary soldiers from the Frontier Corps mobilized from their bases under the cover of darkness and began the ground offensive. Military authorities claimed that 30,000 troops were part of the assault. Some reports, however, said a total of 60,000 soldiers were involved, including 45,000 combat troops and 15,000 supporting troops.<sup>7</sup>

The military initially targeted Makeen, Spin Kamar and Ladha, all located within the Mehsud tribal areas. The

ground offensive followed three routes into Mehsud territory. One route traveled northwest from the military fort of Jandola to the TTP stronghold of Srarogha via Spinkai Raghzai and Kotkai.<sup>8</sup> A second route traveled northeast from Wana and Shakai toward Sarwekai onward to Kaniguram and Ladha.<sup>9</sup> The third route left the garrison town of Razmak in North Waziristan Agency and headed south to one of the major militant strongholds at Makeen.<sup>10</sup>

The November 3 fall of Srarogha, where Baitullah Mehsud, the former head of the TTP, signed his first peace accord with the government in February 2005 marked a major setback for the TTP. It was in Srarogha that Baitullah spent most of his time plotting attacks, convening meetings and speaking to the media.<sup>11</sup> Zangara, the village where Baitullah was killed by a U.S. aerial drone in August 2009, is also in the Srarogha area, as is his ancestral village. Prior to Srarogha’s fall, the TTP also lost Kotkai, the village of current TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud and his cousin, Qari Hussain, the latter of whom regularly trains suicide bombers for TTP operations.

On November 4, the military announced that they had entered Ladha town, considered the TTP’s most important stronghold. Shortly after, Makeen was taken. By mid-November, the militants had lost almost all their strongholds. Srarogha, Kaniguram, Kotkai, Spinkay Raghzai, Nano, Sherwangai, Shelwestai, Nawazkot, Ladha and Makeen have all been secured by the military. The military then announced that the first phase of operations was complete, as troops had reached all three previously designated targets: Makeen, Srarogha and Ladha.<sup>12</sup>

Also important was the fall of Kaniguram. Military authorities believe that most of the foreign militants

fighting in Pakistan were entrenched in Kaniguram, in particular Uzbek militants affiliated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Although the military insisted that Uzbek fighters and other foreign militants resisted the advancing soldiers, no arrests were reported and no bodies were displayed to members of the media who were regularly flown in on military helicopters to survey the offensive. On a few occasions, however, media teams did report that rockets were fired at the troops, forcing the military to evacuate television crews to safer locations.

Overall, there is little evidence that heavy fighting occurred during the entire operation because it appears that most militants fled in the face of the government advance. Nevertheless, it was impossible for the media to independently confirm both the military and Taliban claims of casualties due to the lack of access to the conflict zone, disrupted lines of communication and the dislocation of almost all of the civilian population from the area.

#### Successes and Failures

On December 9, the Pakistan Army’s Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) released up-to-date figures on the offensive’s successes. It claimed that 589 Taliban militants and 79 soldiers had died in action so far.<sup>13</sup> The ISPR also said that Pakistan’s security forces seized a number of weapons, including RPG-7 rockets, anti-aircraft machineguns and SPG-9 rounds.<sup>14</sup> The military said it discovered 22 interlinked tunnels dug into the mountainside and stocked with arms and ammunition.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the military had taken control of all the important towns in South Waziristan where the TTP previously held power.

At some locations, the TTP’s retreat did not appear to be well organized considering that militants left behind heavy weapons and even cooked food. Separately, security forces said that they found passports of two foreigners in Shelwestai and Sherwangai villages. One passport belonged to Said Bahaji, a German national of Moroccan descent

4 Ismail Khan, “Battle for Waziristan Looms,” *Dawn*, October 2, 2009.

5 Zahid Hussain, “Laddah, Sararogha Cleared; Street Fighting in Makin,” *Dawn*, November 18, 2009.

6 Ismail Khan, “Army Close to Winding Up First Phase of Operation,” *Dawn*, November 5, 2009.

7 Maleeha Lodhi, “South Waziristan: Risks and Oppor-tunity,” *The News International*, November 3, 2009.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Iqbal Khattak, “Taliban Good at Posturing, Poor at Resisting,” *Daily Times*, October 28, 2009; Ifikhar A. Khan, “Troops Enter Militants’ Srarogha Base,” *Dawn*, November 4, 2009.

12 Muhammad Saleh Zaafir, “First Phase of SWA Operation Complete,” *The News International*, November 27, 2009.

13 “589 Terrorists Killed So Far in Operation Rah-e-Nijat,” *Frontier Post*, December 10, 2009.

14 Ibid.

15 “22 Tunnels, 15 Bunkers in SWA Destroyed,” *The Nation*, December 4, 2009.

who is considered a member of the Hamburg Cell that was involved in the 9/11 attacks on the United States. The second passport belonged to Raquel Burgos Garcia, a woman from Spain, who converted to Islam and married a Moroccan, Amer Azizi; Azizi was part of Spain's Abu Dahdah al-Qa`ida cell and was active in sending Spanish militants to training camps in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> The discovery of the passports raised prospects that Said Bahaji and other members of al-Qa`ida could be hiding in South Waziristan or the adjacent tribal areas.

The TTP, however, rejected the government's claims. In addition to disputing government casualty reports, TTP spokesman Azam Tariq insisted that the militant group executed a "tactical retreat" from their strongholds in South Waziristan and assured that the group's strength was largely intact.<sup>17</sup> Tariq said that the TTP was prepared for a long war and contended that the

### **"Hakimullah Mehsud has threatened retaliation against the military once heavy snows begin in South Waziristan in January."**

Pakistan Army was only occupying the major roads, while the militants were entrenched in the surrounding forests and mountains.<sup>18</sup> Lending credence to the TTP's claims about a tactical retreat, the government has so far failed to kill or arrest any senior TTP leaders. Furthermore, even by accepting the military's claims of 589 Taliban fighters killed, it is clear that the majority of fighters—numbering in the thousands—were able to escape and will likely continue to pose a threat.

16 Zahid Hussain, "Passport of 9/11 Conspirator Found in Waziristan," *Dawn*, October 30, 2009. For details on Amer Azizi, see Fernando Reinares, "Jihadist Radicalization and the 2004 Madrid Bombing Network," *CTC Sentinel* 2:11 (2009).

17 Ivan Watson and Samson Desta, "Taliban Claim 'Tactical Retreat' in Pakistan," CNN, November 4, 2009.

18 Irfan Burki and Daud Khattak, "9 More Militants Killed in South Waziristan," *The News International*, November 10, 2009.

It is not the first time that leading militants have escaped major military operations and months of aerial bombardment. The security forces' inability to obtain timely intelligence and capture or kill militant commanders has a pattern in all of their military operations. Furthermore, the current offensive did not benefit from the element of surprise, as it was clear that the military would launch the operation before the winter so that gains could be made by the time of the first snowfall. As a result, the militants were able to flee from South Waziristan before the start of the offensive. The snow began to fall on December 9, making the movement of troops toward the militants' mountain redoubt difficult. Outnumbered and outgunned, the militants retreated by replicating the tactics used by the Afghan Taliban, deciding to employ guerrilla tactics to harass the advancing troops and attack them at remote outposts.

Hakimullah Mehsud has threatened retaliation against the military once heavy snows begin in South Waziristan in January.<sup>19</sup> The military, however, appears to be prepared for the changing weather conditions. The troops deployed to the combat zone have already been replaced by fresh contingents.<sup>20</sup> More helicopters, heavy weapons, night-vision goggles and other equipment, some of it provided by the United States, have been sent to the troops. The soldiers are also benefiting from jamming devices that have been installed to protect military convoys from improvised explosive devices.

It is clear that Hakimullah, Qari Hussain, Waliur Rahman and Azam Tariq are still alive, as they have spoken to reporters in recent weeks.<sup>21</sup> This also shows that they have access to telephone lines and are therefore unlikely to still be in the Mehsud tribal territory in South Waziristan, considering that the phone lines are no longer operational in the area.<sup>22</sup> Current speculation

19 "We Will Give Effective Answer to Military Action in January - Hakimullah Mehsud," *Daily Jang*, December 10, 2009.

20 Zaafer.

21 Personal interview, Qari Hussain, TTP leader, December 5, 2009.

22 Cell phones do not work in most tribal areas including North and South Waziristan because mobile phone

only places Waliur Rahman, the TTP commander for South Waziristan, and his fighters in the Mehsud area, where he is organizing attacks against security forces.

It is possible that Hakimullah and his commanders could be seeking shelter in North Waziristan, where another Pakistani Taliban commander, Hafiz Gul Bahadur, maintains control.<sup>23</sup> Hakimullah and his commanders are

**"The struggle, however, is far from over. The TTP has proved through its unrelenting campaign of terrorist attacks in Pakistani cities that its capabilities have not been fully degraded."**

unlikely to be in South Waziristan's Wana area, where Maulvi Nazir and militants from the Ahmadzai Wazir tribe operate; these non-TTP militants are likely hesitant to allow TTP fighters into their area due to fears that it would destabilize their own towns by drawing in the Pakistan Army.<sup>24</sup> Hakimullah could also have found refuge in Orakzai Agency, an agency he used to command for the TTP until the death of Baitullah Mehsud. Orakzai remains a TTP stronghold where militants from Waziristan, Khyber and Dara Adam Khel also operate and which serves as a base for planning attacks against Pakistan's urban centers. Some TTP commanders and fighters are reported to have entered Kurram Agency, and the

service is not available there. Militants normally avoid using satellite phones as their signals are easily tracked and have led to repeated captures.

23 Hafiz Gul Bahadar, however, is not part of the TTP.

24 South Waziristan is inhabited by two Pashtun tribes, Mehsud and Ahmadzai Wazir. The latter are not involved in the current fighting. The two tribes have traditionally been rivals and the government exploited this rivalry by renewing its peace deal with Taliban militants belonging to the Ahmadzai Wazir tribe living in the Wana and Shakai areas. The Mehsud-populated areas were targeted by the Pakistani military because the TTP had its headquarters there and drew most of its cadre from the Mehsud.

decision by Pakistan's military to send fighter jets and helicopter gunships to central Kurram was apparently taken following intelligence reports about the concentration of militants in the area.<sup>25</sup>

The TTP has retaliated by carrying out suicide bombings and other attacks in Pakistan's urban centers, and tasking its affiliates in Bajaur, Mohmand, Hangu, Kurram and elsewhere to launch fresh attacks on the security forces to put pressure on the government and influence public opinion.<sup>26</sup> They are also launching sporadic hit-and-run attacks against Pakistan's military in South Waziristan.

#### The Offensive Going Forward

The Pakistan government's overall strategy in South Waziristan is not clear. Initially, it was to eliminate the TTP leadership and capture the militants' strongholds in South Waziristan. Yet the military now plans on holding the areas it clears until the threat from the TTP is diminished. In fact, the mission has now become a counterinsurgency operation since the government plans on reviving the civil administration in the tribal agency. The military will also have to oversee the repatriation and screening of displaced tribal civilians to their villages, and manage rehabilitation and reconstruction work. As in Swat, where the government has been slow to revive the civil administration and reconstruction work has yet to begin in earnest, the situation is even more difficult in South Waziristan.

The second phase of military operations in South Waziristan is being presented as a clear and consolidation effort. The troops will be clearing militants from all captured territory, detaining suspects, searching for weapons, removing mines and demolishing the homes of Taliban members. The government is also planning on bringing the political administration back to the area, where it has been absent for years. It will take time for civil officials to take control from the military authorities, who are

now in charge of the affairs in all tribal regions. There are plans to complete damage assessments so that tribal households affected by the fighting can be compensated. South Waziristan's political administrator, Syed Shahab Ali Shah, promised that reconstruction and development work would begin once peace was restored. He also said that unemployed men would be recruited into the civil armed forces known as Khasadar and Levies to maintain security in the area.<sup>27</sup>

Repair work on the Shakai-Kaniguram road and reconstruction of the Jandola-Srarogha road has reportedly started. Reconstruction of the roadways will facilitate the movement of troops and supplies, and enable the military to mobilize quickly in case the militants decide to launch a counteroffensive. Work on restoring the power

**“Public support for the army's actions in the tribal areas, currently at 51%, could also be jeopardized if the military bows to the pressure of the United States and its NATO allies and takes action against the hideouts of predominately Afghan Taliban militants, such as in North Waziristan and Baluchistan.”**

transmission lines is also moving forward. Officials in the FATA political administration are planning to complete major repair work, restore civic services and revive the political administrative system in South Waziristan by April 2010, in time for the displaced Mehsud tribespeople to return to their villages from the neighboring districts of Tank and Dera Ismail Khan.

The third phase will include corrective political steps. Efforts will be made to win the support of the Mehsud tribe against the militant groups. The military has said that it recognizes this cannot be accomplished until it demonstrates its commitment to overcoming militancy in the region. There is also a proposal to relocate the Mehsud tribe's regional headquarters from Ladha to Makeen, which is located in the plains and can be better defended due to its proximity to the army garrison in Razmak. The fort in Ladha, which was destroyed by the militants, would also be rebuilt and used to station troops for their quick deployment to problem areas.

The government also plans on creating more administrative units to increase the state's official presence and make the Mehsud territory governable. Another important and still divisive issue is the bifurcation of South Waziristan into two separate administrative divisions: the Mehsud and the Ahmadzai Wazir regions. The Mehsud tribe opposes this plan, and warns that it would create acrimony at a time when efforts are needed to bring the tribe into the mainstream.

#### Conclusion

The TTP retreated from its strongholds in South Waziristan in the face of the Pakistan military's offensive. Its birthplace and headquarters are no longer under its control. The group is under pressure to launch the long guerrilla war that its commanders have threatened. Although the group still has armed units operating in Bajaur, Mohmand, Dara Adam Khel, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram and other locations in the northwest, the government appears determined to weaken the militants' overall network. The airstrikes and ground attacks by the military in lower and central Kurram and in Orakzai and Khyber are designed to destroy the TTP's logistics and supply lines, in addition to killing relocated cadres who fled military action in South Waziristan.

The struggle, however, is far from over. The TTP has proved through its unrelenting campaign of terrorist attacks in Pakistani cities that its capabilities have not been fully degraded. Its success in hitting high-security military targets through complex suicide assaults proves that it can continue to launch operations

<sup>25</sup> Khattak.

<sup>26</sup> It is the TTP's standard policy to claim responsibility for attacks on security forces and police, but to remain silent when public places and civilians are attacked. Although Hakimullah denied TTP involvement in bombing marketplaces, there have been attacks claimed by his organization in the past against these types of targets.

<sup>27</sup> “Mehsuds Who Suffered Losses in Military Operations Will Be Compensated,” Radio Razmak, December 10, 2009.

despite losing its South Waziristan base. Moreover, the hardest part of the mission for Pakistan's military has only just begun. Routing guerrilla forces with a modern army is not difficult; it is the "hold" phase of counterinsurgency that will prove the most challenging. The militants can now begin to practice the form of warfare at which they are best: sporadic guerrilla attacks against troops.

Moreover, for Pakistan's government to be successful, it will need to move against TTP leaders and cadre in other tribal areas—where they are seeking shelter—which will stretch the military's operations and make it more vulnerable to guerrilla attacks. Public support for military operations could fall if civilians feel increasingly insecure in their own homes, workplaces and cities. Public support for the army's actions in the tribal areas, currently at 51%, could also be jeopardized if the military bows to the pressure of the United States and its NATO allies and takes action against the hideouts of predominately Afghan Taliban militants, such as in North Waziristan and Baluchistan.<sup>28</sup> It is clear that Pakistan's security forces are still in the early stages of their perennial fight against Islamist militants intent on weakening the state.

*Rahimullah Yusufzai is a senior Pakistani journalist and political and security analyst presently working as Resident Editor of the English daily The News International in Peshawar. He has been reporting on Afghanistan and Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and Baluchistan since the early 1980s.*

## The Internet and its Role in Terrorist Recruitment and Operational Planning

By Sajjan M. Gohel

THE VIRTUAL WORLD is fast becoming the most important meeting place for terrorists, and a major venue where extremists can make contact with like-minded individuals. Through these relatively anonymous contacts, an extremist can be brought into the terrorist fold and become physically involved in terrorist plots. Today, there are a growing number of cases in which terrorist groups, or jihadist radicalizers, have used the internet to recruit individuals in the West, providing them a starting point to engage in terrorist activity. By ignoring this developing issue, there is the risk of becoming complacent about an emerging threat that appears to be growing more significant with time.

This article will explore a now defunct network of terrorist cells that were located across the world and which became connected through the internet. By studying this network of cells, which the author identifies as the Digital Jihad Network, it becomes evident that the internet has become a key platform in cell formation and terrorist activity. Moreover, the article will also show how the internet is increasingly being used to recruit Westerners for jihadist operations at home and abroad. Finally, the article will identify the threat posed by "lone wolf" terrorism, which is made possible as a result of jihadist literature, online radicalizers and military training materials available on the web.

### The Internet as a Staging Platform: A Case Study of the Digital Jihad Network

The internet is increasingly playing a critical role in linking together disparate terrorist cells around the world. An examination of one major global jihadist network reveals the sheer number of links and connections forged through the internet. The case involved Ehsanul Sadequee, who an Atlanta court found guilty of conspiracy to materially support terrorists in August 2009. His trial explored a nexus of extremists who were connected through the internet to plan attacks and form a global network linking North America, Europe and

South Asia. The trial resulted in eight terrorism cases involving several dozen defendants and years of complex international cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

Born in Virginia with parents from Bangladesh, Sadequee exhibited radical sentiments in his teens. Soon after the September 11 attacks, he sent an e-mail to an extremist website expressing his desire to join the Taliban.<sup>2</sup> Sadequee's extremist activity intensified when he met Syed Haris Ahmed, a Pakistani-American student at Georgia Tech, at a mosque in Atlanta. The two made contact in a password-protected chat room.<sup>3</sup> Transcripts of their internet conversations reveal that they fed off each other's outrage at the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup>

It was in the virtual space, through murky web forums and radical chat rooms such as "Clearguidance," that an extremist network of like-minded individuals, together with Sadequee and Ahmed, was established and where ideas for terrorist training and plotting attacks were discussed.<sup>5</sup> The network included a group of radicals from Canada, known as the "Toronto 18" led in part by Zakaria Amara, a gas station attendant;<sup>6</sup> a Bosnian-born Swede named Mirsad Bektasevic who was planning attacks against Western interests in Sarajevo; and Aabid Khan from Manchester, England, who acted as a facilitator for various Pakistan-based terrorist organizations.<sup>7</sup> The final actor in the network was Younis Tsouli, a former Moroccan diplomat's son living in London whose computer expertise made him the network's hub.<sup>8</sup> Tsouli had also used the internet to build links to al-Qa`ida operatives in Iraq.<sup>9</sup>

1 "Atlanta Defendant Found Guilty Of Supporting Terrorists," U.S. Department of Justice, August 12, 2009.

2 Ibid.

3 Bill Gillespie, "The Case Against Canada's Plotters," Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, October 14, 2009.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 "Toronto 18 Video Evidence Released," Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, October 20, 2009.

7 "Atlanta Defendant Found Guilty Of Supporting Terrorists."

8 Tsouli infamously was able to hack an FTP server operated by the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department and turn it into an al-Qa`ida message board, providing detailed information on the art of hacking.

9 "Terrorist Use Of The Internet," Combating Terrorism

28 This poll is available at Gallop Pakistan, the findings of which were published on November 3, 2009.

In early 2005, Ahmed and Sadequee traveled to a Toronto mosque to meet with some members of the Toronto 18 to discuss possible attacks on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta and oil refineries.<sup>10</sup> Aabid Khan also flew in from London for the gathering.<sup>11</sup> None of the individuals had formal terrorist training, so they agreed as a first step to travel to Pakistan and spend three months in a training camp run by Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LT), a Pakistani terrorist group that

**“Through its relatively secure anonymity, the internet has become a key medium for Westerners to identify and connect with jihadist radicalizers and recruiters.”**

orchestrated the Mumbai terror siege in November 2008.<sup>12</sup> Khan would make the necessary arrangements with the LT so that the network's members could travel to Pakistan and begin training. Khan was also in contact with Jaysh-i-Muhammad (JM), another terrorist group in Pakistan that was partly involved in the abduction and murder of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi.<sup>13</sup> The network's members rented two basement apartments in Toronto as a

base from where they and others part of their internet chat group could gather before traveling to Pakistan.<sup>14</sup>

After their planned paramilitary training trip in Pakistan, the network intended to return to Toronto and choose targets to attack in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and continental Europe. They anticipated the attacks to be possibly the most coordinated terrorist assault ever seen. A few weeks after their trip to Toronto, Ahmed and Sadequee visited Washington, D.C. where they made more than 62 video clips of potential targets, including the Pentagon, the Capitol, and the World Bank headquarters.<sup>15</sup> Sadequee e-mailed the scouting videos to Tsouli and Khan.<sup>16</sup>

Sadequee eventually traveled to Bangladesh to get married, and he continued his participation in the global network. Although Ahmed was able to travel to Pakistan, he and Khan were not able to arrange training for the global plotters because of the logistical difficulties in bringing them all together. In October 2005, Sadequee communicated via e-mail from Bangladesh with Tsouli in London and Bektasevic in Sarajevo, as the latter was obtaining explosives and weapons for a plot.<sup>17</sup> They discussed a propaganda video that Bektasevic was preparing that would announce the formation of a group they called “Al-Qa`ida in Northern Europe.”<sup>18</sup>

By this time, however, law enforcement and intelligence agencies had finally traced their internet communications and were monitoring their activities on the web, in addition to keeping them under close physical surveillance. Within days, in October 2005, Bektasevic was apprehended in Sarajevo and British police arrested Tsouli in London.<sup>19</sup> Bektasevic's arrest revealed that he had already assembled a suicide vest attached to a detonator, suggesting

his plot was imminent.<sup>20</sup> Tsouli's encrypted hard drive provided a wealth of information that led investigators to pursue other militant links across the world. Both Tsouli and Bektasevic are serving lengthy prison sentences after being convicted on terrorism-related charges. In March 2006, Ahmed was arrested in Atlanta by the FBI and Sadequee was detained in April 2006 in Bangladesh. Ahmed was convicted in June 2009 for conspiracy to provide material support to terrorism in the United States and abroad.<sup>21</sup>

In Britain, once the evidence had been gathered from the other plots, authorities quickly moved to apprehend the remaining members of the network. In April 2006, Scottish police arrested a student, Mohammed Atif Siddique, as he was in the process of boarding a flight to Pakistan to meet Aabid Khan who had been indoctrinating and radicalizing Siddique through the internet.<sup>22</sup>

In June 2006, Toronto witnessed the dramatic arrests of several men also connected to the network. The Toronto 18 cell had been infiltrated by two police informants and was accused of planning attacks on two Toronto buildings and an Ontario military base. The cell members had in their possession large quantities of what they thought was ammonium nitrate.<sup>23</sup> In October 2009, Zakaria Amara pleaded guilty to knowingly participating in a terrorist group and intending to cause an explosion for the benefit of a terrorist group.<sup>24</sup> Investigations revealed that members of the Toronto cell, including Amara, were influenced by the internet sermons of U.S.-born Islamist ideologue Anwar al-Awlaki, who is believed to be based in Yemen.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> “Atlanta Defendant Found Guilty Of Supporting Terrorists.”

<sup>22</sup> *HMA v. Mohammed Atif Siddique*, October 23, 2007; Swann.

<sup>23</sup> “Toronto 18 Video Evidence Released.”

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Unlike other radicals, Anwar al-Awlaki understands Western culture and has used the internet to tailor his messages to directly influence young impressionable people. During his time in the United States, he served as an imam at San Diego's Rabat mosque, where he met future 9/11 hijackers Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi and developed a close relationship with them. Al-Awlaki was also in communication through the internet with Nidal

Working Group (CTWG), George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, June 16-17, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Gillespie.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Aryn Baker and Jyoti Thottam, “The Making of a Mumbai Terrorist,” *Time Magazine*, March 8, 2009. Interestingly, the anonymous nature of the internet also served as a tool to aid and mask the LT's Mumbai attack. One of the handlers for the group sent an e-mail to an Indian TV channel claiming that the “Deccan Mujahidin” was responsible for the plot. Deccan, being an area in southern India, implied the plot was indigenous. Investigations subsequently found that the e-mail message originated in Lahore in Pakistan, before being routed to different locations through an anonymous “re-mailer” service. This is a system that acts as a mail intermediary and allows users to send e-mails to a destination anonymously. The play successfully misled many as to the origins of the group and could serve to act as a template for future attacks.

<sup>13</sup> Nick Fielding, “Omar Saeed Sheikh: The British Jackal,” *Sunday Times*, April 21, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Sebastian Rotella, “Georgia Man Convicted of Aiding Terrorism Groups,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> “Terrorist Use Of The Internet.”

<sup>19</sup> Gordon Corera, “Al-Qaeda's O07,” *TimesOnline*, January 16, 2008.

Four days after the Toronto plotters were arrested, Aabid Khan was detained at London's Heathrow Airport as he disembarked from a flight from Islamabad in June 2006.<sup>26</sup> When police searched his luggage they found two computer hard drives, 16 CDs and a quantity of documents.<sup>27</sup> The contents of the material showed Khan inciting others to participate in terrorist activity through the internet, and evidence also showed that he had facilitated trips to Pakistan.<sup>28</sup> In August 2008, Khan was convicted of being a terrorist propagandist.<sup>29</sup>

Hammaad Munshi, a 16-year-old British schoolboy, was also caught in the network, becoming Britain's youngest convicted terrorist.<sup>30</sup> Munshi was a friend and recruit of Aabid Khan, and was convicted in September 2008 of possessing materials that were likely to be used in acts of terrorism.<sup>31</sup> Munshi collected instructions for making napalm, explosives and suicide vests from the internet.<sup>32</sup> A quantity of propaganda videos and audio recordings, stored on the family computer, were also found during a search.

This case study of the Digital Jihad Network reveals how the internet is being used as a platform to facilitate contact among like-minded aspiring jihadists. Moreover, it also plays a role in the preparation and plotting of

attacks. In the case of this network, it allowed members to come into contact with individuals with actual physical ties to terrorist groups, such as the LT in Pakistan. The dismantling of the network led to dozens of arrests around the world. Worryingly, this template has also been used subsequently in the United States to recruit people for terrorist activity abroad.

#### **Al-Shabab Recruits in the United States and the Pakistan-Virginia Case**

In November 2009, federal authorities unsealed terrorism-related charges against men they say were key actors in a recruitment drive that led young Somali-Americans to join al-Shabab, a Somali insurgent group and an al-Qa'ida affiliate. In total, authorities have implicated 14 people in the case. Perhaps the most notorious is Zakaria Maruf, an American-Somali who had left Minnesota for southern Somalia to link up with al-Shabab and subsequently recruited men from the United States through a variety of means, including the internet.<sup>33</sup>

This was the case of Mohamoud Hassan, a student at the Carlson School of Management, whose path toward extremism began through the internet with searches for jihadist videos and jihadist chat rooms. Like the Toronto 18, Hassan listened to the audio lectures of Anwar al-Awlaki.<sup>34</sup> Hassan then began to communicate frequently with Maruf who established contact through listservs, an antiquated form of sending e-mails, and conference calls arranged by an associate who distributed several hundred numbers and passwords so people could establish contact securely.<sup>35</sup>

In November 2008, Hassan turned his back on a university education and with two other students left for Somalia to join an al-Shabab training camp where he linked up with his internet recruiter Maruf.<sup>36</sup> In September 2009, Hassan's grandmother received news from Somalia that her grandson was killed.

33 Amy Forliti, "Details Emerge About Somali Terrorists' Recruiting Methods," Associated Press, August 25, 2009; Andrea Elliott, "A Call to Jihad, Answered in America," *New York Times*, July 12, 2009.

34 Elliott.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

It is unlikely that he will be the last Somali-American recruited by al-Shabab handlers to fight in Somalia. His case is a mere example of the problem.<sup>37</sup>

More recently, in December 2009 five men from northern Virginia were arrested in Sargodha in Pakistan's Punjab Province on suspicion that they were plotting terrorist attacks and planned to fight in Afghanistan.<sup>38</sup> The Pakistani police interrogation report identified one of the suspects as Ahmed Abdullah Minni, who it claims regularly went on YouTube to watch Taliban attacks on the U.S. military in Afghanistan and left comments praising the actions.<sup>39</sup> His comments attracted the attention of extremists, and he was eventually contacted through the internet by a mysterious individual using the alias "Saifullah."<sup>40</sup> A Yahoo! e-mail account was set up so the accused and Saifullah could communicate.<sup>41</sup>

The suspects planned to travel to Pakistan, and then to Afghanistan. Once they arrived in Pakistan's port city of Karachi, the men left for Hyderabad.<sup>42</sup> Pakistani authorities claim that they tried to connect with JM and Jama'at-ud-Da'wa (JuD), the parent wing of LT.<sup>43</sup> According to Pakistani authorities, neither JuD nor JM expressed any interest in recruiting the men.<sup>44</sup> During the past 10 years, however, both groups have actively recruited foreigners. It is likely that the two groups are reluctant to induct Americans at this time in light of the recent case of David Headley, a

37 Laura Yuen, "Fifth Minnesota Man Dies in Somalia," Minnesota Public Radio, September 5, 2009. In December 2008, al-Awlaki addressed al-Shabab followers in one of his blog entries stating, "We are following your recent news and it fills our hearts with immense joy."

38 "Interrogation Report, 'Profiles of the Foreigners Held,'" Punjab Police, Sargodha, Punjab Province, December 11, 2009.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid. Interestingly, to avoid interception by law enforcement and intelligence agencies, e-mails were never sent from the account, but messages were left in the draft folder and deleted after reading, the online version of a "dead letter drop."

42 "Mosque of Americans Arrested in Pakistan Plans Investigation," CNN, December 11, 2009.

43 Jama'at-ud-Da'wa was proscribed by the United Nations following the Mumbai terror siege attacks.

44 "Interrogation Report, 'Profiles of the Foreigners Held,'"

Malik Hasan, the U.S. Army officer who is charged with killing 13 people and wounding 30 at Fort Hood, Texas in November 2009. See Michelle Shephard, "The Powerful Online Voice of Jihad," *Toronto Star*, October 18, 2009; *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), p. 221; Theo Emery, "The FBI Probe: What Went Wrong at Fort Hood?" *Time Magazine*, December 10, 2009. Al-Awlaki was characterized in court testimony as an inspiration by two of the six people convicted on conspiracy and other charges in a plot to kill U.S. military personnel at Fort Dix. A Facebook page devoted to the ideologue once had thousands of supporters. Following the Ft. Hood shooting, the page was removed by the website administrators.

26 Swann.

27 "Cases Concluded in 2008," The Counter-Terrorism Division of the Crown Prosecution Service, undated.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Swann.

31 Ibid.

32 Jenny Percival, "Yorkshire Teenager Becomes Britain's Youngest Convicted Terrorist," *Guardian*, August 18, 2008.

Chicago resident accused of conducting reconnaissance on behalf of LT during the preparation for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, as well as conspiring to attack the offices of the Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*. Other reports state that the two terrorist groups thought that the men were working on behalf of Western intelligence agencies.

U.S. officials are exploring possible criminal charges against the northern Virginia men. The mystery man, Saifullah, has yet to be identified. The recent case is concerning because it shows how Westerners, in this case Americans, can be induced to partake in jihad through contacts made over the internet and travel to Pakistan for direct training. In many ways, the case is similar to the global network tied to Ehsanul Sadequee.

#### **The Internet and its Role in "Lone Wolf" Terrorism**

Another growing concern is the issue of "lone wolf" terrorism. This refers to an individual not connected to any particular cell or network, but who becomes radicalized as a result of jihadist literature online. Moreover, the individual can also become trained in explosives and other weapons through military training manuals available on the internet. The emergence of these self-generated violent extremists presents a significant challenge to law enforcement because they have few, if any, physical organizational links to other collaborators. This means that warning signs may only be seen in hindsight, after a plot has already been executed.

One of the most disturbing cases of "lone wolf" terrorism is Nicky Reilly, who attempted to carry out a suicide bomb attack in May 2008 in Exeter in the United Kingdom. Reilly, who has Asperger's syndrome, made an improvised explosive device (IED) out of soft drink bottles filled with paraffin, caustic soda and nails. He tried to detonate the IED in a café, yet the bombs exploded prematurely and Reilly was the only person injured.<sup>45</sup>

Reilly, a Muslim convert, researched how to make IEDs on the internet. He also used the internet to obtain the IED's

components, as well as to investigate potential targets.<sup>46</sup> Importantly, he was in frequent contact via the internet with two unidentified men from Pakistan, with whom he discussed his intentions and from whom he received encouragement and information.<sup>47</sup> The unidentified individuals answered his questions and directed him to bomb-making websites.

Reilly's case is concerning because he never traveled to a foreign country for training, which is one reason why he was not discovered by authorities until he executed his plot. His case presents a

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worrying scenario because it was almost completely domestic, other than the virtual contacts forged over the internet. Furthermore, his two unidentified contacts were not apprehended, which means they can continue their attempts to foment jihad in Western countries through contacts made on the internet. Cases of "lone wolf" terrorism, of which Reilly is only one, show how the internet has the ability to at least somewhat become a substitute for physical military training, although the pattern so far implies that internet training alone reduces operational effectiveness.

#### **Conclusion**

Through its relatively secure anonymity, the internet has become a key medium for Westerners to identify and connect with jihadist radicalizers and recruiters. The internet is part

of the process connecting aspiring terrorists with like-minded individuals or actual terrorists operating out of countries such as Pakistan and Somalia. After consolidating relationships over the internet, the recruits can then plot and plan mass casualty attacks while remaining in contact with their handlers through the world wide web.

These factors raise serious challenges for Western governments, whose citizens are being lured into the terrorist fold over the internet. The internet has become a starting point for those seeking persuasive jihadist information, ideological guidance, practical military instructions and connections with jihadist handlers. To combat this threat, counterterrorism efforts will need to increasingly factor in the virtual battlefield in addition to the physical battlefield.

*Dr. Sajjan Gohel is Director for International Security at the Asia-Pacific Foundation, an independent intelligence and security think-tank. He received his Ph.D. in International History from the London School of Economics & Political Science (LSE). His doctoral thesis, entitled, "The Evolution of Egyptian Radical Ideological Thought from Hasan al-Banna to Ayman al-Zawabiri," is in the process of being published. Dr. Gohel's primary research interests include: the security challenges in South Asia, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa and the connection with the West; radical ideological thought both present and historical; and the role that New Media plays in transnational terrorism.*

<sup>46</sup> Adam Fresco, "Bomber Nicky Reilly was Brainwashed Online by Pakistani Extremists," *The Times*, October 16, 2008.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> *HMA v. Nicky Reilly*, January 30, 2009.

## Prisons in Iraq: A New Generation of Jihadists?

By Myriam Benraad

OVER THE LAST two years, thousands of Iraqi detainees have been released from prisons in compliance with Iraq's 2008 general amnesty law and the U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement that was enforced in January 2009. Following the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraqi cities in June, and the upsurge in violence in several provinces—mainly Baghdad, Ninawa and Diyala—the Iraqi government has repeatedly blamed prisoner releases for providing al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) with new opportunities to stage high-profile attacks.

On December 8, 2009, for example, 127 people were killed in a series of coordinated attacks that struck government sites in Baghdad; the attacks were endorsed by AQI's Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).<sup>1</sup> AQI also claimed responsibility for several other deadly operations, including the October 25 suicide attacks that targeted the Iraqi capital's Ministry of Justice and provincial council, the execution of 13 Sunni tribal members in Abu Ghurayb in November, and the suicide attacks against the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance in Baghdad that killed more than 100 people in August.<sup>2</sup> Rising tensions in cities such as Mosul and in Anbar Province, where violence had declined drastically since the U.S. "surge" in 2007, indicate a return of armed jihad in Iraq and raise doubts over the sustainability and durability of its stabilization process.

This article explores the connection between the numerous prisoner releases in Iraq since 2008 and AQI's resurgence. Emphasis will be laid on the pervasive effects that the amnesty law and U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement have had on the release of radical inmates from

prisons and their implications in recent terrorist operations. Of the 73 men arrested by Iraqi police in November and accused of involvement in the August suicide attacks in Baghdad, several acknowledged established ties with AQI and other radical groups during their incarceration.<sup>3</sup> In a context of economic uncertainty and widespread corruption and bribery that provide fertile ground to insurgents, prisons now appear to have become the primary crucible of jihadist ideology and Islamist radicalization in Iraq, raising new security concerns and casting doubts on the Iraqi government's ability to maintain security ahead of the upcoming elections scheduled for March 7, 2010.

### Sensitive Prisoner Releases

Iraq's general amnesty law came into effect in February 2008. At the time of its adoption, the law was part of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's national reconciliation effort aimed at drawing the alienated Sunni Arab community back into the political process and convincing former jihadists to renounce violence.<sup>4</sup> Throughout 2008, more than half of the total detainee population was released, which consisted of 17,800 inmates out of a total of 33,600.<sup>5</sup> Since January 2009, the first steps in the implementation of the U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement have witnessed the transfer of thousands of new prisoners from U.S.-run facilities to the Iraqi authorities, including the release of more than 5,000 inmates.<sup>6</sup>

Originally, as provided by Article 5 of the Iraqi amnesty law, detainee releases had to be conducted "in a safe and orderly manner" by judicial committees designated in each Iraqi province by the Supreme Judicial Council, composed of first-class prosecutors. The law only pertained to inmates facing less significant charges, and each committee

was tasked with carefully reviewing detainee criminal records before their release to ensure that they had not committed serious crimes not covered by the amnesty—such as terrorism and sectarian manslaughter.<sup>7</sup> Article 6 of the

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law added that Iraqi police and judicial forces had to take appropriate measures prior to a detainee transfer or release by Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I).

While MNF-I argues that recidivism rates among released detainees have been low, so far most releases have occurred in a context of Iraqi police and military forces not yet able to maintain security, weak rule of law and judicial authorities not equipped with the tools to properly monitor former prisoners. For instance, the 2008 amnesty law does not make provisions for the post-detention surveillance of inmates by Iraq's judiciary<sup>8</sup> and is therefore being reviewed by Iraqi lawmakers; it must be amended in 2010 so that the amnesty strictly excludes prisoners held on terrorism charges. Yet, existing legal gaps, concrete negligence in the application of the law and other shortcomings have already allowed a number of radicals to be pardoned and freed, several rejoining the armed insurgency.

Endemic corruption and bribery also play an important role. Iraqi officials from the Ministry of Interior have reported that approximately \$10,000 in bribes were given to various accomplices to facilitate the movement of AQI suicide bombers—some of whom allegedly

1 Salam Faraj, "Iraq Says 13 Held for Blasts as Security Chiefs Grilled," Agence France-Presse, December 13, 2009.

2 Jane Arraf, "Abu Ghraib Attack Raises Fears of Resurgent Al Qaeda in Iraq," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 17, 2009. For the Islamic State of Iraq's statement of responsibility for the August attack, see [www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefa\\_ISIMartyrdom-Operations.pdf](http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefa_ISIMartyrdom-Operations.pdf).

3 "Iraq US Jail was Qaeda Breeding Ground," Agence France-Presse, November 15, 2009.

4 The amnesty law was supported by the Sunni Tawafuq Front, and was considered a step toward its return to government.

5 See the statement by Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh and figures reported by the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council's spokesman, Abd al-Sattar al-Bayrkdar, in "Iraq Courts Order 20,000 Freed Under Amnesty," Reuters, June 22, 2008.

6 This estimate is based on publicly released MNF-I data.

7 Article 2 of the 2008 amnesty law excludes crimes sentenced to death under the Iraqi Penal Code of 1969 and the following criminal convictions: murder, kidnapping, sexual abuse, embezzlement of public funds, counterfeiting of Iraqi currency or foreign currency, forgery of official crimes, drug offenses, smuggling of antiquities, and the crimes set forth in the Military Penal Code of 2007.

8 "Iraq PM Blames US Prisoner Releases for Violence," Agence France-Presse, May 13, 2009.

former Ba'ath Party members<sup>9</sup>—through security checkpoints during the August 2009 bombings.<sup>10</sup> Again, according to the Ministry of Interior, AQI-related prisoners frequently bribe prison guards to acquire cell phones used to contact outside insurgents. In other instances, prison guards directly help radical inmates escape. As reported by provincial officials from Salah al-Din Province, in September 2009 16 AQI members, including Muammar Abd al-Salam Mahdi, who was detained for the murder of Iraqi police officers, managed to escape from a prison facility in Tikrit due to the complicity of their guards.<sup>11</sup>

AQI and radical insurgent factions also benefit from corrupt members within the Iraqi judiciary—interrogators, lawyers, prosecutors and judges—who are bribed to release AQI affiliates through the issuance of illegal warrants, identity falsification and expunged criminal records.<sup>12</sup> In October 2009, a lawyer from Mosul was arrested by Iraqi security forces for bribing guards to release members of AQI.<sup>13</sup> Such collusion has apparently become so common that Iraq's Supreme Judiciary Council ordered an investigation this June and made a formal request for the international community's assistance.

#### A Factor of AQI's Resurgence

The causal link between significant releases of Iraqi detainees and AQI's recent resurgence in Iraq has been emphasized by many official Iraqi sources. Several high-ranking representatives from the Ministry of

Interior reported in October 2009 that some of the suicide bombers and accomplices of the August 19 and October 25 attacks likely had been former detainees exposed to the AQI narrative during their incarceration.<sup>14</sup> Also, according to the Iraqi police the majority had been detained at former U.S. military bases such as Camp Bucca, closed down in September and which had become a breeding ground for AQI's ideology.<sup>15</sup>

The current situation raises questions about Iraq's prison system as the new cradle of jihadist propaganda and its consequences on security if additional detainees are released under similar conditions. Prisons have always been an incubator for radical ideology. The mentor of contemporary Islamism, Sayyid Qutb, wrote his manifesto *Milestones Along the Road* in an Egyptian prison, and Jordanian jihadist Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi recruited his main followers while detained.<sup>16</sup> The radicalization of hearts and minds and recruitment by Islamists within the prison setting is all the easier as facilities are often overburdened and daily conditions precarious.

Despite these problems, U.S. forces did make an undeniable effort to limit radicalization within Iraqi prisons and even pursued deradicalization programs. Referred to as "religious enlightenment," a first initiative was introduced by the commander of detention operations in Iraq, General Douglas M. Stone, in 2007.<sup>17</sup> It was intended to "reform" Iraqi detainees who had been held for more than a year, by offering them education and counseling with Muslim clerics and psychiatrists to instill in them a moderate approach to Islam and avoid the spread of jihadist ideology. A juvenile facility, known as the House of Wisdom or *Dar*

*al-Hikma*, was opened at Camp Victory in September 2007 to provide younger Iraqi detainees—who are often the most radical—with educational and employment opportunities, with the goal being to thwart their recruitment into AQI once released.<sup>18</sup>

Following the transfer of U.S.-run prison facilities to the Iraqi government this year, deradicalization programs have been maintained. They continue to focus on the rehabilitation of Iraqi inmates before they are freed, especially those most disposed to AQI's ideology. While a number of prisoners have been successfully deradicalized, signing an oath not to take up arms once released and reintegrated into civilian life, the efforts to shape attitudes among the detainee population (especially former insurgents) have met evident limits, as illustrated through AQI's recent resurgence.

Several factors explain why deradicalization programs in Iraq have had mixed results. First, the prison setting makes it difficult for imams ministering in correctional facilities to identify radical detainees who cannot be moderated and therefore should be segregated from other inmates. This uncertainty has likely led to the release of radical elements. Second, while abhorred outside by most Iraqis, AQI's radical message retains resonance in the prisons, and influences illiterate and disenchanted prisoners in particular. AQI uses the "occupation narrative" as a means of recruiting new partisans. The jihadist organization depicts prisons as the symbol of "infidel" oppression, and identifies the "occupiers" as both U.S. and Iraqi forces. For example, in September 2009, a riot occurred in the newly reopened Abu Ghurayb facility, renamed the Baghdad Central Prison,<sup>19</sup> when several AQI-affiliated detainees attempted to overpower security guards.<sup>20</sup>

9 The Nuri al-Maliki government has repeatedly blamed Ba'athists and their supporters in countries such as Syria for being behind the recent terrorist attacks in Iraq. It is worth noting, in this regard, that former members of the Ba'ath Party are known to have joined the ranks of AQI and other radical armed groups in 2003, especially the indigenous Salafist trend that gained significant influence among Sunni Arabs during the 1990s.

10 Sinan Salaheddin, "Iraqi Suspect: It Cost \$10,000 to Pass Checkpoints," *Huffington Post*, August 23, 2009.

11 Steven Lee Myers, "Qaeda Members Escape Prison in Iraq," *New York Times*, September 24, 2009; "Fugitives Assisted by Prison System: 16 Qaeda Prisoners Escape from Iraqi Jail," Agence France-Presse, September 24, 2009.

12 Ned Parker, "Corruption Plays Key Role in Iraqi Justice," *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 2009.

13 "Lawyer Suspected of Bribery Arrested in Mosul," Multinational Force-Iraq, press release, October 14, 2009.

14 Marc Santora and Riyadh Mohammed, "Pervasive Corruption Rattles Iraq's Fragile State," *New York Times*, October 28, 2009.

15 "Al Qaeda Recruited Bombers from US Prison in Iraq," *Daily Times*, November 16, 2009; Jason Keyser, "Camp Bucca: Military Closes Largest Detention Camp in Iraq," *Huffington Post*, September 16, 2009.

16 Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 8, 2006.

17 Walter Pincus, "U.S. Working to Reshape Iraqi Detainees," *Washington Post*, September 19, 2007.

18 "Juvenile Detainees Gain Second Chance Through Dar al-Hikmah," Multinational Force-Iraq, August 17, 2007.

19 Kim Gamel, "Renamed Abu Ghraib to Reopen," *Washington Times*, January 25, 2009.

20 Sameer N. Yacoub, "Abu Ghraib Inmates Attack Guards," *Huffington Post*, November 24, 2009.

### Conclusion

Although many different factors account for AQI's resurgence in Iraq, the release of thousands of Iraqi detainees since 2008 could be one of the most significant. The withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraqi cities last summer has also offered AQI partisans new space to operate. After being temporarily defeated through the U.S. surge and its positive effects on security, AQI seems to have reconstituted itself within prisons. A number of released detainees are acknowledged to have re-radicalized during their detention, made contact with AQI, and been involved in several suicide attacks.

Consolidating the security improvements achieved in Iraq since 2007 and keeping AQI on the margin should be a priority for both the U.S. and Iraqi governments. In this regard, a number of concrete steps need to be taken. The legal framework that has allowed the release of dangerous jihadists, the amnesty law in particular, must be comprehensively assessed and amended so that no more protection is granted to them. Strengthening the rule of law and fighting against corruption are also fundamental to rebuilding functional institutions in Iraq. Eventually, within a prison system that offers an ideal environment for the dissemination of radical jihadist ideology, the monitoring of detainees must be reinforced and "irredentist" Islamists rigorously separated from moderate inmates who are more likely to be successfully rehabilitated.

*Myriam Benraad is a research scholar at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and a research associate at the Center for International Studies and Research in Paris-Sciences Po. Previously, she was a consultant for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a policy analyst at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Middle East & North Africa Initiative, where she provided expertise and recommendations to the Iraqi government on economic reforms and corruption. She is currently completing her Ph.D. in political science, addressing Iraq's post-2003 Sunni Arab identity phenomenon.*

## Developing Regional Counterterrorism Cooperation in South Asia

By Alistair Millar

U.S. PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA has set a new tone in the fight against terrorism, moving away from his predecessor's "global war on terrorism" into "a new era of engagement."<sup>1</sup> This shift in rhetoric is evident in the administration's approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan in a region where the United States and its NATO allies are embroiled in an extensive military campaign. When the administration's new "AFPAK" strategy was unveiled in March 2009, National Security Adviser General James Jones proclaimed that "the cornerstone of this strategy...is that it's a regional approach," adding that the administration "will pursue intensive regional diplomacy involving all key players in South Asia."<sup>2</sup>

Experts in the region agree that "there is a growing realization throughout the world that trans-border terrorism and organized crime cannot be controlled without bilateral or regional cooperation."<sup>3</sup> The 2008 attacks in Mumbai, where gunmen traveled by boat from Pakistan's port of Karachi to India, clearly highlighted the transnational dimension of the threat and the essential need for a regional approach to intelligence sharing, law enforcement and other forms of counterterrorism cooperation.<sup>4</sup> Yet pursuing a regional approach involving "all key players in South Asia" on any security related issue, let alone the extremely sensitive matter of fighting terrorism, is fraught with challenges.

This article will highlight some of these challenges by looking at the counterterrorism efforts of the South

Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It concludes by examining the prospects for developing a broad-based regional response to the threat of transnational terrorism by enhancing law enforcement cooperation on the subcontinent.

### Many Agreements, Not Much Action

There has been no shortage of declarations explaining the need for greater collaboration among states in the region on issues related to border security, law enforcement, and mutual legal assistance. The primary regional organization in South Asia where peace and security issues are raised, SAARC, includes India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan in its membership<sup>5</sup> and has had the issue of terrorism on its agenda since well before the 9/11 attacks. More than 20 years ago, SAARC adopted a Regional Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism that called for cooperation among its member states on extradition, evidence sharing, and other information exchanges to address "terrorist acts." In 1995, SAARC also established a Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) to support the implementation of the convention by collecting, assessing, and disseminating information on terrorist offenses, tactics, strategies, and methods. Cooperation on combating terrorist financing was then included in an additional protocol to the convention in 2002, and a SAARC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance was approved at the 15<sup>th</sup> SAARC summit in August 2008.<sup>6</sup> The objective of the agreement is to overcome the need for separate bilateral agreements by harmonizing the domestic legal systems of member countries.<sup>7</sup> SAARC countries will hopefully find it easier to cooperate on counterterrorism investigations and the prosecution or extradition of terrorist suspects when the Convention enters into force. If past is prologue, however,

5 Since it was founded in 1985, SAARC's membership has included Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, with Afghanistan joining in 2005. China, Japan, the European Union, Republic of Korea, the United States, and Iran have observer status with SAARC.

6 Muralidhar Reddy and Sandeep Dikshit, "Legal Assistance Treaty Gets SAARC Approval," *Hindu*, August 3, 2008.

7 "SAARC Convention to Help in Combating Terrorism," Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, press release, August 27, 2008.

1 "Obama's Speech to the UN General Assembly," *New York Times*, September 23, 2009.

2 General James Jones, "President Obama's Afghanistan-Pakistan (AFPAK) Strategy," briefing to the Foreign Press Center, Washington, D.C., March 27, 2009.

3 V. Balachandran, "Insurgency, Terrorism and Transnational Crime in South Asia," in Amit Pandya and Ellen Laipson eds., *Transnational Trends: Middle East and Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, 2008).

4 Somini Sengupta "Dossier Gives Details of Mumbai Attacks," *New York Times*, January 6, 2009.

the chances of member states agreeing on which individuals and groups should be the target of such cooperation are likely to be limited.

In April 2008, counterterrorism experts from SAARC countries decided to share intelligence for curbing terrorism and other transnational crimes.<sup>8</sup> Sharing intelligence on the subcontinent, however, has been complicated by concerns that connections between state intelligence services and terrorist organizations could allow sensitive information to be misused. Nonetheless, India and Pakistan did reach an agreement in April 2008 to exchange intelligence regarding recent attacks and to discuss the prospects for strengthening cooperation against terrorism.<sup>9</sup> In an exchange facilitated by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, India and Pakistan shared an unprecedented amount of intelligence information on Lashkar-i-Tayyiba/Jama'at-ud-Da'wa in the aftermath of the Mumbai terrorist attacks in November 2008.<sup>10</sup> The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation also assisted the Indian government with its investigation after the attacks, including by deploying personnel to conduct interviews and use advanced forensic investigation techniques.<sup>11</sup> Yet, a trial for key suspects has been postponed twice by the Lahore High Court in Pakistan and formal charges have yet to be filed against the accused.<sup>12</sup> Using foreign intelligence services as a bridge between India and Pakistan is useful and certainly better than the previous lack of cooperation between the two states, but it is not an adequate substitute for joint, multilateral information sharing at the regional level. Moreover, progress on intelligence sharing will be of limited utility without enhancing active cooperation among law enforcement

and judicial officials to prevent terrorist attacks and successfully prosecute those responsible.

#### Turning Talk into Action

The need for greater cooperation against terrorism continues to figure prominently on the agenda of SAARC summit meetings, but the rhetoric has resulted in little concrete action.<sup>13</sup> This is not surprising given the tensions and mistrust that exist between many of its member states, particularly between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and India and Pakistan, where concerns that Pakistan's intelligence service is stoking rather than

**“One option would be to create a new regional counterterrorism forum for cooperation, which would have the necessary expertise and mandate to provide training and implement related counterterrorism capacity building efforts in South Asia.”**

preventing insurgencies in neighboring states is deepening suspicions among its neighbors and Western allies.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, India and Pakistan have been locked in a deadly dispute over Kashmir for decades.

These and other deeply rooted differences have crippled interstate cooperation. As V. Balachandran has noted, “unless states within the region can overcome their historical distrust, there can be no progress in eliminating terrorism and insurgency that cross national borders.”<sup>15</sup> Some countries have also used SAARC to cynically pursue short-

term foreign policy objectives vis-à-vis their rivals at the expense of promoting deeper regional cooperation.<sup>16</sup> Finally, technical limitations and a lack of capacity at the regional and national levels on the subcontinent are also impediments to action. A combination of a lack of confidence among its members and concerns about ceding individual state sovereignty has meant that SAARC members have been reluctant to create a strong secretariat for the organization or to provide it with the needed expertise, mandate, and resources to promote the implementation of SAARC policies and commitments.<sup>17</sup>

Although SAARC's political role should not be underestimated, given the obstacles above it may not be possible in the short-term for it to move beyond rhetorical statements and norm setting to encourage practical counterterrorism cooperation in the region. With suspicions about the connections between security services and terrorist groups and the unwillingness of states to empower SAARC to play a more active role in implementing measures to prevent and combat terrorism, more emphasis needs to be placed on promoting cooperation on technical measures that are less likely to be derailed by political disputes.

Therefore, it would be advisable to establish closer working relationships among “technical” counterterrorism experts through a forum other than SAARC. One option would be to create a new regional counterterrorism forum for cooperation, which would have the necessary expertise and mandate to provide training and implement related counterterrorism capacity building efforts in South Asia. It could also help to build trust among officials from different countries in the region by providing a medium for sharing

8 “SAARC States Team Up to Curb Trans-national Crimes,” *The Post* [Islamabad], April 17, 2008.

9 “India, Pakistan to Share Info on Terror Cases,” *Economic Times*, April 16, 2008.

10 Joby Warrick and Karen DeYoung, “CIA Helped India, Pakistan Share Secrets in Probe of Mumbai Siege,” *Washington Post*, February 16, 2009.

11 Donald Van Duyn, chief intelligence officer, Federal Bureau of Investigation, statement before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Washington, D.C., January 8, 2009.

12 Salman Masood, “Pakistan Postpones Mumbai Trial Again,” *New York Times*, October 3, 2009.

13 A record of SAARC Summit Declarations is available online at [www.saarc-sec.org/main.php?t=4.1](http://www.saarc-sec.org/main.php?t=4.1).

14 Shaun Gregory, “ISI and the War on Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30:12 (2007).

15 V. Balachandran, “Insurgency, Terrorism and Transnational Crime in South Asia,” in Amit Pandya and Ellen Laipson eds., *Transnational Trends: Middle East and Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, 2008).

16 For example, Smruti S. Pattanaik has noted that “a major hurdle before the organisation has been the failure of some of the member countries—especially Pakistan and Bangladesh—to overcome their proclivity to pursue political goals and limited national agendas within the regional framework.” See Smruti S. Pattanaik, “Making Sense of Regional Cooperation: SAARC at Twenty,” *Strategic Analysis* 30:1 (2006).

17 For a discussion of this point, see Kishore C. Dash, *Regionalism in South Asia: Negotiating Cooperation, Institutional Structures* (London: Routledge, 2008).

expertise and practices.<sup>18</sup> The police in Pakistan, for example, are “often closer to the front lines in combating terrorism, and better at collecting intelligence, than their counterparts in Pakistan’s powerful—and much better-funded—military.”<sup>19</sup> Building the capacity of, and trust between, law enforcement and judicial officials and other technical counterterrorism practitioners in the region is critical and could lead to higher levels of political cooperation against terrorism. In the end, SAARC could even endorse or incorporate such a mechanism into its secretariat if it proved successful.

According to Christine Fair, a Pakistan expert at Georgetown University, little U.S. funding has gone to assisting Pakistan’s police, a “mere 2.2 percent of the nearly \$12 billion provided as aid or military reimbursements under the generous Coalition Support Fund Program.”<sup>20</sup> Hassan Abbas, an expert on Pakistani police reform at Harvard University and a former Pakistani government official, argues that at “the least, half of all U.S. funds allocated for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency support in Pakistan should be given to the police and other civilian law enforcement agencies and be closely monitored.”<sup>21</sup> Abbas, who is critical of the U.S. “AFPAK” strategy for failing to sufficiently address law enforcement, calls on the United States to “push for more regional cooperation for fighting crime in South Asia.”<sup>22</sup>

18 This suggestion was initially explored in a project conducted by the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation and the International Peace Academy in 2008. See Eric Rosand, Naureen Chowdhry Fink and Jason Ipe, “Countering Terrorism in South Asia: Strengthening Multilateral Engagement,” International Peace Institute, May 2009.

19 Paul Wiseman and Zafar M. Sheikh, “Pakistani Police Overwhelmed, Underfunded,” *USA Today*, May 5, 2009.

20 C. Christine Fair, “From Strategy to Implementation: The Future of the U.S.-Pakistan Relationship,” testimony presented before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Washington, D.C., May 5, 2009.

21 Hassan Abbas, “Police & Law Enforcement Reform in Pakistan: Crucial for Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Success,” Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, Harvard University, April 2009.

22 Hassan Abbas, “Obama’s AfPak Metrics Miss the Mark on Pakistan,” *Foreign Policy*, September 21, 2009; Abbas, “Police & Law Enforcement Reform in Pakistan: Crucial for Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Success.”

In Southeast Asia, regional counterterrorism related training centers have played an important role in improving capacities and cooperation. Although the two regions are different and the longstanding tensions that exist between India and Pakistan—both nuclear-armed states—are not as acute among states within Southeast Asia, the Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) could provide a possible model for what might be accomplished in South Asia. The JCLEC and other regional training and information centers, including the U.S.-funded International Law Enforcement Academy in Bangkok and the Malaysian-funded Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counterterrorism, have all contributed significantly to improving informal, practical counterterrorism cooperation in that region. The information and training provided by these centers improve the capacities of law enforcement and other officials to conduct effective counterterrorism, criminal, and financial investigations. Through the contacts they forge, these centers also help to improve regional and international law enforcement cooperation. The separate Southeast Asian centers pursue discrete priorities according to the interests of their main funders. In the case of the JCLEC, Australia has partnered closely with Indonesia and has trained more than 3,000 law enforcement and legal officers on issues ranging from post-blast analysis, management of serious crime, financial investigations and criminal intelligence.<sup>23</sup> The JCLEC is located within the Indonesian National Police Academy.

With support from the United States and other donors with a keen interest in improving regional responses to terrorism in South Asia, a South Asian Law Enforcement Academy could be established and equipped in a neutral country in the region such as Bangladesh, which currently has four police training centers in Tangail, Noakhali, Rangpur, and Khulna.<sup>24</sup>

23 “Statement to the United Nations General Assembly Plenary for Sixth Committee on the Global Counterterrorism Strategy,” Susan Grace, director, Counterterrorism Cooperation Section, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, September 4, 2008.

24 For more information, see the Bangladesh Police website at [www.police.gov.bd/index5.php?category=107](http://www.police.gov.bd/index5.php?category=107).

The UN Counterterrorism Committee’s Executive Directorate (CTED) organized a regional workshop of law officers and prosecutors from across South Asia that took place in November 2009 in Dhaka, hosted by the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute.<sup>25</sup> Such initiatives are a step in the right direction in a region where creating opportunities for dialogue and cooperation at the operational level is urgently needed. Such externally sponsored workshops could eventually lead to higher-level political engagement among states in the region on a range of counterterrorism issues and help to set the stage for the establishment of a regional law enforcement center in South Asia. The UN’s involvement could also be valuable as a convener of activities by offering an alternative to bilateral engagement, which can limit participation and ownership among other stakeholders in the region.

### Conclusion

For the Obama administration to be effective in promoting greater cooperation to prevent and fight terrorism in South Asia, it will need to act decisively but also carefully so as not to exacerbate regional tensions. It should sponsor workshops and encourage the creation of a regional forum for cooperation where technical expertise can be exchanged and trust can be developed in pursuit of common objectives.

Following the example of Australia’s cooperation with Indonesia in Southeast Asia, the United States, through the departments of Justice and State, should facilitate and fund law enforcement cooperation at a regional level and sponsor a technically-focused forum for steadily building the necessary trust among countries in South Asia. By starting with less politically sensitive areas of training such as forensics and communications and by promoting cooperation on issues related to reducing narcotics trafficking and other transnational criminal activities, it is possible that trust could be established among police officials across the

25 “Summary of Event on Countering Terrorism in South Asia: Building Capacities and Strengthening Multilateral Engagement,” Center on Global Counterterrorism, May 20, 2009. Also see the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute website at [www.bei-bd.org](http://www.bei-bd.org).

subcontinent. This joint training would not only help to improve basic skills and allow access to more sophisticated equipment—both of which are severely lacking among many police officials in South Asia—but it could also allow for greater cooperation to take root and build the confidence that is necessary to strengthen regional and bilateral cooperation on intelligence sharing that helps monitor and stifle terrorist activity.

The challenges of forging counterterrorism cooperation in South Asia are formidable, as is evident from the limited results during the last 20 years of efforts mounted within SAARC. Funding and support for a regional law enforcement cooperation center on the subcontinent will have to be bolstered by much needed police reform efforts within individual countries in the region where corruption and lack of capacity remain major concerns. Although there is no guarantee that a willingness to cooperate among law enforcement officials in the region will take root as quickly as it has in other parts of the world, the urgent need for greater cooperation against terrorism demands bold action.

*Alistair Millar is Director of the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation in Washington, D.C.*

## Singapore's Approach to Counterterrorism

By Gavin Chua Hearn Yuit

SINGAPORE REPRESENTS A BASTION of general stability amid low intensity conflicts in Southeast Asia. It has not suffered a terrorist attack on its soil in almost two decades. Nevertheless, Singapore's counterterrorism community believes that the country could face a terrorist attack at any moment in the future, and by facing this reality it constantly attempts to respond to rapidly emerging terrorism trends.<sup>1</sup>

In the last year, for example, Asia has experienced two major terrorist attacks targeting hotels in Mumbai and Jakarta, both signifying an upward trend in sophistication and scale of terrorist operations. To adequately respond to these threats, Singapore has adopted social resilience as a key counterterrorism strategy.<sup>2</sup> Singapore's government considers race and religion the country's "most visceral and dangerous fault line."<sup>3</sup> It believes that reducing racial and religion tension<sup>4</sup> in this multi-ethnic and multi-religious country is critical in preventing future acts of terrorist violence in Singapore.<sup>5</sup>

1 "The Fight Against Terror," National Security Coordination Centre (NSCC), Singapore, 2004.

2 Through the government's community engagement programs and other initiatives to build social resilience, civilian communities are expected to develop capacities to "detect and prevent disruptions to a nation's security, and where necessary, to absorb shocks and bounce back into a functioning condition after a crisis as quickly as possible." Definition provided by the Centre of Excellence for National Security's Social Resilience program.

3 Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, National Day Rally Speech, August 16, 2009.

4 In the 1950s and 1960s, Singapore experienced race riots. One of the most prominent incidents was the "Prophet Muhammad Birthday Riots" between Malays and Chinese, which occurred on July 21, 1964. A Malay procession following the Prophet Muhammad's birthday celebrations attacked ethnic Chinese spectators. The country's race and religion fault line was also fueled by the crackdown on Singapore's Jemaah Islamiya branch in December 2001, when the possibility of a Singaporean terrorism threat became a reality. See "Appeal for Calm," *Straits Times*, July 22, 1964; Norman Vasu, "(En)counter-ing Terrorism: Multiculturalism and Singapore," *Asian Ethnicity* 9:1 (2008).

5 Of Singapore's 4.9 million residents, 74% are Chinese, 13% Malay, 9% Indian, and 3% other ethnicities. The

This article will first provide background on the history of terrorism in Singapore, including how the country has foiled a number of recent plots. It will then identify the Singapore government's various programs to establish social resiliency and reduce jihadist radicalization within its society. Finally, the article will show the steps Singapore has taken most recently to stir the public's imagination to the threat of terrorism to maintain public vigilance.

### Singapore's Experience with Terrorism

The last bombings to strike Singapore occurred in November-December 1987, targeting the American International Assurance building and Shell Tower. Before 1987, Singapore faced a number of other small-scale bombings, some involving Palestinian terrorists.<sup>6</sup> Then, in 1991, Singapore's counterterrorism apparatus received international attention when it successfully stormed a hijacked airliner and killed four terrorists claiming to be members of the Pakistan Peoples' Party.<sup>7</sup> Terrorist violence in Singapore faded out thereafter.

In the months after the 9/11 attacks, however, the threat of terrorism returned. Singapore's Internal Security Department (ISD) prevented Singapore's JI branch from launching a series of bomb attacks targeting foreign embassies and U.S. interests in the country in December 2001. The ISD detained a total of 13 JI members, including their spiritual

traditional Chinese religions, Buddhism and Taoism, account for 51% of the resident population. The proportion of Muslims and Hindus have remained relatively unchanged since 1990 at 15% and 4% respectively. Among the Chinese, there were more significant shifts in religious affiliation, with Buddhism and Christianity surpassing Taoism as the main religions from 1990 to 2000. In comparison, almost all Malays were Muslim without significant changes during the last 20 years. Among the Indians, Hinduism had the largest following (55%) and Islam accounted for slightly more than a quarter of Indians. The "Others" category refers to smaller ethnic minority groups, such as the Eurasians. See "Monthly Digest of Statistics Singapore," Singapore Department of Statistics, November 2009; "Singapore Census of Population, 2000," Singapore Department of Statistics, May 2001.

6 "Faber House Explosion," *Straits Times*, March 18, 1985.

7 "1991 - SQ117 Rescue," MINDEF History, Government of Singapore, 2006.

leader, Ibrahim Maidin. Maidin trained in Afghanistan in 1993, and wrote several letters to Taliban leader Mullah Omar and al-Qa`ida leader Usama bin Ladin.<sup>8</sup> Upon his return to Singapore, Maidin arranged for JI members to receive training in Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup> Subsequent arrests ensued in September 2004 and July 2006, crippling JI's network in Singapore.

Singapore has also faced a threat from homegrown radicalization. This was most vividly seen through the case of Abdul Basheer Kader, a 28-year-old Singaporean lecturer with a background in law.<sup>10</sup> Abdul Basheer was about to make contact with Lashkar-i-Tayyiba in Pakistan to train for "militant jihad" at the time of his arrest in Singapore in February 2007.<sup>11</sup> According to Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs, Abdul Basheer was affected by radical jihadist discourse read on the internet.<sup>12</sup>

In January 2008, Singapore authorities arrested three young men under the Internal Security Act for involvement in activities that posed a potential terrorist threat, including attempts to make improvised explosive devices and to join foreign "mujahidin networks" to wage armed jihad in Afghanistan, Palestine and Chechnya.<sup>13</sup>

Luckily, however, vigilance by Singapore's authorities managed to prevent these plots from actualization.

In February 2008, however, Singapore faced a major security breach when JI operative Mas Selamat Kastari escaped from a jail in the country. Kastari remained on the loose for more than a year until he was recaptured in Malaysia in May 2009 with the help of Singapore's intelligence services.

Nevertheless, the escape dealt a major blow to Singapore's counterterrorism reputation.

Kastari's escape raised the possibility of fissures developing within racial and religious harmony in Singapore. After his escape, Singaporean authorities considered the possible scenario of Kastari being harbored by jihadist sympathizers in the country, which would heighten sensitivities between Muslim and non-Muslim communities.<sup>14</sup> Minister Lim Swee Say described the

**"The RRG's objective is to counsel detained JI members and to counter their ideological beliefs. Since 2003, the RRG has performed more than 800 counseling sessions, and has progressively released some of the detainees on restriction orders."**

Kastari escape as a "test in inter-racial cohesion" as certain communities might "take a position based on their racial or religious groups and draw the line."<sup>15</sup> Fortunately, Singaporeans passed the test without creating any racial or religious tension.

The Kastari incident also presented a useful test for social resilience in Singapore. There was a period of public outrage and confusion about the escape directed at the government and expressed on various online blogs and forums,<sup>16</sup> but there were also concerted efforts made by various communities to "[put] up posters, [share] information on possible sightings and even offering rewards from their own pockets."<sup>17</sup>

14 "More Likely Fugitive has Fled," *Straits Times*, January 16, 2009. Also see "Capture of Mas Selamat: Lesson for All in Weeding Out Terrorism," *Straits Times Forum*, May 12, 2009.

15 "S'poreans Get A+ for Response on Mas Selamat's Escape: Swee Say," *Straits Times*, March 12, 2008.

16 See, for example, "90 days Since Escape...No More Information?" *Online Citizen*, May 26, 2008.

17 Speech by Professor S. Jayakumar at the Opening Cer-

#### Building Social Resilience to Terrorism

As a result of Singapore's multi-ethnic and multi-religious population, its leaders consistently stress the importance of social harmony. Inherent in speeches is the concern that a "single flashpoint" such as a terrorist attack could destroy decades of harmony building efforts.<sup>18</sup> Singapore Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew presented the public audience with a wildcard scenario:

If a Malay-Muslim Jemaah Islamiya member blew up a bomb in a Mass Rapid Transit station and the blast killed more Chinese and Indians than Malays, it would lead to non-Muslims distancing themselves from Muslims out of fear [such as in the aftermath of the London 7/7 bomb attacks in 2005].<sup>19</sup>

Singapore made early investments in building social resilience, an effort that would yield high dividends in the long run. One month after the Singapore JI network was exposed in December 2001, then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong proposed the concept of "Inter-Racial Confidence Circles" (IRCC) for each of the country's 84 constituencies,<sup>20</sup> and "Harmony Circles" for schools, work places and other local organizations.<sup>21</sup> A National Steering Committee was also established to provide broad guidance for IRCCs to deepen inter-racial and inter-religious rapport within communities.

The total IRCC membership reached 1,021 by June 2006, of which Chinese, Malays, Indians and other ethnicities constituted 58%, 21%, 20% and 1% respectively.<sup>22</sup> The IRCC was renamed "Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles" in September 2007, to reflect

emony for the Second Asia-Pacific Programme for Senior National Security Officers (APPSNO), April 14, 2008.

18 "Racial Harmony is Not a Given: MM, PM," *Straits Times*, July 19, 2009.

19 Ibid.

20 Singapore is divided into 84 constituencies that serve as electoral divisions and where community outreach activities are concentrated.

21 "Community Development: Promote Racial Harmony & Community Bonding," Government of Singapore's eCitizen portal, February 28, 2007.

22 "Challenges for IRCCs," *Straits Times*, January 14, 2007.

8 "Intelligence from Afghanistan Breaks Singapore Plot," CNN, January 11, 2002.

9 "The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism: White Paper," Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs, 2003.

10 "ISD Detains Self-Radicalised Singaporean," Channel News Asia, June 8, 2007.

11 Ibid.

12 Kumar Ramakrishna, "Self-Radicalisation: The Case of Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader," S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, June 11, 2007.

13 "Further Releases, Issuance of Restriction Orders & Detentions Under The Internal Security Act," Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs, January 24, 2008.

the new role of IRCCs in bridging different religious groups at the local level. In April 2008, the minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Vivian Balakrishnan, announced a six-fold increase in IRCC membership from 2006, with 84% of all religious organizations joining as members.<sup>23</sup> The key value of the IRCC network, according to Minister Balakrishnan, is “to make sure that in times of peace, we build relationships, trust and confidence. This will create a safety net for Singapore. If ever anything unfortunate were to happen, at that point in time, this safety net would be tested.”<sup>24</sup>

After the London 7/7 bomb attacks in 2005, the government launched the Community Engagement Program (CEP) in February 2006 to provide more integrated and comprehensive efforts in preparing the populace to be psychologically and socially resilient to terrorism. Example initiatives over the past few years include introducing Safety and Security Watch Groups at industrial and commercial premises; outreach to foreign worker populations through the foreign worker dormitories; and expanding the scope of Emergency Preparedness Exercises to cover the readiness to detect and prevent the fallout from potential communal tensions in a crisis.

Aside from the IRCC and CEP, the government also formed (formally in October 2005) the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), which is an unpaid, all-volunteer grouping of Islamic scholars and teachers who possess formal Islamic educational credentials from both local *madrasas* and foreign universities.<sup>25</sup> The RRG’s objective is to counsel detained JI members and to counter their ideological beliefs. Since 2003, the RRG has performed more than 800 counseling sessions, and has progressively released some of the detainees on restriction orders.<sup>26</sup>

The RRG has received attention from U.S. policymakers. In September 2005, terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman testified before the U.S. Congress on the usefulness of Singapore’s RRG program to “actively [enlist] moderate clerics as a way to get insight and then to use the information from...those clerics, to construct very effective information and psychological operations.”<sup>27</sup> In 2007, the U.S. military adopted parts of the RRG program model in Iraq, to offer an alternative to indefinite detention without trial. Marine Major-General Douglas M. Stone, a proponent of detention reform, who oversaw U.S. detention facilities in Iraq at the time, noted the progressiveness of the RRG with its very low recidivist rate, “making the Singapore model the most successful.”<sup>28</sup>

Even with the IRCC, CEP and RRG programs in place, clear signs remain to be seen that members of the public feel like equal stakeholders when it comes to countering terrorism and its threats to social resilience. The terrorist threat is not directly palpable to the public, in part an outcome of the “silent sentinel” effect of security and intelligence agencies operating behind the scenes effectively. A possible reason is the lack of terrorist attacks in Singapore. Yet, the recent Kastari escape has now sensitized the public to deal more directly with the effects of terrorism. New opportunities have arisen for closer public engagement toward building resilience to counter terrorism.

#### Keeping the Public Aware of the Threat

In 2009, there were three notable events and initiatives spearheaded by the government to engage the public about the dangers of terrorism. The first was Exercise Northstar VII, one of the most complex military exercises conducted in Singapore, involving more than 2,000 people from 15 agencies.<sup>29</sup> The exercise brought to the public

imagination a simulated Mumbai terrorist attack scenario, focusing on “soft targets” such as hotels, food and beverage outlets, and transportation networks. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong commented that in Mumbai, Indian civilians must have seen the terrorists moving through the streets carrying their equipment immediately before the attack. He wanted to make sure that civilians would immediately notify authorities if such an event were to occur in Singapore. “You must carry on living life as normal,” said Lee, “but at the same time always keep an eye open and be slightly suspicious and vigilant.”<sup>30</sup>

Second, the Singapore government introduced a series of measures to harden “soft targets” in the public sphere. A new Singapore Standard for Hotel Security was launched to enhance the conduct of systematic and regular reviews of emergency operating procedures, security plans and equipment.<sup>31</sup> The Police Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Unit was enlarged to form the Public Transport Security Command, where 400 policemen will patrol the bus interchanges and MRT stations.<sup>32</sup> Finally, the Singapore Infocomm Technology Security Authority was established to protect critical IT infrastructure against increasing global trends of cyber-espionage and cyber-terrorism.<sup>33</sup>

The third and final event was the Total Defense Display and “pledge moment” at the National Day Rally in August 2009. The purpose of the Total Defense Display was to showcase Singapore’s defense capability through an integrated demonstration of the country’s military, civil and social defense. The rally organizers sprung a surprise on the public audience with a simulated event of a bomb discovery at the rally venue, prompting momentary confusion and subsequently general

23 Speech by minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, at the National Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle Workshop, April 5, 2008.

24 “Religious Groups Roped into IRCCs,” *Straits Times*, September 7, 2007.

25 For an in-depth analysis of the RRG, see Kumar Ramakrishna, “A Holistic Critique of Singapore’s Counter-Ideological Program,” *CTC Sentinel* 2:1 (2009).

26 For more information, see the website of the Religious

Rehabilitation Group, located at [www.rrg.sg](http://www.rrg.sg).

27 Bruce Hoffman, “Evolving Counterterrorism Strategy,” statement to the House Committee on International Relations, September 29, 2005.

28 “Singapore Scheme Helps De-Radicalise Detainees in Iraq,” *Malaysian Insider*, April 20, 2009.

29 Background on the exercises can be located in the Singapore Ministry of Defense’s *Cyberpioneer* magazine, available at [www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/publications/cyberpioneer/index.html](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/publications/cyberpioneer/index.html).

30 “Exercise Northstar Tests Singapore’s Response to Terrorist Attack,” Channel News Asia, July 15, 2009.

31 “Launch of SS 545 Singapore Standard for Hotel Security,” SPRING Singapore, August 27, 2009.

32 “Public Transport Security Command to Enhance Train, Bus Safety,” Channel News Asia, August 4, 2009.

33 “Singapore Infocomm Technology Security Authority Set Up to Safeguard Singapore against IT Security Threats,” Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs, October 1, 2009.

awe at the Total Defense Display where the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and the Home Team (Ministry of Home Affairs and affiliate agencies) were able to showcase their capabilities and instill public confidence in Singapore's vigilance toward external threats.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the rally also introduced for the first time a "pledge moment" where at exactly 8:22 PM Singaporeans were invited to spend 30 seconds reciting the country's pledge to foster national unity. Participants also included 700 establishments and overseas Singaporeans residing in different time zones.

### Conclusion

All of these efforts show that the Singapore government is continuing forward with proactive measures to cope with emerging terrorist threats, and to foster national unity in the face of jihadist attempts to create divisions. Although the government hopes to avoid a terrorist attack in the future, it is cognizant of the various terrorist cells operating in the region that have killed scores of civilians in attacks on hotels and other civilian venues. Moreover, militants associated with JI continue to target Singapore, and the only reason the country has not become a victim is due to its success in foiling these plots thus far.

*Gavin Chua was a former civil servant at the National Security Coordination Secretariat (Risk Assessment and Horizon Scanning Program) at the Prime Minister's Office, Singapore. He is currently Co-Founder and Managing Partner (Strategy) at IntSight (www.intsight.net), a Singapore-based venture helping organizations to anticipate and manage emerging threats and opportunities. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Singapore.*

## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

November 1, 2009 (GLOBAL): The leader of al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula called on militants to bomb airports and trains in Western countries, explaining that explosives can easily be acquired from household materials. Nasir al-Wahayshi, the leader of the group, wrote in the jihadist magazine *Sada al-Malahim* that "you do not need to exert great effort or spend a lot of money to make 10 grams of explosives, more or less. Do not spend a long time searching for materials as they already exist in your mother's kitchen. Make them [explosives] in the shape of a bomb you hurl, or detonate through a timer or a remote detonator or a martyrdom-seeker belt or any electrical appliance." Al-Wahayshi also wrote that "it is a duty that a Muslim mujahid be busy planning to reap the heads of infidels." – *Reuters, November 2*

November 1, 2009 (IRAQ): Two suicide bombers—one in an explosives-laden vehicle and the other on foot wearing a suicide belt—killed two people just outside the city of Ramadi, Anbar Province. Iraqi authorities believe the bombers were targeting a passing police patrol. – *Reuters, November 1*

November 1, 2009 (IRAQ): A bomb on a bus near a police checkpoint in Karbala killed at least three people, including a policeman. – *Reuters, November 1*

November 1, 2009 (IRAQ): Explosives attached to a bicycle ripped through a popular market in Mussayab, a predominately Shi'a town that is 40 miles south of Baghdad. The explosion killed at least five people. – *Reuters, November 1*

November 1, 2009 (SOMALIA): A remotely-detonated bomb killed five senior military officers in northern Somalia's Sool region. – *Shabelle Media Network, November 1; UPI, November 1*

November 2, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Ahmad Wais Afzali, a New York City imam charged with four counts of making false statements to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, pleaded not guilty. Afzali is accused of alerting suspected terrorist Najibullah Zazi that he was

under surveillance. Before his arrest, Afzali had been used as an informant by the New York police. Prosecutors allege that Zazi admitted to taking explosives courses at an al-Qa`ida training camp in Afghanistan, and that he was planning to detonate bombs in the United States. – *Reuters, November 2*

November 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistan's government announced \$5 million in monetary rewards for information leading to the capture of top Pakistani Taliban commanders. The three most wanted commanders include Hakimullah Mehsud, Waliur Rahman and Qari Hussain, who each carry a \$600,000 reward for their capture, dead or alive. – *BBC, November 2*

November 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani troops gained control of Kaniguram, an important stronghold of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. On October 17, the Pakistan Army deployed at least 30,000 ground troops in a major offensive against TTP militants in South Waziristan. – *BBC, November 4*

November 2, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber on a motorbike detonated his explosives next to workers waiting for their salaries outside a bank near the four-star Shalimar Hotel in Rawalpindi. The blast killed at least 30 people. The attack occurred not far from the Pakistan Army headquarters. – *AFP, November 1; Guardian, November 2*

November 3, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Five British soldiers were shot to death by an Afghan policeman they were training in Helmand Province. The assailant managed to flee the scene. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, although it was not immediately clear whether they were involved. – *AP, November 4*

November 3, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani troops marched into Srarogha, an important stronghold of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Srarogha, located in South Waziristan Agency in Pakistan's tribal areas, is where former TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud signed his first peace accord with the government in February 2005. On October 17, the Pakistan Army deployed

34 "Multi-Sensory NDP Defence Display Set to Thrill Audiences," *Cyberpioneer*, June 29, 2009.

at least 30,000 ground troops in a major offensive against TTP militants in South Waziristan. – *AFP, November 3*

November 3, 2009 (YEMEN): Suspected al-Qa`ida militants killed seven members of Yemen's security forces in eastern Hadramawt Province. The men were ambushed as they traveled back from a post on the Saudi Arabian border. Three of the dead were senior officers, including the chief of the Political Security Organization for Hadramawt Province, the regional security chief, and the head of the regional criminal investigation division. Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula later took credit for the attack. According to the *New York Times*, which referred to an official Yemeni government statement, "The assailants opened fire on the motorcade's lead vehicle as it passed through the town of Kashm Alein in the Alabr district, causing the vehicle to collide with an oncoming truck in the opposite lane and burst into flames." – *BBC, November 4; Reuters, November 5; New York Times, November 3*

November 3, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine soldiers killed five militants from the Abu Sayyaf Group in Basilan Province in the southern Philippines. – *Mindanao Examiner, November 3*

November 4, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed four militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *Reuters, November 5*

November 5, 2009 (UNITED STATES): U.S. Army Major Nidal Malik Hasan opened fire on his own soldiers at the Ft. Hood military base in Texas, killing 13 people. Hasan was seriously wounded after being shot by a civilian police officer. Hasan, a graduate of Virginia Tech, was a military psychiatrist who was practicing at the Darnall Army Medical Center at Ft. Hood. Previously, he worked at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. He is 39-years-old. Later investigations revealed that Hasan was attempting to make contact with an individual associated with al-Qa`ida, according to ABC News. Various reports stated that Hasan, a Muslim, "seemed to have gradually become more radical in his disapproval of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan." – *Dawn, November 8; CNN,*

*November 7; ABC News, November 9*

November 5, 2009 (UNITED STATES): A U.S. court charged Tarek Mehanna and Ahmad Abousamra with providing and conspiring to provide material support to terrorists, conspiracy to kill in a foreign country, among other charges. Although Mehanna is in U.S. custody, Abousamra apparently left Boston for Syria almost three years ago after facing questions from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mehanna, a U.S. citizen, is a 27-year-old pharmacist who was living with his parents in the Boston suburbs when he was arrested on October 21, 2009. Mehanna and Abousamra allegedly conspired to attack civilians at a shopping mall, U.S. soldiers overseas, and two members in the federal government's executive branch. The two men have apparently been friends since childhood. – *Boston Globe, November 6; New York Times, October 21*

November 5, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani troops secured the Ladha Fort in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The town of Ladha is considered one of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP) most important strongholds. On October 17, the Pakistan Army deployed at least 30,000 ground troops in a major offensive against TTP militants in South Waziristan. – *Reuters, November 5*

November 6, 2009 (GLOBAL): A videotape of Usama bin Ladin appeared on Islamist web forums. It appears, however, that the video is the Pashtu-language version of a tape released in Arabic and Urdu in June-July 2009. The tape was titled, "To Our People in Pakistan." – *Reuters, November 6*

November 6, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani troops entered Makeen in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The town is considered the headquarters of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). On October 17, the Pakistan Army deployed at least 30,000 ground troops in a major offensive against TTP militants in South Waziristan. – *Reuters, November 6*

November 6, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Gunmen opened fire on an army brigadier and his driver in Islamabad, both of whom were wounded in the attack. Pakistan's *Dawn* said that the brigadier worked for a

military intelligence agency. The attack resembled the October 22 assassination of a brigadier who was shot to death in heavy rush hour traffic in Islamabad. On October 27, another brigadier was targeted by two gunmen on a motorcycle, but that attack did not result in any casualties. – *Reuters, November 6; New York Times, November 6; Guardian, October 22*

November 8, 2009 (NETHERLANDS): Dutch police arrested a Somali man at an asylum-seeking center in Dronten in the northern Netherlands. The man, identified in some press reports as Mohamud Said Omar, is wanted in the United States on terrorism charges. He is accused of helping Americans from the Somali diaspora travel to Somalia in 2007 and 2008 to take part in "jihad." U.S. prosecutors also allege that he financed weapons purchases for Islamist extremists. The United States has asked for the man to be extradited. – *Independent Online, November 11; Minneapolis Star-Tribune, November 13*

November 8, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a crowded market in Adazai, a town 10 miles south of Peshawar. The bomber targeted one of the city's local mayors, Abdul Malik, who was killed in the blast. Malik had previously been a Taliban supporter, but switched sides and formed a local militia to help fight against Taliban militants. A total of 12 people were killed. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed credit for the attack. – *AFP, November 7; Independent, November 8; Bloomberg, November 10*

November 8, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Police shot dead a suicide bomber as he ran toward a police checkpoint in Islamabad. The bomber was killed before he could detonate his explosives. – *Voice of America, November 9*

November 8, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants fired rockets at a security checkpoint in Makeen, located in South Waziristan Agency, killing four Pakistani soldiers. Soldiers responded and killed eight militants. – *AFP, November 9*

November 9, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in a rickshaw killed three people at a police checkpoint in Peshawar. – *Voice of America, November 9*

November 9, 2009 (ALGERIA): An Algerian court sentenced three Moroccans—Yacine Bouheltit, Bilel al-Aloui and Mohamed al-Hamedi—to three years in jail for trying to join al-Qa`ida fighters in Iraq. The men illegally crossed into Algeria from Morocco and were arrested after authorities intercepted their cell phone conversation with an Algerian militant. The Algerian militant was going to take the three Moroccans to Islamist strongholds in northern Algeria and then to Iraq to join al-Qa`ida. – *Reuters, November 10*

November 9, 2009 (PHILIPPINES): The severed head of a kidnapped school principal, Gabriel Canizares, was found in a bag left at a gas station in Jolo in Sulu Province, located in the southern Philippines. Canizares was kidnapped by Abu Sayyaf Group militants on October 19 in Sulu's Patikul town. He was beheaded after his family failed to pay his \$42,000 ransom. – *Mindanao Examiner, November 9; BBC, November 9*

November 10, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle killed at least 24 people in Charsadda in the North-West Frontier Province. – *Bloomberg, November 10; GEO TV, November 10*

November 11, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber riding a motorcycle attacked NATO troops in southern Afghanistan's Zabul Province. Two civilians were killed in the explosion. – *Dawn, November 11*

November 11, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani police arrested seven suspected militants in the commercial hub of Karachi. The suspected militants are part of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and they were allegedly planning to attack security agency offices and officials in Karachi. The suspects were arrested following a shoot-out in the city. – *Reuters, November 12*

November 12, 2009 (GERMANY): The U.S. State Department extended a travel alert for Germany, urging Americans to remain cautious as a result of al-Qa`ida's recent threats against the country. The alert replaced another alert that was issued in September and expired on November 11. The new alert will remain in effect until February 10. The alert states, "Over the past few

months, al Qaeda has released videos threatening to conduct terrorist attacks against German interests. While these threats initially mentioned the German federal elections in September, al Qaeda continues to threaten Germany." – *CNN, November 13*

November 12, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Gunmen killed a Pakistani working at the Iranian Consulate in Peshawar. – *AP, November 19*

November 12, 2009 (MAURITANIA): Twenty-five Mauritanian detainees issued a statement from a prison in Nouakchott renouncing Islamic extremism. The detainees are mostly members of al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. – *AFP, November 12*

November 13, 2009 (UNITED STATES): The U.S. government announced that it will prosecute Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, the "mastermind" of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, in a Manhattan federal courtroom. Four other co-conspirators will be charged alongside him. – *New York Times, November 14*

November 13, 2009 (GERMANY): The German government announced that it will send 120 more soldiers to northern Afghanistan to reinforce its base in Kunduz Province. Germany has the third-largest troop contingent in the NATO-led mission, consisting of 4,200 soldiers. – *Reuters, November 13*

November 13, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber in a vehicle attacked a U.S. military convoy on the outskirts of Kabul, wounding nine NATO personnel, 10 civilian contractors and three Afghans. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. – *New York Times, November 13*

November 13, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle struck the regional headquarters of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency in Peshawar. At least 10 people were killed in the explosion, which caused the partial collapse of the building. – *Christian Science Monitor, November 13; Reuters, November 13*

November 13, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle killed at least eight people at a

police station in Bannu in the North-West Frontier Province. At least five of the dead were policemen. – *Christian Science Monitor, November 13; The Nation, November 14*

November 14, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in a vehicle detonated his explosives in Peshawar, killing at least 11 people. Two policemen were among the dead. According to news reports, the bomber "detonated explosives when police asked him to stop for a search." – *al-Jazeera, November 14*

November 15, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants attacked a police post in Arghandab district of Kandahar Province, killing eight Afghan policemen. – *Reuters, November 16*

November 15, 2009 (IRAQ): Gunmen posing as Iraqi soldiers executed 13 members of the same tribe in two villages in Abu Ghurayb district on the outskirts of Baghdad. Authorities believe that al-Qa`ida in Iraq was behind the execution-style killings. One of the men killed was the head of the Iraqi Islamic Party in the area. – *Christian Science Monitor, November 17*

November 15, 2009 (YEMEN): Takeo Mashimo, a 63-year-old Japanese engineer, was kidnapped near Sana`a by tribesmen seeking to exchange him for one of their relatives held by police. – *AFP, November 22*

November 16, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants fired rockets at a bazaar in Tagab district of Kapisa Province, killing at least four Afghan civilians. The location of the attack was near the site of a meeting between French soldiers and local tribal leaders. – *New York Times, November 16*

November 16, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle killed four people during an attack on a police station just outside Pakistan's Badaber air force base near Peshawar. – *Reuters, November 16; CNN, November 17*

November 17, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants blew up a girls' school in Khyber Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. No one was at the property when it was destroyed. – *AFP, November 16*

November 17, 2009 (NORTH AFRICA): Daniel Benjamin, the U.S. State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism, told a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee that al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is less likely to target Europe, primarily as a result of increased pressure on the group from Algerian security forces. According to Benjamin, "We currently view the near-term possibility of such an expansion of operations [to Europe] as less likely than it was just a few years ago. This, in large measure, is because of the pressure on the group in Algeria." - *Reuters, November 17*

November 17, 2009 (THAILAND): Security forces killed six suspected separatists in southern Thailand's Pattani Province. - *al-Jazeera, November 18*

November 18, 2009 (UNITED STATES): A U.S. district judge in Miami sentenced two brothers to six and seven years in jail for swearing allegiance to al-Qa`ida and plotting to blow up Chicago's Sears Tower. The brothers, Burson and Rotschild Augustine, were members of the so-called Liberty Five, a U.S. group that sought contact with al-Qa`ida and plotted to conduct a series of terrorist attacks in the United States. - *AFP, November 18*

November 18, 2009 (IRAQ): U.S. General Ray Odierno, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, told reporters that al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) is becoming dominated by Iraqis and less by foreigners. According to Odierno, AQI is increasingly joining forces with members of Saddam Hussein's Ba`ath Party. "Al Qaeda in Iraq has transformed significantly in the last two years," said Odierno. "What once was dominated by foreign individuals has now become more and more dominated by Iraqi citizens." - *Reuters, November 18*

November 19, 2009 (UNITED STATES): A U.S. district judge in Miami handed down prison terms of eight and nine years to Stanley Phanor and Patrick Abraham for swearing allegiance to al-Qa`ida and plotting to blow up Chicago's Sears Tower. The men were members of the so-called Liberty Five, a U.S. group that sought contact with al-Qa`ida and plotted to conduct a series of terrorist attacks in the United States. - *AFP, November 19*

November 19, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed six militants, including three foreigners, in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. - *Dawn, November 20*

November 19, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a court building in Peshawar, killing 19 people. - *Reuters, November 19; AP, November 20*

November 20, 2009 (UNITED STATES): A U.S. district judge in Miami sentenced Narseal Batiste to 13 ½ years in prison for being the ringleader of the so-called Liberty Five, a U.S. group that sought contact with al-Qa`ida and plotted to conduct a series of terrorist attacks in the United States, including bombing Chicago's Sears Tower. Batiste faced a maximum of 70 years in prison. According to the Associated Press, "The sentencing Friday marked the culmination of a case that began with an FBI raid in June 2006 on the group's warehouse, known as the 'Embassy,' in Miami's impoverished Liberty City neighborhood. Top U.S. officials acknowledged at the time that the Sears Tower and FBI plots never got past the discussion stage and the group never acquired the means to carry out such audacious attacks." - *AP, November 20*

November 20, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan Member of Parliament Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf narrowly escaped an assassination attempt near Kabul. His convoy was struck by a remotely-detonated bomb, killing five of his bodyguards. - *Voice of America, November 20*

November 20, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber riding a motorcycle detonated his explosives in the capital of Farah Province, killing at least 12 people. - *AFP, November 19*

November 20, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed eight people, including foreign militants, in Mir Ali in North Waziristan Agency. - *Dawn, November 20*

November 21, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): A rocket struck the wall of the five-star Serena Hotel in downtown Kabul. Another rocket hit the front of the Rabia Balkhi hospital. A total of four

people were wounded in the attack. - *AFP, November 21*

November 21, 2009 (PAKISTAN): An explosion ripped through the offices of an aid agency, Shift International, in Peshawar. A security guard was wounded. - *AP, November 20*

November 23, 2009 (UNITED STATES): Federal authorities in the United States unsealed terrorism-related charges against eight men accused of recruiting at least 20 young Somali-Americans from Minnesota to join al-Shabab, an Islamist insurgent group, in Somalia. - *Washington Post, November 24*

November 23, 2009 (YEMEN): Japanese engineer Takeo Mashimo, who was kidnapped by Yemeni tribesmen near Sana'a on November 15, was released after a week of captivity. The release occurred after negotiations by Yemen's government. - *AP, November 23*

November 23, 2009 (MAURITANIA): Mohamed Ould Ahmed, a 23-year-old suspected member of al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), was recently indicted in Mauritania over his role in a September 2008 attack that left 11 Mauritanian soldiers dead. - *AFP, November 23*

November 24, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistan's military killed 18 militants in Bara, close to the city of Peshawar, in a new operation against Taliban militants. The purpose of the new operation was to capture mountain heights and strategic locations from militants who have been assaulting Peshawar in recent weeks. - *AP, November 24*

November 25, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Mullah Omar, the leader of the Afghan Taliban, purportedly released a new statement declaring that U.S.-led forces will be defeated in Afghanistan even if they increase their troop numbers. He also called on his followers to "break off all relations with the stooge administration in Kabul." He said, "The invading Americans want [holy warriors] to surrender, under the pretext of negotiations. This is something impossible." - *Los Angeles Times, November 26*

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**CONTACT**

Combating Terrorism Center  
U.S. Military Academy  
607 Cullum Road, Lincoln Hall  
West Point, NY 10996  
Phone: (845) 667-6383  
Email: [sentinel@usma.edu](mailto:sentinel@usma.edu)  
Web: [www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/)

\* For Press Inquiries: (845) 667-6383

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

November 25, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Suspected Taliban militants destroyed a tanker supplying fuel to NATO troops in neighboring Afghanistan. The attack occurred just outside the city of Peshawar. – *AFP, November 24*

November 25, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Pakistan's government charged seven men with involvement in the November 2008 terrorist assault on India's financial hub of Mumbai. Two of the men, Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi and Zarrar Shah, have been accused by India of masterminding the attacks. – *AP, November 25*

November 25, 2009 (MALI): Pierre Kamat, a French national, was kidnapped by gunmen in Mali's remote east. A Malian security official said that Kamat is being held by militants from al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb. – *Reuters, November 26; AFP, November 27*

November 26, 2009 (PAKISTAN): A roadside bomb exploded in Peshawar, injuring two policemen and an 11-year-old girl. The attack targeted a police station chief. – *BBC, November 26*

November 26, 2009 (YEMEN): Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula released a new video showing the corpse of abducted Yemeni security official Bassam Tarbush. According to Reuters, "The video showed group members preparing to shoot Tarbush, kidnapped in June according to Yemeni media, for spying on Islamic militants, but the actual shooting was not shown. The footage later carried a still photograph apparently showing his corpse with facial cuts." – *Reuters, November 26*

November 27, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Tooryalai Wesa, the governor of Kandahar Province, escaped assassination after a remote-controlled bomb exploded under his convoy. The governor was not injured. – *Los Angeles Times, November 28*

November 27, 2009 (PAKISTAN): Shahpoor Khan, a key anti-Taliban tribal leader, was killed by a roadside bomb as he returned home from saying prayers for the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Khan was an important ally of the Bajaur authorities. – *AFP, November 26*

November 28, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Twelve prisoners escaped from a jail in Farah Province. A 13<sup>th</sup> prisoner, who was apprehended as he tried to escape, explained that the tunnel took 10 days to dig and that the plan was to slowly empty the prison overnight. The escaped inmates include low-level Taliban militants along with drug dealers and other minor criminals, according to local authorities. – *AP, November 28*

November 28, 2009 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan border police said they killed 27 Taliban-linked insurgents during a clash in Khost Province. Police also said that they captured a Chechen fighter during the fighting. – *AFP, November 28*

November 29, 2009 (MAURITANIA): Three Spanish aid workers traveling in a convoy were abducted by armed gunmen on the road between the capital Nouakchott and the coastal trading city of Nouadhibou. Authorities suspect that al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb is holding the aid workers. – *Voice of America, December 2; Reuters, November 29; AFP, November 30*

November 30, 2009 (UNITED KINGDOM): British Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced that he will send 500 more soldiers to Afghanistan, bolstering the United Kingdom's total troop force in the country to 9,500. When including special forces, however, the total British troop commitment will exceed 10,000. – *Guardian, November 30*

November 30, 2009 (CANADA): A Canadian judge ruled that Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub be freed from custody under strict conditions. The government is trying to deport Mahjoub on the grounds that he was a high-ranking member of an Egyptian terrorist organization. – *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, November 30*

November 30, 2009 (ITALY): Two former Guantanamo Bay detainees who will be tried in Italy on terrorism charges arrived in Milan. The men, Adel Ben Mabrouk and Mohamed Ben Riadh Nasri, are both Tunisian. Officials said that the men are members of a terrorist group linked to al-Qa`ida and allegedly recruited fighters for Afghanistan. – *AP, December 1*