



# Terrorism Monitor

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### KURDISH POLITICAL LEADER CLAIMS PLAN TO DISSOLVE THE PKK IS FINALIZED

Bayram Bozyel, the General Chairman of Turkey's pro-Kurdish Hak-Par (Rights and Freedom Party) has disclosed a plan he claims will soon be implemented to dissolve the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan – PKK) and end the longstanding conflict between Turkey's military and the Iraqi-based Kurdish militants (Haber Turk, July 6; *Sabah*, July 11). Hak-Par seeks greater Kurdish autonomy within a Turkish federal system.

According to Bozyel, who made the revelations following meetings with leading members of northern Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the four-part plan was drawn up by Turkey, Iraq and the United States and has the full approval of the KRG. The plan calls for the following:

- Northern Iraq's Mahmur camp near the Turkish border housing some 10,000 Kurdish refugees since the early 1990s will be closed and the refugees returned to Turkey. U.S. officials have sought the closure of the camp for several years.
- PKK cadres based on Qandil Mountain will be moved to the newly vacant Mahmur camp where they will be disarmed.

- Leading members of the PKK will be given Iraqi passports and allowed to move to certain European countries, primarily Norway. Active contacts with the European Union regarding the plan are continuing.
- Turkey will prepare a “solution package” that will include an amnesty for deactivated PKK fighters.

According to Bozyel, the principal political leaders in Kurdish northern Iraq, Iraqi president Jalal al-Talabani and KRG president Massoud Barzani “have also assumed significant roles in this process. They are disturbed by the PKK; they see it as a serious instability factor in the region. They are in favor of speeding up the activities regarding the disarmament of the PKK.” Bozyel even claims “high ranking cadres” of the PKK “are in favor of this plan” (*Taraf*, July 2; July 4, Argun.org).

Turkish Chief of the General Staff, General Ilker Basbug, was recently asked if the PKK was at the point of being dissolved. He replied, “It would be an overstatement to say that. But, it was delivered very severe blows recently. International support for that organization has diminished. They realized that northern Iraq is no longer a safe haven for them and that they could not achieve anything by using weapons. But, it would be wrong to say that it has been finished off. We can, however, say that we have reached an unprecedented point. We are, therefore, at a critical juncture” (*Hurriyet*, June 4).

#### TALIBAN SPOKESMAN WARNS HAMID KARZAI MUST EXPECT SAME FATE AS NAJIBULLAH

In a recent interview with the Global Islamic Media Front’s Sada al-Jihad magazine, Taliban spokesman Qari Muhammad Yusuf warned Afghanistan’s President, Hamid Karzai, that as a “U.S. agent” he could expect the same fate as former collaborationists such as the pro-British Shah Shuja (assassinated in 1842) and the pro-Soviet President Muhammad Najibullah (tortured, castrated and hanged in public in 1996) (hanein.info, July 15).

Yusuf addressed what the Taliban describe as an attempt to shift the Iraqi experience with the pro-government “Awakening Councils” to Afghanistan through the creation of the Afghan Public Protection Force (“the Guardians”) (see *Terrorism Monitor*, July 9). According to Yusuf, recruitment efforts have been opposed by local shaykhs. “The situation in Afghanistan is different from

the conditions in Iraq. This is why the American attempts to set up tribal ‘Awakening Councils’ are doomed for failure in Afghanistan... What causes security issues for us are the foreigners who bombard innocent civilians, and kill and imprison them without guilt. This is how the attempt to establish ‘Awakening Councils’ has failed completely in all the Afghan provinces.”

The Taliban’s senior spokesman was vague about the role played by the movement’s Pakistan counterparts in destroying NATO supply transports passing through the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), declining to respond to a question regarding the ties between the two groups and the role the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) play in the Islamic Emirate’s larger strategy. “The Americans and their allies from the NATO forces are not enemies of the Taliban alone, they are enemies of the entire Muslim nation. Every Muslim thus considers it is his religious duty to do whatever he can against this aggressor Crusader enemy. As for the relation between the Islamic Emirate and the Pakistan Taliban, it is a relation of religion, creed, and brotherhood.”

Similarly, Yusuf offered only a vague endorsement of al-Qaeda fighters still active in Afghanistan, referring to them as “the immigrant mujahideen”. “They are our brothers in religion and creed. They are carrying out jihad in the cause of God against the Crusader forces in Afghanistan.”

Yusuf also condemned President Barack Obama’s attempts at outreach with the Muslim world, embodied most notably in recent speeches delivered in Ankara and Cairo (see *Terrorism Monitor*, June 12). “The American’s stance towards the Muslim world is very clear. It is an aggressive and a hostile stance. The Americans proved their hatred towards the Muslim world by occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, and by supporting and aiding the Zionist entity in Palestine. So how is it possible for Obama, by delivering a short speech to a group of people in Cairo or Turkey, to conceal this clear approach and all the brutalities which were committed by the US forces during the past eight years?”

## Hafiz Mohammad Saeed – India’s Most Wanted Man Free Again in Pakistan

By Mukhtar A. Khan

The release of Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, founder of

proscribed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Amir of Jama'at-ud-Da'wa (JuD), from detention last month in Pakistan has raised eyebrows in the West as well as India. He was released from house arrest on June 2 when the Lahore High Court ruled it did not have enough evidence against him on terrorism charges. However, Pakistan's Deputy Attorney General Shah Khawar says that Pakistan's law enforcement and intelligence agencies have enough evidence to suggest that a freed Hafiz Saeed is a continuing security threat. The Punjab provincial government and the federal government of Pakistan have already filed petitions before the Pakistani Supreme Court seeking a reversal of the decision of Lahore High Court. Nevertheless, the federal government continues to struggle to make an adequate case for his preventive detention and the Punjab provincial government has admitted its evidence is insufficient (*The News* [Islamabad], July 17; *Daily Times* [Lahore], July 17).

Hafiz was detained by Pakistani security officials last December when India accused him of involvement in plotting the bloody assault on India's main city of Mumbai in November 2008, followed by a UN Security Council resolution that added Hafiz Saeed and his charity organization to a list of individuals and organizations tied to the Taliban and al-Qaeda. After his release from six months in detention, he strongly denied links with al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations and condemned Pakistan's military offensive in Swat against Taliban. India has shown its strong resentment over the release of Hafiz Saeed and his aide, senior JuD leader Colonel (ret'd) Nafiz Ahmed, while the United States has called on Pakistan to cooperate and bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks to justice. Some U.S. officials have pointed out that the release of Hafiz Saeed indicates a lack of commitment from Pakistan in the fight against extremism. (*The News*, June 4).

Hafiz Mohammad Saeed was born to a religious family in Sargodha (Punjab province) in the tumultuous years that followed the creation of Pakistan. More than 30 members of his family were murdered in 1947 when his family migrated from Shimla (India) to Punjab (Pakistan) during the partition of India and Pakistan. His father Kamaluddin, a small landlord, gave him both a religious and modern education. Hafiz Saeed is married to Maimoona, the daughter of Hafiz Mohammad Abdullah, his maternal uncle and a famous religious leader in Punjab (*Hindustan Times*, June 2).

Hafiz Mohammad Saeed first drew attention when the then-president of Pakistan, General Mohammad Zia-ul-

Haq, appointed him as research officer in the Council on Islamic Ideology. Then he joined the University of Engineering and Technology as a teacher of Islamic Studies in Lahore. The government then sent him to Saudi Arabia in the early 1980s for higher studies. It was there that he met some Arab jihadi leaders who inspired him to focus his energies on waging jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union.

Hafiz Mohammad Saeed also met with Shaykh Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, an influential Palestinian jihad ideologue and mentor of Osama bin Laden. Azzam influenced him to found the Markaz Dawa-wa'l-Irshad (Center for Call and Guidance) in Muridke, Lahore in 1987. The institution preached jihad and the Wahhabi-Salafi form of Islam. Hafiz Saeed founded LeT in the early 1990s, allegedly with support from Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's military intelligence agency. LeT then shifted the focus of its jihad from Afghanistan to Indian-administered Kashmir (*The Hindu*, June 3).

LeT is believed to have been involved in almost all major attacks against India over the disputed territory of Kashmir. Hafiz Saeed stepped down from the leadership of LeT soon after India blamed this group for the terrorist attack on its parliament in December 2001. He handed over leadership of the group to Maulana Abdul Wahid Kashmiri, who is based in Srinagar, part of Indian-administered Kashmir. Shortly after this, Pakistan banned LeT after the United States added it to its list of designated terrorist organizations.

However, Saeed was quick to revive his old Markaz Dawa-wa'l-Irshad organization with a slight modification of its name to Jama'at-ul-Da'wa, beginning as a charity and public welfare organization. It is common practice for militant organizations in Pakistan to rename themselves so as to bypass the law and avoid official bans. The old offices of LeT simply changed the names on their signboards with no significant change to the nature of the activities carried out inside. However, after 9/11, due to changes in Pakistan's policies towards India and pressure from the United States, Hafiz Saeed and his organization stepped back from aggressive jihadi activities in Kashmir. Despite this, several offices of LeT continued to recruit militants for jihad in Pakistan-administered Kashmir (BBC News, June 2).

India has long asked for the extradition of Hafiz Saeed, whom it suspects of being the mastermind behind all major terrorist attacks inside India. However, Pakistan's government wants him to be tried inside Pakistan. So

far, Pakistan has not brought sufficient evidence to punish him for his involvement in terrorist activities (*Daily Times*, June 5). Since 2001, he has been detained three times, but in every instance he was freed due to the apparent lack of evidence against him. In July 2006, India asked the Government of Pakistan to ban the JuD and arrest its leaders, including Hafiz Saeed, for their alleged involvement in the July 11 Mumbai train bombings that killed over 200 people. Pakistan rejected the Indian claims and put Hafiz Saeed under house arrest. He was released a month later (*Hindustan Times*, June 2).

The latest release of Hafiz Mohammad Saeed by court order might once again ignite the already tense relations between Pakistan and India if the ruling is not reversed by the Supreme Court.

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## Niger Delta Militants Mount First Ever Raid on Lagos Oil Facilities

By Andrew McGregor

Niger Delta militants in speedboats launched a devastating attack on Nigeria's rapidly decaying energy infrastructure on July 13 by seizing and destroying a major oil distribution point in Lagos, a city of 16 million people. The assault was the first time militants from the Delta region have struck Nigeria's largest city.

An assault group from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) struck the Atlas Cove Jetty during the night, killing a number of sailors guarding the facility before driving away the rest. Dynamite charges were placed on ten pipelines at the terminal and the resulting explosion was heard throughout the city. The attackers returned to base without apparent intervention from the Joint Task Force (JTF), a hybrid security force detailed with eliminating the insurgency in the oil-rich Delta. The attack came only hours before the release of imprisoned MEND leader Henry Okah under a new Nigerian amnesty program.

Two days after the assault a MEND spokesman said the operation was carried out by only "18 experienced commandos" in two speedboats (*Daily Trust* [Abuja], July 15). Resistance from the guards was dispelled by several bursts from heavy caliber machine guns, according to MEND.

Damage to the Atlas Cove terminal was reported to be heavy. Because Nigeria's inland refineries are not running due to a lack of crude supplies as a result of pipeline attacks, the oil-rich nation is dependent on imported refined fuel. The Lagos facility handles 35% of Nigeria's refined oil imports (AFP, July 14). MEND destroyed a recently repaired Chevron pipeline for the second time only days before the Lagos attack (AFP, July 10).

A rival Niger Delta movement, the Ijaw Youth Campaign for Peace (IYCP), condemned the attack and followed up on a threat to "forward names of those involved to the Federal Government" by naming fugitive militant leader and tribal chief Government Ekpemupolo (a.k.a. Tompolo) as the man behind the Lagos attack (*Daily Trust*, July 15). Another Ijaw group, the Warri Ijaw Peace Monitoring Group (WIPMG), denied Tompolo had anything to do with the attack and described the IYCP as "saboteurs" set on destroying the peace process in the region (*The Nation* [Lagos], July 15).

Tompolo, who is wanted in connection with the disappearance of 16 Nigerian servicemen, narrowly escaped capture when his base, known as "Camp 5," was struck by a land and air assault coordinated by the JTF. The defenses of the sophisticated base, complete with barracks, armory and a modern mansion for Tompolo's use, were entirely designed to repel an attack coming from the waterways, the customary transportation routes in the roadless Delta (*Vanguard* [Lagos], May 29). There are suggestions that Tompolo was working a protection racket to fund his luxurious lifestyle by working as a "security advisor" to various foreign oil firms (*Nigerian Tribune*, June 1).

Lagos state Governor Babatunde Fashola denounced the attack on the Lagos oil terminal, pointing out that Lagos State had hosted numerous displaced people from the Niger Delta while experiencing its own struggle for development funds after the national capital moved to Abuja. "We have provided succour and accommodation for the displaced people of the Niger Delta as a result of the agitation... Is Lagos not also a victim of years of neglect? Is this an agitation without limits? Is a friendly

and host state fair game? ...I want to think that what has happened is a mistake and it will never be repeated” (PANA Online [Dakar], July 16; *Daily Sun* [Lagos], July 16).

The Niger Delta militants, who seek a greater share of Nigeria’s oil revenues, have succeeded in cutting down Nigeria’s monthly oil revenues to \$1 billion per month, compared to \$2.2 billion in 2008 (AFP, July 13). A statement from MEND claims that “While the government is talking about amnesty on one hand, the JTF on the other is still carrying out a punitive scorched earth policy on communities around oil facilities as a way of permanently relocating the people from their ancestral homes and turning the area into an oil mining area” (234next.com, July 21).

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## New Strategies in al-Qaeda’s Battle for Algeria

By Camille Tawil

In September, three years will have passed since the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat - GSPC) joined al-Qaeda. A sharp rise in terrorist attacks has been noticeable since 2007, when the GSPC changed its name to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and became the official franchise of al-Qaeda in North Africa. In 2007 and 2008, AQIM carried out a series of spectacular attacks, mainly by suicide bombers, and in June of this year it managed to kill at least 18 security personnel in one ambush alone south-east of Algiers.

This report examines how Algerian authorities are dealing with the threat posed by AQIM, and how the Islamist group is adapting to the government’s strategy.

### The Survival of Islamist Militancy in Algeria

Algerian authorities seem to have been taken aback by the resurgence of militant activities in the country in the past few years. The bloody war with the armed Islamic

groups which engulfed the country during the 1990s was seen as something of the past. The Islamic Salvation Army (Armée Islamique de Salvation - AIS) gave up its arms and joined an amnesty program by 1999. The Armed Islamic Group (Groupe Islamique Armé - GIA), the most vicious of the Algerian militant groups, was defeated militarily, while its successor, the GSPC, was confined to some pockets of resistance, mainly to the east of Algiers. The Algerian government still had hopes that the leadership of the GSPC would soon agree to lay down its arms and join a reconciliation program launched by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Unfortunately, these hopes were soon dashed; Hassan Hattab, the Amir of the GSPC, who favored reconciliation with the government, was replaced in 2003 by a new Amir, Nabil Sahraoui (a.k.a. Abu Ibrahim Mustafa), who favored not only a continuation of jihad in Algeria, but also joining forces with Osama Bin Laden’s global struggle against the West. 2003, therefore, was a critical year for the survival of the GSPC. The Iraq war, which started that year, fueled anger among the Algerian youth, many of whom volunteered to join the insurgency in Iraq in the hope of fighting Americans who were seen as “occupiers of Muslim lands.” Many of those volunteers were aided by GSPC cells to reach Iraq. Others stayed at GSPC training camps in Algeria, having failed to reach their destination in Iraq due to crackdowns on the cells that were supposed to smuggle them there. With these new recruits training for jihad the GSPC was given a new lease on life.

The Iraq war did more than help the GSPC to raise fresh recruits to replace its depleted ranks; according to the former head of the GSPC media section, Abu Omar Abd al-Birr, it also put the Algerian group on the course of finally joining al-Qaeda through the contacts it forged with the Jordanian jihadi Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the late leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq (*Ennahar*, March 15; *al-Hayat*, March 15).

The process of merging with al-Qaeda was started by Nabil Sahraoui, but it did not materialize until 2006, under the leadership of Sahraoui’s successor, Abd al-Malik Droudkel (a.k.a. Abu Musab Abd al-Wadoud). In September of that year, the GSPC announced its affiliation with Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda and in January 2007 it became the official franchise of al-Qaeda in the whole of North Africa. AQIM proved its worth when it launched suicide attacks in Algiers in April 2007, targeting the Prime Minister’s offices and a security post. It was the first time Algerian Islamists used a coordinated martyrdom attack, comparable to

those considered the hallmark of al-Qaeda operations. In December 2007, a similar attack took place in Algiers, this time targeting the UN Headquarters and the Constitutional Court. Other AQIM operations in 2007 included an attack on the Coast Guard barracks in Dellys (just east of Algiers) and a failed attempt to kill President Bouteflika in Batna that nevertheless claimed at least fifteen lives. The number of attacks increased in 2008 (295 compared to 218 in 2007), though the number of casualties declined. [1]

These attacks seem to have taken the authorities by surprise, but the Algerian security services were soon able to adapt and form a counter-offensive strategy. This strategy was built on two major policies: a military offensive and a religious offensive against the Islamist militants.

#### The Government's Military Offensive

The security services started their counter-offensive slowly, but with spectacular success. The investigation into the April 2007 attacks in Algiers led them to the identity of the major perpetrators. But security forces were faced with a dilemma: how to reach them in the mountains? The solution was provided when a major AQIM figure, Samir Sai'oud (a.k.a. Musab Abu Abdallah), was caught alive in an ambush in the spring of 2007. The security services decided to announce his death through the official Algerian Press Service. Surprisingly, Sai'oud's death was confirmed by AQIM itself, which did not realize he was only injured (muslm.net, April 27, 2007). The government's aim was to reassure the militants in the mountains that their usual routes had not been compromised. The information gleaned from this detainee combined with other sources of information led to the killing or capture of dozens of militant leaders, including Ali Al-Dees (a.k.a. Sayyed Ali Rashid), Zohair Harek (a.k.a. Soufian Fasila, the Amir of AQIM's Second Zone), Abd al-Hamid Hamzawi (a.k.a. Abu Turab), and Abd al-Fattah Abu Basir (a.k.a. Fateh Bouderbala) (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, November 21). After suffering these losses, the whole network responsible for the April attacks in Algiers was dismantled.

However, the authorities were well aware that such success would be short lived if not followed by more efforts to sustain it. The security services also knew from past experience that the militants in the mountains would soon be able to reorganize and restore any losses they suffered if they were allowed a safe haven in which to hide and regroup. To prevent this, government forces

have been going into the areas where the militants are known to be hiding, with more than ten operations recorded every week. These operations have often been very difficult, especially in the eastern provinces of Kabylia and Boumerdes, where AQIM has well-defended bases high in the mountains.

The aim of these attacks is to prevent AQIM from regrouping and to keep it on the run. If AQIM is occupied with its survival it will not have time to plan new attacks. The offensive against the hideouts of AQIM will be measured as a success only if it leads to the group having to reduce the frequency of its attacks, something which will become clear during the coming months.

#### The Government's Religious Offensive

The authorities know full well that the armed Islamists cannot be defeated solely by military means. Other policies have to be adopted as well, so a two-front religious offensive was launched against AQIM. The first part of this offensive was to allow known Islamist leaders who have renounced violence and joined the peace process to explain why they did so. In an interview with the author conducted for *al-Hayat* newspaper, Hassan Hattab, GSPC's founder and former Amir, explained why he decided to "come down from the mountains" and surrender. He, and three other well known GSPC leaders spoke at length about the reasons why they gave up arms and called on their religious comrades who are still in the mountains to follow them and join the National Reconciliation. In short, they all declared that what AQIM is doing is not jihad (*Al-Hayat*, March 14 - 17).

In addition to these interviews, the Algerian authorities hosted a well known Saudi Salafist preacher, Ayed al-Qarni, who visited the country for the first time in March. Al-Qarni is an important figure in the Salafist movement in the Gulf, a movement which was seen as supporting the cause of the Algerian Islamist rebels during the 1990s. After the large-scale Algerian massacres in the second half of the 1990s and the launch of the government's amnesty initiative towards those who lay down their arms, the Salafist movement in the Gulf played an important role in convincing some Algerian groups to surrender. The message from the Salafists to the jihadis in Algeria was clear: what you are doing is not jihad (*Al-Hayat*, March 14 - 17). Dr. Al-Qarni repeated this message during his visit to Algeria in March and was allowed to meet with former militants

who have renounced violence. (Al-Arabiya, March 16).

Has this two-pronged religious offensive produced any results? It is still too early to tell. But the Algerian press lately has been full of stories about groups willing to give up the fight after having been contacted by Hattab. It has also been reported that another well known Islamist leader is willing to surrender—Salim al-Afghani, the head of the Defenders of the Salafist Call, who is in negotiations with the government regarding the disbandment of his group (*Al-Hayat*, June 22). If this turns out to be true, it could well be the result of what he has heard from the Salafist movement regarding the fighting in Algeria.

#### Countering the Government's Strategy

AQIM, in the meanwhile, seems to be trying to adapt to the government's strategy. AQIM's major worry seems to be getting drawn into a direct battle with the Algerian army. In order to avoid this, AQIM has constantly been a step ahead of the advancing troops. Not a single major battle has been reported between the two sides lately, an indication of the militant group's eagerness to avoid a battle it knows it will lose. Reports in the Algerian press often mention the killing of a few Islamists in the army operations, but nothing more than that.

Instead of direct confrontation with the army, AQIM tries to launch attacks against "soft targets" – mainly the poorly-armed civil defense force members in rural areas. Occasionally, AQIM manages to kill members from other military branches, as it did in June 2009 when it ambushed a convoy of paramilitary police near Bordj Bou Arreridj, in a mountainous area east of Algiers, and killed 18 of its members and one civilian (other civilians were reportedly caught during the ambush but AQIM made an effort to demonstrate that it only targets the military). It was one of the heaviest losses suffered by the authorities in years.

With a single successful attack, AQIM was able to show that it is has not been affected by the army's assault against its hideouts. In addition, AQIM can also boast that it is able to operate not only in Algeria but also across the Islamic Maghreb, especially in Mauritania where the Israeli embassy was fired on in February 2008 and French tourists and an American teacher were killed in December 2007 and June 2009 respectively.

Apart from Algeria and Mauritania, AQIM's operations have not been reported in other countries of the Islamic

Maghreb (Morocco, Libya and Tunisia). However, AQIM's Sahara Zone has been active not only in southern Algeria, but also across Mali and Niger, where several tourists and westerners (including Canadian diplomats) have been taken hostage in return for ransom. However, all the hostages have been released unharmed, apart from a Briton who was killed in June.

To counter the government's religious offensive, AQIM turned to Ahmed Deghdegh (a.k.a. Abu Abd al-Allah Ahmed), the head of its political committee, who in May appeared in a 40-minute video countering accusations directed at his group. Deghdegh, who has been on the U.S. sanctions list since July 2008, insisted that it was the right decision for the GSPC to merge with al-Qaeda. [2] This merger, he stated, has made the Algerian group stronger with an influx of recruits from various countries of the Maghreb. Deghdegh went on to claim that the amnesty offered to the Islamists by President Bouteflika is worthless and assured Algerians that AQIM has not been affected by Hassan Hattab's call to its members to join the peace process. Hattab, he said, is nothing but a "traitor" who has "sold out." Deghdegh insists Hattab's interviews with *al-Hayat* will not have any impact on AQIM's activities. Only time will tell whether Hattab or Deghdegh is right about the future of AQIM. Until then, more blood will surely be spilt in Algeria.

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Notes:

1. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2008/122433.htm>
2. <https://treas.gov/press/releases/hp1085.htm>

## Islam-o-Muslim and the Resilience of Terrorism in Bangladesh

*By Animesh Roul*

After a relatively long period of calm, Islamist militancy in Bangladesh is showing new signs of life, even in the face of continuous crackdowns on terrorist infrastructure and activity by counterterrorism forces in the country.

Security officials have long established that many of the outlawed terrorist groups have been trying to regroup and reorganize after lying low (mostly in northwestern and southwestern Bangladesh) after a state of emergency was declared in January 2007. In June 2008, reports came quickly of the reemergence of terrorist groups such as Jama'at ul-Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB), Allahr Dal, Harkat-ul Jihad al Islami (HuJI) and Hizb-ut Towhid (HuT). The revival was especially strong in the southwestern districts of Kushtia, Meherpur, Jhenidah, Magura, Chuadanga, Jessore, and Satkhira. Intelligence sources revealed that all these groups have maintained close operational ties and carried out terrorist operations on Bangladeshi soil. One estimate suggested there were about 12,000 cadres actively operating in the country, mostly madrassa (Islamic seminary) teachers, students and clerics of mosques (*Daily Star* [Dhaka], June 12, 2008). In April of this year, Bangladesh intelligence agencies declared that the Islamist terrorist groups are reorganizing with the aim of making a deadly comeback (*Daily Star*, April 29).

A mid-June report based on the confessional statement of a JMB terrorist shed some light on this resilient outfit. According to the report, JMB operatives are still using different border routes in Chapai Nawabganj and Jessore to smuggle in bomb-making materials and small arms from neighboring India despite being weakened by the government crackdown (*Daily Star*, June 22). The militant also confessed that members of the JMB central committee are trying to keep the organization afloat in Dhaka and other divisional capitals.

### The Emergence of Islam-o-Muslim

In the midst of this evolving terrorist scenario in Bangladesh, a new jihadi outfit has emerged under the name of Islam-o-Muslim (IoM). The existence of IoM, a hitherto unknown group that security forces believe is a dissident breakaway faction of JMB, came to light when the Detective Branch (DB) of the Bangladesh police apprehended JMB terrorist Mustafizur Rahman (a.k.a Montu) in Dhaka's Fakirerpol district on June 28, followed by the June 30 arrest of another JMB terrorist from the Gazipur district, Abdur Rahim (a.k.a Shahadat Hossain), who claimed to be the chief of IoM. Security forces also apprehended a pair of IoM area commanders identified as Sajedur Rahman (a.k.a Hanif) and Jalal Uddin (BDNews24.com, July 3; *New Nation* [Dhaka], July 3). On July 6, a joint team of police and paramilitary personnel from the Bangladesh Rifles arrested senior IoM operative Selim (a.k.a Saifullah), the IoM second-

in-command and military affairs commander in Chapai Nawabganj (BDNews24.com, July 8; *Daily Star*, July 8).

After this string of arrests, the elite counterterrorist Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) claimed they had foiled IoM's attempt to expand its activities by arresting many of its top leaders in a stepped-up crackdown on the terrorist infrastructure in Bangladesh. After extensive investigation, Bangladesh police have now confirmed that at least four JMB suspects arrested on earlier occasions in various parts of Chapai Nawabganj were actually IoM members. These suspects were identified as Abdul Mumin, Abdur Raqib, Rabiul Islam and Abdul Munib.

The interrogations of Abdur Rahim and other suspects revealed that IoM was formed in April 2009 to dominate the northwestern part of Bangladesh. With around 10 to 15 Ehsar (full-time) members and many Gayeri Ehsar (part-time) activists, IoM reportedly tried to expand in Rajshai division (bordering India's West Bengal State) to establish a free zone consisting of the Gomastapur, Shibganj and Bholahat portions of the Chapai Nawabganj frontier district, Bagmara of the Rajshahi district and Raninagar and Atrai of the Naogaon district.

The arrest of Abdur Rahim and Sajedur Rahman, both former members of the JMB's Majlis-e-Shura (Council of Advisors), brought this new outfit to the fore of the ever-expanding Islamist landscape in Bangladesh. Abdur Rahim, an alumnus of Islami Chhatra Shibir (the student wing of Jamaat-i-Islami Bangladesh), joined JMB in 2002. He was appointed chief of the Bagmara sub-district initially and was actively involved in JMB's violent activities targeting left-wing Sarbahara activists in Rajshahi district. However Rahim, a close associate of Siddiqui Islam (a.k.a Bangla Bhai, leader of the radical Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh - JMJB), fled to India after the countrywide crackdowns on JMB's top leadership following the serial bomb blasts in August 2005 (*Daily Star*, July 7). Rahim reportedly worked for JMB's cause in India by raising funds and new recruits in and around the Murshidabad, Nadia and Malda districts of India's West Bengal state. After his return to Bangladesh early this year, Rahim formed IoM due to the internal feud growing within the ranks of the JMB, primarily over financial and ideological matters.

Unlike JMB, which used various terror tactics in the country ranging from suicide attacks to planting



bombs and explosives, the IoM aims to wage jihad with small arms, focusing on weapons and ammunition manufacturing in their hideouts. Police seized shotguns, bullet-making materials, and books on jihad from all the IoM cadres they have arrested so far. Both Abdur Rahim and Selim vehemently opposed many of the JMB's activities, especially bomb blasts. Instead they have chosen assassination-style killings with small arms as their main tactic (*Daily Star*, July 19).

IoM has conducted several meetings of their top leaders at Raghunathpur and Ranihati villages in Shibganj sub-district. Abdur Rahim was in charge of recruiting new IoM members from active as well as inactive members of JMB in Chapai Nawabganj, Rajshahi and Naogaon districts. Significantly, the JMB is reported to have planned a meeting in the village of Kansat in April. Three years ago, hundreds of JMB cadres took part in the Kansat Movement, a peasant revolt sparked by alleged irregularities in the Rural Electricity Board and irregular power supplies. [1] JMB members decided to take part in the movement primarily because of its anti-Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) agenda, which gave them the opportunity to target government infrastructure and property (*Daily Star*, June 22).

#### The Jama'at ul-Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB)

When JMB's top leadership was put on trial in March 2007, a new six-member central committee took shape with Maulana Sayedur Rahman Jaffar as the acting chief of the group. The other five members were identified by intelligence agencies as Assaduallah Arif, Tasleem, Faruq, Syed and Mahfuz (*Jajjaidin* [Dhaka], March 3, 2007; see also *Terrorism Focus*, March 27, 2007). Since that time Maulana Sayedur Rahman is believed to be heading the JMB in Bangladesh while operating from his home in the Mirpur locality of Dhaka.

Most of the second-rung JMB leaders went into hiding after the Bangladesh government's proclamation of emergency and withdrew further following the executions of senior JMB leadership in March 2007. A similar case is that of Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami (HuJI), whose cadres also went into hibernation soon after the countrywide crackdown on the HuJI leadership.

The JMB along with other terrorist groups wants to establish a shari'a-based Islamic state in Bangladesh. The outfit perpetrated a series of deadly bombings in market places and court premises in 2005. The counterterrorist RAB claims to have arrested nearly 44 JMB operatives

during the last six months (*Daily Star*, July 19).

#### Transnational Terror Ties

Most of the Bangladesh-based terrorist outfits have well-nourished transnational linkages that reach as far as Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Myanmar. Bangladesh police recently arrested a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operative, Mufti Obaidullah (a.k.a Abu Zafa), who has been working under LeT leader Amir Reza and LeT operative Khurram Khoiyam in Pakistan and Daowd Ibrahim in Dubai. Obaidullah, originally from India's West Bengal, reportedly told his interrogators that his task was to organize jihad in Bangladesh in cooperation with HuJI and JMB operatives.

Obaidullah has close ties with Mufti Abdur Rauf of the HuJI and JMB's Hasanuzzaman Hasan, who was arrested by police on July 17 (*Independent*, July 20; *New Nation* [Dhaka], July 20).

Within the last couple of months, counterterrorist forces have managed to arrest JMB's IT chief Emranul Haque Rajib and top explosives expert Jahedul Islam Sumon (a.k.a Bomb Mizan), both from the Dhaka area. The explosives expert reportedly revealed during interrogation that JMB has close operational ties with the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), a militant movement drawn from Muslim Rohingya refugees from Myanmar's Rakhine state. Islam Sumon told his interrogators that the RSO had been giving terrorist training to various Islamic militants in Bangladesh since the 1980s and that he and other JMB operatives had been trained by RSO weapons experts at a camp near the Myanmar border. JMB reciprocated by teaching the Rohingyas how to make and detonate improvised explosive devices (IEDs) (*Bangladesh2Day.com*, May 19). Islam Sumon also revealed that many JMB members had fled to Pakistan either to undertake military training there or to fight for one of the militant groups operating in Pakistan (*Daily Star*, June 23).

#### Conclusion

The Home Ministry of Bangladesh has recently made public a list of 12 terrorist organizations that are currently active in the country. [2] Earlier, they claimed that 33 terror outfits were active in the country. With the recent developments in view, the Bangladesh government is now planning to set up a highly-trained National Police Bureau of Counter Terrorism to combat militancy and terrorism. IoM appears to present a serious threat as the

JMB dissidents look to revive their insurgency with new members and new tactics. Looking at the emergence of IoM and the surge of other terror groups, it would not be farfetched to conclude that this South Asian country could face the fate of Pakistan or Afghanistan if it fails to tackle the reemergence of Islamist terrorism.

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Notes:

1. See the article by A.H. Jaffor Ullah, “Kansat Uprising: The first peasant revolution in Bangladesh in a long time,” Mukto-Mona.com, April 15, 2006.

2. Bangladesh Home Ministry compiled a report that includes 12 militant groups. They are; Jama’atul Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB), Harkatul Jihad al Islami (HuJI), Hizbut Towhid, Ulama Anjuman al Bainat, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islami Democratic Party, Islami Samaj, Touhid Trust, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, Shahadat-e al-Hikma Party Bangladesh, Tamira Ar-Din Bangladesh (Hizb-e Abu Omar) and Allahr Dal (*Times of India*, March 17).