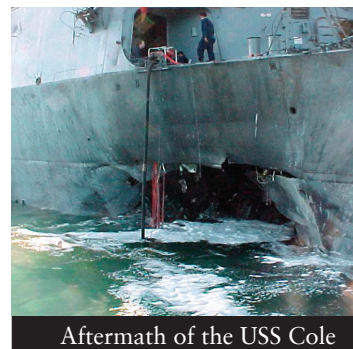




# Terrorism Monitor

*In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror*

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Aftermath of the USS Cole

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**DEPUTY AMIR OF TALIBAN REJECTS U.S. PLAN TO CREATE AN “AWAKENING” MOVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN**

Late last month, Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Carl Levin described a new law signed by President Barack Obama authorizing the payment of Taliban militants in return for laying down their arms. Lower-level Taliban fighters would be offered amnesty and employment in new local defense militias patterned on the “Awakening” movement that diverted many Iraqi Sunni militants into pro-government forces that played a major role in expelling al-Qaeda from large parts of Iraq (AFP, October 29; Reuters, October 27).

The Taliban responded to this initiative with an October 30 statement by Deputy Amir Mullah Brader Akhund, released through the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Voice of Jihad website ([alemarah.info](http://alemarah.info), October 30). Mullah Brader described the plan as nothing new, suggesting “old weapons” of this type were already a proven failure in Afghanistan: “The British invaders used it in the 19th century but failed; the former Soviet Union used it; it failed too.”

Mullah Brader issued a number of points for the “moribund rulers of the White House”:

- The existence of “moderate” and “extremist” Taliban does not correspond with reality; these terms are American inventions.

- The Mullah describes the professional soldiers of the Coalition and members of the Afghan National Army (ANA) as “mercenaries and employed gunmen.” By contrast, the Taliban fight solely for independence and the establishment of a Shari’a system. “This war will come to an end when all invaders leave our country and an Islamic government based on the aspirations of our people is formed in the country.”
- The White House should focus on “pragmatic” and “realistic” means of ending the conflict. The United States should stop “shedding the blood of innocent Muslim people” by pulling its forces out of Afghanistan and by putting “an end to the game of colonialization.”
- The huge military expenditure on the war in Afghanistan will deepen the American economic crisis. “Your people will face more problems and suffer from psychological diseases.”
- In a reference to President Hamid Karzai and his brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai, Mullah Brader denounced those “few well-known Afghan Americans who sell their country and who have received training in the CIA cells for many years.” The Mullah describes their actions as an unforgivable and shameful act that will carry an “historical taint.” The Mullah suggests American leaders should look at the example of the pro-British Shah Shuja (assassinated in 1842), and the pro-Soviet Babrak Karmal, who was ousted as president by his Soviet sponsors in 1986. The United States should study what status these surrogate leaders had “in the eye of the Afghan masses.”

The Taliban statement came at the close of a month that saw 53 American fatalities in Afghanistan, the worst single month for U.S. military losses since the war began in 2001.

#### TARIQ AFRIDI APPOINTED HEAD OF TALIBAN IN STRATEGIC KHYBER AGENCY

The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have filled the post of Taliban chief in the strategically important Khyber Agency following a meeting in Orakzai Agency (The News [Islamabad], November 10). The new leader is

Tariq Afridi, the notorious Taliban commander based in Darra Adam Khel (see *Terrorism Focus*, February 13, 2008).

Afridi will replace former Khyber Agency Taliban commander Kamran Mustafa Hijrat (a.k.a. Muhammad Yahya Hijrat; a.k.a. Mustafa Kamal Kamran Hijrat), who was arrested by Pakistani security forces in December 2008. Hijrat was responsible for planning numerous attacks on NATO supply convoys in Peshawar and along the dangerous highway through the Khyber Pass. It can be expected that Afridi will now take over these operations, which are intended to pressure U.S. and Coalition forces in Afghanistan by cutting off their supply lines.

From his base at Darra Adam Khel, Afridi has been responsible for attacks on security forces in Orakzai Agency as well as suicide bombings in Peshawar, Kohat and the Punjab. He is best known outside of Pakistan for his kidnapping and murder of Polish engineer Petr Stanczak in 2008. Stanczak was beheaded by his captors in February 2009 when Islamabad refused to release certain Taliban prisoners in exchange for the hostage. A cash offer was made but refused by Afridi (*Dawn* [Karachi], April 26).

Despite his rise through the Taliban ranks, Tariq Afridi nonetheless faces opposition from within his own tribe. Last April a lashkar [ad hoc militia] of over 300 mostly Afridi tribesmen was raised to drive the Taliban commander out of Darra Adam Khel. Most members of the lashkar had previously been under Tariq Afridi, but left his group over killings of security personnel. Despite some clashes, the lashkar did not succeed in their mission (*Dawn* [Karachi], April 23).

## A Shift in Terrorist Strategy Threatens Italian National Security

By Dario Cristiani

The Italian Home Minister, Roberto Maroni, recently stated: “We believe that terrorist cells fundraise and train to carry out attacks in our country. It is not yet a homegrown terrorist situation, like in the United Kingdom and in Spain, but we are getting closer to it” (*Corriere della Sera*, November 6). Maroni added that the October attack against a military

installment in Milan represented a major turning point for Italy. “The situation is changed. There is a concerning evolution in our country after the [bombing in] Milan. It represents a change in the presence of these activities in Italy.” Maroni is referring to the October 12 attack carried out against the Santa Barbara Carabinieri barracks in Milan by a Libyan militant, 34-year-old Muhammad Game (ANSA, October 12). The bomb used for the attack was made of five kilos of ammonium nitrate but only one kilo detonated because of the improper preparation of the bomb (*Corriere della Sera*, October 14). While a Carabinieri corporal was injured in the blast, the Libyan attacker was the only one seriously injured, losing use of a hand, a forearm and an eye. Shortly after the attack, Italian authorities denied that the man was part of a wider terrorist network but the overall situation remained unclear (*La Repubblica*, October 12).

After several days of investigation, it was revealed that the man did not act on his own but had two accomplices, Egyptian Abdel Hady Abdelaziz Mahmud Kol and Libyan Muhammad Imbaeya Israfel. They have since been arrested. It seems that the three men were connected to a radical group whose main base is in Egypt but this has not been officially confirmed. In Israfel’s apartment police uncovered a chemical arsenal, some mobile phones and a timer. Moreover, the police found the identity documents of other persons likely connected to the group. It could mean that the cell had a wide membership and was not a small, isolated group as previously claimed (*La Repubblica*, October 16). A previous attempt to create a terrorist cell was foiled in December, 2008 when two Moroccan men, Rachid Ilhami and Gafir Abdelkader, were arrested on charges of trying to recruit militants to carry out terrorist attacks in Italy (Sole 24 ore, December 2, 2008).

Further investigations by security services revealed Game had compiled detailed dossiers on the habits and homes of some 15 leading politicians, including Interior Minister Roberto Maroni, Defense Minister Ignazio La Russa, and Minister Without Portfolio Roberto Calderoli, a Northern League politician known for his provocative anti-Islamic behavior. Most of the information was taken from the internet, using applications such as Google Maps and Google Video (AKI, November 13).

The Islamist panorama in Italy is characterized by the presence of small and fluid extremist circuits, often led by charismatic leaders with previous experience in

militant activities. These leaders are able to radicalize and co-opt young Muslims, above all in northern Italy, where the presence of Islamic communities is wider. Indeed, the region in which the risks are highest is the northern region of Lombardy with its capital city of Milan, due to the presence there of substantial Islamic communities.

Prisons play a major role in the recruitment of cell members by providing a suitable place for indoctrination and propaganda activities, particularly among prisoners from North Africa. [1] The main basin of recruitment consists of those individuals frustrated and alienated by their inability to integrate into their new territorial and cultural reality. Historically, Italy has been more of a logistical base for Islamist terrorism rather than a direct target for attacks. The main activities of these groups until now were related largely to fundraising, recruitment and the acquisition of documents for the militants.

Such groups have had some relations with Italian organized crime groups, as demonstrated in an investigation of the general judiciary court of Naples in 2005 (*La Repubblica*, July 13, 2005). However, the latest developments have shown that some changes have occurred relative to previous patterns of militant activity. The militants involved in this attack were not jihadists with previous “epic” experiences in the most important fields of global jihad, like Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, they were not officially part of any organized group. These characteristics could make the fight against these groups even harder. Confronting small and disconnected groups could have both advantages and disadvantages. The groups are weaker in the absence of a wider organization and proper resources, but, at the same time, it is harder to control them due to the lack of continuity and solid traces to follow in an investigation. Moreover, the risk of emulation could represent another possible outcome of such “homegrown” attacks. These attacks appear to show that it is relatively easy to carry out a jihad operation, even though a larger network may be at work behind the scenes.

Even if an attack is not successful, its public resonance can be an aim unto itself. The latest developments seem to show that Italy is no longer perceived as only a logistical platform for jihadist activities, but is now regarded as an eligible target for terrorist attacks. Such a shift could have a strong impact on Italy’s anti-terrorism measures and the immigration policies of the government. For example, the powerful Northern League (Lega Nord

per l'Indipendenza della Padania - North League for the Independence of Padania) political coalition has already proposed a tougher law to control immigration fluxes after the recent attack.

More than 13,000 potential targets for terrorist actions are continuously monitored by security services in Italy (AKI, August 14, 2006). A further specific dimension of risk is represented by the wide presence of notable Christian churches and historical monuments, any of which could present a suitable symbolic target for terrorists (see *Terrorism Monitor*, September 21, 2005). The October attack, however, differs from many other terrorist attacks carried out in Europe in the past few years because of its specific goal. Normally, terrorist attacks are aimed to frighten common people through attacking the vital infrastructure of modern life, such as public transportation systems. Instead, the target of this attack was a military installation (though the Carabinieri paramilitary has law enforcement functions, it is part of the Italian armed forces). The other seven targets the group intended to hit were also military facilities. Investigators said that the reason behind this choice was to create a popular consensus against the Italian military presence in Afghanistan (La Repubblica, October 14, 2009). Therefore, this attack had a specific political aim and the choice of the target was functional to it. The militants wanted to show, through attacking the military, that they were committed not to attacking the Italian people indiscriminately, but only the protagonists of the Italian role in Afghanistan. The choice of target was related to the specific priorities of this small and, apparently isolated group.

As noted by the Italian Home Minister (a member of the anti-immigration Northern League), the terrorist risk in Italy is rising. The October attack, even if it was unsuccessful, showed that it is relatively easy to prepare and organize an attack. A small group organized it, even if it is likely that it was part of a larger network of terrorists. It demonstrated that small cells active on Italian soil are able to organize and carry out attacks. This time the target was a military barracks, since the specific political purpose of the group was to influence Italian public opinion to force the government to withdraw the troops from Afghanistan. It was only unsuccessful because of the improper preparation of the bomb. However, it demonstrates that Italy is no longer just a logistical platform for these groups but instead represents a target in itself.

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Notes:

1. Relazione annuale del Sistema di Informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica, Information System for the Security of the Republic - Italian Intelligence Service, 2008, <http://www.sicurezza nazionale.gov.it/web.nsf/pagine/home>.

## Iranian Leaders Weigh Support for the Houthi Rebellion in Yemen

*By Babak Rahimi*

The Houthi rebellion against the Yemeni regime, which erupted in 2004 and has intensified with the unleashing of "Operation Scorched Earth" by the Yemeni forces in the northern Sa'ada governate, has brought various claims by Sunni-led Arab states of Iranian involvement (al-Jazeera, November 11; al-Arabiya, November 11). The allegations, most of which originate with the Yemeni elite led by President Ali Abdullah Saleh, accuse the Shi'a Zaidi rebels of receiving financial and military support from Tehran. Yemeni authorities claim the Houthis are looking for patronage and arms (especially from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards) for their anti-government operations (al-Jazeera, August 18; al-Arabiya, November 11).

Zaydi Shi'ism is one of three main branches of the Shi'a movement, together with Twelver Shi'ism and the Isma'ili branch. The adoption of the Sunni Hanafi school of Shari'a by the Arab Zaidis brings them theologically closer to their Sunni neighbors in Yemen than to the distant non-Arab Shi'a Ayatollahs of Iran. The Houthist rebellion has its origins in the mid-1990s with the foundation of the Shabaab al-Mu'mineen (The Young Believers) by the late Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, a Zaydi religious leader. Fighting between the Young Believers (soon known as "Houthists") and the government broke out in 2004. The rebellion cannot easily be classified as a sectarian conflict since President Saleh and many political and military leaders in Yemen are themselves Zaydi Shiites (see *Terrorism Monitor*, May 10, 2005).

Sana'a condemned Tehran for "interference" in its domestic politics after the Iranian foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, offered Iran's help in bringing security to Yemen (*al-Arabiyah*, November 11; *Mehr*, October 17). In contrast to a united Arab front (with the exception of Syria) opposing any Iranian involvement, a debate is brewing in Iran between different political factions on how to deal with the Houthi conflict. The debate is exposing deep tensions within the Iranian political community and sheds new light on how Iranian foreign policy might be shifting on a regional scale in the post-election period. Meanwhile, the latest fighting between Houthi and Saudi forces along the northern borders of Yemen has transformed the local conflict into a regional crisis (*Yemen Times*, November 11, *al-Arabiyah*, November 11; *al-Alam*, November 16).

Ahmadinejad's administration has publicly denounced the military assault on the Houthis, but it has done so on a humanitarian basis, not because of any desire to support the rebels' aspirations for an autonomous state in north Yemen. In fact, Tehran has explicitly given its support to the territorial integrity of Yemen (IRNA, September 9). Tehran's opposition to the government's military attacks has largely centered on the "national rights" of Yemeni citizens, maintaining a consistent policy in backing state authority without giving up support for Yemen's Shi'a (IRNA, September 22). This tactic is used mainly because Tehran faces its own separatist problems in Baluchistan and Kurdistan; therefore, overt support for the Houthist rebels could undermine Iran's own efforts to maintain central authority.

It is likely that the Iranian authorities desire a Houthist governorate in the north that would remain under the central authority of Sana'a. In this sense, Foreign Minister Mottaki's latest objection to the conflict was less about Saudis protecting their borders from foreign rebels and more about warning them against supporting "extremist and terrorist groups," such as militant Salafist Sunni factions in Yemen (*Hamshari*, November 13). In reality, Tehran's greatest concern may in fact lie in the possible resurgence of al-Qaeda with the deepening of the Houthi conflict and the weakening of the Yemeni state authority in the course of the ongoing military conflict. Viewed in this way, ironically, Iran and Saudi Arabia may in fact share a common interest in Yemen, despite appearances of a "proxy war" between the two states.

As Tehran assesses its next move, the ideologically hard-line faction closely linked with those in power

continues to object to the regime's lack of an aggressive diplomatic and military response to the situation in Yemen. On November 14, the hard-line *Keyhan* newspaper described the Houthi conflict as a "union of Arab reactionaries" inflicting the "slaughter of Shi'as of Sa'ada" (*Keyhan*, November 14). According to this view, the Wahhabist Saudis, with the support of other Gulf states like the United Arab Emirates, aim to crush the oppressed Shi'a population primarily because of their sectarian goal of molding the Islamic world into the Wahhabi conception of Islam. The hardliners accuse the government of remaining silent about the Sunni slaughter of Shi'a civilians in Yemen (*Tabnak*, November 12). The hardliners also condemn Iranian civic groups and religious authorities in the holy city of Qom, especially those who are not associated with the government, for their inaction against Saudi aggression (*Tabnak*, November 12).

In contrast to the hardliners, the clerical establishment in Qom has remained relatively silent, possibly because of a religious bias against the Houthis, as Zaydi Shias are doctrinally closer to Sunnis than to Twelver Shi'ism—the largest branch of Shi'a Islam and the one most commonly practiced in Iran. The most important cleric to object to the latest events in Yemen has been Grand Ayatollah Golpayegani. Just days after the Saudi military attack on the Houthis, Golpayegani vehemently denounced the strike, accusing the "Islamic world" of giving consent to a slaughter of innocent people at the hands of fellow Muslims (*Tabnak*, November 11). However, other Grand Ayatollahs, like Ali al-Sistani, prefer to remain silent, revealing the deep division over how to deal with the Houthi conflict within the clerical establishment. On the other hand, the reformists also appear to maintain a sense of ambiguity in regards to Yemen and Saudi Arabia's efforts to crush the rebels. While the reformists are disturbed by allegations that Tehran is shipping military equipment to the Houthis, the reformists are largely playing down the conflict by focusing more on Iran's internal problems, especially the post-election controversies that continue to haunt the hardliners in powers (*Etemad*, October 28).

In broad terms, the debate in Tehran reveals the emergence of a less boisterous and more cautious Iranian foreign policy in the region. Despite the hardliners' grab for power since the June elections, the Islamic Republic appears to be weaker as a regional force while facing outbreaks of violence inside and outside of its borders. On a rhetorical level, Tehran will show its support for the rebels as a sign of Shi'a strength, but on a strategic

level, it is highly unlikely that it will risk the eruption of a regional conflict with its neighboring Sunni states over a non-Twelve Shi'a group in Yemen. With this new cautious regional policy, the level of violence in north Yemen could considerably diminish in the months to come. But much of this will depend on how the Saudis deal on a diplomatic and military level with a highly volatile situation that has the potential to drag the entire region into conflict.

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## Combating Terrorism in Asian Waters

By Vijay Sakhuja

Last year's devastating attack on Mumbai by operatives of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was a reminder of the importance of securing the maritime environment against terrorist activities. It was not the first time terrorists had exploited weaknesses in marine security in Asia, but it drew attention to the necessity of securing national coastlines, a challenging task for the developing naval forces of many Asian nations.

The "Mumbai Dossier" prepared by Indian government agencies through the interrogation of Muhammad Ajmal Amir (a.k.a. Kasab—the only terrorist captured alive in the attack) and other material evidence provides a clear and coherent picture of the sequence of the attack, including its planning and preparation (Hindu.com, January 5). According to the dossier, ten terrorists departed Karachi in Pakistan for Mumbai onboard the fishing vessel *Al-Husseini*. En route they hijacked the Indian fishing craft *Kuber*, killed the crew and threw their bodies overboard. Afterwards they abandoned the fishing vessel and shifted to inflatable craft that landed at unsecured waterfronts in Mumbai. The perpetrators were highly motivated, well trained and proficient in use of GPS (global positioning systems). During the attack, the terrorists were in constant communication with their masters in Pakistan through satellite telephones.

### Terrorist Groups in Asia with Maritime Capability

Besides Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a number of terrorist groups in Asia are capable of using the maritime medium to conduct attacks:

- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Before their recent defeat by the Sri Lankan military, the LTTE had successfully exercised control of the seas off Jaffna in the northeast region of Sri Lanka. The movement's naval wing, the Sea Tigers, were proficient in wolf-pack tactics using fast speed boats, underwater operations involving saboteur attacks and daring forays against the Sri Lankan Navy.[1] The group was also known to own and operate a fleet of ocean-going vessels that facilitated LTTE's weapons and logistics supply chains. Besides already providing a major source of revenue, these vessels were also engaged in drug smuggling.
- Al-Qaeda is known to possess some naval capability. Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (captured in 2002 and currently held in Guantanamo Bay) was al-Qaeda's naval specialist who designed assaults on shipping and underwater attacks by suicide demolition teams. In fact, al-Nashiri was the mastermind of the USS Cole and MV *Limburg* attacks in 2002. He devised a sophisticated naval strategy against shipping that recommended ramming merchant ships with motorized swimmer delivery vehicles carrying explosives, planting explosives on ships in port and carrying out underwater attacks by divers (*Asia Times*, May 11, 2007).
- Jemmiah Islamiah (JI) in Indonesia. The JI has contacts with al-Qaeda and may have been trained in maritime attacks and suicide scuba diving. In 2003, Singapore authorities foiled JI plans to attack U.S. naval vessels in the Changi Naval base. The JI operatives had meticulously drawn up plans and identified "kill zones" to conduct suicide boat attacks on vessels in the narrowest part of the channel. [2]
- Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI). The Bangladesh-based HuJI is believed to be an offshoot of a group based in Pakistan with links to Osama bin Laden and has a force of about 15,000 operatives (Satep.org, November 12). HuJI is also intricately linked to insurgent

groups in northeast India and has been a major source of weapons in this area for a long time (*Indian Express*, August 17). Huge consignments of illegal arms sourced in Southeast Asia are moved across the seas by HuJI and unloaded in Bangladeshi ports before being sold to Indian insurgent groups. [3]

- The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines. The MILF has been active in waters around the Philippines and has a limited maritime capability. In 1999, the group is alleged to have approached North Korea for a mini-submarine, though a MILF spokesman said the report was “absolutely untrue” (Reuters, January 4, 2005). The ASG has significant maritime capability built around stealthy, high speed, shallow-draft wooden boats that are equipped with machine guns. The group was responsible for the February 2004 bombing of *Super Ferry 14* 90 minutes out of Manila Bay that killed over 100 people (*Asia Times*, April 24, 2004).

It is evident that some terrorist groups in Asia possess significant maritime capability, or at least the ability to strike targets on or from the sea. In the past, they have successfully employed sophisticated tactics and recorded spectacular attacks against ships and coastal infrastructure. The ability to mount attacks through the subsurface medium using mini-submarines, submersible platforms, sea mines (Limpet mines) and saboteurs are sought after and at least one group (the LTTE) had gained some proficiency in these methods.

### Complexity of the Maritime Domain

The sea offers both opportunities and challenges. It is an open highway and nearly 90 percent of global trade is carried onboard commercial ships, making the sea lanes the umbilical cord of the global economy. At another level, the sea can be perilous; it is vast, opaque and provides an excellent means to engage in terrorism “at sea,” as demonstrated by the USS *Cole* and MV *Limburg* attacks, and “from the sea,” as witnessed by the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

Although the sea is a complex medium and requires greater skills to conduct attacks, it is becoming popular among terrorist groups partly due to the success of maritime attacks mounted so far. Significantly, a variety of equipment found in the inventory of terrorist groups

(high speed recreational boats, sea scooters, scuba diving equipment, etc.) are of dual nature and are relatively easy to acquire commercially without inviting suspicion. The innovative use of these tools by the terrorist groups has overwhelmed Asia’s maritime security agencies.

### Responding to Maritime Terrorism

Several Asian navies have modified their strategies and doctrines to address threats arising from asymmetric actors. There is an ongoing transformation in the naval force structure built around highly agile platforms like smaller boats that can be quickly deployed for a wide spectrum of low-end missions to engage a sophisticated enemy operating on the high seas. Distinctive assets are provided by air platforms for surveillance and reconnaissance. These are both manned (fixed wing aircraft and helicopters) and unmanned (unmanned aerial vehicles, aerostats and satellites) and are highly networked with a variety of sea-based platforms. In essence, Asia’s navies are building capabilities to obtain credible maritime domain awareness.

At another level, several multilateral, trilateral and bilateral forums have mushroomed in Asia, where countries must address maritime asymmetric threats and challenges. These include the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), and Track II initiatives such as the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) is a significant government-to-government agreement by fourteen Asian countries to enhance the security of regional waters.

At the functional-operational level, Asian countries are engaged in bilateral and multilateral naval exercises focused on terrorism and piracy, intelligence sharing arrangements, symposiums, conferences and training arrangements. The Malaysia-Singapore-Indonesia (MALSINDO) trilateral naval patrols and the Eyes in the Sky (EIS) air patrol involving maritime aircraft from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand are significant regional initiatives aimed at enhancing security of the Straits of Malacca.

The Asian nations have also undertaken capacity building initiatives that involve the training of personnel, financial assistance, technology support and even maritime surveillance assistance. For instance, Japan and India have committed financial assistance and China

has provided technological support for the security and safety of the Straits of Malacca. [4] The United States has supplied radars to Indonesia for maritime surveillance and Japan has transferred small ships to Malaysia and Indonesia to bolster their patrolling capability. [5] India also provides maritime surveillance cover to the Maldives. (*Times of India*, October 17)

Some Asian countries are ill-equipped to guarantee maritime domain awareness since there are critical weaknesses and deficiencies in their monitoring and surveillance. Furthermore, they are overwhelmed by the responsibility of monitoring vast littoral territories. In the absence of technological wherewithal, they remain vulnerable while their coasts emerge as hotbeds of illegal activity that provide a breeding ground and launching point for terrorist activities. At the operational level, the absence of “hot pursuit” agreements is dexterously exploited by terrorists, insurgents, pirates and other criminals to evade capture. Many Asian states have yet to develop a common legal framework to prosecute terrorists, partly due to varying domestic perceptions and humanitarian laws.

#### Conclusion

It is evident that maritime asymmetric challenges and threats require a sophisticated strategy that pivots on domain awareness, an effective intelligence apparatus, and a credible armed response. So far Asian nations have done well by building capacities to respond to maritime terrorism, but further incidents like the 2008 Mumbai attack still remain a possibility. At one level, this is due to the covert nexus between states and terrorist groups in which some states may employ terrorism as a policy against their adversaries. At another level, it could be due to poor governance of sea spaces resulting in “chaos in the littorals,” particularly in Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Robust maritime domain awareness still eludes Asian countries due to financial and technological deficiencies. This situation has the potential to adversely impact the security of the entire region. There will be added pressures on Asian nations to build response capabilities to preclude intervention by other stakeholders, including extra-regional powers who could try to exploit the security vacuum as a means of establishing a wide naval presence in Asian waters.

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Notes:

1. Vijay Sakhuja, “The Dynamics of LTTE’s Commercial Infrastructure”, Observer Research Foundation Occasional Paper, April 2006.
2. The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism,” White Paper, Ministry of Home Affairs, Republic of Singapore, 2003.
3. Anthony Davis, ‘New Details Emerge on Bangladesh Arm’s Haul’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, September 2004.
4. Hasjim Djalal, “The Development of Cooperation on the Straits of Malacca and Singapore,” Paper presented at the International Symposium on Safety and Protection of the Marine Environment in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, November 24, 2008.
5. John B. Haseman and Eduardo Lachica, “Getting Indonesia Right”, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 54, 2009.

## The Jihadis and the Cause of South Yemen: A Profile of Tariq al-Fadhli

*By Rafid Fadhil Ali*

Earlier this year Tariq al-Fadhli, the prominent jihadist leader from South Yemen, broke his 15 year alliance with the Yemeni government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Al-Fadhli, who was a member of the anti-Soviet Mujahideen movement in Afghanistan, is often described as the founder of the jihadi movement in Yemen. His break with the government was reported in the mainstream Arab and Yemeni media but was also noted on pro-jihadist websites (Alflojaweb.com, April 18). Al-Fadhli’s new position provided momentum to the Southern Movement (SM) and its struggle for secession and he soon became a leading figure in the alliance.

Tariq al-Fadhli’s father, Nasir bin Abdullah al-Fadhli, was the leader of the powerful al-Fadhil tribe and a sultan who owned and ruled wide areas of the southern province of Abyan. After the British pulled out of South Yemen in 1967, the elder al-Fadhli lost his lands and power to the new rulers of South Yemen, the Marxists



of the Yemen Socialist Party (Al-Hizb al-Ishtiraki al-Yamani - YSP). Tariq's family moved to Saudi Arabia where he grew up. In the late 1980s, he abandoned his education and joined the mujahideen movement in Afghanistan fighting against the Soviet forces (Yemen-Sound, July 29).

Since joining the SM, al-Fadhli has presented himself as a nationalist from the south calling for the rights of South Yemenis. The terminology he uses in his statements and speeches is more patriotic than Islamist. He talks about his time in Afghanistan as something from the past. About a month after he joined the SM, al-Fadhli was interviewed by a pan-Arab daily. In response to a question about his experience in Afghanistan, he stated, "You are talking about something from 20 years ago... We now live on our lands and have no links with Afghanistan. Let anyone who accuses us of terror present his accusation in front of the whole world and the international community. I will be ready to take responsibility if anything was proven against me. Otherwise those who accuse me should be held responsible... We [in South Yemen] have been invaded 15 years ago and we are under a vicious occupation. So we are busy with our cause and we do not look at any other cause in the world. We want our independence and to put an end to this occupation" (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 14).

On the same day al-Fadhli's interview was published, the regional organization of al-Qaeda declared its support for the people of South Yemen. In an audiotape released on the internet, Nasir Abdul Kareem al-Wahayshi (a.k.a. Abu Basir), leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, expressed his sympathy with the people of the southern provinces and their attempt to defend themselves against their "oppression." Al-Fadhli declared that what the people of the South need is not a call for secession but a call for ending the oppression. "What is happening in Lahaj, Dhali, Abyan and Hadramaut and the other southern provinces cannot be approved. We have to support and help [the southerners]," said al-Wahayshi. He went on to address the South Yemenis, promising retaliation. "The oppression against you will not pass without punishment... the killing of Muslims in the streets is an unjustified major crime" (al-Jazeera.net, May 14).

Al-Fadhli and Bin Laden

In his book *Da'wat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah al-'alamiyyah* (The Call of the Global Islamic Resistance),

Syrian jihad strategist Abu Musa'ab al-Suri indicated Osama bin Laden intended to initiate a major jihadist movement in southern Yemen, taking advantage of the internal rivalries of the YSP leaders. According to al-Suri, Tariq al-Fadhli was chosen and trained by Bin Laden to practice jihad in Yemen, but President Saleh managed to convince him to join the government (Minbaralhurriyya.org, September 16). Al-Fadhli denies any special relationship with Bin Laden. "Osama was not as famous at that time [in 1980s Afghanistan] as he is now. We were with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whom many Arabs were comfortable to fight with. I was in an area west of Kabul called Maidan Warda. I did not meet Bin Laden till the last battle of Jalalabad and only for short and staggering times. My relationship with him was like any other one in the field, very normal with nothing special" (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 14).

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, al-Fadhli returned to Saudi Arabia and then to North Yemen. When the unification of Yemen was declared in 1990, al-Fadhli saw his socialist enemies becoming partners in the power structure. The YSP accused him of being behind the assassination of one of their leaders. He was arrested after the attacks on two hotels in Aden where American soldiers participating in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia were staying. Al-Fadhli denies any involvement in the attacks or the assassination. He spent three years in jail on the charges.

The Civil War

By the time the fourth anniversary of unification arrived, relations between President Saleh and the YSP were at their worst. The YSP leaders waged a war in the south calling for secession. They accused the north and president Saleh of dominating the government. Upset by Saleh's support for Iraqi president Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia supported the South. [1]

President Saleh turned to the YSP's ideological enemies, the jihadis, for help. Who else but Tariq al-Fadhli could provide the best assistance against the socialists? According to al-Fadhli's account, he was released at 2:30 in the morning and asked to join the fight immediately (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 14). The role of the jihadis led by al-Fadhli was vital in winning the war for the north (see *Terrorism Monitor*, July 13, 2006). Al-Fadhli was then rewarded by becoming a senior member of President Saleh's ruling party, the General People's Congress (al-Mo'tamar al-Sha'by al-'Am). He also got

part of his father's lands back (Albaisanews.com, May 14).

Yemen has been, and will always be, a country of symbolic importance for the Islamists, especially its southern part. The family of Saudi-born Osama bin Laden is originally from Hadramaut province in South Yemen and he once aimed to eventually settle there. Yemen is also mentioned in an apocryphal hadith as a place for believers to go when there is a threat. Aden-Abyan is specifically mentioned in the hadith as the place where an army of 12,000 men will arise to fight for the religion of Allah in the last days (see *Terrorism Monitor*, February 23, 2006; May 4, 2006; July 13, 2006). Yemen is also of crucial strategic importance. Its geographic location places it close to vital shipping lanes, as well as Sudan, Somalia and Saudi Arabia, countries of high interest for al-Qaeda.

The unification of Yemen denied jihadis the battle they wanted to fight—a pure battle against the deteriorating pro-Soviet YSP, a scenario that would be similar to Afghanistan. When the 1994 civil war broke out, they fought for Saleh against the YSP, whom they considered to be unbelievers.

The defeat of the south in 1994 did not end the secessionist cause of its people. Frustration led to the emergence of the SM, formed by secular groups and led by the YSP. The deterioration in south Yemen has reached a point where ideological enemies have put their differences behind them for a common cause. Tariq al-Fadhli became a leading figure in the SM and recognized the former president of South Yemen, Ali Salem Al-Beedh, as the legitimate leader of the south Yemeni people. Al-Fadhli also claimed that he continues to maintain his influence over the jihadis, but tries to separate this role from al-Qaeda, whose existence postdates the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad. “It is impossible that I let [the jihadists] down. Al-Qaeda is new. These are jihadists who fought in Afghanistan and I was with them fighting the Soviets in the 1980s. I have strong relations with all of the jihadists in the north and the south and everywhere, but not with al-Qaeda” (Albaidanew.com, May 14). President Saleh's old tactic of manipulating competing groups seems to be of diminishing value. In his last meeting with President Saleh, al-Fadhli refused to cooperate with the government on the jihadi issue or the southern issue.

The situation in the south is of interest to al-Qaeda as well. After the declaration of al-Qaeda in the Arabian

Peninsula (formed by the Saudi and Yemeni branches of the organization), the 33-year-old al-Wahayshi emerged as the leader of the new organization. His statement expressing support for South Yemen came from a man who knows the area and its people. Like al-Fadhli, al-Wahayshi comes from the southern province of Abyan. The link between al-Fadhli's and al-Wahayshi's support for the people of the south has not been proven yet, but the pro-government media has already put both men in one basket as leaders of al-Qaeda (*Althawra*, October 17). With his senior position among jihadis and tribesmen, al-Fadhli's loyalties and policies will play an important role in shaping the future of South Yemen.

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Notes:

1. See *Harb al-Yamen 1994 al-Asbab wal Nata'ij* (The Yemen War: The Causes and Effects), Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1995.