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TALIBAN AIM TO ELIMINATE U.S. BASES IN NURISTAN

In the wake of an attack that nearly overran a U.S. military outpost in Afghanistan's Nuristan province, the Taliban have released a statement in the name of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan describing the attack as part of a larger campaign to drive the U.S. military out of their bases in Nuristan. The statement appeared in the October-November issue of the Taliban's *Al-Sumud* magazine.

An October 3 attack by some 300 Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami fighters on Combat Outpost (COP) Keating (occupied jointly by U.S. and ANA forces) left eight Americans dead and 24 wounded. The attack on COP Keating was similar, in both scale and ferocity, to the Taliban attack on the U.S. outpost at Wanat in July, 2008 that left nine U.S. soldiers dead and 27 wounded.

The isolated outposts in Nuristan were meant to provide some control of the passes through the rugged terrain of the Hindu Kush along the border with Pakistan. In winter these outposts are extremely difficult to supply. COP Keating, surrounded by high ground on three sides, was unable to conduct patrols outside the perimeter.

Nuristan's Governor, Jamaluddin Badar, told an Afghan daily that the Taliban commander of Kamdesh and Barg-i-Matal districts, Mullah Abdur Rehman Mustaghni, was killed in an American airstrike on October 9. The report was



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verified by General Muhammad Afzal, commander of the 201st “Selab” (Flood) Corps of the Afghan National Army (ANA), but was denied by a Taliban spokesman (Pajhwok Afghan News, October 10).

As might be expected, the Taliban have exaggerated their success at COP Keating, describing the camp of 90 Afghan policemen and 50 U.S. troopers of the 61st Cavalry Regiment as “one of the most important and biggest U.S. bases.” While the Taliban forces overran part of the outpost, the arrival of air support allowed U.S. forces to retake the post before destroying it in their withdrawal. The Taliban claim “army soldiers are surrendering to the mujahideen [in Kamdesh district] on a daily basis.” They also warned of “more dangerous outcomes, such as an armed mass rebellion, which happened many times in the units of the Soviet army in Afghanistan.”

The Taliban statement also claimed that the expulsion of U.S. forces from Nuristan would deal a blow to Israel, which it alleges to be profiting from a trade in “plundered” diamonds from Nuristan, a known source of gemstones. “As usual, where there is wealth and opportunities, there must be Jews around.” The Taliban see the U.S. occupation of the region as part of the region’s economic exploitation. “From the beginning, the U.S. Army estimated that the blood of its soldiers is cheaper than diamonds, precious stones, interests of Jewish banks, the oil of Afghanistan and middle Asian countries, and 9,000 tons of opium plundered for free from Afghanistan at the beginning of every summer.”

With Wanat already abandoned, U.S. troops pulled out four days after the attack from COPs Keating and Lowell as well as Observation Post Fritsche in Kamdesh in what was described as a preplanned withdrawal (*Army Times*, November 3). Some U.S. forces remain in the Nuristan capital of Parun to protect the governor and the local administration (*Asia Times*, October 29). Qari Ziaur Rahman, a Taliban commander closely tied to the Arab militants of al-Qaeda, now has effective control of most of Nuristan. The Taliban described the decision to withdraw as “one of the realistic decisions taken by the U.S. Army, which will certainly be followed by similar ones.”

The U.S. withdrawal from its outposts in Nuristan and four others near the South Waziristan border has not been well received in Pakistan, where Pakistani government forces are in the middle of a major military operation

designed to eliminate the Taliban terrorist threat in South Waziristan. With the operation having been long encouraged by Washington, Pakistani observers now wonder why an apparent Taliban escape route has been opened along the border with Afghanistan. Pakistani intelligence intercepts are said to reveal that Qari Ziaur Rehman has invited at least one Pakistani Taliban commander to move his operations to Nuristan (*The News* [Islamabad], October 18). The American withdrawal during Pakistani operations on the other side of the border is a major change from 2008’s Operation Lion Heart, when U.S. forces in eastern Afghanistan coordinated with the Pakistani military to put pressure on Taliban groups along both sides of the border.

According to the statement, the Taliban of Nuristan now have their sights set on destroying a U.S. military base in Nuristan’s Nurgram district and three other military bases in the Ghaziabad district of bordering Kunar province. The remaining posts of the “local enemy forces” (i.e. the ANA) “are not considered a big obstacle against the operations of the mujahideen.”

Nuristan, with its remote and inaccessible mountain settlements, provided a refuge for the older religions and languages of Afghanistan. The region was known as Kafiristan (Home of the Unbelievers) until its largely pagan population was converted to Islam after being conquered by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan in 1896. The Nuristanis became famous for their resolute resistance to British and Soviet invaders and have shown their intention to add Americans to the list of unsuccessful occupants of the area. According to the Taliban, “The occupiers themselves have repeatedly said that Afghanistan is the graveyard of the empires and the daily events prove the veracity of their review of historic events.”

CRACKS BEGIN TO SHOW IN THE LORD’S RESISTANCE ARMY

A sustained cross-border campaign by Uganda’s Special Forces to eliminate the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in cooperation with the military of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) of South Sudan appears to be yielding results nearly a year after Operation Lightning Thunder began.

The perilous condition of the scattered LRA forces was best revealed by the surrender of senior LRA commander

Charles Arop, notorious for his supervision of a typically senseless LRA massacre of 143 Congolese civilians in the village of Faradje using axes, clubs and machetes on Christmas Day, 2008 (*New Vision* [Kampala], November 5; AFP, November 5). Continuing in a means of propagating itself, the LRA kidnapped 160 children for use as labor, sex-slaves or fighters (the latter must usually murder their own parents as part of the LRA's method of breaking the mental resistance of its recruits). Arop recently commanded a force of over 100 fighters, but continuous attacks by the Ugandans devastated his command. Referring to Arop's surrender, Lieutenant-Colonel Felix Kulayigye of the Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF) noted, "He was only left with one fighter, so what choice did he have?" (AFP, November 5).

Among those to come in recently was the last of the four wives of feared LRA Brigade Commander Okello Kalalang, who was killed in a September bombardment of LRA positions in the Central African Republic (CAR).

Other rebels are reportedly eager to surrender due to the deteriorating conditions in LRA camps, though all are aware that escape attempts are punished by the LRA with instant death. The breakup of the LRA into smaller units following the onslaught of Operation Lightning Thunder has weakened the movement's capabilities, with the small units constantly on the move. According to the recently surrendered Lieutenant Francis Opira; "Life has become hard. We are few, which forces us to do a lot of work. Walking in the long bushes has also become tiresome" (*New Vision*, November 3). The large number of LRA officers and NCOs that have turned themselves in demonstrates a loosening of the iron discipline that once kept the LRA in the field despite a distinct absence of popular support. Without constant indoctrination, many of the abductees who form the majority of the LRA's strength have begun to think of a return home under the lenient conditions being offered by Kampala.

A group of nine LRA members who surrendered following a late October battle in the Central African Republic cited a power vacuum in the leadership and a shortage of food in the bush as the main reasons behind their submission. All nine were under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Otto Malaba and Lieutenant Ochen, who continue to operate along the DRC-CAR border (*Daily Monitor* [Kampala], November 2).

Turkish Navy's Fight Against Piracy in the Gulf of Aden Serves Foreign Policy Goals

By Emrullah Uslu

In February, the Turkish Parliament approved a government motion allowing Ankara to deploy Turkish naval forces (Turk Deniz Kuvvetleri) as part of Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151), an international anti-piracy naval force operating off the coast of Somalia. The motion called for a one-year limit to the deployment in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somali coast, where scores of commercial vessels have been hijacked by pirates. After parliamentary approval, the Turkish frigate TCG *Giresun* (former USS *Antrim*) set sail from the Aksaz naval base on the Aegean coast to Somalia as part of a U.N.-led effort to prevent pirates from hijacking foreign ships (*Anadolu Ajansi*, February 18).

Since February, Turkish warships in the mission have engaged in numerous clashes with pirates. Recently the Turkish navy frigate TCG *Gediz* launched an operation against a pirate vessel allegedly planning to hijack a Greek commercial ship and subsequently detained five pirates. The Turkish General Staff posted a note on its webpage and shared the following details about the incident: "Kalashnikovs, one musket, four RPG-7 rounds, three AK-47 clips and 21 cans of benzene during the operation launched against the pirate skiff after responding immediately to a call for help" (tsk.mil.tr, November 6). The *Gediz* is a former Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigate with 20 years of service in the U.S. Navy as the USS *John A Moore* before it was re-commissioned in the Turkish Navy.

In September the *Gediz* launched an operation against pirates who were attacking two Panamanian registered merchant ships, detaining seven pirates (NTV, September 27). In July and August Turkish commanders conducted several operations against pirates and detained at least ten pirates (*Anadolu Ajansi*, July 24; August 11). On November 6 the *Gediz* intervened to prevent the hijacking of the Greek-owned MV *Theodoros* (Athens News Agency-Macedonian News Agency, November 6; Montena Informativna Agencija, November 5; *Today's Zaman*, November 6). The *Gediz* fired warning shots at the pirates before deploying a helicopter in support. The

action resulted in the capture of five pirates (*Hurriyet*, November 5). [1]

Turkish participation in the international force against piracy in and around Somalia is not limited to the two G class frigates, TCG Gokava (former *USS Samuel Eliot Morison*) and TCG Gediz. Turkish Rear Admiral Caner Bener took command of CTF 151 between May 3 and August 15. Turkey was the second nation to command the international counter-piracy task force and the occasion marked the first time Turkey had commanded a combined naval task force (AFP, April 24; denizhaber.com, May 15).

Unlike the Turkish Army's role in international operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan, the Turkish Navy's role in CTF-151 is a relatively new phenomenon. Though Turkish ships have been part of international military exercises (including NATO exercises), Turkish naval ships have not participated in international operations that require armed engagement with other forces. In addition to participating in CTF-151, the Turkish navy has already taken a role in the combined naval task force operating off the coast of Lebanon since 2006 as part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

Turkey's participation in the international force off Somalia became part of the public debate when two Turkish commercial ships, MV *Karagol*, an oil/chemical tanker, and the MV *Yasa Neslihan*, a bulk carrier, were hijacked by pirates in October 2008 (turksam.org, February 18, 2009). Both ships were released after the payment of a ransom. In July 2009, another Turkish cargo ship, the MV *Horizon-1*, was hijacked and kept under the pirates' control for more than three months (*Sabah*, July 8). The Turkish navy planned an operation against the pirates holding the *Horizon-1*, but the owner of the ship refused the offer, preferring to pay a ransom to save the ship and crew. After its release, the ship was accompanied by the *Gediz* to the Jordanian port of Aqaba (*Hurriyet*, October 6).

While Western analysts have examined the possible ties between terrorism and piracy, including the possibility of using a hijacked ship to damage or otherwise take down a major port, Turkish security analysts have not paid much attention to the issue. For instance, while two leading Turkish security think tanks have released reports about the Turkish military's role against piracy, neither addressed the possible relationships between terrorism and piracy. [2]

Turkey's naval cooperation with the international community is related to two main issues. First is the recent growth of the Turkish shipping industry. More and more, Turkish-owned commercial ships are on the high seas where piracy is considered one of the main threats to Turkey's emerging shipping business. Second is Turkey's new foreign policy perspective, which seeks to be active in the international community in order to gain its support for Turkish issues, such as the nation's fight against terrorism. The measures appear to be paying off, with Ankara gaining more international support for its counter-terrorism efforts than ever before.

Notes:

1. Details of the mission of the *Gediz* to Somalia may be found at http://www.dzkk.tsk.tr/turkce/FAALIYETLER/duyurular/090621_tcg_gediz_bilgi.php.
2. Dr. Celalettin Yavuz, "Turk Deniz Kuvvetleri ve Somali'de Korsan Avi," February 18, 2009, <http://www.turksam.org/tr/a1588.html>, and Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies, "The Struggle Against Piracy; The Somalia Case and Turkey's Position, March 2009.-" <http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/showReport.aspx?ID=2>.

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Neo-Zarqawists Target the Arab Christians of Jordan

By Murad Batal al-Shishani

On October 15, the State Security Court of Jordan imposed jail sentences of 15 to 20 years on 12 alleged Jordanian members of al-Qaeda accused of attacks against a church in the Kingdom last year (*Al-Ghad* [Amman], October 16; *Al-Rai* [Amman], October 16). In a reaction similar to those seen in trials of Salafi-Jihadis, plot leader Shaker al-Khatib and the rest of the convicted group prostrated themselves, thanking Allah as a sign of defiance against the court (*al-Jazeera*, October 15).

Al-Khatib and four others in the group, aged between 19 and 28, received the death penalty, but the court commuted the sentence to 20 years in prison "because

they are young and should be given a chance to repent.” The other seven were handed 15-year sentences.

This group was charged in July 2008 with carrying out terrorist attacks and manufacturing and using explosives. According to a Jordanian official, “The al-Qaeda members tried to attack a Latin church in Irbid [in North Jordan] in July last year after a Christian boy allegedly insulted the Prophet Muhammed, but the attempt failed...Following that, they attacked the same church again using Molotov [cocktail bombs] and a Christian cemetery in Irbid, but caused no casualties” (AFP, October 16).

Targeting Christians or their churches in Jordan seems to be a significant development in jihadi violence in Jordan. This switch appears to be inspired by the alleged targeting of Iraqi churches by the late leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, before he was killed in June 2006 (see *Terrorism Focus*, February 6).

The Christians of Jordan are an original part of Jordanian society, which explains their integration into the tribal system of Jordan and their attainment of high political and military ranks. Prior to these attacks, there were no records of sectarian incidents against them in Jordan. The Christians and their places of worship were not formerly major targets for the Salafi-Jihadis, but it seems that the new generation of Salafi-Jihadis (the neo-Zarqawists) is inspired by al-Zarqawi’s legacy of targeting the “non-believers,” such as Shiites, Christians, and Jews.

Jordanian Christians represent between 4-5% of the total population. In January 2009, Jordanian authorities designated the “Council of Church Leaders in Jordan” as the only Christian body recognized by the government. The council includes leaders of the four traditional Christian faiths: the Bishops of the Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic (Melkite), Roman Catholic, and Armenian Orthodox Churches. There are other Christian churches that are not represented in the council, such as the Evangelist Church, Assemblies of God Church, Church of the Messiah, the Coptic Church and the Maronite Church. The decision by the Jordanian government came after its decision to extradite Protestant evangelists because they “were trying to convert members of Jordan’s older Christian faiths” (ammonnews.net, January, 30). American evangelist movements have targeted the traditional

churches of the Middle East (Coptic, Syriac, etc.) for conversion since the 19th century.

In his criticism of al-Zarqawi, his former mentor Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi urged young jihadis not to target churches, elderly tourists, or other civilians on the grounds that such targets are typically chosen because they are easy, not because they have strategic value to jihad (al-Jazeera July 6, 2005; *al-Hayat*, July 10, 2005; see also *Terrorism Monitor*, July 9). Al-Zarqawi responded by denying that al-Qaeda in Iraq targeted Arab Christians or other civilians. “Even though these are non-Muslim groups, they have not demonstrated to us that they have become partners of the Crusaders in their fighting against the jihad fighters, and they do not play the base role played by the Shiites” (al-Hesbah, July 2005).

Despite his claims of innocence regarding the killing of Christians and civilians, the legacy of al-Zarqawi has played a major role in creating a more radical generation of jihadis, especially in the Levant region. The Jordanian trials of jihadis started in the early 1990s but did not show Christians to be among the jihadis’ targets before 2004, when the plots related to al-Zarqawi started to appear. In 1991 the Jaysh Muhammad (Army of Muhammad) case revealed that the defendants felt they were permitted to steal from Christians in order to use the funds for the sake of jihad based on an old fatwa (religious ruling) issued by the Egyptian Gama’a al-Islamiya terrorist group in the early 1980s. In a later case known locally as the “Conspiracy of the Millennium,” a Christian site was among the tourist-related targets that the group planned to attack in late 1999. However, this site may well have been chosen largely because of the media exposure it would garner.

Last March, the State Security Court of Jordan sentenced three Jordanians to 22½ years in prison for plotting a suicide car bomb attack on a church in Amman. Their plan called for bombing a Roman Catholic Church in Amman’s eastern district of Marka after initially planning to strike against a police battalion. Convicted ringleader Majid Muhammad Nasr was apparently radicalized in prison by al-Qaeda operatives linked to al-Qaeda in Iraq, including Iraqi Ziyad Karbouli, who is serving his sentence in Jordan (*Al-Riyadh*, June 27, 2008; for Karbouli, see *Terrorism Focus*, May 31, 2006).

Following a long period of co-existence, the various plots against Christian targets that have emerged in

the last year and the recruitment of Tha'ir Abd-al-Qadir al-Wahidi by Jordanian Islamists to attack a visiting Lebanese Christian Choir in Amman in January demonstrate a major shift in the Islamist view of traditional Arab Christians in Jordan, a change that can ultimately be traced back to the influence of al-Zarqawi on a new generation of jihadis (*Dar al-Hayat*, January 28; see also *Terrorism Focus*, February 6).

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The Hunt for Pakistan's Most Wanted Terrorists

By Mukhtar A. Khan

Despite the fact that the Pakistani military has pushed Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters out of 90 percent of their stronghold in the South Waziristan tribal agency bordering Afghanistan, there are no indications as yet of weakness on the part of the Taliban. The Taliban have instead stepped up their suicide attacks on major cities like Peshawar, Islamabad and Lahore, hitting military targets and security checkpoints as well as civilian positions. All of these activities are carried out in a very coordinated and disciplined way which reveals a determined and well-knitted network across the country. It is a fact that Pakistan's military operations and the fear of increasing drone attacks have collapsed their communication system in the tribal areas, but this deficiency has been covered by the Taliban and their "sleeper cells" in southern Punjab (*Dawn* [Karachi], October 24). So far, the military operation has been successful in reclaiming territory from the Taliban but has failed to put an end to the increasing wave of suicide blasts that have crippled the socio-economic, educational and political spheres in Pakistan.

The Pakistani government has come to the realization that unless the senior leadership of the Taliban is nabbed, there can be no end to terrorist activities in the country. For this purpose, it has announced rewards for the capture or killing of top Taliban leaders (*Dawn*, November 2). The following is a brief description of

the top Taliban leaders who are sought by Pakistani authorities for their involvement in terrorist activities. Hakimullah Mahsud

The Taliban's 28-year old commander, Hakimullah Mahsud, is a tough and ruthless militant who became the new Taliban chief after his predecessor Baitullah Mahsud was killed in a U.S. drone attack in South Waziristan. Hakimullah was a close confidant of Baitullah, serving as his driver, spokesman and then commander of strategically important tribal areas like Khyber, Kurram and Orakzai agencies. It was in these tribal agencies that his strong military skills and ambitions came to the fore. In 2007, Hakimullah established his military strength when he took some 250 Pakistani soldiers hostage for more than two months in South Waziristan. However, it was in Khyber, Kurram and Orakzai that he took an independent role and used the power of the media to get himself recognized as the new top leader of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It was Hakimullah who disrupted the NATO fuel supply lines in Khyber and Peshawar and took responsibility for destroying more than 600 NATO vehicles and containers (*The News* [Islamabad], September 1).

Hakimullah Mahsud is believed to be behind all the major suicide attacks in Pakistan. He has accepted responsibility for the majority of attacks against the military and other security forces. Hakimullah is also blamed for killing Shi'a Muslims in Orakzai and Kurram agencies. He has close links with the banned anti-Shi'a sectarian group Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and its militant wing Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ).

The Government of Pakistan considers Hakimullah Mahsud its enemy No. 1, and has put a bounty of 50 million rupees (\$600,000) on his head for his death or capture (*Daily Mashriq* [Peshawar], November 2).

Qari Hussain Mahsud

Known in Pakistan as *Ustad-e-Fidayeen* (Trainer of Suicide Bombers), Qari Hussain Mahsud is regarded as the most dangerous and ruthless Taliban militant in South Waziristan. He is notorious for his innovations in training child suicide bombers. Qari Hussain is the cousin of TTP Chief Hakimullah Mahsud and was an LeJ operative before joining the TTP. He is considered to be the right hand of Hakimullah, who supported him in reaching the top echelons of the TTP.

Qari Hussain carries a bounty of 50 million rupees (\$600,000) from the Government of Pakistan (*Daily Jang*, November 2). He is one of the most sought-after militants, having taken responsibility for suicide attacks on sensitive government offices, including two attacks on the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in Lahore and another on the Manawan Police Training Center in the same city. Early this year, the government claimed that Qari Hussain had been killed by security forces but he appeared alive before the media to refute these reports. In the aftermath of Baitullah Mahsud's death in a drone attack in August, Qari Hussain has been wreaking havoc with a series of suicide attacks on the four main cities of Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Islamabad (Geo TV, November 3).

Maulana Waliur Rahman

The 35-year-old Maulana Waliur Rahman is considered to be the only politically mature person in the TTP ranks in Waziristan. He used to be the most trusted advisor of Baitullah Mahsud, supervising the financial affairs of the widening Taliban movement (*The News*, September 1). Maulana Waliur is believed to be a good manager and ideologue but not a skilled fighter. He never fought in Afghanistan against the USSR nor against U.S.-led coalition troops. He joined the ranks of the Pakistani Taliban only five years ago when Baitullah emerged as Taliban leader after the death of former leader Nek Mohammad Wazir in a U.S. drone attack.

Waliur Rahman is not as aggressive as Hakimullah. He has a religio-political background associated with the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI)'s Fazlur Rahman group. Unlike the majority of TTP leaders, he completed his religious education, doing so in a well-known seminary in Faisalabad known as Jamia Islamia before teaching in a madrassa for several years in South Waziristan. Waliur Rahman follows the Deobandi school of thought unlike Hakimullah Mahsud and Qari Hussain Mahsud, who follow the Salafist interpretation of Islam. This is believed to be one of the main reasons that al-Qaeda's leadership did not prefer him as the new TTP Chief despite the fact that the emissaries of Taliban Supreme Leader Mullah Muhammad Omar had opted to declare him the chief of the TTP after Baitullah's death. Al-Qaeda wanted an aggressive leader like Hakimullah who could advance their ideology in the region and capitalize on his strong links with LeJ in the mainland of Pakistan (AKI, September 10). Waliur Rahman's head also carries a bounty of 50 million rupees (\$600,000). Currently, he is the TTP chief for South Waziristan.

Maulvi Faqir Mohammad

Maulvi Faqir Mohammad is the strongest TTP commander based outside Waziristan. He is regarded as a skilled guerilla fighter who has been active in the region since the late 1980s. The 39-year old Maulvi Faqir belongs to the Mohmand tribe and was born and raised in the Mamond region of Bajaur – a strategically important tribal agency bordering Afghanistan's Kunar province in the west, and Pakistan's Malakand and Swat region in the east.

Known locally as "Commander Faqir," he is suspected to have close ties with al-Qaeda's deputy leader, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri. He is believed to have hosted a dinner for al-Zawahiri in January 2006 in Damadola (Bajaur). The home was blown up by a U.S. drone strike but al-Zawahiri had left just minutes before (*Daily Mashriq*, January 23).

Maulvi Faqir belongs to a religious family that fought in Afghanistan against the Soviets and later alongside the Taliban. He went to Afghanistan along with his two sons to wage jihad in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. At that time he was an active leader in the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM). TNSM chief Maulana Sufi Mohammad is considered to be his mentor in jihad. Before joining the TNSM, Maulvi Faqir was a local leader of Jama'at-e-Islami – a religio-political party.

Maulvi Faqir is wanted by the government of Pakistan for his alleged ties with al-Qaeda and sabotage activities under the umbrella of the TTP. The reward for his head is 15 million rupees (\$180,000) (*Dawn*, June 29). Maulvi Faqir was a strong contender for the top post in the TTP after the death of Baitullah, but the Taliban Shura (council) was determined to keep the top leadership post in Waziristan.

Maulana Fazlullah

Once the most dreaded person in the scenic valley of Swat, Maulana Fazlullah has been in hiding since April when the Pakistani military launched a heavy offensive against his banned militant outfit, TNSM. The 34-year-old Fazlullah has led TNSM since 2002 when his father-in-law and TNSM founder Maulana Sufi Mohammad was jailed upon return from Afghanistan, which he had crossed into illegally with several thousands of armed volunteers (including Fazlullah) to wage jihad against

U.S.-led Coalition troops. Fazlullah re-organized the TNSM and made the movement more radical by launching a pirate FM radio station from his madrassa in Imam Dheri, Swat. He soon became popular and earned nicknames like “FM Mullah” and “Radio Mullah” (see *Terrorism Monitor*, May 26).

Fazlullah mobilized the people in Malakand through his FM radio and recruited an army of volunteers numbering around 12,000. He preached against women’s education and torched some 300 girls’ schools in the area. His men put a ban on polio vaccinations, NGOs, and playing music. He challenged the writ of the government and declared his own brand of Shari’a in Malakand before expanding from Swat into Buner district. At this point Fazlullah went too far, sparking a serious reaction from the government, which dismantled the TNSM movement in Malakand. Several TNSM leaders were killed or arrested while others went into hiding, including Fazlullah, who is believed to have been injured in the military offensive (*Daily Times* [Lahore], July 9).

Fazlullah received his religious education from Sufi Mohammad’s madrassa, Jamia Mazahir-ul-Uloom, in the Maidan village of Lower Dir. It was here where he came under the influence of the Wahhabi school of thought. He is now wanted with a bounty of 5 million rupees (\$60,000) on his head.

While government forces continue their offensive in South Waziristan, it has become apparent that the death or apprehension of the region’s leading militant commanders will be the key to eliminating the terrorist threat looming over Pakistan.

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Perspectives on the Future of the Somali Jihad

By Andrew McGregor

For nearly a year now, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia has been waging a life or death struggle for survival against the

repeated assaults of a radical Islamist opposition; an opposition that remains unsatisfied with the appointment of a fellow Islamist as president and the implementation of Shari’a as the law of the land. Led by the former leader of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad, the TFG has little effective control over the country outside of a few Mogadishu neighborhoods, despite backing from the United States, the United Nations and the African Union (AU). Members of the TFG work under the constant threat of assassination, keeping many parliamentarians outside of the country. The Islamist militants demonstrated their reach in a bombing that killed the Minister of Security, Colonel Umar Hashi Adan, in Hiraan province last June (*al-Jazeera* [Doha], June 19; *al-Arabiya* [Dubai], June 18). Possible directions for the future of the Islamist insurgency in Somalia are offered below.

Leadership of Harakat al-Shabaab Mujahideen

The leadership of Somalia’s Harakat al-Shabaab Mujahideen (Youth Mujahideen Movement) appears to be in a state of flux at the moment. The movement’s reclusive leader, Shaykh Ahmad Abdi Godane “Abu Zubayr” (a.k.a. Ahmad Abdi Aw Muhammad, a.k.a. Shaykh Mukhtar “Abu Zubayr”), was seriously wounded in May when a suicide bomb went off prematurely in a safe house where an al-Shabaab meeting was being held (*Garowe Online*, May 18, May 20; *Waagacusub.com*, May 18). Little has been heard of him since. Only days after the blast, the public face of the movement, Shaykh Mukhtar Robow “Abu Mansur,” was replaced by Shaykh Ali Mahmud Raage (a.k.a. Shaykh Ali Dheere) (*Radio Simba*, May 21; *Shabelle Media Network*, May 22). No explanation was offered for the sudden change and Mukhtar Robow briefly faded from public view before reappearing with a statement threatening the administrations of semi-autonomous Puntland and Somaliland, a self-declared independent state (*AllPuntland.com*, October 31). He was then reported to have appeared at an anti-Israel demonstration in Baydhabo, where he announced that there would be a hunt for anyone who holds Israeli citizenship or who might be Jewish (*Puntland Post*, October 31). Though there are no public signs of enmity, there is always the possibility that Godane’s death or prolonged incapacitation could set off a power struggle within the Shabaab leadership.

Factionalism in the Islamist Opposition

The Hizb al-Islam movement, led by Shaykh Dahir Aweys, is the successor to Shaykh Aweys’ earlier organization,

the Eritrean-based Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia – Asmara (ARS-Asmara). While Hizb al-Islam is larger than al-Shabaab, the latter is better organized and possibly better equipped. At the moment, Hizb al-Islam operates as an ally of al-Shabaab in the fighting in Mogadishu, though there are differences between the two groups that could erupt into open warfare at any moment. There have already been skirmishes between the groups.

Al-Shabaab's Salafist orientation has brought it into conflict with Somalia's Sufis, who have responded to the desecration and destruction of their shrines and places of pilgrimage by forming their own formidable militia, the Ahlu Sunnah wa'l-Jama'a. With Sufis rather than Salafists representing mainstream Islam in Somalia, al-Shabaab has created a determined enemy that is unlikely to cease fighting until the radical Islamists have been defeated.

Internationalization of the Somalia Conflict

Reflecting its narrow vision of what constitutes righteous rule, al-Shabaab has, in the last year, threatened all of its neighbors as well as Burundi, Uganda, Ghana, Israel and the United States. The conflict already has an international element, with Ugandan and Burundian troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) deeply involved in the active defense of the TFG, Ethiopian troops conducting cross-border incursions after a lengthy and costly occupation of Somalia, and U.S. airstrikes being launched on terrorist targets. The TFG has also issued appeals for neighboring countries, including Kenya, Djibouti and Yemen, to send troops to Somalia to bolster the government (al-Jazeera, June 22). It is clear that the TFG has little local support it can rely on and would quickly collapse without international backing.

Al-Shabaab is active in fundraising and recruitment of Somali diaspora groups in Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, Canada and the United States (*NRC Handelsblad*, November 13). While these activities have not yet escalated to politically-motivated violence, the possibility exists, particularly as al-Shabaab becomes more vocal in its threats to Western states. The recent arrest of three Somali men accused of targeting a military installation in Australia with a suicide attack has alarmed other nations hosting large Somali communities (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, August 7).

Al-Shabaab has pledged retaliation against the United States in response to the mid-September airstrike that

killed al-Qaeda suspect Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan (*Daily Nation* [Nairobi], October 8). Though direct retaliation is probably beyond the means of al-Shabaab, it is entirely possible that its agents in the American diaspora could arrange some kind of internal attack by young people sympathetic to the Islamist cause in Somalia. Al-Shabaab leader Shaykh Abdi Ahmad Godane has made clear the international ambitions of the movement: "We will fight and the wars will not end until Islamic Shari'a is implemented in all continents in the world and until Muslims liberate Jerusalem..." (AFP, May 13). For the moment these goals may exceed the grasp of a movement that has yet to take Mogadishu.

What Will Happen in Somalia in the Event of a Shabaab Victory?

- Popular support for the movement (which is difficult to gauge but certainly does not include a majority of Somalis) would inevitably diminish due to the movement's ordinances against popular pastimes such as watching soccer or chewing qat, as well as the movement's affection for hudud punishments for violations of Shari'a, such as stonings, amputations, beheadings and whippings. Though Shari'a law has already been implemented in Somalia, al-Shabaab is only interested in its own interpretation, one not shared by a majority of Somalis.
- Shabaab's foreign connections will work against them. Shabaab's international ties are all with non-state actors, none of which will be of any assistance in running a state. On the contrary, these ties will invite embargoes and other sanctions. International isolation and the suspension of humanitarian aid are likely outcomes for an organization which has referred to UN aid agencies as "enemies of Islam."
- The movement's revanchist program to establish a "Greater Somalia" places it immediately at odds with every one of Somalia's neighbors. Any attempt to expand Somalia's borders as part of the development of an Islamic Caliphate in the Horn of Africa would require full national support, in the absence of which disaster would surely befall the movement and the nation. Al-Shabaab's revanchism would quickly mobilize regional opposition.

- Civil war with Puntland and Somaliland would quickly follow an al-Shabaab victory in Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab terrorist attacks on autonomous Puntland and self-declared independent Somaliland have already introduced political violence into these pockets of Somali stability. Shabaab's declared intention is to bring both regions under the control of an Islamist caliphate, a program with almost no popular support in these two regions. With Puntland and Somaliland already embroiled in a bitter and occasionally violent border territorial dispute, the possibility of a three-sided civil war exists.
- Continued fighting with Ahlu wa'l Jama'a would be a near certainty with al-Shabaab hardliners appearing to have won the internal debate over the wisdom of deliberately antagonizing Somalia's vast Sufi community through the continued destruction and desecration of Sufi shrines, graves and places of pilgrimage.
- Though al-Shabaab has cooperated with Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys' Hizb al-Islam militia on the Mogadishu battleground, the Shabaab leadership has serious differences with the ambitious Shaykh Aweys and would likely prefer to exclude him from any Islamist administration. If Shaykh Aweys could keep his fighters from going over to al-Shabaab, further intra-Islamist fighting could be expected.
- Having very little influence with Somalia's tribal elders, the movement has little expectation of resolving existing clan disputes or preventing the eruption of new ones, leaving little hope that the movement could impose stability without a massive increase in violence.
- Without a core of technical experts or experienced administrators, the inability of al-Shabaab to carry out the basic administrative functions of a national government would inevitably lead to the collapse of the regime, leaving Somalia in perhaps an irreparable state.
- The return of Ethiopia's military would be a real possibility. The rise of Islamist forces in Somalia is likely to increase ethnic-Somali resistance to Ethiopian rule in the Ogaden region. If Addis Ababa has a choice between fighting the war in Somalia or their own in eastern Ogaden province, it will choose Somalia, especially if further U.S. arms and training are made available. The United States would like to act through a proxy in Somalia rather than open a new front in the War on Terrorism through direct military intervention.
- The possible effect of an al-Shabaab victory on the piracy situation is difficult to gauge. In the past al-Shabaab has expressed its opposition to piracy, even attacking a party of pirates at one point, though this was just as likely to be inspired by clan rivalries or a dispute over distribution of ransom money. Since most pirate activity emanates from Puntland, an al-Shabaab victory in Mogadishu might have little impact unless the movement acts to invade Puntland and end its semi-autonomous status. This would bring al-Shabaab into direct contact with the armed forces of neighboring Somaliland and an almost inevitable confrontation that would stretch al-Shabaab's supply lines and capabilities in a region where they have little influence.
- An al-Shabaab victory would represent a major blow to African Union (AU) peacekeeping efforts. The AU mission to Darfur could be described as having a mixed record at best – in Somalia it has only been through the commitment of Uganda that AMISOM has survived. Though the mission has been bolstered by the addition of Burundian troops, it is still severely undermanned and subject to greater stress than ever since the AMISOM mandate was changed to provide for military action against the insurgents in Mogadishu. In the event of a TFG collapse, AMISOM troops and equipment (including artillery and armor) would have to be quickly evacuated, a capability the AU does not possess. With little peace to keep, the AU peacekeepers face daily combat losses and are subject to suicide bombings even in their own camps, such as the one that killed 17 Ugandan and Burundian soldiers on September 17, including the mission's second in command, Major General Juvenal Niyoyunguruza of Burundi. The attack was retaliation for the U.S. airstrike that killed al-Qaeda operative Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan (New Vision [Kampala], September 17; *Daily Nation* [Nairobi], September 18).

- An al-Shabaab victory would present jihadis in other theaters with a temporary morale boost, but a large scale movement of jihadis to Somalia is still unlikely. Somali clannishness and factionalism are anathema to hardcore jihadis, who are in the habit of placing organizational needs and group identity over personal or tribal needs and identities. Lack of infrastructure and modern communications will inhibit rather than enhance international operations based in Somalia. The prevailing xenophobia of many Somalis does not offer the same sort of welcome and refuge al-Qaeda found in the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan. Southern Somalia also offers a possible trap for global jihadis, as seen from the experience of the ICU in December 2006, when Ethiopian troops on land and U.S. ships at sea squeezed the ICU fighters towards a reinforced Kenyan border. Getting out of Somalia could be much harder than getting in if an international effort is mobilized against al-Shabaab.

- A mass exodus of Somali civilians would surely follow an al-Shabaab victory, leading to a further humanitarian crisis that might require international intervention. Already parts of Mogadishu have been largely depopulated and Somali refugees make desperate attempts to reach Yemen daily on craft that are barely seaworthy. With most land borders closed to refugees, smuggling people out of Somalia has become one of the few growth industries in Puntland, the closest point to Yemen.

- In the event of an al-Shabaab victory, the movement may ironically rely on Somali factionalism for its survival. Much the same way as the TFG only survives due to the inability of the Islamist opposition to unite effectively, al-Shabaab could survive for an extended time because of the inability of the anti-Islamist opposition to unite.

Conclusion

Despite international support, the TFG of President Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad appears to have little chance of survival. Almost continuous pressure from the armed Islamist opposition threatens to undermine the current administration, sending it to the same fate as

the failed administrations of former President Abdullahi Yusuf and the earlier Transitional National Government (TNG) of Abdiqasam Salad Hassan. With little hope of relief from the apparently incessant warfare in south and central Somalia, there are signs that further attempts will be made to carve out independent, locally-ruled mini-states along the lines of Puntland and Somaliland. Combined with the entrenchment of clan rivalries and interference from neighboring states, regional interests and international powers, prospects for the establishment of a united Somalia at peace with its neighbors are disappointingly slim.

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